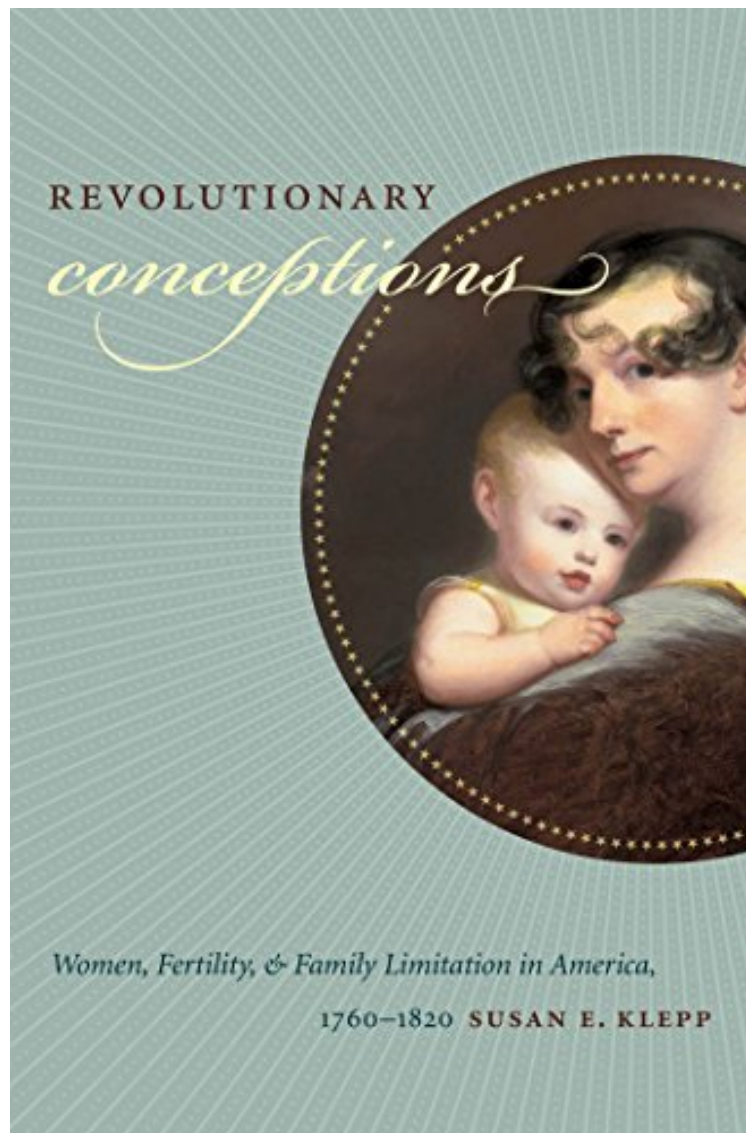


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Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820 (Published by the Omohundro Institute of Early American ... and the University of North Carolina Press)

Susan E. Klepp

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before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Revolutionary Conceptions: Women, Fertility, and Family Limitation in America, 1760-1820 (Published by the Omohundro Institute of Early American ... and the University of North Carolina Press):

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. the revolution behind the scenesBy hmf22The United States did not seek to regulate contraception and abortion until the mid-nineteenth century. Family size peaked in the mid-eighteenth century. What happened in between? That, in a nutshell, is Klepp's topic in Revolutionary Conceptions. Klepp maintains that while the American Revolution was unfolding on the world stage, another, female-led revolution was unfolding behind the scenes as American couples began to delay marriage, space births, and curtail childbearing several years before the wives reached menopause. These changes transformed the pattern of women's lives and their very conception of their purpose in life. This engaging book is a surprisingly quick read as scholarly works go. It has a strong statistical foundation, with due attention to regional and class differences. Klepp approaches her topic imaginatively: in one lavishly illustrated chapter, she explores how images of women gradually changed from emphasizing fertility to emphasizing self-control. The chapter on the technology of birth control is less satisfactory because Klepp doesn't wrap it up with a clear assessment of exactly how the typical Revolutionary-era woman limited family size, but she does at least provide a comprehensive overview of the full range of methods available, with an emphasis on emmenagogues. In short, Revolutionary Conceptions is a well-researched and fascinating book that challenges many previous theories about when and why Americans began to limit family size. Highly recommended.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding insights based on a lifetime of scholarship by a leading historian of 18th C PhiladelphiaBy HistoriannThis is a brilliant book that brings the eighteenth and early nineteenth century alive in the realm that historians find most difficult to discover: the history of private life, including sexuality and family life. In sum, this book argues that the real American Revolution for free women was their decision to have smaller families ca. 1760-1820, declaring independence from the "teeming bellies" esteemed earlier in the 18th C in favor of fewer children and greater attention and care for the children's educations. I have taught this book repeatedly in undergraduate classes as well as to graduate students, and they love the fascinating insights as well as the larger argument the book makes, which they find largely persuasive. The book also features a striking essay analyzing 18th C Anglo-American women's portraiture as a clue to these transformations, which we use in class alongside Google image searches of the paintings so we can see the full-color versions of the portraits included in the book (and some that aren't as well.)0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An interesting textbook.By CustomerThis was a really good and exciting book although it didn't completely answer my questions about the time the author researched.

In the Age of Revolution, how did American women conceive their lives and marital obligations? By examining the attitudes and behaviors surrounding the contentious issues of family, contraception, abortion, sexuality, beauty, and identity, Susan E. Klepp demonstrates that many women--rural and urban, free and enslaved--began to radically redefine motherhood. They asserted, or attempted to assert, control over their bodies, their marriages, and their daughters' opportunities. Late-eighteenth-century American women were among the first in the world to disavow the continual childbearing and large families that had long been considered ideal. Liberty, equality, and heartfelt religion led to new conceptions of virtuous, rational womanhood and responsible parenthood. These changes can be seen in falling birthrates, in advice to friends and kin, in portraits, and in a gradual, even reluctant, shift in men's opinions. Revolutionary-era women redefined femininity, fertility, family, and their futures by limiting births. Women might not have won the vote in the new Republic, they might not have gained formal rights in other spheres, but, Klepp argues, there was a women's revolution nonetheless.

[Readers] will find much of the research fresh and giving much food for thought as we approach discussion of hot issues of our own day.--Anglican and Episcopalian HistoryA remarkably detailed study of childbirth and family planning from the colonial period through the early nineteenth century. . . . Relevant not just to historians but also to those who study current debates.--American Historical An exciting new interpretation of the radicalism of the American Revolution.--Early American LiteratureFascinating. . . . Klepp offers an exciting new interpretation of women in Revolutionary America, and she presents her quantitative and qualitative evidence in an accessible and elegant manner.--Common-PlaceOutstanding. . . . [An] admirable book.--Pennsylvania Magazine of History and BiographyThe heart of the book . . . focus[es] on cultural reinterpretation of fertility and the technologies of family limitation. Here, Klepp makes her most original contribution and persuasively presents women as a constitutive force in this sea change. . . . Joins a growing body of scholarship in demonstrating that gender conventions were debated and transformed in the age of revolution.--Journal of American HistoryInteresting. . . . Demographers have much to gain from reading the work of this investigator.--Population and Development Everyone interested in the American

revolutionary era, women, and human reproduction will find *Revolutionary Conceptions* insightful."--Register of the Kentucky Historical Society
Through an exhaustive examination of an enormous variety of qualitative sources . . . Klepp is able to reconstruct important shifts in how people thought about these sensitive issues. . . . Fascinating. . . . A true example of interdisciplinary work at its best--rigorous yet imaginative, nuanced yet sweeping.--Journal of Interdisciplinary History
This important new work skillfully synthesizes more than four decades of scholarship on women, fertility, and sexuality while successfully recovering clues to the intimate conversations and decision making that took place between husband and wife and within women's social networks. . . . Essential.--Choice
Written by one of our most distinguished historians, this marvelous book analyzes the revolution by the women of America's founding generations to assume greater control over their lives. This shift in consciousness and behavior transformed the new nation every bit as much as did the traditional political revolution.--Billy G. Smith, Montana State University
Specialists and students alike now have an excellent, strongly argued monograph on long-term fertility decline in the United States that highlights women's choices. While carefully delineating regional and racial variations in patterns of fertility, Klepp convincingly makes the case that women deliberately limited family size in the name of new ideals about personal autonomy and mutuality in marriage promoted by the American Revolution and evangelical Christianity.--Toby L. Ditz, The Johns Hopkins University
Susan Klepp's brilliant research reveals that an intimate American Revolution lurked under the familiar one, destabilizing old ways and quietly transforming American society in ways that few men understood. She challenges much that we thought we knew; many otherwise admirable books now feel outdated.--Linda K. Kerber, University of Iowa
Klepp's adept use of quantitative data and visual imagery makes the fertility transition real in cultural as well as demographic terms. We see the transformation in the representations of women's bodies and calculate the shift in numbers of births. Her knowledge of the evidence is unsurpassed, and she presents her findings with clarity and insight.--Kathleen M. Brown, University of Pennsylvania
From the Inside Flap
By examining the attitudes and behaviors surrounding the contentious issues of family, contraception, abortion, sexuality, beauty, and identity, Klepp demonstrates that many American women--rural and urban, free and enslaved--began to radically redefine motherhood during the Age of Revolution as they asserted, or attempted to assert, control over their bodies, their marriages, and their daughters' opportunities.