

BOOK REVIEWS

IN/EQUALITY: An Alternative to Anthropology. 2nd edition. Pem Davidson Buck. Palo Cedro, CA: CAT Publishing Inc., 2010. viii +229 pp. (Paper US\$36.00)

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This is a significant addition to the market for textbooks introducing core ideas and central concepts in cultural anthropology, and showcasing best practices in critical analysis. Choosing a textbook is one of a university teacher's primary dilemmas. Many introductory textbooks arrive in our mailboxes as review copies or instructor's editions—often with glossy covers, pretty pictures, and colorful side boxes summarizing key issues. Which textbook is the best choice? Is there a clear choice? Do the choices meet the demands of familiarizing undergraduates, both anthropology majors and students having other academic homes or interests—with core concepts and methods in rigorous and critical yet accessible ways? Pem Buck's book is literally a black-and-white (as in no glossy pictures), down to earth exposition of questions, definitions, and perspectives that challenges the status quo—or what she calls "learned ignorance" (p. 19)—while offering students a model to do the same.

Buck provides readers with a "new pair of glasses" (p. 1) to see how a decolonized anthropology and an engaged anthropology link knowing and doing, thereby enhancing awareness of culture and social organization as factors that produce inequality and equality locally as well as globally. She argues that introductory textbooks tend to ignore or underrepresent the significance of this perspective on culture and social organization for critical analysis. Yet, the perspective is necessary, she maintains, to build a decolonized anthropology, which seeks to reverse the impact of the discipline's historical associations with colonial expansion and conquest. It is also necessary to pursue an engaged anthropology, whose practitioners

participate in people's lives as they seek to understand and find solutions for the underlying causes of problems confronting them on a community level.

Buck challenges readers by modeling new ways of asking questions and looking at every aspect of culture and social organization. She uses two main approaches. First, she carefully defines an extensive vocabulary for talking about how a given society actively creates conditions of equality/inequality. This vocabulary appears in the page margins throughout the book, but is also usefully assembled in a glossary at the end. Second, Buck directly states her intentions: namely, to underscore and critique the roles played by constructed core components of culture and social organization in the systematic making of specific kinds of social relations—egalitarian or stratified, and in a family, community, or nation-state. Her main examples of these core components are religion, language, kinship, household/gender roles, race, modes of production, and political and economic organization.

In chapter 1, "A New Pair of Glasses," and chapter 2, "Imperialism, Colonialism, and Neocolonialism," Buck not only states her book's goals and objectives, but also gives easy-to-understand definitions for several familiar terms: ethnocentrism, exploitation, race, racism, sexism, ethnic groups, class/class bias, ideology, and fieldwork. Moreover, she defines new terms and concepts that introductory texts typically omit. Examples include "double vision" (p. 16), "expropriation" (p. 32), "internal colonialism" (p. 36), "dying wages" (p. 39), "company colonies" and "labor reserve area" (p. 43), "dependent development" (p. 51), "the Global North" (p. 53), "liberation theology" (p. 57), and "structural violence" (p. 66). Buck presents all terms and concepts from an applied perspective highlighting their relevance for knowing, understanding, and changing the societies and communities in which we live.

Chapter 3, "Equality and Inequality: Underlying Principles," is Buck's most thought-provoking chapter. She expounds without apology her main critique of stratification as a system of exploitation

in state-based societies, while describing in detail other options for organizing society. She boldly states: “[S]tratifed societies don’t represent progress for the majority of people in them in terms of human well-being. They are much better ... at creating wealth for a few” (p. 72). Debunking the equation of egalitarian societies with primitive ways of life, Buck posits a framework for seeing egalitarian societies and stratified societies as learned states and ways of being, and analyzes systems, structures, and processes that make both types of society possible by directing and regulating behavior. Throughout the chapter, she privileges egalitarian societies as valued forms of social organization that make visible important ideas about human behavior and equality/equitable treatment. This characteristic of egalitarian societies, Buck argues, is often misrepresented or ignored in textbooks emphasizing the significance of stratified state-based societies for human progress. Here, she once again defines and applies terms—for instance, “leveling device” (p. 83) and “stratified redistribution” (p. 91)—that build readers’ vocabularies and help them understand the construction of systems of equality and inequality within a society.

In chapter 4, “Factoring in Gender,” and chapter 5, “Factoring in Race, Caste, and Class,” Buck uses a discussion of modes and means of production to demonstrate how powerholders manipulate social constructs to maintain and advance systems of exploitation. In chapter 6, “Maintaining Stratification,” Buck reviews powerholders’ systematic efforts to control society and ensure that people accept, maintain, and reproduce stratification. Finally, in chapter 7, “Globalization: The Return of Empire,” is a call to arms. Buck urge readers to remain vigilant, to apply anthropological knowledge consciously, to use new-found glasses to see things differently, and recognize the production of inequality in all of its forms, traditional or emergent, such as “globalized empire” making (p. 193) in which wealth flows to the Global North’s elites and upper middle classes.

Pem Buck believes that things can change and her book helps readers to see what needs to be changed, along with the implications of making those changes on a community level in the context of globalization. *IN|EQUALITY: An Alternative Anthropology* is an alternative to conventional textbooks in both content and presentation. Whether teachers agree with Buck’s approach or disagree with her audacious disruption of seemingly benign presentations of ever-growing lists of

terms, concepts, and definitions in introductory cultural anthropology courses, this book merits careful consideration in conjunction with or instead of more conventional textbooks. Their students will find it an instructive tool for developing another way to look at and question what they take for granted.

Race, Place and Globalization: Youth Culture in a Changing World. Anoop Nayak. Oxford, UK, and New York, NY: Berg Publishers (distributed by New York University Press), 2003. ix + 208 pp. (Cloth US\$109.00; Paper US\$42.95)

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Paul Willis’s monumental ethnography of British working-class youth, *Learning to Labor* (Willis 1977), helped to foster contemporary Critical Youth Studies, a still rapidly growing field. The seminal work evinces how young working-class males actively produce, with a degree of creativity and resistance, cultural forms and practices that influence the development of their own subjectivities. This cultural production is not entirely autonomous, such that ideologies embedded in working-class culture (writ large) find their way into youth culture. Instead, Willis argues, youth draw specifically from the shop floor culture of manual laborers, which made sense given limited future possibilities—the likelihood that young men would become manual laborers themselves. Unfortunately, many shop floor cultural values sustain racism and sexism, requiring youth participants to shape identities in direct opposition to immigrants and women. However, the values are necessary to produce subjectivities that include feeling superior to non-manual laborers, which results, Willis maintains, in high self-esteem or self-worth among working-class youth.

In *Race, Place and Globalization*, Anoop Nayak directly answers a puzzling question raised by Willis’s study: with the disappearance of manufacturing in de-industrialized societies, how do working-class youth produce their masculine identities without the shop floor’s influence?