AMBI Faculty Lisa Campo-Engelstein, PhD New Publication

AMBI Faculty Lisa Campo-Engelstein was recently published in The Albany Law Journal of Science & Technology. Below is the abstract:


Trust is one of the underlying themes in many discussions, media coverage, laws, and policies about contraception. Although women are generally held responsible for contraception, the myriad laws, as well as forms of surveillance and normalization, surrounding it give the impression that women are not trustworthy with it. Men are typically not thought to be the ones responsible for contraception and a significant part of the reason why, at least according to popular press articles on developing a “male pill,” is that they are not considered trustworthy with contraception. My goal in this paper is to discuss some of the gendered social norms that contribute to the perception that neither women nor men are trustworthy with contraception. I begin in the first section by laying out my own conception of trust, which draws heavily on Amy Mullin’s work, claiming that we trust those who we assume believe in the same social norms we do. In the second section, I unpack some of the social norms relevant to contraceptive trustworthiness and conclude that, like in most other areas of reproduction, the dominant norm is self-sacrifice. In the third and forth sections, I show how dominant gender norms portray women and men as social groups as incompetent for contraceptive responsibility and hence contraceptive trustworthiness. Specifically, in the third section I claim that although women generally adhere to the social norms necessary for contraceptive trustworthiness, the cultural belief that women are irrational inhibits their overall trustworthiness, including their contraceptive trustworthiness. In the fourth section, I argue that cultural beliefs about men (e.g. they have uncontrollable libido, they have trouble mastering domestic tasks, and they are not concerned about preventing pregnancy) suggest that they will not be competent to contracept correctly and consistently. Finally, in the conclusion, I make some suggestions for increasing contraceptive trust for women and men.