



A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique & American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s

Stephanie Coontz

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique & American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s

Stephanie Coontz

A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique & American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s Stephanie Coontz

In 1963, Betty Friedan unleashed a storm of controversy with her bestselling book, *The Feminine Mystique*. Hundreds of women wrote to her to say that the book had transformed, even saved, their lives. Nearly half a century later, many women still recall where they were when they first read it. In *A Strange Stirring*, historian Stephanie Coontz examines the dawn of the 1960s, when the sexual revolution had barely begun, newspapers advertised for "perky, attractive gal typists," but married women were told to stay home, and husbands controlled almost every aspect of family life. Based on exhaustive research and interviews, and challenging both conservative and liberal myths about Friedan, *A Strange Stirring* brilliantly illuminates how a generation of women came to realize that their dissatisfaction with domestic life didn't reflect their personal weakness but rather a social and political injustice.

A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique & American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s Details

Date : Published January 4th 2011 by Basic Books (first published June 30th 2008)

ISBN : 9780465022328

Author : Stephanie Coontz

Format : ebook 248 pages

Genre : Feminism, History, Nonfiction, Womens Studies, Sociology, Womens, Gender

 [Download A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique & American Wo ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique & American ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique & American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s Stephanie Coontz

From Reader Review A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique & American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s for online ebook

Christina says

This book looks at the phenomenon that was *The Feminine Mystique* when Betty Friedan wrote it in the 1960s. I found its analysis of *The FM* interesting, since I'd never read the book but knew some of its history. Basically, what it comes down to is that Friedan wrote that the culture of the day idolized and elevated the work of a homemaker, creating the "feminine mystique", while many housewives (particularly educated ones) found it boring at times. The solution, according to Friedan, is for a woman to get involved in creative (i.e. paid) work.

I found it ironic, however, that Coontz is critical of how Friedan didn't go far enough in facing down the stereotypes of her age (because *gasp* Friedan didn't support lesbians!) but at the same time, Coontz takes our current stereotypes and cultural mores for granted and doesn't examine them. That was the biggest disappointment to me -- that Coontz starts from the clear bias that virtually everything that came from the feminist movement is wonderful, that the reason the book was so successful is that it resonated with those poor depressed housewives, and that women belong in the workforce (virtually no mention is made of how this helps children, however, which to me is the biggest problem with the feminist movement -- it's all about individual fulfillment at the expense of children).

For example, Coontz analyzes the letters written to the editors of the magazines that published excerpts of Friedan's book, noting that 80% of them were negative. She quotes the positive ones in detail, showing how these women resonated with what Friedan was saying, then says dismissively that those who were negative towards Friedan just showed how steeped they were in the feminist mystique themselves -- because of course if a woman writes in to say it's a wonderful gift to be able to create a beautiful home and a loving environment for her husband and children, she must be brainwashed by the cultural expectations. Never mind that according to Coontz herself, that means that 80% of the letters were apparently written by brainwashed, oppressed housewives.

From my perspective, as an educated mother who has chosen to stay home with my children, I can see why and how Betty's book resonated with those who felt discouraged or frustrated with the work of motherhood. Motherhood is hard work and much of it is invisible (except when it's not done!). It's also a long-term investment. Much of it doesn't grant immediate benefits, like a paycheck, status, or recognition. If you focus on the day to day, short-term feelings, it's easy to feel like nothing important is happening and to find yourself buying into Friedan's arguments that it would be better to enter the workforce and enjoy more creativity and fulfillment. But the creative work offered in the workforce is nothing compared to the real pay-off that comes from really giving your heart and soul to the people you love. Relationships take time, energy, and effort, some of it mundane and boring, but in the grand scheme of things, that's what matters most.

Ciara says

we read this one in my feminist book club, & i think it probably earned two & a half stars from me. when will goodreads get with the program & start offering half-stars?

i really wanted to like this book! i was even prepared to shell out & pay full-price for it new, but the independent bookstore in my town didn't have any copies & couldn't get a copy to me before my book club meeting. a word to the wise for those of you who live in towns with well-stocked independent bookstores: never take that for granted. although i routinely sang the praises of the harvard bookstore when i lived in boston & spent hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars there over the course of eight years, i am now feeling like i didn't cherish it enough.

because i couldn't get a hard copy in time for my meeting & the public library copy (copies?) was (were?) checked out, i had to settle for an ebook. this may have influenced my perspective on the book. i have even gone so far as to read e-versions of books i've already read as actual books, & i did not like them as much in the e-version. i don't have an ereader, so i have to read ebooks on my computer. even with the screen light turned down, it makes my eyes tired, the interface is clunky, & i find myself racing to finish the book just so i can end the torture of reading on an electronic device.

the actual text of this book is skimpy--only about 180 pages. it's not a biography of friedan, who wrote the feminine mystique so much as it is a mash-up of a social history examining the influence of the feminine mystique & a sociological overview of women's rights fifty years later. if you have ever read any interdisciplinary-ish sociological non-fiction, especially that published by an academic press, you will be familiar with the way that these books always start with a really detailed introduction that functions as a kind of annotated table of contents. pretty much all the talking points the book is going to focus on are summarized briefly in the intro. well, a strange stirring basically read as a 180-page introduction. i kept waiting to get to the meat & potatoes part of the book, the part that would can it with the endless statistics & survey results for two seconds & really get into some nitty gritty stories about how the feminine mystique influenced its readers, or how it was marketed, or how it shaped a second wave feminist legacy that is relevant to women today. but it was just a ceaseless parade of facts, figures, percentages, survey results, & rehashing of other scholars' research. the whole thing felt a little bit sloppy & lot derivative. about halfway through the book, i found myself thinking, "this is a book about a book, & the author has failed to make any compelling argument about why in the fuck i should care about the feminine mystique." i mean, that is kind of an oversight.

even though the other women in my book club had been excited to read this book, we kept it on our agenda for three weeks & never managed to talk about it even once. all three of our meetings were just gossip sessions. which says a lot more about the book than us. it just didn't compel us or inspire us at all. even our few attempts to relate our gossip topics to something in the book were belabored & shallow.

& today, i read an article in the "new york times" written by stephanie coontz, about educated women & marriage. her argument was basically that women are now earning more than half of all advanced degrees in the united states, & by the time an educated women is 35-40, she is just as likely to have been married than her less educated counterparts. um...fascinating? there were lots tawdry details about how men that are less educated than their wives experience more erectile dysfunction, which coontz suggests is a function of a man feeling inferior to his wife. it was like the feminist version of yellow journalism. i don't know. it just felt like a throwback to 1992 or something, like the next article was going to be about gennifer flowers. i guess that if you are really pining for feminist scholarship that has not progressed beyond the clinton administration, this might be just the book you are looking for, but the rest of us are a little disappointed.

Emily says

Ms. Coontz presents a compelling account of the impact *Feminine Mystique* had on women and society when it was first published in 1963. She notes the exaggerations and glossing-over-of-details that occasionally occur in Betty Friedan's book as well as the laser-like precision with which she (Friedan) described the feelings of so many women (mostly white, middle-class) of the time. This balanced critique offers solid criticisms (for example, the experience of minorities is completely overlooked) and gives credit where it is due; the reactions of women when they first read the book are given in their own words, which lends additional emotional force to the statements.

My husband put up with my indignant recital of most of the first chapter, which selectively sets the scene for readers of what life was like for women in the early 1960s. "Only two of eight Ivy League schools accepted women undergraduates." "Elementary schools did not allow girls to be crossing guards or to raise and lower the American flag each day." "The law did not recognize that a married woman could be raped by her husband." "At least five states required women to receive court approval before opening a business in their own name." If steam could have been coming out of my ears, it would have been...

I was unaware of the focus Friedan put on advertisers and consumerism. She pointed out the consistent image promoted in advertisements that told women that the pinnacle of happiness could be reached mopping the floors and baking bread, implying that if those housewifely pursuits didn't transport you to nirvana there was something wrong with you. I was also shocked to learn that many (most?) psychiatrists of the day agreed; "any woman who wanted more meaning in life than she found in the kitchen and nursery suffered from psychological maladjustment."

Ms. Coontz spends one solid chapter debunking several myths that have grown up around *Feminine Mystique*, including that it was "male-bashing." In fact, Ms. Coontz reports, it "made a point of not criticizing husbands for their wives' unhappiness." Rather, Friedan insists that "marriages would be happier when women no longer tried to meet all their needs through their assigned roles as wives and mothers." *Feminine Mystique*, while it was significant "click" moment for many individual women, did not launch the modern feminist movement.

I appreciate Ms. Coontz's thoughtful consideration of the effects of *Feminine Mystique* today. Interestingly, she posits that "The feminine mystique may now be less of a barrier to gender equality than the 'masculine mystique'." She notes that "a recent study of middle school students...found that the feminine stereotypes that prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s were virtually dead...But attitudes about masculinity had not moved all that far." She also suggests "two *new* feminine mystiques [that] stand in the way of the equality and harmony Friedan envisioned": the "hottie mystique" - which emphasizes the importance of looking "sexy" even at very young ages - and the "supermom mystique" - the "all-consuming search for perfection in child rearing" all the time worrying that any little mistake or omission will ruin their children forever. Finally, she states, "The devaluation of motherhood and fatherhood is part of what may be the biggest contemporary mystique of all: what sociologists...label the 'career mystique'" or the idea that "a successful career requires people to commit all their time and energy throughout their prime years to their jobs, delegating all caregiving responsibilities to someone else."

A thoughtful, balanced review of an influential and intriguing book.

For more book reviews, come visit my blog, Build Enough Bookshelves.

Tobi says

i got a review copy of this in the mail this week and have been reading it today...it's excellent....read johanna fateman's review here <http://www.bookforum.com/review/6950>...I am forcing myself to put it down until next month...if anyone would like to read this book and meet up to discuss it I would be totally into that, so let me know! it's a nuanced, social history of betty friedan's the feminine mystique, but it doesn't seem to be just for theory-nerds or womens studies majors; this book is for anyone interested in having a clear understanding of post-war 20th century American history.

coontz has a race and class analysis of the feminine mystique , but persuasively argues that it is worth a deeper look, not a quick dismissal. I read the feminine mystique when I was 18. I wasn't a 50's housewife or mom, I was a teenage girl in a band in a male-dominated punk scene struggling not to be defined as "someone's girlfriend", and it resonated with me at the time. I look forward to reconsidering it in its social context.

Erika says

The first two or three chapters were slow-going for me, but then the book picked up momentum. It is fascinating to read reactions to The Feminine Mystique from a wide spectrum of people and from different generations and time periods. There weren't quite as many testimonials as I had anticipated, but in the end, those the author chose to use were highly resonant. I think much of the truth (both positive and negative) of the book was captured in this unexpected reaction "from a prominent gay historian."

"In the 1990s he had a stay-at-home boyfriend 'who suffered from the same anxieties as the housewives Friedan profiled.' At his advice, his partner read the book taking comfort from the idea that the depression he had at first experienced as a personal inadequacy was an understandable reaction to the lack of independent meaning in his life.

"A few years later, the historian picked up Friedan's book himself and was 'astounded' by its power. 'Her diatribes against homosexuals were repellent. I was shocked to see that she reflected uncritically the biases of the 1950s...But the book still spoke to me, a gay man of the twenty first century."

I found the last two chapters especially good, including Coontz's discussion of the "career mystique."

Doug says

Not quite the "sequel" that I needed to bring me up-to-date with the movement, but still a pretty good contextual analysis of a great book. Sometimes falls into the "statistics regurgitation" rhythm of much of the genre, but is mostly well-written and sensitively analyzed.

K says

I enjoy Stephanie Coontz's books, with their critical analysis of the way we think things were historically vs. factual evidence. This book overlapped a little with her book on marriage but focused on myths and facts

surrounding *The Feminine Mystique* and its impact, both perceived and actual.

In her introduction, Coontz tells us that *The Feminine Mystique* "has been credited -- or blamed -- for destroying...the 1950s consensus that women's place was in the home." Passionate opinions abound about whether this was a good thing or a bad thing, including many from people who've never actually read the book. When Coontz finally read the book, she discovered that she found it "boring and dated...repetitive and overblown," as well as making oversimplified claims about feminism in the 1920s and antifeminist reactionary sentiments in the 1940s and 1950s. Friedan was also not exactly liberated by today's standards -- she opined against homosexuality, failed to acknowledge the experience of people of color, and was actually not as single-minded about women working outside the home as she is perceived to be.

Coontz begins by acknowledging that the early 1960s was in fact a time of much institutionalized sexism in America. She writes about Freudian psychiatrists promoting ideas that if a woman felt dissatisfied in her wife/mother role, there was clearly something wrong with her rather than with her situation. Coontz notes that Friedan did not actually challenge the notion that women should be wives and mothers. Rather, Friedan gave voice to the fact that many housewives, while striving mightily to convince themselves and others that they were content to revolve their lives around the routines of housework and childcare, felt a deep insecurity, self-doubt, and unhappiness that they could not articulate. This was a message which spoke to a large number of 1960s housewives.

According to Coontz, a prominent theme of *The Feminine Mystique* was that women, like men, want to feel that their lives have a greater meaning and purpose. Friedan argued that although a woman who could stay home and raise her children was arguably privileged, and may feel guilty for failing to appreciate her situation, she could still feel frustrated and stifled. This struck a chord with many women in this situation, who were struggling with depression and taking tranquilizers and blaming themselves for the dissatisfaction they felt. Interestingly, Coontz notes that "Nowhere does the book advocate that women pursue full-time careers or even suggest that women ask their husbands to help them with childcare and housework if they went to school or took a job." In fact, many later feminists felt that *The Feminine Mystique* failed to confront male privilege in the home. Friedan simply advocated for women to "pursue and education and develop a life plan that would give meaning to the years after her children left home." This agenda was hardly a militant one.

According to Coontz, Friedan argued that following women's suffrage and the first wave of feminism in the 1920s, the Great Depression and World War II resulted in a backlash that drove women back into the home out of a need for family stability in trying times. Friedan added that manufacturers saw the population of homemakers as ideal consumers, and promoted household goods as a source of self-actualization for women in these roles. She named other sources as well as promoting the idea that women should feel entirely fulfilled in homemaking roles and have no need for any other outlets. However, Coontz adds, Friedan's account does not exactly jive with actual history.

Although successful activism by women for the sake of women's suffrage resulted in progress, feminism in the 1920s was not a monolithic movement and many expressed discomfort with the changes on this front. More women began working at this point, but it was a time of glaring double standards and inequalities. Further, having gained the vote, feminism lost a unifying cause and the threat of fascism in the 1930s became more of a concern than women's rights. Additionally, a review of popular articles published in the late 1940s and 1950s suggests that Friedan's ideas were not as novel as people believe; in fact, feminist ideas were being voiced and the ideal of a woman staying home was being challenged in a variety of quarters. In other words, although there was some truth to Friedan's views of feminist history from the 1920s until the 1960s, the picture was more complex than she acknowledges.

That being said, Coontz acknowledges that reading *The Feminine Mystique* was transformative for many women. Many women describe *The Feminine Mystique* as liberating them from the self-blame they experienced as they struggled with anxiety and depression in their roles as homemakers, sometimes with difficult marriages. Although Friedan's claims had been anticipated by some earlier scholars, Friedan's book reached a wider audience and was therefore perceived as original. Some women credit Friedan with giving them the courage to leave their unhappy marriages; however, Friedan was actually not anti-marriage. Friedan's argument was that marriages would be happier when women no longer tried to meet all of their needs through their assigned roles as wives and mothers, not that women should leave their marriages. In fact, Coontz encountered women (and men!) who reported that reading *The Feminine Mystique* actually helped their marriages.

According to Coontz, many critics dismiss *The Feminine Mystique* "as written by a middle-class housewife who did not understand the needs of working women or minorities and who addressed problems unique to elite, educated readers." Coontz notes that the book was clearly biased in favor of women from middle-class backgrounds, and had its biggest impact on women who were college-educated but could not see how to integrate their education with their adult life as wives and mothers. This was certainly a different problem from women who were working out of necessity, although some working-class women embraced *The Feminine Mystique* as well. Coontz is sympathetic, noting that although the pain of women struggling with hardship and deprivation should clearly not be overlooked, the internal struggles of middle class women experiencing role conflict are worth examining as well.

In her final chapters, Coontz notes that Friedan exaggerates the originality of her ideas and fails to acknowledge some of her source material. *The Feminine Mystique* was not actually ahead of its time, according to Coontz, who states that books "don't become bestsellers because they are ahead of their time. They become bestsellers when they tap into concerns that people are already mulling over, pull together ideas and data that have not yet spread beyond specialists and experts, and bring these all together in a way that is easy to understand and explain to others." Rather than innovating, *The Feminine Mystique* "synthesized a wide range of scholarly research and contemporary social criticism."

Coontz also notes that Friedan exaggerated the "hostile reception" her book received; in fact, she had a large number of supporters. According to Coontz, "The women's movement certainly would have taken off without Friedan's book." What Friedan did accomplish, though, was "lifting so many women out of such deep self-doubt and despair." Coontz describes *The Feminine Mystique* as a "journalistic tour de force, combining scholarship, investigative reporting, and a compelling personal voice." According to Coontz, Friedan's "insistence on the need to break down prevailing assumptions about women, work, and family and to look for the societal origins of dilemmas that are often experienced as purely personal remains extremely relevant."

Coontz describes Friedan as far from a "man hater." Rather, she was "consistently, almost romantically, optimistic about heterosexual love and marriage in a world where women were men's equals." According to Coontz, although sociologists and economists correctly predicted that women with more resources would be more likely to walk away from an unsatisfying marriage, after an initial increase the divorce rate actually began to decline after the 1980s. More women are happily integrating careers and motherhood, and more men are helping with housework, even if their wives stay home. The lowest level of life satisfaction is not reported by stay-at-home mothers or by working mothers -- rather, it's reported by those who have had one of these paths forced on them when their preference is the other path.

Coontz argues that we have come a long way since *The Feminine Mystique*; however, we have some new problems. According to Coontz, in our time of increasingly liberal dress norms, young girls are increasingly

preoccupied with looking "hot" without looking "slutty," and this early emphasis can lead to girls becoming sexually active before they are emotionally ready. Coontz adds that as a society, we continue to give conflicting messages about motherhood and work as well as promoting the myth that stay-at-home mothers and working mothers are divided into two hostile camps and sides must be taken about who is "right." According to Coontz, while most women desire some combination of professional development and hands-on motherhood, rigid work policies create a reality where one of these goals must take a backseat, even if it is no longer sacrificed entirely. Today, "...few workers have the luxury of a full-time caregiver at home, even though obligations to children last longer than in the past..." and "...employees who *do* earn enough to support a family...are often forced to work more hours than they really need or want." Coontz notes that other countries set limits on the maximum length of the workweek and are more generous with subsidized parenting leaves.

I remember learning in high school that *The Feminine Mystique* rocked American society, and in my religious circles, feminism is often blamed for the breakdown of families and all sorts of societal ills. It was fascinating to examine this rhetoric through the lens of a historical look at the book that supposedly -- though not actually -- launched the movement.

Patty says

I bought this book about a year ago to complete a thrift books order. My local library didn't own it and I wanted to read it. Also I thought I would recommend it to my book group. I am not sure why it took me so long to get to this.

I am definitely suggesting it to my book group. Even though we have some issues about feminism, I think we can safely read it and not have a battle about "working" moms. We will see.

Coontz does an excellent job of putting *The Feminine Mystique* in context. I was glad to find out more about where women were when the book came out; what women were most affected by this and how Friedan and her writings fit in with the feminist movement of the 60's and 70's.

I also was pleased to read Coontz' perspective on this seminal work. As a feminist scholar, Coontz could talk about the way Friedan influenced many aspects of American life.

Because Coontz is a professor, she is able to talk knowledgeably about the negative effects of this feminist book. Somehow it never occurred to me that if you are a scholar in this area, you should be reading the conservative, backlash to this type of materials. Now that I know that, of course it makes sense. Another plus in reading for my own edification, rather than for teaching. I am grateful to read what I want rather than what I need to read.

If you have any interest in history, in the changes that have happened since the 1950's or you just want to know more about Betty Friedan, this is the book for you.

Holly says

It's quite common in literary criticism to find a book that's about another book: you know, analyses of *Pride and Prejudice* or *War and Peace*. Don't know that I've ever before come across a work of informational nonfiction about another work of informational nonfiction. It made for a weird read.... Still, I would recommend the first eight chapters for anyone who read and found interesting *The Feminine Mystique*. I would recommend the ninth and final chapter for ANYONE: it's terrific, a really concise summary on the state of heterosexual marriage, gender equality and human happiness in the US in the 21st century. I would recommend Coontz's "lengthy bibliographic essay," which is how refers in her author's note to the travesty she substitutes for citations and a works cited list, for *absolutely no one*--it's a useless piece of crap. It ensures that no one can easily check her scholarship, which raises suspicions, since she points out that Friedan didn't like it when people checked hers. Stephanie: what's up with that useless thing? What on earth were you *thinking*?

Veronica says

I've described *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique & American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* by Stephanie Coontz to others as a historical look at the women who read *The Feminine Mystique*, the impact of the book on their lives and a look at the myth of Betty Friedan. For a women's history nerd like me, this book was awesome. Admittedly, the semester took its toll on how quickly, or rather how slowly, I read this book as this review was supposed to be included in Girl w/Pen's salon back in February.

I also have to admit that I've never read *The Feminine Mystique*. I know, I know...but Coontz also talked to women who didn't read the book either! The mythology surrounding TFM is so strong that it has touched most of our lives whether we have read it or not. I believe the mythology of TFM is simply put that Betty Friedan, a 1950s housewife, wrote a book about how she discovered that her boredom of caring for the kids and cleaning the house lead her to single-handedly revive the feminist movement in the USA. This includes founding the National Organization for Women. The critiques focus on how the book and the mainstream feminist movement (NOW) were too focused on middle-class white women. Coontz painstakingly proves and disproves these myths.

She also puts all the realities into historical perspective. Coontz is a historian and while some may think she is making excuses for how Friedan frames the issues in the book as well as tweaks Friedan made to her own backstory. Coontz outlines the often ignored/hidden feminist movement of the post-WW II era before the second wave officially begins with facts such as:

...by 1955, a higher percentage of women worked for ages than ever had during the war. In fact, women's employment rate grew four times faster than men's during the 1950s. The employment of wives tripled and the employment of mothers increased fourfold. (page 59)

The emotion that Friedan tapped into with TFM, according to Coontz, wasn't that being married and a mom was a terrible thing, but that by having marriage & motherhood as THE goal in life, for most women in the 1950s, their life goals were achieved by 25. "...a few years after having children [they] found that they had no compelling goal left to pursue. As Cam Stivers said, it felt as if her life was already over (page 86)."

The myth that Friedan was anti-marriage was explored and Coontz finds evidence that yes, some of the women who read TFM eventually divorced. But she also found that many of those women remarried and loved their second marriages. Coontz also talked with men who had read the book. Those men recounted how it helped them reframe how they saw marriage as more of a partnership.

As for the whiteness of TFM, Coontz acknowledges this fact. She spends one chapter to answer this critique directly while educating readers on the often unacknowledged history of African-American women in the civil rights movement as well as their leadership in "balancing" work and family. Coontz interviewed African-American women who wrote to Friedan who were upset that Friedan thought working would solve housewives problems as well as those who said it steeled them against the "prejudices in graduate school or medical school (126)."

I loved the chapter where Coontz lets Ruth Rosen's working class critique take center stage. So many white working class women wrote to Friedan with essentially a "wah..wah..wah..." message. Women who were working their butts off at the office and at home and did not feel liberated. And the even-handedness of Coontz also shows us working-class women who used TFM as their only ally in their quest to attend college and postpone the marriage & baby carriage.

Coontz ends the book with a look at how women are faring today. Did feminism kill marriage? Nope. The more education a woman gets, the more likely they are to marry. Did feminism kill sexiness? Nope. The more men contribute to housework, the happier they are in the bedroom! It's not all fun and roses, but it's not the gloom and doom that anti-feminists want us to believe.

And lastly, does feminism hate mothers? Hell no! Coontz wrote an excellent op-ed in the NYTimes for Mother's Day outlining how feminism has helped mothers by pushing for women to make their own choice about staying home with the kids, working outside the home or both depending on the family's need. Most pressure on women to be a certain kind of mother usually comes from non-feminist talking heads.

I really hope that everyone who has any opinion of what TFM did to our culture will read this book. It won't convert those who fiercely opposes feminism, but those who hold moderate views or hesitate to call themselves feminists based on any of the myths this books debunks, will be moved to reexamine those beliefs. It will also allow for a re-examination of Friedan herself. For those of us who are fiercely feminist, this is a must read book. One who doesn't know her history is bound to repeat it. And we all know how that turns out in the feminist movement. *wink*

Disclaimers: I requested a copy from the author and am a big fan of her previous work.

Susan Albert says

A Strange Stirring is an excellent "biography of a book" that sets The Feminine Mystique in its historical context. I grew up in the 1950s, read Friedan's book in 1964, and was strongly influenced by it. In its time, for Friedan's intended audience, it was a powerful book. It has come under fire in recent decades by people who weren't there when it came out and don't understand how it felt to be a fifties woman. A Strange Stirring sets the record straight. Kudos to author Stephanie Coontz for a well-documented, beautifully written study of an important book, an important decade.

Jesse Jost says

Eye opening and thought provoking historical analysis! I enjoyed it.

Marinia Powell says

The subject matter was interesting, but the text bookish style in which it's written waters down the interest.

Aimee Powelka says

Great read for people like me who had heard of The Feminine Mystique but never really knew what it was (another way to say sexism). I loved the way it helped me think about my female relatives - one grandmother who would have like being a nurse, another who went a little batty being home full-time - plus the how the aspirations of my mother and mother-in-law were shaped by the times they were raised in. And I really hope the last chapter on how Americans are increasingly fed-up with our fixation on work and career is true and change happens before my kiddos turn 18!

Apple Red says

this book is absolutely wonderful and terrific. i love this book.
