

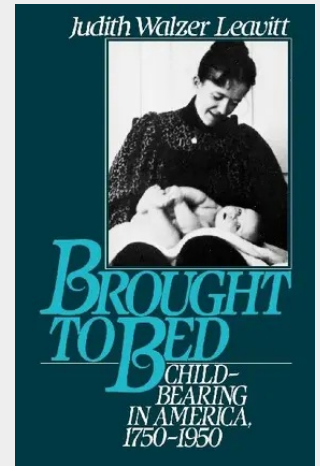
Leavitt

Brought to Bed

Childbearing in America 1750 to 1950

Based on personal accounts by birthing women and their medical attendants, Brought to Bed reveals how childbirth has changed from colonial times to the present. Judith Walzer Leavitt's study focuses on the traditional woman-centered home-birthing practices, their replacement by male doctors, and the movement from the home to the hospital. She explains that childbearing women and their physicians gradually changed birth places because they believed the increased medicalization would make giving birth safer and more comfortable. Ironically, because of infection, infant and maternal mortality did not immediately decline. She concludes that birthing women held considerable power in determining labor and delivery events as long as childbirth remained in the home. The move to the hospital in the twentieth century gave the medical profession the upper hand. Leavitt also discusses recent events in American obstetrics that illustrate how women have attempted to retrieve some of the traditional women--and family--centered aspects of childbirth.

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