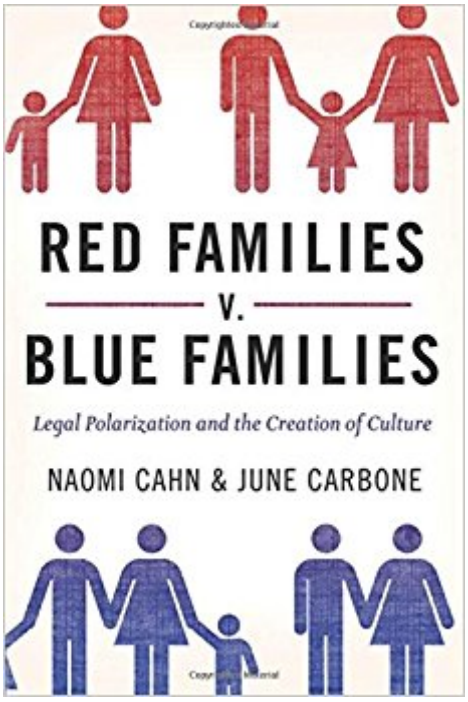
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Red Families V. Blue Families: Legal Polarization And The Creation Of Culture



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Synopsis

Red Families v. Blue Families identifies a new family model geared for the post-industrial economy. Rooted in the urban middle class, the coasts and the "blue states" in the last three presidential elections, the Blue Family Paradigm emphasizes the importance of women's as well as men's workforce participation, egalitarian gender roles, and the delay of family formation until both parents are emotionally and financially ready. By contrast, the Red Family Paradigm--associated with the Bible Belt, the mountain west, and rural America--rejects these new family norms, viewing the change in moral and sexual values as a crisis. In this world, the prospect of teen childbirth is the necessary deterrent to premarital sex, marriage is a sacred undertaking between a man and a woman, and divorce is society's greatest moral challenge. Yet, the changing economy is rapidly eliminating the stable, blue collar jobs that have historically supported young families, and early marriage and childbearing derail the education needed to prosper. The result is that the areas of the country most committed to traditional values have the highest divorce and teen pregnancy rates, fueling greater calls to reinstill traditional values. Featuring the groundbreaking research first hailed in The New Yorker, this penetrating book will transform our understanding of contemporary American culture and law. The authors show how the Red-Blue divide goes much deeper than this value system conflict--the Red States have increasingly said "no" to Blue State legal norms, and, as a result, family law has been rent in two. The authors close with a consideration of where these different family systems still overlap, and suggest solutions that permit rebuilding support for both types of families in changing economic circumstances.Incorporating results from the 2008 election, Red Families v. Blue Families will reshape the debate surrounding the culture wars and the emergence of red and blue America.

Book Information

Paperback: 300 pages
Publisher: Oxford University Press; Reprint edition (October 1, 2011)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0199836817
ISBN-13: 978-0199836819
Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 0.9 x 6.1 inches
Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)
Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 20 customer reviews
Best Sellers Rank: #272,868 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #40 inÃ Â Books > Law > Family

Law > Domestic Relations #52 inÃ Â Books > Gay & Lesbian > Nonfiction > Civil Rights #118 inÃ Â Books > Gay & Lesbian > Nonfiction > Bisexuality

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Family law scholars Cahn (Test Tube Families) and Carbone (From Partners to Parents) defuse America's bitter culture wars in this measured, statistics-based look at the societal pressures and changing economic realities that influence regional ideologies and voting patterns. The book focuses on the blue state/ red state division, acknowledging the demographic data suggesting that life patterns differ regionally, and that these differing family structures influence political allegiances: the bluest states have fewer teen mothers and lower divorce rates, and emphasize responsibility; red states have high teen birth and divorce rates and emphasize tradition. According to the authors, these core differences are the crucible from which the battles over abortion, same sex marriage, and contraception spring. Their suggestion? Return to a federalized approach that allows each region to address its constituents' specific needs. The authors allow that a return to decentralization might not be feasible, but given the recent national debates over health care, the Stupak amendment, and same sex marriage laws, the book's illuminating (if very technical) statistical data and dispassionate approach render it invaluable. (Apr.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Red Families v. Blue Families is a fascinating, groundbreaking look at the ways in which the red versus blue political divide reflects an even deeper divide in family life and sexual values. Cahn and Carbone have updated the old maxim that the personal is political, and enormously enriched it, with hard data and subtle observations."--Margaret Talbot, The New Yorker"This fascinating and surprising book will change the way we think about the culture wars. Naomi Cahn and June Carbone reveal a series of unexpected truths about marriage, divorce, and sexual behavior in Red states and Blue states. Some highlights: College educated women are far less likely to divorce than those without college degrees. Only a quarter of evangelical teens abstain from sexual activity more than other teens. And expanding access to contraception, rather than abortion, is the best way to delay marriage and promote stable families. By using invaluable data to cut through the ideological posturing that has distorted American politics, Cahn and Carbone point us toward a less polarized future."--Jeffrey Rosen, Legal Affairs Editor, The New Republic"The book's illuminating (if very technical) statistical data and dispassionate approach render it invaluable." --Publishers Weekly "An

illuminating analysis...Cahn and Carbone make a strong case for formulating family laws through the existing federalized family legal system so they are not victimized in culture wars inflamed by vote seeking politicians."--ForeWord Reviews"Wonderful...The book is primarily a study of the way in which different family forms have emerged in different parts of the country, and the political ramifications of the polarized value systems that result. But the data it contains reveals a deep incoherence in the American government's family planning policies. --Andrew Koppelman, Balkinization[An] important new book Whether Cahn and Carbone are right will take time and subsequent scholarship to learn; but their story is both plausible and sobering. Plausible, because it brings so many aspects of the culture wars into sharper focus. Sobering, because the economic and cultural forces battering traditional family norms show no signs of abating--but the new, education-centered pathway to adulthood is often least accessible to those who need it most. --Jonathan Rauch, National Journal"Provocative." --The Week"Cahn and Carbone argue that family law in the United States has been increasingly polarized...They conclude that as a result family law has been rent in two, and they seek to find places where these different family systems still overlap, allowing identification of a new family model geared for the postindustrial economy."--Law & Social Inquiry"An insightful companion to any intellectual debate about the political, legal and cultural divide in our country today...The book is both fascinating to read and fast paced, leaving you hooked from beginning to end. Whatever your position on the issues presented in the book, you will walk away well informed about the political and legal divisions that have resulted in a culture divide in our country today, will be well versed in critical issues bubbling at the top of the family law agenda, popular culture, federalism and law and science issues that are the forefront today."--Law and Politics Book Review

The authors of this book discuss how actual differences in the way that people live, and form families, create differences in how people perceive value issues. They explore how economic change underlies these different lifestyles, and what this means to American families. They support their assertions with data.Traditional/conservative communities form families retain the expectations of the early 20th century, and form families just as our great-grandparents did. Tying sex to marriage, and abstinence before marriage, and key values--they marry earlier, have more pregnancies, more unplanned pregnancies, and get less education. Because folks are expected to marry young, the expectation is that they will bend to the authority of older family members and the church. Because they do marry young, finding an holding a "good job" is very difficult--they correctly perceive that even if they follow the "right path," they struggle. For those who fall off the right path,

early pregnancies have catastrophic effects on their future ability to prosper. Being unemployable has a way of making you "not marriage material

I purchased this book after reading about it in an article on Slate.com. The author's thesis is an intriguing one: The nation is increasingly made up of two types of families, red and blue, or information-era families and left-behind families. Blue families are those made up of college graduates (generally) who have deferred marriage and child-bearing until they have achieved some measure of both emotional maturity and financial security. These are the urban-dwelling, politically liberal high-earners in today's America. Red families are made up of high school graduates (or less) who jump directly from school into marriage and child-rearing, often completed via the old shotgun marriage necessitated by pregnancy. In the early part of the book, Cahn posits that these early marriages often lead to frequent divorces and that the blue family model explains why the marriage rate is rising for educated women, and stagnant or declining for less-educated women.Everyone wants to feel like a winner, and I must admit that this book made me want to preen a bit as I am one of the educated women who married later in life than many of the women around me. Cahn provides an interesting model of what I've seen around me but haven't put into words myself. The only reason I didn't give this book 5 stars is that the second half is, in my humble opinion, a bit on the dry side as it is comprised of an analysis of the abortion issue, the abstinence-only sex-ed issue, divorce and custody issues, and other issues which didn't hold my personal interest as much as the first half of the book.Still, this is a well-researched tome, and I would recommend it enthusiastically.

This book is a wonderful read because it gives you everything you need to understand modern American families - the social science statistics, legal analysis, expert insights on culture, and a nuanced treatment of the eocnomics - and combines those diverse currents into a light, even enjoyable (given the topic under dicsussion) narrative.The authors do an excellent job of avoiding the bile of the culture wars, and instead are able to tease out what the fundamental differences are between different conceptions of the family in America. Everyone has 'family values', and want the best for their children - the split comes over how to guarantee the best, and the role that sexuality and fertility play in different conceptions of what is the best for a family.Here's a good discussion of some of the arguments in the book from a conservative writing for the New York Times: [...]

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