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**Flirtation, desire, and cut-glass biscuit barrels: forms of expertise in  
*Antiques Road Trip***

**Abstract**

This article looks at the development of broadcast talk in those reality TV genres associated with shopping and negotiation, focusing on *Antiques Road Trip*. In a context in which reality TV has become associated with judgement and rancor, we are concerned with the balance between expertise and ordinariness, and exploring the place of conversational and interactional styles we have come to associate with “sociability” and the maintenance of “face”, both in terms of pleasure and spectacle and providing a tactical basis for on-screen negotiation. We argue that these performances differ from conventional discourses of expertise as arbiters of specialist insight and market value, and offer new performances of expertise, based on a tactical mix of professional capital and sociability.

**Introduction: shopping and negotiation**

*Antiques Road Trip* is just one of many antiques-based television shows that have become a feature of television schedules for over 30 years in the UK and elsewhere. However, with the exception of the long-running BBC production *Antiques Roadshow* and its US version (Bonner, 2003; Clouse, 2008; Hall, 1999), they have received relatively little academic attention. The proliferation and longevity of such programmes may be linked to the long-term popularity of antiques, and certainly with the more recent rise of “thrift shopping” as a marker of cultural capital (DeLong *et al*, 2005). From interior-design-led antique shops

to car boot sales, what has emerged is a second hand goods sector that spans a price range from the negligible to the extravagant. At the higher end of this price range, the commodities available for purchase carry a “provenance” that combines monetary value with the prestige of scarcity, whilst the lower end seeks out hidden nuggets and curiosities from amongst discarded junk and bric-a-brac, often at modest cost. All told, this produces a small-scale mercantile sector that places an emphasis on consumer creativity and participation, in which some shoppers will search for goods that have an aesthetic, practical or collectable value to themselves, while others seek to make a profit by re-selling hitherto undervalued goods for a higher price.

Programming based around antiques shopping is therefore positioned to draw upon what Turner (2010) and Thornborrow (2015) identify as a new prominence in public and popular engagement in broadcasting. As Postrel (2003: 9) puts it, the activities surrounding antiques shopping forego a “one best way” attitude for a more fluid and disjointed shopping aesthetic, where the pleasures in identifying an item and securing a deal outweighs the prestige and ritual of the corporate retail setting (Miller, 1998: 58). In keeping with the imperatives of reality-based broadcasting, the cluttered intimacy of the antiques market produces an overtly personal shopping experience with extended interaction between seller and purchaser, including negotiation on price.

Of course, a programme with negotiation at its core has to remain attentive to the status of the exchanges that unfold as acceptable encounters, and Brown and Levinson’s (1978) theory of politeness helps us understand how competitive interactions are managed in broadcasting and elsewhere. Brown and Levinson (1978: 55) maintain “patterns of message construction... are part of the very stuff that social relationships are made of” and their analysis of this shows the “dimensions by which individuals manage to relate to others in particular ways”. Specifically, Brown and Levinson suggest that all participants in an interaction have an interest in maintaining two types of face: the “positive face” desire to be liked and be socially compliant, and the “negative face” wish to avoid threat or imposition.

However, a great deal of the research into television discourse emphasizes a widespread refusal to maintain face and exercise politeness. Palmer (2003) emphasizes the role of reality television in highlighting misconduct and poor behaviour in order to aid in the “government” of the troublesome. Other authors have highlighted the decline of civility across media genres, ranging from the “spectacular incivility” of reality TV (Lorenzo-Dus, 2009: 97) to the broader rise of belligerence as entertainment and discursive mechanism (Higgins and Smith, 2017). In this article, in contrast with the rancorous tone of much television discourse, we will see the various ways in which expert contestants perform sociability and use such tactics as conversational flirtation to manage face, while negotiating price and calling upon specialist forms of know-how.

### **From evaluation to gameshow: the rise of *Antiques Road Trip***

Antiques have become a matter of popular interest, and this has been reflected in the development of dedicated television programmes. In a spectacle of instructive revelation, the long-running *Antiques Roadshow* (BBC, 1979-present) offers members of the public the chance to have their antique possessions assessed by specialists in front of the cameras. This educational drive has extended into merchandising, with BBC Books issuing a number of pocket guides in the mid-1990s. Over the programme’s lifetime, the rhetoric of value has shifted from advice on replacement for home insurance to the likely yield at auction; appealing to an interest in the generation of profit also picked by programmes such as *Bargain Hunt* (BBC, 2000-present) and *Dickenson’s Real Deal* (ITV, 2006-).

In its own focus on monetary yield, *Antiques Road Trip* (BBC, 2010-present) is an extension of this family. In the programme, two experts (usually auctioneers or antique dealers in their own right) are given £200 apiece and a vintage sports car in which to travel, with instructions to drive around a specified area of Britain, purchasing antiques along the way. They then try to grow their

respective kitties by submitting their goods to be sold at auction. Their end-of-week tallies are used to declare a “winner”; although in the ethos of public service broadcasting, the profits are given to the BBC charity Children in Need. As another concession to the programme’s public service setting, the experts are also shown breaking off their journey to visit various museums to explore some facet of local history, usually associated with products that they might come across in the antique shops they visit en-route. There are also occasional *Celebrity Antiques Road Trip* series where a media personality is paired with one of the established experts.

Rather than members of the public featured in a more conventional gameshow, *Antiques Road Trip* therefore pits antiques specialists against one another in a contest around buying cheaply and then selling on. Each half-hour show devotes twenty minutes to the pursuit and purchase of goods and ten minutes to the auction, producing a main focus on the “shopping” aspect of the game. In Scannell’s (1991) terms, this extended focus on the purchase of the goods provides the stage for a “doubly-articulated” performance, with the expert shoppers explaining to the overhearing audience the merits of the goods under consideration, followed by the usually protracted process of negotiating a price with the seller. Superficially at least, this seems to offer viewers the spectacle of negotiation, or at the very least a lesson in perceiving the ticket price on goods in antique shops as a mere starting point. This negotiability, with implied reduction in seller profit, is perhaps the main reason why such shows never visit charity shops, where such a reduction in seller profit would be morally questionable to say the least.

### **Forms of celebrity-expertise**

By now, it will be clear that these different sorts of antique programme call upon various performances of expertise. In a study of the use of expert-academics in media, Fenton *et al* (1998) argue that experts are positioned as detached from the priorities and expressive worlds of ordinary people: often a target for the populist contempt of the audience and programme host. This contrasts quite

markedly from the construction of expertise on programmes such as *Antiques Roadshow*. In a discussion of the US version, Hall (1999) emphasises the narrative suspension built upon the provenance and worth of the articles, defined and animated by the status-heavy, qualified assessors offering glimpses of their “domain of knowledge”. In the UK form too, Bonner (2003: 190) describes a succession of micro detective stories with the expert as the hero sleuth; each tale setting out with the implied question “What is this object?”, before culminating in the announcement of its monetary “worth”. Across the format, Clouse (2008: 3) describes the mastery exhibited as a ritual of “dramatic tension” after which the truth of an object is “revealed”.

While the ridiculed “boffins” described by Fenton *et al* (1998) differ from the bardic respect accorded to *Antiques Roadshow* experts, there are nonetheless parallels in the discursive distance between expertise and ordinariness. In partial contrast to this formal expertise of assessment and evaluation, the performance of know-how in *Antiques Road Trip* accords more with the approachability that Langer (1981: 356) ascribes to the “television personality”. In terms of performance, this is a characterization that opts for familiarity over the exceptional, and prefers ordinariness over extraordinariness. While experts across antiques programmes present forms of expert-celebrity, such that they are individuals that combine professional standing with considerable and on-going media visibility, *Antiques Road Trip* produces a form of expert-celebrity around an “ideology of intimacy” (Nunn and Biressi, 2010), joining specialist credibility with a claim to the authentic and the ordinary, including performances of “unpredictability and spontaneity” (Enli, 2015: 73).

It is one thing to understand the status of expert discourse and performance in these programmes, but in order to see how this is sustained and managed across different types of interaction, it is worth drawing upon Goffman’s notion of the “frame”. For Goffman (1986) the frame amounts to the underlying, context-specific rules of an exchange in a given setting; be it the purchase of a newspaper, a job interview or a light-hearted exchange of insults. However, far from an “engrossable” frame in which the participants do not reflect on the

terms of their involvement (Goffman, 1986: 346), this is a frame that foregrounds the skill of performance. As Goffman (1981) demonstrates in his work on radio talk, frames therefore offer an essential insight into the organisation of broadcast talk (Thornborrow, 2015). However, in the majority of broadcast discourse, the production of “fresh talk” – that is, talk which appears unrehearsed – requires what Goffman (1986) calls a “key” change (a shift in tone or stance, within the frame). Lorenzo-Dus (2009: 41) argues that fresh talk often offers a sideways glimpse of the “personal experience” of the speaker, aside from their professional function. However, across our examples the production of fresh talk from accomplished experts is at the very centre of the frame.

However, talking over the images of the competing experts, the voiceover provides a parallel frame of expertise in *Antiques Road Trip*, providing additional contextual and historical intelligence. This is provided by former Sotheby’s director and presenter of *Bargain Hunt*, Tim Wonnacott, and serves to anchor the regime of knowledge associated with the commercial exchange of antiques, as well as keying into moments of irony to remark on the style and performance of the competing experts. The off-camera voice of Wonnacott therefore produces an overarching layer of formal-expert input that enables the on-screen performers to emphasise their less punctilious type of authority, which remaining within the overall tone of the programme. For example, what follows is Wonnacott’s voiceover to accompany a scene in which an expert is browsing an antique shop’s stock:

Now he’s spotted a military object which has been pressed into use as an umbrella stand. It’s a charge carrier that would have been used to contain a cordite charge for an artillery weapon. These were made from the seventeen hundreds through to the twentieth century, although this is quite a late example. It’s priced up at a hundred and twenty-five pounds.  
(Extract 1)

The use of present tense, despite being added in the post-production phase, enhances the sense of now-ness. As with many second hand goods, the exact

purpose is not always clear and so here the commentary helpfully explains the possible use of this item (“pressed into use as an umbrella stand”) before going on to explain the history of such an object (“a charge carrier”) and its original use. Wonnacott glosses over the more precise details of this item and offers no explanation as to why this is “quite a late example”, leaving the terms of his expertise and knowledge implicit. While Wonnacott’s insights call upon a number of technical terms allied with a high degree of specificity (“it would have been used to contain a cordite charge”), these are softened by elements such as the hedged “quite a late example”, setting what Fairclough (1995) call as an “intertextual” discursive context for the display of knowledge. A close-up shot of the price tag is also voiced for us, the passive voice expression of “priced up” as an action rather than a quality of the object itself: an arbitrary act, the result of which is positioned as potentially reversible. As well as providing an authoritative commentary, the expert therefore functions as a provider of warrant for the negotiation to come.

### **Sociability: unthreatening expertise**

As indicated earlier, the representation of second hand goods as “antiques” links them to an established order of knowledge, which itself is articulated with notions of refinement and aspiration. Davidoff and Hall (1995) describe a long history of second hand goods being bought by the emergent middle classes. In Bourdieu’s terms (1984), such purchases seek to replicate the habitus of a more refined social world. In this way, greater prestige comes to be attached to certain goods over others, and with it, a higher price. This collocation of antiques with particular expressions of refinement is one that we can explore through the linguistic performance of many of the expert participants in *Antiques Road Trip*, where they employ infantilised lexical choices that are characteristic of an English upper class lexicon: “Oh that’s a fun thing”, and “That’s a sweet little dish”. While socially-laden, however, this is a manner of speaking that minimises threat. Both utterances are spoken by male participants but, in Lakoff’s (1975) terms, using typically feminine (and, by cultural convention, infantilised) adjectives.

However, if we look in more detail at the interactions between the expert shoppers and the shop owners, we will see that these affectations of refinement are geared towards the display of what can be referred to as “sociability”. Scannell’s (1996: 24) work on the early history and development of broadcasting is useful here, as he points out a tension between the interaction we would associate with private conversation and that crafted for pleasurable and diverting conversation in broadcasting. Added to this, Thornborrow (2015: 2) points to the play between “ordinary” and “expert” voices, as the production of fresh broadcast talk demands an increasing “variety of identities and range of performances”. We can begin to see the interactions between buyer and seller are for an overhearing audience need to be shaped in accord with the need for broadcast talk to appear as sociable.

In common with much other broadcast talk (Livingstone and Lunt, 1993), *Antiques Road Trip* produces an intensified version of “real” conduct, where tips on negotiation for viewers carry hyperbole and excessive drama associated with the performance of reality TV. As we will see, the enhanced performance of familiarity and humour produces the forms of exchange necessary for the communicative intention of the programme to provide an entertaining spectacle, but in a manner that meets its obligations towards broadcast sociability (Scannell, 1996). As well as the competing experts, there is a substantial performative element in the conduct of the sellers who, as we will see, are apparently willing to play along with underlying assumption that all prices are open to negotiation downwards. To refer to the norms of politeness outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987), this means the act of opening a negotiation neither threatens the “positive face” of the seller by maligning their professional honesty in setting a price, nor, in this peculiarly flexible retail environment, is it an act of impertinence that imperils the shop-owner’s “negative face” need to avoid impertinent imposition.

### **The performance of desire**

We have noted that one of the ways the contestants distance themselves from an overtly expert persona and foreground ordinariness, is the performance of authentic desire in the display of what Enli (2015: 137) marks out as “spontaneity”. The performance of the expert buyers is partly manifest in an expertise that is predicated on adherence to the body of knowledge necessary for the conduct of their job – and is a necessary component of the frame – but here projecting an emotional rather than coldly professional commitment. Albeit that the professional standing of the contestants adds a frisson of possible professional humiliation to the narrative structure of the show (where each episode ends with the goods being auctioned), this reputational peril further emphasizes the gulf in contextual status and understanding between the contestants and the “lay” audience. Partially to ensure this gap does not translate to a breach in audience’s capacity to empathize, we will see that the contestants combine their professional know-how with more prominent expressions of “ordinary” sociability.

However, we have noted the important role of the voiceover in providing an additional frame to comment on the interaction. In extract 2, we begin to see how these performances work in parallel with the programme voiceover by Tim Wonnacott discussed in the section above. For added emphasis, the voiceover is rendered in italics:

TP	You see ah I need something (1) to beat him with (1) thrash him with (2) not literally	1
VO	<i>Well let's hope not (1) (shots around shop) but a pretty object has caught Thomas's eye (holding vase)</i>	5
TP	I have a a real passion for Scandinavian things (.) and here we have (.) a piece of Royal Copenhagen and it's simply marvelous (.) (runs finger seductively down vase) just because of the design the style	10
VO	<i>Royal Copenhagen Porcelain has been a manufacturer of Danish porcelain since 1775 (.) this 1950s vase is priced at forty pounds (TP returns vase to shelf, shots of table and glasswear) (2) and that's not the only Scandinavian beauty Thomas has spotted (.) oh no</i>	15

TP	Oh! Didn't see this (picks up bowl and empties contents) (2) Hmmm (.) as a bit of a freak when it comes to these things (.) it says (.) Holmegaard Per Lutken (1) (taps bowl with finger) it's quite an (.) early (1) biomorphic bowl (close-ups of TP stroking the bowl)	20
VO	<i>Per Lutkin was a glass maker at the Danish glass factory Holmegaard (.) many of his designs are considered twentieth century classics (.5) this dates from round about 1955 (.) ticket price is at forty pounds.</i>	25

(Extract 2)

In the section above, we referred to the didactic frame of the voiceover, in providing added information and tactically engaging the present tense to legitimize or pour scorn on the on-going assessments of the competing experts. Producing claims to knowledge similar to that of the voiceover, the participants demonstrate their knowledge of the goods through an on-screen description and assessment of them. In Extract 2, we can see how the more overtly-expert voiceover by Tim Wonnacott (VO) speculates on expert Thomas Plant's (TP) plans ("well let's hope not", line 4), while working to affirm and elaborate on Plant's lighter expression of knowledge (lines 11-14, lines 21-25).

From the participant (TP), desire is exhibited in a combination of lexical choice and embodied performance, allied to a continual acknowledgement of the competitive frame of the programme. Competition is articulated with humour as Plant is shown walking around an antiques shop ostensibly talking to himself but in a manner that co-opts the overhearing audience as co-conspirators. In keeping the role of fresh talk as described by Lorenzo-Dus (2009), these are firmly anchored in the motivations of the individual. His opening utterance represents his competitiveness amplifying the metaphorical use of "beat" to the more violent "thrash" (line 1). With his "passion" to win made explicit on line 7, Plant then is shown prowling around the shop's stock, while Wonnacott's voiceover interprets the action on screen with an assessment of the vase Plant is holding as a "pretty object" (line 4). Plant's desire to win then shifts to an expression of love of the particular class of antique, where his admiration of a style of china is articulated as "a real passion" (line 5), illustrated by a shot of

Plant caressing the vase. It is at this point that Wonnacott's voiceover keys to a specialist footing, adding information about the object, including the less romantic matter of the price (lines 21-25).

Plant plays his own knowledge against a redirection of his passion towards self-depreciation. At times this is explicit and expressed as self-disclosure, such as his admission of being "a bit of a freak" (line 17). At other times it is less explicit, such as his glossing over the terms of his knowledge, coyly declaring the bowl to be "quite an early" example (line 19), without identifying the features that have enabled him to produce this judgement. Importantly for the hierarchy of expressive expertise, Plant's strategic modesty in expressing the specialist insight that enables him to assess the piece is embellished by the voiceover, which produces two extended turns offering more precise information on manufacturer, date and price, as well as validating Plant's self-confessed admiration for this style ("twentieth century classics", lines 23-24). In this way, the on-screen participants are given the space to express their skills, knowledge and passion for the objects, which are placed within a more formal discourse of knowledge in the post-production voiceover. Implicitly, this is also educating the viewers who, as potential shoppers, will in theory be better placed to identify a bargain themselves. The voiceover also reinforces the mood of the programme by offering a sexualized edge in pointing to Plant's interest in another "Scandinavian beauty" (line 14), also in keeping with Wonnacott's own ironic and mischievous tone.

### **The performance of flirtation**

We can see elements of a lightness of touch there, but with the voiceover able to act as arbiter of formal expertise and specialist knowledge, the exchanges in the programme take the main burden in the enactment of sociability. If we examine the on-screen interaction between buyer and seller, we can start to expand on the performances of expertise and enactments of passion that we have just explored above, directing sociability towards a particular form of popular expertise. As Bonner (2003: 192) has previously observed of the public

participants on *Antiques Roadshow*, the shop owners are expected to also “play along” with the terms of the show, and submit to the legitimacy of negotiation. To fully understand these interactions, we will call upon the vocabulary associated with flirtation. Our use of flirtation follows that of Eglund *et al* (1996: 107-108) who see this as a “positively valianced activity”, with, or in this case without, sexual intent. The benefit of flirtation in comparison with other interactional styles is its association with an exaggerated expression of passion, positive attraction and courtship, with the connotative potential to link the performance of passion with a set of positive politeness strategies.

However, flirtation is a hazardous endeavour. Indeed, Henningsen (2004) warns of the intentions behind flirtatious conduct being misinterpreted, and the “miscommunication” that may arise from playful rather than amorous flirting. In his discussion of frames and the performances therein, Goffman (1986: 50) stresses the care needed to avoid overstretching the interactive possibilities of a given frame and offering insult or menace. By way of guidance, Eglund (1996: 114) *et al* contrast the “stereotypical” flirtation motivated by the wish to initiate a sexual encounter, and the “conversational” flirtation we see in our examples, directed towards “positive reinforcement, expressiveness and supportiveness”. Conversational flirtation is therefore dedicated to maintaining positive face, while avoiding the hazards that stereotypical flirtation brings in threatening the negative face perils of threat and imposition. In our examples, the place of flirtation is also regulated by the means to engage in what Goffman (1986: 45) describes as “keying” within the frame, and switching from one constituent activity of the frame to another: in this case, from a flirtatious footing to one dedicated to negotiation.

So we can begin illustrating how conversational flirtation operates within the frame, and the place of keying, the following extracts are taken from an episode that features a male and a female expert buyer: Charlie Ross and Catherine Southon (CS). Extract 3 sees Ross (CR) interacting with shop owner, Samantha (S):

VO	<i>Charlie and Samantha are having a great time on the other hand (shots of CR and shop keeper laughing and larking about)</i>	1
CR	I've just seen a biscuit barrel here (1) which has got a (.) silver plated (.) top (.) cut glass body (.) not pressed glass which is nice (.) a particularly nice swing handle	5
VO	<i>Forerunners of our modern-day cookie jars (.) biscuit barrels have been popular for over two hundred years (.) this one was made by the Sheffield silversmiths (.) William Hutton and Sons in the early twentieth century (.) perfect for preventing your custard creams from drying out (.) if you like custard creams</i>	10
CR	The great thing is er Samantha doesn't have a price on this which (.) leads me to believe this is free with every purchase	
S	You t- you tell me what you would like to pay and I'll see	
CR	Oh no you d'you smack me	15
S	I could I could do	
CR	Do something really	
S	I could do	
CR	Saucy on that	
S	Ten pounds and it's yours	20
CR	(Expels air loudly and waggles glasses in amazement) Blimey you are making an old man's glasses steam up (.) here (1) can you really do that for a tenner	
S	(Laughing) I can	
CR	Samantha (holds out hand) let me kiss you again (kisses her hand – she blushes deeply) this is the most golden day of my life	25

(Extract 3)

Wonnacott's voiceover establishes the terms of the on-screen interaction of Ross and Samantha, as she laughs as Ross pulls faces and engages in a manneredly-flirtatious exchange of looks (during the delivery of line 1). Switching to direct address, Ross then speaks to camera on the merits of a glass biscuit barrel, his description reverting to his expert persona to express a preference for cut glass rather than cheaper pressed glass (line 4). The voiceover again intervenes in its didactic mode to offer contextual information about the object as well as maker details that are not otherwise clear on-screen (line 8), before a brief pause provides the bridge to key into a light-hearted address to the viewers and a perceived preference for a well-loved and old-fashioned variety of biscuit (lines 9-10). This humour, attached to direct address to viewers (indicated by the inclusive pronoun "you") extends the sociable tenor of the conversation into the commentary.

The scene develops into an exchange which demonstrates the qualities of positive politeness, with Ross's flirtatious mode of engagement reciprocated by Samantha, albeit without the overtly sexualized lexicon used by Ross. Samantha in particular acknowledges the playful status of their interaction as conversational flirtation diffusing Ross's declaration of attraction with laughter (line 24). This combination of exchange and play enhances the sociability of the text, while departing from the forms of ritualistic exchange associated with the more routine shopping experience.

This overt playfulness extends to a performed disregard for the norms of professional practice associated with the area of expertise. The absence of a price tag on this object leads to Ross turning to address the camera, albeit well within hearing distance of Samantha, to flout the maxim of quality and professional competence by hypothesizing that the biscuit barrel might be free (line 12). Samantha plays along with what amounts to an implied invitation to commence negotiation by inviting Ross to name a suitable price (line 13). Ross's response to being accorded the power of determining the starting price is to sidestep this professional function and bluster and talk over Samantha, pretending fear that she might physically assault him (line 15), conceding truthfulness to the imperatives of humour. Rather than undertaking the necessary function of directing Samantha towards a price, this stretch of speech is instead used by Ross to elaborate on a double entendre around "smack" as "something really saucy" (lines 17-20). When Samantha is finally given the floor to deliver the price, his apparent surprise at such a reasonable amount is manifest in a comedic performance of being overheated and sexually aroused, while foregrounding the unthreatening status of his conduct by emphasizing the age difference between Ross and Samantha ("you are making an old man's glasses steam up" lines 21-22). The flirtatious conceit continues as they close the deal, Ross kissing Samantha's hand and employing comic exaggeration to underline his regard for the seller and her generosity ("this is the most golden day of my life" line 25). Expressed in a light-hearted footing, these are offered as gestures not just of affection, but of vulnerability. As well as involving a performance of professional naivety, the dependence of the negotiations on

regard for the seller over the object of sale offers a comedic risk of rejection or rebuke.

As the extract above has begun to show, the accessibility of the flirtatious frame is also apparent in the scope for other interactants, such as shop owners and sellers, to temporarily engage in some of its components. In the following extract shows, expert Catherine Southon (CS) engages in a performance of flirtation with shop owner Les (L) in order to secure a more reasonable price in the same episode, striking a different balance of power:

CS	Charlie	1
CR	Look here comes Miss Southon	
L	Good morning	
CS	I've got my high heels on (.) hello (Les clasps hands)	
L	A pleasure to meet you	5
CS	Oh move out of the way Charlie I'm moving in (stands close to owner who is still holding her hand)	
CR	Les is now going to give me none of his time whatsoever (.) it's all about Southon	
CS	(CS being led away by L) Bye bye Charlie we've made friends	10
CR	I can see you are going to have a cracking time (shakes head at camera)	
VO	<i>Now whilst Charlie has a little browse-about (.) Catherine has already spotted something she likes</i>	
CS	I like your little Georgian pipe box	15
L	Yes (.) how much do we have written on that	
CS	Quite a lot	
L	Well have you seen another one	
CS	No	
L	Well it isn't too much money then	20
CS	Two hundred and twenty pounds it's got on	
L	That is obviously a misprint (.) I expect I meant to put a hundred and fifty on it don't you think	
CS	Oh I would hope e- even less than that	
L	Cos I like you and I want you to beat that old rascal chap in there (leans in) a hundred and thirty quid and it's yours there you are (.) now how can I go any better than that	25
CS	Any chance of tucking it under a hundred	
L	Final offer (.) one twenty	
CS	I'm very tempted at hundred pounds	30
VO	<i>That's one for Catherine to mull over</i>	

(Extract 4)

This scene opens with both Ross and Southon shopping in the same antiques shop, with owner and male seller Les in attendance. Ross entered the shop first, and this extract begins with Southon's arrival a few seconds later. Ross initially addresses an imaginary third party within hearing distance of the subject: "Miss Southon" (line 2). Southon diffuses the apparent formality in her being named by title and surname, indirectly excusing her tardiness with a general implicature (Terkouafi, 2001) ("I've got my high heels on" line 4), which serves to emphasise Southon's femininity and distinguishes her from the two tweed-clad older men. In keeping with the flirtatious footing of the two contestants, this is immediately interpreted as indicative of the solidarity and intimacy of a close heterosexual friendship and an opportunity for seller Les to enter into the frame by grasping Southon's proffered hand (line 4). Southon proceeds on the basis she has charmed Les ("Oh move out of the way Charlie, I'm moving in", line 6), moving on the basis of an assumption that Ross pretends acknowledgement of in line 8 when again he addresses the camera, this time pretending coldness between himself and his competitor by referring to her only by her surname ("It's all about Southon", line 9). Southon is then shown being led away by Les, who is still holding on to her hand, which Southon interprets using the suggestive euphemism "making friends".

Despite her flirtatious performance, Southon is nevertheless able to shift footing. On spotting a desirable item (line 15), she keys from flirtation to negotiation. After Southon assesses the initial price with the purposively understated "quite a lot" (line 17), Les attempts to defend the cost by pointing out the unique qualities of the item. Sustaining the negotiator position, Southon reads out the price without engaging in the individual merits of the item (line 19), to which Les rearticulates his strategy by claiming a mistake in pricing that reduces the price by £70. When this is implicitly refused by Southon (line 24), Les resumes the flirtatious nature of their earlier interaction by inferring it is in his power to enable her to win the competition, describing Southon's rival Ross in a comedic trope of upper class speech as "that old rascal chap" (line 25). After Southon's refusal, employing the informal "tuck under" to request a further reduction to £100, Les engages the lexicon of negotiation while continuing to embody a

flirtatious footing by responding with a “final offer” of £120 while holding onto Southon’s hand, which again Southon rejects through the suggestive mental process verb of being “tempted” by her own valuation. The scene ends there, with Wollacott’s voiceover reassuring viewers that the bargaining has not yet finished.

After an undisclosed time in the shop, Southon finally gets round to making her purchases. When she does this, we can clearly see the work involved in keying between negotiation and flirtation (extract 5):

L	You can kiss me hand (CS feigns kissing hand) that will do now don’t get carried away (stands with arm around CS still holding her hand)	1
CS	Right (.) so I’m having (.) I think I’m going to have your pipe box	5
L	Yes	
CS	I think I’m going to have your Punch	10
L	Yes	
CS	Well we’ve agreed on the Punch	15
L	Yes we have	
CS	There’s no going back (.) your baskets	20
L	Yes (.) I’ll tell you what I’ll do (.) ninety quid (shot of pipe box)	
CS	Yes (.) for the box	20
L	Fifteen (pointing)	
CS	For the Punch	20
L	Thirty five (.) (turns to face her and holds both her hands) and I’ll tell you what (pats hands) I’ll throw in the Stanhope for you for twenty five pounds (.) how about that	
CS	Lovely (.) you are completely gorgeous	20
L	Oh sweetiepie I wouldn’t go that far	
VO	<i>Nor would I (.) after of discount of three hundred and twenty pounds though perhaps I might (1) (shots of purchases) Catherine’s gone wild and spent a grand total of a hundred and sixty five pounds concluding her shopping</i>	20

(Extract 5)

As an acknowledgement of the conversational status of the flirtation, Les produces a performance of limiting Southon to kissing his hand, playfully warning of Southon becoming overly enamoured and getting “carried away” (line 2). Marking her shift to a negotiation footing with “right” (line 4), Southon then recites her list of potential purchases to which Les responds with prices that are considerably lower than the ticket prices we have seen earlier, while

sustaining the holding of hands in a physical marker of intimacy. Southon realizes the extent of her good fortune in securing considerable discount and reverts to flirtatious mode by telling Les he is “completely gorgeous” (line 18). Les downplays the intention of this remark by disaffiliating from its accuracy (“I wouldn’t go that far”, line 19), having sustained the conceit by referring to Southon again as “sweetiepie” (line 19). It falls to Wonnacott’s voiceover to emphasise the scale of the discount Southon has achieved, and also to use this as to ameliorate the terms of the flirtatious behaviour by agreeing with Len’s disaffiliation (“Nor would I”, line 20).

We can therefore see the role that flirtation occupies in distancing the activities of the contestants from the discourses of expertise, which predominate in the commentary and providing a resource in shaping a popular form of expertise. From the exchange between Les and Southon, it is also clear the extent to which flirtation develops as a tactical activity (England *et al*, 1999), where the shopkeeper Les, primed by the initial tone established by expert Ross, maintains a flirtatious stance throughout the exchanges with Southon. Within this, we can also see that all participants call upon occasional concessions to diminish interpretations of the exchanges as sexually-motivated, often to key into the negotiation component of the frame. However, it is also apparent how the components of the frame work in tandem, enabling Southon to engage in strategic keying out of a flirtatious persona, or to use the discourse of sexualized conversation to produce potential face-threatening acts of rejection in negotiation.

## **Conclusions**

As we have noted above, antiques shows are increasingly being mixed with the game show format. The BBC’s attempt to exploit public interest in antiques in a quiz show failed when *Antiques Master* was cancelled after two series in 2011. This was a show in which ordinary members of the public competed to identify and value objects; engaging with what Thornborrow (2015) identifies as a shift towards public participation, but lacking the drama and humour of other

antiques-based formats. *Antiques Road Trip* produces this sense of ordinariness, but concentrated in the discourse of the competing experts; offering viewers not only a chance to witness the search for antiques, but to see that there are a number of different ways in which prices can be arrived at. The performance imperatives of broadcast discourse undoubtedly emphasize the performances of flirtation and desire and it would be unconventional for any member of the public to attempt to woo shop owners who are otherwise strangers in the way we see here. Nor might a shop owner be willing to negotiate substantial discounts under normal circumstances, were they away from the cameras.

While these forms of performance are novel in their articulation with expertise, they are commonplace in media more broadly. Skeggs (2010: 75) describes such heightened emotional gesturing as that we see above in terms of the “affective” excess of melodrama. Couldry and Littler (2011) also point out the manipulation of “emotional commitment” in reality TV formats, not just to intensify any affective relations the audience may feel with the participants, but also to further the relations of power and economic drive of the format.

The projection of expertise in popular broadcasting is a matter of on-going concern. In line with the concerns of Fenton *et al* (1998), Lorenzo-Dus (2009: 119) reflects on the entertainment value in provoking “experts” to lose their composure on television and submit to raw conflict. In this article, we see the performance of a loss of composure of a far less rancorous sort. This involves the engagement of particular performative frames on the part of the experts. These frames of engagement contrast with the conventions of cultural expertise exhibited in advice-based antiques programmes, and are geared towards popular expertise and the pleasures of interaction. In a development of the shift described by Turner (2010) across the media landscape, what we may see is an articulation between expert and non-expert modes of performance that accord with broader shifts towards the popular in broadcasting.

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