

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Virginia Rutter / Framingham State University Sociology
vrutter@gmail.com / 206 375 4139

The Way We Still Never Were: Which “family values” have changed or stayed the same since the tumultuous 1992 presidential campaign?

AUSTIN TX, MARCH 30, 2016: In 1992—the year the presidential campaign erupted into a culture war over family values —Stephanie Coontz published [*The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*](#). The title offered the core concept, and the book demonstrated that diversity and change have always been hallmarks of American families: “Leave It To Beaver” was not a documentary. Nearly a quarter-century later—and after twenty years Director of Research and Public Education at the Council on Contemporary Families-- Coontz has revised and updated *The Way We Never Were* with the latest findings on family trends. The new release was on March 29, 2016.

This week she provided a briefing report to the CCF sharing some of what she found has changed—and what failed to change—in the past quarter-century.

Ten doomsday predictions that didn’t come true. This is what we feared in the 1990s: *Super Predators. Crack Babies. Working Moms. Teen Sex. No Fault Divorce, Educated women’s marriage prospects. Equal marriages killing sex. Cohabitation before marriage. Same sex marriage. Women’s unequal burden in the “second shift.”* Yikes.

Coontz offers a history of how these fearful predictions fanned the culture wars, and tells us what actually happened. Super predators: Never showed up. Instead, crime and violence plummeted. Crack babies: They were actually impoverished babies. No fault divorce actually led to a sharp drop in domestic violence, and divorce rates have fallen since it became the norm. Those “lonely” educated women are now the most likely to marry and least likely to divorce. Egalitarian couples nowadays have the best sex. Cohabitation before marriage has no influence on odds of divorce. Same-sex marriage—is the law of the land and the kids are doing great. The second shift is a myth: Men are stepping up to the plate, even if most employers are not.

Two things we SHOULD feel anxious about. With all this forward progress, Coontz notes two things that have gone backwards: we have *greater* inequality and we have *fewer* reproductive rights.

And several things to feel very disappointed about. Some things haven’t changed, according to Coontz:

“Since 1993, the federal government has made no substantive progress toward policies that help women and men reconcile work and family obligations, while other countries have leapt ahead,” she notes.

“Politicians continue to recycle myths about past family life to avoid confronting contemporary family needs,” she reminds us, and proceeds to demolish several.

-continue for background-

Stephanie Coontz is a Director of Research and Public Education for the Council on Contemporary Families as well as a professor of History and family studies at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. Reach her at coontzs@msn.com, cell 360-556-9223.

LINKS:

CCF BRIEF: [The Way We Still Never Were: Another Quarter Century of Family Change and Diversity](https://contemporaryfamilies.org/they-way-we-still-never-were-brief-report/)
(<https://contemporaryfamilies.org/they-way-we-still-never-were-brief-report/>)

CCF ADVISORY: [The Way We Still Never Were: Which “family values” have changed or stayed the same since the tumultuous 1992 presidential campaign?](https://contemporaryfamilies.org/they-way-we-still-never-were-press-advisory/)

(<https://contemporaryfamilies.org/they-way-we-still-never-were-press-advisory/>)

The Council on Contemporary Families, based at the University of Texas-Austin, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of family researchers and practitioners that seeks to further a national understanding of how America's families are changing and what is known about the strengths and weaknesses of different family forms and various family interventions.

The Council helps keep journalists informed of notable work on family-related issues via the CCF Network. To join the CCF Network, or for further media assistance, please contact Stephanie Coontz, Director of Research and Public Education, at coontzs@msn.com, cell 360-556-9223.

Follow us! [@CCF_Families](https://twitter.com/CCF_Families) and <https://www.facebook.com/contemporaryfamilies>

Read our blog [Families as They Really Are](https://thesocietypages.org/families/) - <https://thesocietypages.org/families/>

March 30, 2016

-end-