

Click and Kin has traceable academic underpinnings in many disciplines, including and especially anthropology, media studies, and philosophy. Inasmuch, it may also be useful as an introductory humanities studies text for liberal-arts undergraduates—particularly those who have yet to choose a major. It also has inherent potential benefits for longtime academics seeking an updated, more complete understanding of what is happening in our world—this increasingly networked, transnational world—today.

Doulas and Intimate Labor: Boundaries, Bodies and Birth

Angela N. Casteñeda and Julie Johnson Searcy, Editors
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2015

REVIEWED BY ARA FRANCIS

This edited collection is the most comprehensive account of birth doulas in the academic literature to date. Looking closely at the relational and intimate dimensions of doulas' labor, the chapters cover a broad spectrum of experiences, including those of abortion, adoption, and radical doulas. The book is rare in its depth. Editors Angela N. Casteñeda and Julie Johnson Searcy are practicing doulas, as well as anthropologists, and most of the contributing authors have similarly impressive, multifaceted backgrounds as scholars, doulas, midwives, labor and delivery nurses, childbirth educators, and lactation consultants. Informed by so much lived experience, the volume offers an insider's perspective and allows the reader to glimpse into spaces that are so often closed to scholars. This volume thus makes an invaluable contribution to our understanding of doulas' work.

Organized into three sections, the book begins with an exploration of doulas and the mothers they serve. Here authors review and unpack the evidence that doulas improve birth outcomes; reiterate how a doula's role is to follow the mother, rather than guide her; discuss how doulas can help women, and themselves, reclaim their bodies from dominant cultural narratives of thinness and worth; and considers how doulas assist adolescent mothers and mothers relinquishing babies for adoption. The sixth chapter by Amy L. Gilliland, "Doulas as Facilitators of Transformation and Grief," is a particularly strong contribution, offering lengthy excerpts from the author's interviews with forty-three doulas and thirty-three parents.

The volume's second section considers doulas in the broader context of

their communities. Two analytically sharp chapters, Nicole C. Gallicchio's "What Kind of Doula Are You? Birth Doulas, Multiple Moralities, and the Processes and Politics of Ethical Becoming" and the volume editors' "My Role is to Walk the Tightrope': Doulas and Intimacy," render this segment particularly appealing for scholars in anthropology and sociology. Gallicchio explores how communities of doulas informally regulate newcomers, encouraging them to master and set aside their own strong emotions and ideological commitments in order to prioritize the needs of birthing women. Casteñeda and Searcy use the metaphor of the "tightrope" to address the delicacy of doulas' boundary work as they seek to establish intimacy (but not too much intimacy) with their clients and to balance their intimate labor with the demands of professionalism and the marketplace.

Focusing on doulas and institutions, the volume's third section includes Annie Robinson and Lauren Mitchell's excellent chapter on The Doula Project, a full-spectrum doula organization in New York City. Here the reader gains an appreciation for the more revolutionary possibilities embedded in the doula orientation to care. The Doula Project partners with institutions, rather than working for individual clients, and their volunteer doulas work with women "across the spectrum of pregnancy choices, including during abortions, miscarriages, stillbirth inductions, adoption planning, and births for low-income individuals" (188). Part of a reproductive justice movement—distinct, in important ways, from the natural birth movement—The Doula Project advocates for a woman's right to birth alternatives, no matter her social location or pregnancy outcome. Monica Basile further explores this ethos in her chapter "Reimagining the Birthing Body: Reproductive Justice and New Directions in Doula Care." She explains how reproductive justice doulas go beyond addressing the medicalization of childbirth to recognize the structural forces that profoundly limit some women's ability to control "when and if they have children, how they give birth, the extent to which they are able to provide for their children, and even their children's survival" (227-28).

These rich, often first-hand accounts might leave some scholars wanting a more distanced, critical analysis of doulas' work, particularly vis-à-vis bigger questions about post-modern life, semi-professional caregiving, and the historically- and culturally-specific meanings of doula's emotional labor. Nonetheless, *Doulas and Intimate Labor* is a pivotal text for anyone doing research in this area. The volume is also of tremendous value to doulas, doula educators, reproductive rights advocates, and pregnant women who are seeking a deep but varied look at doulas' work and its transformative potential.