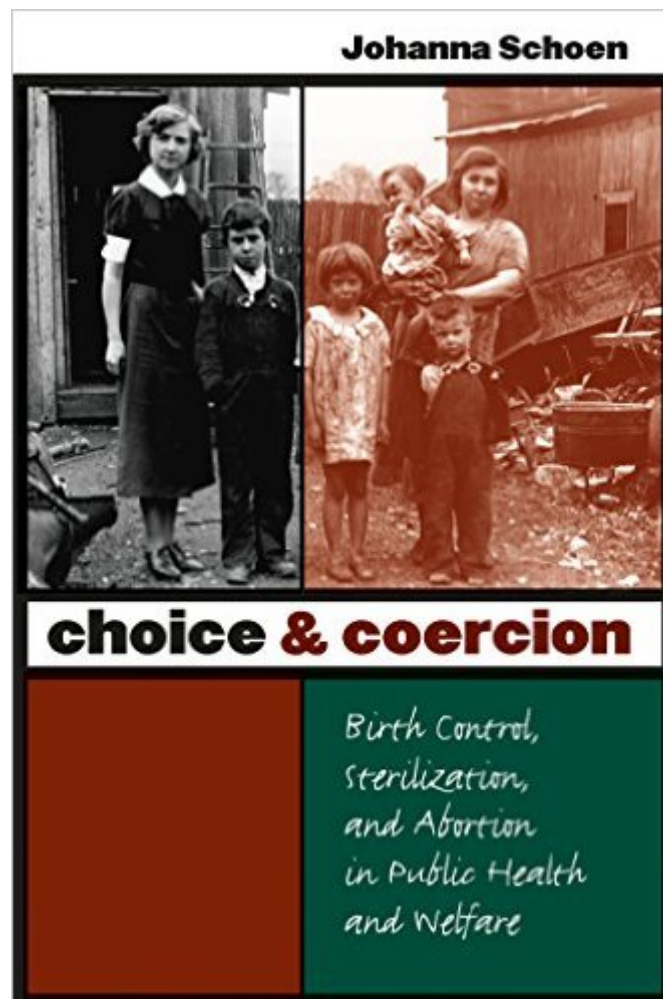


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# Choice And Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, And Abortion In Public Health And Welfare (Gender And American Culture)



## Synopsis

In August 2003, North Carolina became the first U.S. state to offer restitution to victims of state-ordered sterilizations carried out by its eugenics program between 1929 and 1975. The decision was prompted largely by a series of articles in the Winston-Salem Journal. These stories were inspired in part by the research of Johanna Schoen, who was granted unique access to summaries of 7,500 case histories and the papers of the North Carolina Eugenics Board. In this book, Schoen situates the state's reproductive politics in a national and global context. Widening her focus to include birth control, sterilization, and abortion policies across the nation, she demonstrates how each method for limiting unwanted pregnancies had the potential both to expand and to limit women's reproductive choices. Such programs overwhelmingly targeted poor and nonwhite populations, yet they also extended a measure of reproductive control to poor women that was previously out of reach. On an international level, the United States has influenced reproductive health policies by, for example, tying foreign aid to the recipients' compliance with U.S. notions about family planning. The availability of U.S.-funded family planning aid has proved to be a double-edged sword, offering unprecedented opportunities to poor women while subjecting foreign patients to medical experimentation that would be considered unacceptable at home. Drawing on the voices of health and science professionals, civic benefactors, and American women themselves, Schoen's study allows deeper understandings of the modern welfare state and the lives of women.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A well-researched and even-handed look at women's reproductive history in the 20th century, this book uses a wide range of sources to look at all aspects of society -- government, philanthropists, medical workers, individuals -- and how the agendas of each sector impacted women's healthcare and options...or lack thereof. Dr. Schoen avoids absolutes: that women or the poor were always the passive, helpless victims or that agencies or doctors held all the social power. She showed that things were (and still are) far more complicated than those easy, cliched stereotypes. At the same time, she writes about difficult subjects and events with compassion. It avoids the hyperbole evident in other books I've read on the matter, and it does not talk down to the reader. At the same time, it is very readable and engaging. Those on the extremes of the pro-choice/anti-abortion argument will likely be annoyed with it because it looks at the subject of women's reproductive history through an objective lens rather than an emotional or sentimental one. It's a fine line to walk, and, in my opinion, she walked it well.

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