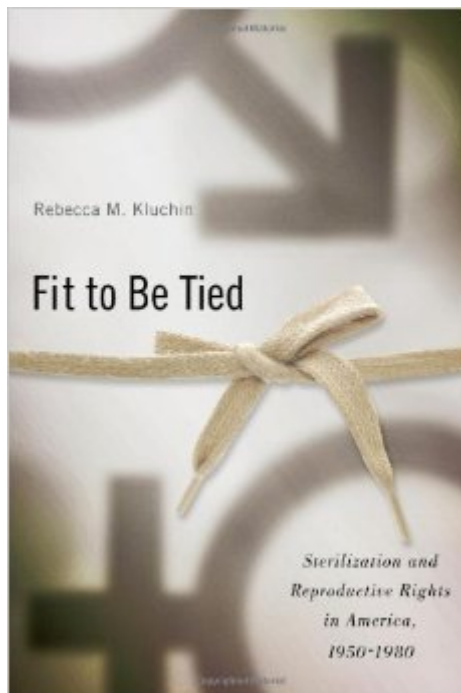


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# Fit To Be Tied: Sterilization And Reproductive Rights In America, 1950-1980 (Critical Issues In Health And Medicine)



## Synopsis

The 1960s revolutionized American contraceptive practice. Diaphragms, jellies, and condoms with high failure rates gave way to newer choices of the Pill, IUD, and sterilization. *Fit to Be Tied* provides a history of sterilization and what would prove to become, at once, socially divisive and a popular form of birth control. During the first half of the twentieth century, sterilization (tubal ligation and vasectomy) was a tool of eugenics. Individuals who endorsed crude notions of biological determinism sought to control the reproductive decisions of women they considered "unfit" by nature of race or class, and used surgery to do so. Incorporating first-person narratives, court cases, and official records, Rebecca M. Kluchin examines the evolution of forced sterilization of poor women, especially women of color, in the second half of the century and contrasts it with demands for contraceptive sterilization made by white women and men. She chronicles public acceptance during an era of reproductive and sexual freedom, and the subsequent replacement of the eugenics movement with "neo-eugenic" standards that continued to influence American medical practice, family planning, public policy, and popular sentiment.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I came across this title from a feminist blog and thought it would make an interesting read. I had heard of the "Mississippi Appendectomy" performed on young, poor, and typically black women of the south in the mid-20th century and thought this would be a good start in learning about what

occurred to these women whose fertility was stolen from them. However, *Fit to be Tied* is much more than a story about forced sterilization. Instead, it is the author's thesis/PhD work that was published for more eyes than just the author's university. The foundation of this book is on the eugenic and what the author calls the neo-eugenic movements in the US during the early to mid-20th century and its impact on permanent sterilization, both forced and voluntary. She covers how these movements influenced the medical, welfare, and social services sectors of communities and their personal impact on the reproductively "fit" and "unfit". Cases studies are presented which illustrate how the "unfit" were typically forced into sterilization, or even sterilized without consent or knowledge and other cases in which other women (typically white, middle or upper class) were denied access to sterilization. Major organizations involved in either promoting access or assisting those affected by sterilization are significant aspects of each chapter. The author weaves in other movements that occurred during this time in the US, such as the feminist, civil rights, and other minority rights and their impacts on access to sterilization. The majority of the book focuses on tubal ligations, however vasectomy is also discussed.

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