

*Midwives* concludes by delving into many reasons why midwifery needs to be maintained as both a vital, growing profession and a social movement.

*Mainstreaming Midwives* veers from the theoretical in-depth nature of *Obstructed Labour*, providing the reader with a useful and highly descriptive overview of many of the issues facing midwives and alternative birth communities in the US today. The work is at its strongest when examining the impacts of having a fractionalized movement, exploring the tensions between a need for movement unity while also maintaining space for differences in midwifery philosophy and practice. While this book does provide a useful overview of the American midwifery movement, there are also areas in *Mainstreaming Midwives* that are somewhat concerning. In general, there is a lack of attention to issues of diversity and several authors throughout the book make use of the term "woman" or "womankind" without problematizing these generalizing terms. To argue that midwifery benefits "womankind" does not allow for a thoughtful analysis of the varying degrees of marginalization and privilege among groups of women, including women who practise as midwives and those who access (and do not access) midwifery services.

My biggest criticism of *Mainstreaming Midwives* (and this is a problem that occurs throughout the work) is that surprisingly little respect is offered for women who choose more traditional birth options. A few (of many) examples of this occur as one author makes an offensive reference to "counterfeit birth" (414), and the editors note in their conclusion that they "believe that midwives should become the primary caregivers for most American women throughout pregnancy and birth" (508). While it seems clear that their positioning midwifery care as a superior birthing option comes from a place of genuine caring about women's birth experiences, this anthology tends to paint an overwhelmingly singular picture about medical/hospital births, as well as to

denigrate the choices of women who choose not to use midwifery care for their birth experiences. This is both ironic and distressing, given the propensity of midwifery rhetoric to hold up women's "choices" as one of the most important elements to the midwifery model of care.

While overall I'd say that *Mainstreaming Midwives* is a generally informative read, I believe that the midwifery movement is better served by trying to argue for a greater range in birth choices for women, rather than attempting to make decisions on women's behalf.

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***Sick Building Syndrome and the Problem of Uncertainty: Environmental Politics, Technoscience, and Women Workers.***

Michelle Murphy. Durham: Duke University Press, illustrations; 2006; x+253 pages; ISBN 0-8223-3671-5; \$21.95US (paper).

This book examines the modern office building and the history of sick building syndrome (SBS), which by the 1990s was the most commonly investigated occupational health problem in the United States. Murphy defines SBS as a post-modern problem: a syndrome with "a diversity of ill health effects, mostly minor and associated with a building, for which no specific cause was found" (6). Using a Foucauldian framework, each thematic chapter examines the different but entwined histories and practices through which buildings and bodies are connected, including ventilation engineering, building design, feminist activism, popular epidemiology, government policy, ecology and corporate science, to bring together the complex discourses that name and define SBS and the uncertainty that is borne out from these multiple histories.

Murphy provides a concise history of women's office work in the United States, including a detailed examination of the women office workers' movement of the 1970s and 1980s. This history of women's

activism and the use of popular epidemiological methods and feminist consciousness raising to expose women's experiences of occupational health hazards is particularly engaging. It is brought to the modern day in the final chapter through Murphy's excellent analysis of discourses surrounding multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS) and the fragmented MCS movement occurring in Internet chat rooms, support groups and other "informal cells" where groups work to define and explain what biomedicine has thus far labeled undefinable and imaginary. As someone interested primarily in women's health, I found these to be the most engaging portions of the book. However, this is not to take away from the very thorough and important exploration of the history of other sites which contributed to the uncertain nature of SBS. Murphy's examination of the physical space of the modern office is particularly important since this workplace is where many North American workers spend their days.

This book is written primarily for an academic audience and would be most useful for advanced students of historical studies of labour and science, environmental studies and women's studies. It would also be of interest to those in labour, public health and government who wish to better understand the historical forces and complex confluence of factors contributing to SBS/MCS and their status in both healthcare and the workplace.

Like the problem itself, this book is complex. Murphy handles the complexity well and the book is detailed, rich and unfolds nicely. The engaging prose made me think about lurking bacteria, moulds and insects and had me questioning the bright yellow asbestos warning stickers on the walls of my office. It should be noted that Murphy deftly avoids answering the question "Is it real?" and instead forces the reader to consider how both SBS and MCS are constructed through a collection of contested and uncertain discourses which challenge how much is known about

environmental exposures and human health.

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***The Cell Phone: An Anthropology of Communication.*** Heather A. Horst and Daniel Miller. Oxford: Berg Publisher; ix+211 pages; ISBN 1-84520-401-8; \$29.95US (paper).

The rise of the cell phone has fostered a radical change in Third World communication possibilities by offering a new means of communication to populations historically deprived of land lines and Internet access. *The Cell Phone: An Anthropology of Communication* presents the results of an ethnographic study on the impact of the cell phone on two low-income Jamaican communities over the course of a year. The project was funded by the British Department for International Development as part of a broader initiative to study the potential of the cell phone for participating in development. The study examines the economic assumption that the cell phone alleviates poverty through contributing to Gross Domestic Product and income generation.

Weaving through an analysis of the telecommunications market in Jamaica with interviews and questionnaires, the study shows that the importance of the cell phone does not result from a single economic, technological or social factor, but combines state regulation of the market, technology and people's choice (164). The study highlights the popularity and importance of the cell phone for low-income Jamaican communities through analyses of its presence in areas of crime, health, education, sexual relationships, transnational relationships and in sustaining and extending social networks and solving personal crises. In particular, Horst and Miller describe how the cell phone participates in the maintenance of large social networks through short phone conversations. Such a practice of "link-up"