



# Women, Power, and Childbirth: A Case Study of a Free-Standing Birth Center

*Kathleen D. Turkel*

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Based on her 12 year study of a free-standing birth center, Turkel analyzes the medical model of childbirth in contrast to the midwifery model. In the medical model of birth, women are defined as patients and birth takes place in hospitals where women have little, if any, control over their experience. The midwifery model views birth as a healthy process where midwives act as teachers and guides for women during pregnancy and birth, helping women and their families to shape and define their experience to meet their needs and expectations. Under existing legal and cultural circumstances, free-standing birth centers face a dilemma. They must continually accommodate the medical model while trying to maintain the midwifery model and give women an option to home birth or to hospital birth.

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