

Cambridge University Press

0521609844 - The Moral Veto: Framing Contraception, Abortion, and Cultural Pluralism
in the United States

Gene Burns

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Moral Veto

Why have legislative initiatives occurred on such controversial issues as contraception and abortion at times when activist movements had demobilized and the public seemed indifferent? Why did the South – currently a region where antiabortion sentiment is stronger than in most of the country – liberalize its abortion laws in the 1960s at a faster pace than any other region? Why have abortion and contraception sometimes been framed as matters of medical practice, and at other times as matters of moral significance? These are some of the questions addressed in *The Moral Veto: Framing Contraception, Abortion, and Cultural Pluralism in the United States*. Based on archival and sociological research, and speaking to issues in the study of culture, social movements, and legal change, *The Moral Veto* examines what the history of controversies over such morally charged issues tells us about cultural pluralism in the United States.

Gene Burns is an award-winning teacher and associate professor of public affairs at James Madison College of Michigan State University. A sociologist by training, he is the author of *The Frontiers of Catholicism: The Politics of Ideology in a Liberal World*, a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year in 1993. He has written articles on social movements, revolutions, and the politics of religion in the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Theory and Society*, *Sociology of Religion*, and other journals.

Cambridge University Press

0521609844 - The Moral Veto: Framing Contraception, Abortion, and Cultural Pluralism
in the United States

Gene Burns

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Moral Veto

*Framing Contraception, Abortion, and
Cultural Pluralism in the United States*

GENE BURNS

*James Madison College
of Michigan State University*



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
0521609844 - The Moral Veto: Framing Contraception, Abortion, and Cultural Pluralism
in the United States
Gene Burns
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521552097

© Cambridge University Press 2005

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2005

Printed in the United States of America

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

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Burns, Gene, 1958–
The moral veto : framing contraception, abortion, and cultural pluralism in the
United States / Gene Burns.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-521-55209-5 (hardback) – ISBN 0-521-60984-4 (pbk.)
1. Social values – United States. 2. Culture conflict – United States. 3. Pluralism
(Social sciences) – United States. 4. Abortion – Social aspects – United States.
5. Contraception – Social aspects – United States. I. Title.
HN90.M6B87 2005
363.9'6'0973–dc22 2005000120

ISBN-13 978-0-521-55209-7 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-55209-5 hardback
ISBN-13 978-0-521-60984-5 paperback
ISBN-10 0-521-60984-4 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for
the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or
third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this book
and does not guarantee that any content on such
Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

0521609844 - The Moral Veto: Framing Contraception, Abortion, and Cultural Pluralism
in the United States

Gene Burns

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For Fred Block and Steve Warner, wonderful teachers

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page ix</i>
1 Introduction	I
2 Framing Contraception within Moral Worldviews: The Early, Radical Birth Control Movement	29
3 The Mainstreaming of Birth Control: A New Alliance with Eugenics and Medicine	69
4 Dennett’s Moral Worldview and the Catholic Moral Veto: Unsuccessful Frames for Contraception	106
5 Abortion before Controversy: Quiet Reform within a Medical, Humanitarian Frame	150
6 Abortion and Legislative Stalemate: The Weakness and Strength of the Medical, Humanitarian Frame	207
7 Looking Back: Limiting Frames, Moral Vetoes, and Cultural Pluralism	244
<i>Works Cited</i>	315
<i>Index</i>	331

Cambridge University Press

0521609844 - The Moral Veto: Framing Contraception, Abortion, and Cultural Pluralism
in the United States

Gene Burns

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

Although we academic authors often labor in a fair amount of obscurity, one advantage of writing a second book is that the author is not quite so obscure as during the writing of the first and so more easily connects with many helpful colleagues. Thus I had an opportunity to talk with many people about this project and fear that I may have lost track of a few names. One example is the very friendly and knowledgeable scholar from California whom I met over file drawers at the Library of Congress and who shared with me his impressive knowledge of Mary Ware Dennett and the suffrage movement; I never learned his name. More specifically, I would like to thank, first of all, the generosity of the Annenberg Scholars Program at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, where I spent the 1995–96 year on a fellowship. Elihu Katz, an impressively wide-ranging thinker, provided everything one could want in terms of intellectual stimulation and moral support. I also gained a great deal, both intellectually and personally, from my colleagues David Buckingham, Michael Griffin, and Dona Schwartz. I would like to extend special thanks to Barbara Grabias and Crispin Sartwell.

A number of scholars commented on parts of the project and led me to valuable scholarly literatures, including Nicola Beisel, Paul Burstein, Miguel Centeno, Michele Dillon, Paul DiMaggio, Frank Dobbin, John H. Evans, David Garrow, Stephen Hart, Ted Jelen, Carole Joffe, Beverly Lozano, Jon Christopher Pennington, Leslie Woodcock Tentler, Maureen R. Waller, Susan Watkins, and Mary C. Wright. Colleagues

Cambridge University Press

0521609844 - The Moral Veto: Framing Contraception, Abortion, and Cultural Pluralism
in the United States

Gene Burns

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

at Northwestern University, Loyola University of Chicago, the University of California at Davis, Wellesley College, Franklin and Marshall College, American University, and the University of Pittsburgh provided very helpful feedback to my presentations at their institutions. I also received generous assistance from archivists and librarians at the Schlesinger Library of Radcliffe College, the Sophia Smith Collection of Smith College, and, especially, the Library of Congress, whose collections are an invaluable resource. I am indebted also to Constance Chen, for sharing with me her deep knowledge of the life and career of Mary Ware Dennett. The most admirable and unusual college in which I teach now, James Madison College of Michigan State University, has also been a highly supportive environment. Special thanks to Katherine O'Sullivan See and Kenneth Waltzer for comments on the manuscript that became this book, and to Norm Graham and Sherm Garnett for being such supportive colleagues. I also thank the wonderful students of James Madison for pushing me to think and express myself more clearly, especially those in a senior seminar who read part of this work in manuscript form.

A number of other scholars have been important intellectual and personal influences. I have been very fortunate to know a number of good people, including Bill D'Antonio, Scott Appleby, Jim Davidson, Roger Finke, Jim Jasper, Ruth Wallace, and Mary Jo Weaver. Viviana Zelizer went beyond the call of duty in her professional support. John Noakes and Braulio Muñoz remain special friends and intellectual soul mates. And special thanks go to Kristin Luker.

My thanks also to Ed Parsons, Anoop Chaturvedi, Elizabeth Neal, Mary Child, and Malinda Barrett of Cambridge University Press, and the Press as a whole. It has been a delight to publish this book with Cambridge.

I cannot express enough the importance of my wife, Alison Hirschel, and our wonderful children, Danny, Timmy, and Nicky, for adding so much to life.

Finally, I would like to thank two scholars who are among the finest people I have ever known. Fred Block was my dissertation advisor back in graduate school and continues to provide friendship and unmatched insight. Fred inspires unusual devotion and affection from his students not because he seeks it, but because he does not.

Cambridge University Press

0521609844 - The Moral Veto: Framing Contraception, Abortion, and Cultural Pluralism
in the United States

Gene Burns

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

xi

I admire Steve Warner for multiple reasons, both professional and personal. He is an excellent illustration of someone who integrates depth of intellect with depth of character. Steve is one of those people who come into your life and are unusually supportive and helpful, for reasons we never fully understand.

In an academic world that is sometimes dominated by an overly professionalized atmosphere, both Fred and Steve are true models of personal generosity, intellectual vitality, and intellectual integrity. I dedicate this book to the two of them, with gratitude.