

Patient Citizens, Immigrant Mothers: Mexican Women, Public Prenatal Care, and the Birth Weight Paradox (Critical Issues in Health and Medicine)

By Alyshia Galvez

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According to the Latina health paradox, Mexican immigrant women have less complicated pregnancies and more favorable birth outcomes than many other groups, in spite of socioeconomic disadvantage. Alyshia Gálvez provides an ethnographic examination of this paradox. What are the ways that Mexican immigrant women care for themselves during their pregnancies? How do they decide to leave behind some of the practices they bring with them on their pathways of migration in favor of biomedical approaches to pregnancy and childbirth?

This book takes us from inside the halls of a busy metropolitan hospital's public prenatal clinic to the Oaxaca and Puebla states in Mexico to look at the ways Mexican women manage their pregnancies. The mystery of the paradox lies perhaps not in the recipes Mexican-born women have for good perinatal health, but in the prenatal encounter in the United States. *Patient Citizens, Immigrant Mothers* is a migration story and a look at the ways that immigrants are received by our medical institutions and by our society

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Editorial Review

Review

"Alyshia Galvez challenges conventional wisdom on how Latinas plan families, making a very important contribution to understanding the Latino health paradox."

(Peter J. Guarnaccia, Ph.D. *Institute for Health, Health Care Policy & Aging Research, Rutgers University*)

"This wonderful book demonstrates how immigrant knowledge is rendered irrelevant by the New York City medical establishment, and contributes to our understanding of large-scale transnational immigration issues examined through the lens of gender, pregnancy, and reproduction."

(Rayna Rapp *author, Testing Women, Testing the Fetus: the Social Impact of Amniocentesis in 2011-06-03*)

"For years, health professionals have been intrigued by the so-called 'birth-weight paradox'—the fact that recently arrived Mexican immigrant women have fewer pregnancy complications and fewer low-birth-weight babies than their socioeconomic status would predict. Galvez casts the large New York City public hospital prenatal clinic at which she did her interviews as a site of 'subjectification'—the molding of Mexican immigrant women and their families into racialized, needy, passive subjects of medicalization, state intervention, and monitoring. In large part, the women submit because of their own narratives of bettering themselves by their move to the US. This brief description cannot do justice to the richness of Galvez's analysis and the complexity of the women's negotiations with the US health care system. Highly recommended."

(*Choice* 2012-04-01)

About the Author

ALYSHIA GÁLVEZ, an assistant professor at Lehman College of CUNY, is the author of *Guadalupe in New York: Devotion and the Struggle for Citizenship Rights among Mexican Immigrants*.

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