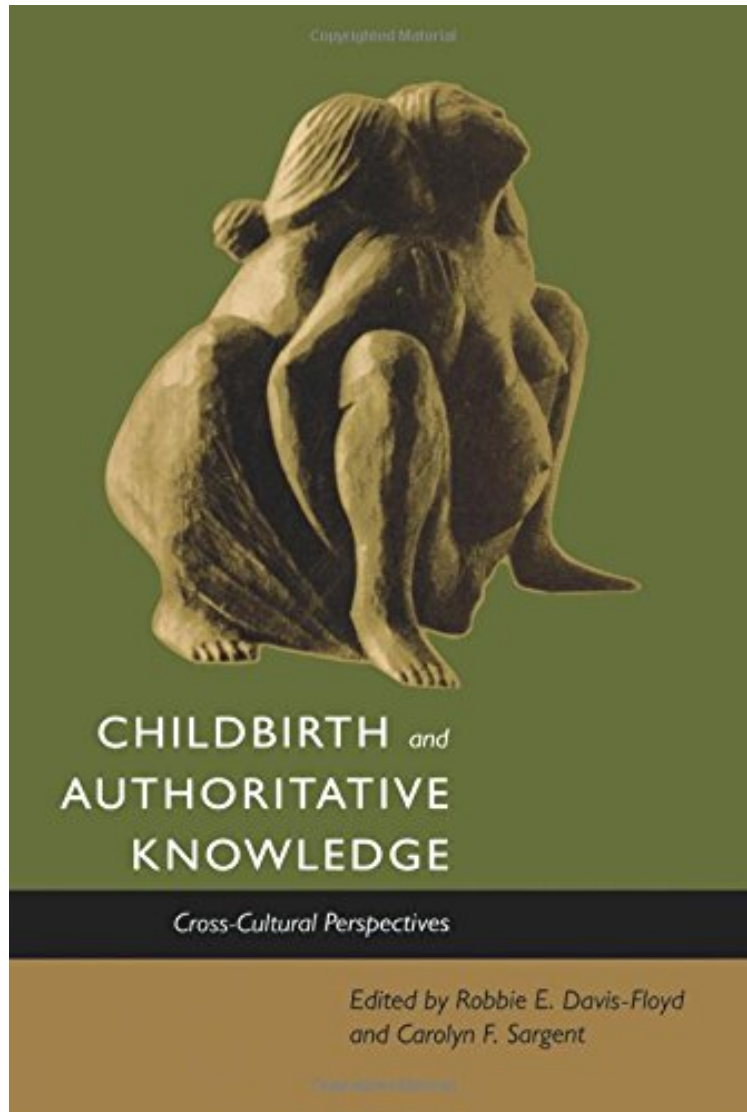


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Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Robbie E. Davis-Floyd, Carolyn F. Sargent
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Robbie E. Davis-Floyd, Carolyn F. Sargent : Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge: Cross-Cultural Perspectives before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge: Cross-Cultural Perspectives:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Mind-expanding By Jeri K. Gunderson Great book!!! Broadens one's perspectives . Confirms others. Met my study needs. I really love knowing how people put their worlds together. 45 of

45 people found the following review helpful. out of the (US dominated) box look at pregnancy and birth By Kathy Gardner This is an amazing collection of medical anthropological qualitative observational studies of pregnancy and birth in many cultures of the world. The caveat of exploration of the book is to critically compare how things got to be this way in our US technological/mechanical system of birthing, and to compare this to other cultural systems. The fallacy of the safety of hospital birth is examined as well as why physicians have (what I believe is) inappropriate status and power in decision making during pregnancy and birth. Researchers describe how culture and women themselves have contributed to their own relinquishment of control over their bodies for what is supposed to be a normal physiological event with the capacity for profound meaning in family life. This book is not for the faint of heart. It will challenge all of your assumptions about how we blindly enter the arena of physician dominated decision making in birth, letting those with technological knowledge hook us up to machines and gadgets, strip us of our clothing and identity, and then tell us how our bodies are functioning based on what machines and those with power say, not what women and families say. Data will prove how midwives can deliver safer (or safer) and sensitive care while respecting women's bodies and the status of her innate knowledge during labor and birth. I highly recommend this book to childbirth educators, midwives, OB nurses, obstetricians, and consumers who want to take back power and control over their pregnancy and birth experience. However, you will see that this cannot be easily done in a hospital setting, and almost impossible with a physician as the care provider. This may sound like I am bashing doctors - this cannot be further from the truth. However this book convinced me that the arena of birth belongs with those who believe in the physiology of normal birth and can spiritually as well as emotionally support women and families experiencing this momentous occasion. The place for doctors is best modeled after the European system of care - as specialists of abnormal pregnancy and birth. The book is written on the upper college to graduate level.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. An International Perspective of Birth By Courtney L. Lewis Inspired by birth anthropologist Brigitte Jordan (author of *Birth in Four Cultures*), editors Davis-Floyd and Sargent have collection of articles written by scientists studying birth all over the world who have taken Jordan's concept of authoritative knowledge and applied it to myriad studies. Authoritative knowledge refers to the dominant accepted theory (usually the Western medical tradition and dependent on technology) and how its acceptance translates into customs and practices surrounding birth. Many of the studies were very easy to read and the articles that "told the tale" of births in Greece, Mexico, and Sierra Leone were especially good. A surprise for me was how much I enjoyed Marsden Wagner's article - a doctor and public health official by training, Wagner was appointed the head of the World Health Organization's Maternal and Child Health Department. As he studied the efficacy of midwifery techniques the world over, Wagner began publishing WHO reports recommending the adoption of midwifery systems and a rejection of technology-oriented birth. His story of how the Western medical community continually attempt to disparage and undermine his work (my words as his are more understanding of the difficulty of change) is an excellent overview of the power of medical professionals.

This benchmark collection of cross-cultural essays on reproduction and childbirth extends and enriches the work of Brigitte Jordan, who helped generate and define the field of the anthropology of birth. The authors' focus on authoritative knowledge - the knowledge that counts, on the basis of which decisions are made and actions taken - highlights the vast differences between birthing systems that give authority of knowing to women and their communities and those that invest it in experts and machines. *Childbirth and Authoritative Knowledge* offers first-hand ethnographic research conducted by anthropologists in sixteen different societies and cultures and includes the interdisciplinary perspectives of a social psychologist, a sociologist, an epidemiologist, a staff member of the World Health Organization, and a community midwife. Exciting directions for further research as well as pressing needs for policy guidance emerge from these illuminating explorations of authoritative knowledge about birth. This book is certain to follow Jordan's *Birth in Four Cultures* as the definitive volume in a rapidly expanding field.

About the Author Robbie Davis-Floyd, Research Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Texas, is author of *Birth as an American Rite of Passage* (California, 1992) and co-editor of *Cyborg Babies: From Techno-Sex to Techno-Tots* (1997). Carolyn F. Sargent, Professor of Anthropology and Director of Women's Studies at Southern Methodist University, is author of *Maternity, Medicine, and Power: Reproductive Decisions in Urban Benin* (California, 1989) and coeditor of *Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method* (1996).