

Birth Control and American Modernity

How did birth control become legitimate in the United States? One kitchen table at a time, contends Trent MacNamara – as Americans reexamined old ideas about money, time, transcendence, nature, risk, and their relationship to family planning. By the time Margaret Sanger and other activists began campaigning for legal contraception in the 1910s, Americans had been effectively controlling fertility for a century, combining old techniques with explosive new attitudes. *Birth Control and American Modernity* charts those attitudes, capturing a movement that relied less on traditional public advocacy than dispersed action of the kind that nullified Prohibition. Acting in bedrooms and gossip corners where formal power was weak and moral feeling strong, Americans of both sexes gradually normalized birth control in private, then in public, as part of a wider prioritization of present material worlds over imagined eternal continuums. The moral edifice they constructed, like similar citizen movements around the world, remains tenuously intact.

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Cambridge University Press
978-1-316-51958-5 — Birth Control and American Modernity
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A History of Popular Ideas

TRENT MACNAMARA

Texas A&M University



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781316519585
DOI: 10.1017/9781108650465

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First published 2018

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: MacNamara, Trent, author.

TITLE: Birth control and American modernity : a history of popular ideas / Trent MacNamara, Texas A & M University.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2018012846 | ISBN 9781316519585

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Birth control — United States — History.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC HQ766.5.U5 M24 2018 | DDC 363.9/60973—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018012846>

ISBN 978-1-316-51958-5 Hardback

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Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Matthew Connelly for sound advice at every turn, to Elizabeth Blackmar for searching questions, to William Leach for foundational discussions, and to Linda Gordon and Dennis Hodgson for insightful comments on the dissertation version of this project. Alan Brinkley, Rosalind Rosenberg, Sarah Phillips, Caroline Bledsoe, Emily Merchant, Katherine Lynch, Susan Pearson, Oliver Murphey, Simon Stevens, Stephen Wertheim, Ed Freedman, and Adam Bright commented on portions of this study, for which I am grateful. Parts of Chapter 2 appeared in “Why ‘Race Suicide’: Cultural Factors in U.S. Fertility Decline, 1903–1908,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 44:4 (2014); I appreciate the opportunity to use that material here. Family and friends encouraged me to pursue this project and helped me detach from it. Thanks to my parents and grandparents for instilling self-discipline and intellectual curiosity, to my friends for laughing at my cat joke, and to my children for enforcing occasional self-abandonment. Molly, Nate, and Josie, your appearance during this writing led wise people to wonder if I had truly mastered my subject. I am glad you do not have 4.04 additional siblings (as you would in 1800, according to the statistics) but each of you fill me with love and gratification. Never stop standing defiantly for what you know to be correct. Annmarie, I could not have done this without your strength, patience, and support. Thank you for being as you are and being here with me.