



Fertile Matters (Chicana Matters (Paperback))

Elena R. Gutiérrez

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While the stereotype of the persistently pregnant Mexican-origin woman is longstanding, in the past fifteen years her reproduction has been targeted as a major social problem for the United States. Due to fear-fueled news reports and public perceptions about the changing composition of the nation's racial and ethnic makeup—the so-called Latinization of America—the reproduction of Mexican immigrant women has become a central theme in contemporary U. S. politics since the early 1990s. In this exploration, Elena R. Gutiérrez considers these public stereotypes of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant women as "hyper-fertile baby machines" who "breed like rabbits." She draws on social constructionist perspectives to examine the historical and sociopolitical evolution of these racial ideologies, and the related beliefs that Mexican-origin families are unduly large and that Mexican American and Mexican immigrant women do not use birth control. Using the coercive sterilization of Mexican-origin women in Los Angeles as a case study, Gutiérrez opens a dialogue on the racial politics of reproduction, and how they have developed for women of Mexican origin in the United States. She illustrates how the ways we talk and think about reproduction are part of a system of racial domination that shapes social policy and affects individual women's lives.

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