

BOSTON UNIVERSITY ANTHROPOLOGY GRADUATE LUNCH SERIES

Revisiting 'The Giving Environment': or, Feeding Nayaka Children & English Readers



Nurit Bird-David

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Friday, March 28

12:30-2:00

PLS 102 (Anthropology
Seminar Room)

Dr. Bird-David examines relational child feeding in the Nayaka forest-world and problematize the concept of 'nurturing' which interferes with understanding it. Essentialist and individualist antecedents of 'nurturing', she suggests, conflate child feeding with a one-way, up-down transfer of food; with training, controlling and loving the children; and with rearing them to grow up and separate from their parents. This conflation obscures the Nayaka relational senses which are embedded in an ontology of living-together and frame child feeding as an instance of sharing between coevals who remain closely related throughout their lives. Dr. Bird-David also contributes a relational perspective to the study of children among forest-dweller hunter-gatherers. Methodologically, the talk makes a case for a duplex ethnography that pays attention not only to the subjects of study but also to the relevant key notions in the language in which the ethnography is written as a means of limiting the latter's own inherent ontological biases.

Dr. David-Bird's research combines new empirical findings drawn from extensive fieldwork and theoretical explorations of central themes in contemporary anthropology. On the basis of fieldwork among the hunter-gatherer Nayaka in India (1978-9, 1989, 2001), Dr. Bird-David formulated original perspectives on hunter-gatherers, contributing to central debates in mainstream anthropology, including critical and reflexive attention to core analytical concepts.!

A light lunch will be provided.

Please RSVP to Mark at 353-2195 or email him at palmerm@bu.edu, if you wish to attend.