



Beggars and Choosers: How the Politics of Choice Shapes Adoption, Abortion, and Welfare in the United States

Rickie Solinger

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An impassioned argument for reproductive rights

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, advocates of legal abortion mostly used the term *rights* when describing their agenda. But after *Roe v. Wade*, their determination to develop a respectable, nonconfrontational movement encouraged many of them to use the word *choice*--an easier concept for people weary of various rights movements. At first the distinction in language didn't seem to make much difference--the law seemed to guarantee both. But in the years since, the change has become enormously important.

In *Beggars and Choosers*, Solinger shows how historical distinctions between women of color and white women, between poor and middle-class women, were used in new ways during the era of "choice." Politicians and policy makers began to exclude certain women from the class of "deserving mothers" by using the language of choice to create new public policies concerning everything from Medicaid funding for abortions to family tax credits, infertility treatments, international adoption, teen pregnancy, and welfare. Solinger argues that the class-and-race-inflected guarantee of "choice" is a shaky foundation on which to build our notions of reproductive freedom. Her impassioned argument is for reproductive rights as human rights--as a basis for full citizenship status for women.

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