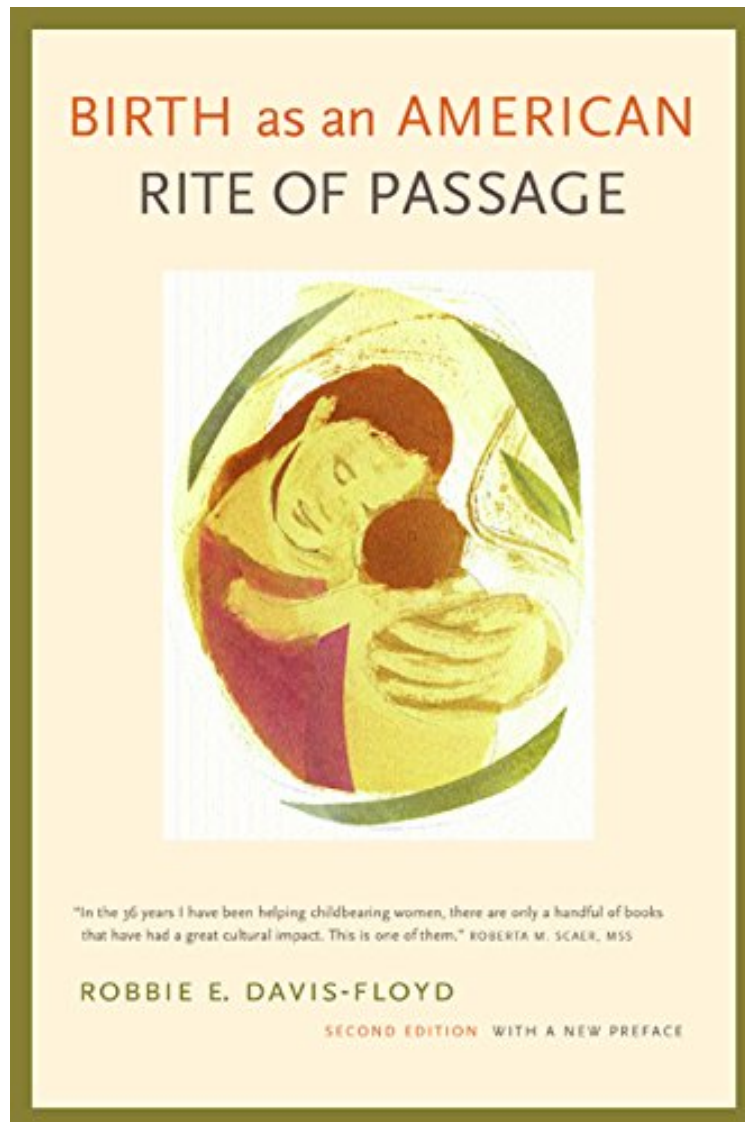


Birth as an American Rite of Passage

Robbie E. Davis-Floyd
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Robbie E. Davis-Floyd : Birth as an American Rite of Passage before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Birth as an American Rite of Passage:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Exploration of the Culture of Birth in America!By Pam Y, CST-DTruthfully, I am not sure I would have bought this book if it hadn't been a required reading for a certification in Pre and PeriNatal Education. However, once I started reading it, I was truly so happy with the information and the author's format for presentation that I now have a second copy! One I can travel with for presentations, and one in my

home (office). While it might be a bit slow in the beginning, everything presented prepares one for the later material - the result of her painstaking interviews. Having never studied anthropology (3 university degrees - how did I avoid that?), I was unsure of what I would find. Very thoroughly researched and documented, BIRTH... presents information that would not otherwise be available to those of us in the birthing position - meaning, giving birth - nor those of us in advocacy or caring for birthing families. She clearly establishes her thesis and then slowly and methodically unwraps the evidence. However, this is not a manifesto! the author is always inclusive and respectful of women and their chosen and unchosen experiences giving birth. Truly, I am changed from reading this book. I have a deeper understanding of the birth of each of my sons and I am better prepared when talking with moms and dads at all stages of the birth journey. In addition, as I complete a certification in Pre and Peri Natal Education, this book has provided me the opportunity to be in the liminal space (which the author clarifies) in a sense - not advocating this or that - but being with the mother/father/child in what they want/wanted and experience/d. For anyone in the pregnancy and childbirth arena, this is a must-read. 10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Everyone should read this book. By Christopher R. Travers. Ok, I'm feeling a little self-conscious being the first male reviewer of this book on , but here it is. Everyone should read this book, male or female, American or not, whatever. This book will change the way you look not only at childbirth but at the medical profession and society as a whole. It's a fascinating read. Most of the book is applicable throughout most of the world. Pregnant women of course will get out of this a social critique regarding the approaches to childbirth in hospitals, how these support and ensure the continuation of patriarchy in our society, etc. Women who are not pregnant will gain from it a different sense of modern medicine and society as a whole. Men are likely to be confronted with a great deal of information about the nature of culture and things we take for granted all the time. In the end, this is a solid piece of anthropology, and moreover it does well what women's studies are supposed to do: provide a new angle over well-trodden ground which explores the cultural contradictions regarding gender roles in modern society. This is not a book full of laments of lost prestige (as stereotypes might lead one to presume), but rather a careful, reasoned critique of how our culture operates and how this is intensified during the childbirth process. It further explores why so many women accept and embrace patriarchy in childbirth. More to the point, this book will challenge how you look at health care more generally and its relationship to societal values. Highly recommended. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. I really liked the work. By Claire Martin. This book offers really great insight into what happens when technology and pregnancy meet in American culture as well as to the responses to the American technocratic approach to childbirth. I really liked that she included doctor's perspectives, giving the reader a look at both sides of the coin. She explored not only women who felt victimized by their experiences in hospitals, but also women who felt empowered by the same experiences. To her shock, she found that more women actually feel safer and more comfortable with a highly technocratic birth and she examines why this might be. The book was very insightful but I found some slow chapters in the middle of the book that seemed to result from saying the same things over and over. I also constantly found myself amazed at some of the experiences of women in hospitals and asking myself if this information is still relevant today considering this book was written in 1992 and a lot of her research was dated in the late 80s. Never the less, it is a great recent history of childbirth in American hospitals. The attitudes of the doctors and women interviewed for this work surely continue to reflect, in many ways, the attitudes still held today considering it wasn't THAT long ago. I recommend this book to women who plan to have their baby in a hospital because I think that it will serve to inform and as a result empower. If you seek to stay in control of your body and the birth of your child, this book would offer much insight. For women who do not want to have their children in the hospital, well, this book will only confirm why you feel that way.

Why do so many American women allow themselves to become enmeshed in the standardized routines of technocratic childbirth--routines that can be insensitive, unnecessary, and even unhealthy? Anthropologist Robbie Davis-Floyd first addressed these questions in the 1992 edition. Her new preface to this 2003 edition of a book that has been read, applauded, and loved by women all over the world, makes it clear that the issues surrounding childbirth remain as controversial as ever.

From Library Journal Davis-Floyd has written a brilliant feminist analysis of childbirth rites of passage in American culture. These rites, she argues, take away women's power over their bodies, naturally designed to bring life into the world, and for no physiological reason give it to the medical system. She believes that society, intimidated by women's ability to give birth, has designed obstetrical rituals that are far more complex than natural childbirth itself in order to deliver what is from nature into culture. "In this way," she writes, "society symbolically demonstrates ownership of its product." This beautiful book, full of insightful interviews with women on a range of birth experiences and with an extensive bibliography, is a wonderful addition to the growing literature on the anthropology of the body and the theoretical debates over mind/body and nature/culture dichotomies. Essential for all anthropology and women's studies collections and medical school libraries and highly recommended for public libraries. - Patricia Sarles, Mt. Sinai Medical Ctr. Lib., New York Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. "[Davis-Floyd] is a respectful listener who has encouraged her subjects to speak honestly about a complex experience. Consequently, even skeptical readers

of the fascinating stories she has gathered should be prompted to reflect on the meaning of their own or their partners' experience of birth. . . . I admire, without reservation, the generous, critical, passionate spirit that animates this book."-- Sara Ruddick, "New York Times Book "From the Inside Flap" I can say without hesitation that in the 36 years I have been helping childbearing women, there is only a handful of books that have had a great cultural impact. This is one of them."Roberta M. Scaer, Editor of Genesis