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**IS IT THE END OF MEN, OR ARE MEN STILL IN POWER?  
YES!**

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INTRODUCTION

You would have to have been napping – as those legions of stay-at-home dads are said to do – to have missed the hoopla over Hanna Rosin’s cover story in the *Atlantic*<sup>1</sup> and the big news about her book.<sup>2</sup> Well done! But I think the book has also been alarmingly misread. Rosin has been called both a radical feminist for celebrating men’s demise, and an anti-feminist for suggesting that women have already won and that discrimination is a thing of the past. I think some of this misreading is deliberate – people read with agendas, after all. And I think some part of it has to do with the way Rosin and her marketers have framed the book. After all, the central thesis of the book is contained not in the big, bold headline, “The End of Men” but in the smaller print subtitle, “And the Rise of Women.”

I believe that the subtitle of her work is entirely right and that the title is just as surely wrong. I will explain in a moment. But first, a story.

I have been teaching gender-studies courses at large public universities for twenty-five years. Being a sociologist and teaching large classes of 300 to 450 students, I often do little surveys in class. When I started twenty-five years ago, I asked my female students what they thought it meant to be a woman. The typical responses I might receive would be “be nice, pretty, smile, cooperate.” When I would ask men what they thought it meant to be a man twenty-five years ago, they would say, “John Wayne.”

When I ask my students now, the women say, “Huh? What does it mean to be a woman? I don’t know. I can be anything I want. I can be an astronaut, a surgeon, Mia Hamm, or Lady Gaga.” When I ask the men, I get “Ah-nuld.”

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<sup>1</sup> Hanna Rosin, *The End of Men*, ATLANTIC, July/Aug. 2010, at 56.

<sup>2</sup> HANNA ROSIN, *THE END OF MEN: AND THE RISE OF WOMEN* (2012).

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Okay, so maybe not Arnold. Maybe some other cardboard cut-out action figure. The women believe that the feminist revolution is over. And they won. They believe they can have it all, they can do anything they want, sleep with anyone they want, pursue any dream they want. And the men are still locked into the same ideology of masculinity that defined my era, that defined my father's era.

In a sense, this is what Hanna Rosin is writing about. This is the dramatic change in *women's* lives over the past half century. The question is what has been the impact on *men* of these enormous changes in women's lives?

### I. ASSUMPTIONS: IS GENDER A ZERO-SUM GAME?

In exploring the impact these changes have had on men, I want to tease out some assumptions in Rosin's argument. Then I want to point to a couple of areas in which I think a different framing might lead to a more accurate understanding of the state of American masculinity.

One assumption in Rosin's argument is causal: the relationship of title to subtitle makes it appear that men ended first, and women have risen to take their place. Surely this is not the proper sequence. If men are ending, it is attendant upon, and a consequence of, the rise of women. They are women, we hear them roar, and we shrivel right up.

The second assumption is logical. Rosin's title and subtitle – indeed, the entire book until its conclusion – assume that gender is a zero-sum game: one rises while the other falls and neither can rise together nor fall together. Even if Rosin does not share the interplanetary theory of gender, that women are from Venus and men are from Mars, she does believe that there is a battle of the sexes and that at present, as one of her male informants puts it, “our team is losing.”<sup>3</sup>

This is what we might call the “either/or” assumption. Either women are winning or losing, and, conversely, either men are winning or losing. Either things are getting better or they are getting worse. Either we are all bowling alone or we are connecting with everyone we have ever met in a virtual friending frenzy. Either hooking up is his wet dream (and her nightmare) or her sexual empowerment at his expense. We sociologists see things differently. We see things as “both/and.” Both statements are true. We frame our analysis in an understanding of the relationship between the two sides.

The third assumption is sociological: Rosin treats men – or as she calls her two-dimensional cartoon version, “Cardboard Man” – as some antediluvian dinosaur, unwilling or unable to adapt, slouching toward extinction.<sup>4</sup>

This assumption raises two questions. First, exactly which men is she talking about? When she writes that “men's hold on the pinnacles of power is

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 61.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 7-8 (describing the imaginary figures, “Plastic Woman” and “Cardboard Man,” that symbolize her conclusions about the state of men and women in which Plastic Woman continually changes and adjusts, while Cardboard Man fails to do so).

loosening,”<sup>5</sup> is she speaking of gay men, black men, Latino men, working-class men, upper-class men, Asian men, transmen, older men, boys? Assuredly not. Actually, even if it is the “end of men,” it is really the end of middle-class, straight, white men. And it is not really the end of them either, of course. It is the end of their unquestioned entitlement.

Second, if men are ending, what is driving them toward this cliff of oblivion? Is it the rise of women? I don’t think so. I think it is the archaic definitions of masculinity that are, and this is key, enforced and policed pretty relentlessly by other men. Rosin omits the central dynamic of masculinity: its homosociality.

Let me discuss just a couple of the substantive areas Rosin addresses. Here I suggest that the picture is far more complicated – and indeed, in some cases, the opposite of what she argues – and that these three assumptions each color her perspective so as to distort or reframe the question.

## II. ECONOMY: GREATER EQUALITY AND THE GLASS CEILING

Let us begin, as Rosin does, with the economy. Here, Rosin is breathlessly hyperbolic in laying out the fact that women’s working lives have changed dramatically. As a result, she gives only half the story – the “either/or” half.

Rosin says, for example, that women are now a majority of the workforce; most of the managers and professionals are now women, one in five men of “prime working age” are out of work, and women dominate in thirteen of the fifteen job categories expected to grow most in the next decade.<sup>6</sup>

None of these statements is true; all have been amply rebutted.<sup>7</sup> I will give only one example. Her statement about managers and professionals takes a massively broad job category and fails to disaggregate it. Among professional jobs, genders remain quite segregated.<sup>8</sup> For example, men outnumber women in some industries such as engineering, architecture, and computer science, while women outnumber men in others such as education, training, and library occupations.<sup>9</sup> In that same aggregate, women earn 73.5% of the salary of men.<sup>10</sup> Hardly the “end of men.”

At the same time, Viviane Reding, the European Union’s Justice Commissioner, commented recently that corporate self-regulation has failed to

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<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 199.

<sup>6</sup> Rosin, *supra* note 1, at 63-64.

<sup>7</sup> See Derek Rose, *Men at Work: Why Men Are as Powerful as Ever in 2012*, ASKMEN, [http://www.askmen.com/entertainment/austin\\_3800/3895\\_men-at-work.html](http://www.askmen.com/entertainment/austin_3800/3895_men-at-work.html) (last visited Mar. 11, 2013) (citing BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, U.S. DEP’T OF LABOR, HOUSEHOLD DATA ANNUAL AVERAGES (2009), available at <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/lf/aa2009/pdf/cpsaat11.pdf>).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

crack the glass ceiling.<sup>11</sup> She has consequently threatened to impose a quota system modeled after that of Norway if the number of women in management positions does not increase.<sup>12</sup> How can women keep banging their heads on the glass ceiling if they have already crashed through it? The truth is that both sides are true. Women have made gains in some sectors and not others, and in middle management, not at the top. Women are rising; men are not ending.

Take a more recent example: the “mancession.”<sup>13</sup> Here, again, Rosin only tells part of the story. As she mentions, the “mancession” of 2007 to 2009 hit men very hard; seventy-five percent of jobs lost were jobs held by men.<sup>14</sup> But the “he-cession” has also been replaced by a “he-recovery.”<sup>15</sup> Since January 2010 job growth for men has been significantly greater than job growth for women.<sup>16</sup> Between July 2009 and December 2010, women lost 222,000 jobs and men gained 640,000.<sup>17</sup>

But the explanation is less about gender, although one must ask exactly which gender did we think would be holding the shovel of all those shovel-ready jobs that were part of the stimulus package? The question is where the jobs are. Job losses have been most severe in the public sector – teachers, administrative personnel, secretaries – that is, jobs held by women.<sup>18</sup> In effect, the American response to the “mancession” was a massive transfer of wealth and jobs to the private sector and away from state and local government. In a sense, we gave to him, at her expense. We have actually seen a dramatic “masculinization” of public spending during the economic recovery.

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<sup>11</sup> See *Boardroom Balance: EU Commissioner Eyes Binding Gender Quota System*, SPIEGEL ONLINE (Mar. 5, 2012, 3:58 PM), <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/boardroom-balance-eu-commissioner-eyes-binding-gender-quota-system-a-819335.html>.

<sup>12</sup> See *id.* (“The European Union is piling pressure onto companies and governments, threatening a legally binding quota if companies fail to elevate more women to the higher ranks of business.”).

<sup>13</sup> ROSIN, *supra* note 2, at 3 (“The terms ‘mancession’ and ‘he-cession’ featured prominently in headlines that year, their efforts at cuteness meant to soften the painful reality that the primary victims of our latest economic disaster had been men like Calvin, the ordained breadwinners.”).

<sup>14</sup> Rosin, *supra* note 1, at 60 (“It can be found, most immediately, in the wreckage of the Great Recession, in which three-quarters of the 8 million jobs lost were lost by men.”).

<sup>15</sup> NAT’L WOMEN’S LAW CTR., *MODEST RECOVERY LARGELY LEAVES WOMEN BEHIND* (2011), available at <http://www.tompkinsnow.webs.com/slowrecovery.pdf> (referencing statistics that show that men have gained more jobs in the economic recovery than women).

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

### III. EDUCATION: IS THE “BOY CRISIS” BECAUSE OF GIRLS’ RISE?

Rosin spends some time rehearsing the “boy crisis” in schools.<sup>19</sup> The debate about this crisis relies on three sets of empirical findings: that boys are lagging behind girls in higher education (women receive nearly 60% of bachelor’s degrees and 60% of all master’s degrees);<sup>20</sup> that girls’ achievement outpaces boys’ (the well-known statistic that 70% of high school valedictorians in 2011 were girls);<sup>21</sup> and that boys are dramatically over-represented on the behavioral and discipline side of things, as they are more likely to be suspended, have learning disabilities, and have behavioral issues.<sup>22</sup>

But again, it is a false framing. Rosin would note that men’s historic advantage in higher education is diminishing, as the percentage of bachelor’s degrees awarded to men is now at its lowest point since World War II.<sup>23</sup> While this might be true, it is not the whole story. More people of both genders are going to college than ever before. In 1980 approximately 5.9 million men and 6.2 million women were enrolled in college and by 2010 the numbers increased to approximately 9 million men and 12 million women.<sup>24</sup> Thus, both statements are true – more *people* are going to college than ever before, but the rate of change is greater for women than it is for men. Is it a zero-sum game? Only if you think that men’s decline is because of women’s gain. Only if you think that increased attention to individual learning styles, greater teacher training, more flexible classroom organization, and a variety of texts is a bad thing for boys. But then you would have to have a pretty inflexibly unforgiving view of boys. Indeed, you would be male bashing.

### IV. SEX: THE GENDER POLITICS OF HOOKING UP

Finally, let’s talk about sex. In addition to my gender-studies courses, I have also been teaching courses on sexuality for the past twenty-five years. I am actually one of the principal investigators on the very study that Rosin cites,<sup>25</sup> the “Online Campus Social Life Survey,” originally developed by Paula England, then at Stanford. We have data from 20,000 undergraduate students nationwide, and we have followed it up with several interviews.

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<sup>19</sup> ROSIN, *supra* note 2, at 145-67 (describing how women are academically outperforming men).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at 149-50.

<sup>21</sup> Lester Holt, *Men Falling Behind Women*, NBCNEWS.COM (Mar. 5, 2011, 7:52 PM), [http://www.nbcnews.com/id/41928806/ns/business-us\\_business/t/men-falling-behind-women/#.URA-6mfhf1E](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/41928806/ns/business-us_business/t/men-falling-behind-women/#.URA-6mfhf1E) (“Women dominate honor rolls and make up more than 70 percent of class valedictorians.”).

<sup>22</sup> See ROSIN, *supra* note 2, at 163.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Fletcher, *Degrees of Separation*, WASH. POST, June 25, 2002, at A1.

<sup>24</sup> NAT’L CTR. FOR EDUC. STATISTICS, U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC., DIGEST OF EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS 2011, at 331 (2012).

<sup>25</sup> ROSIN, *supra* note 2, at 24.

The good news is that Rosin does not wring her hands and deliver another anti-feminist jeremiad that all this hooking up is terrible for girls. Girls just want relationships, so the jeremiad goes, and they put up with hooking up, if they have to, because it is the only way to meet a guy. Indeed, Rosin sees hooking up as an expression of *women's empowerment*.<sup>26</sup>

I think the data are less clear. Yes, women have far greater sexual autonomy than they have ever had, despite current efforts to roll these developments back to the pre-pill era. They have far more control over their sexuality – until they face an unwanted pregnancy. They are far more able to make sexual choices – unless they are drunk at a frat party, at which point their choices may be made for them by someone else.

The problem is not that women are exercising more sexual control and able to engage in casual sex. The problem is the *context* of that increased sexual agency. And the context is still that, when it comes to sex on campus, men still rule. Women's participation in hookup culture is not, as Rosin argues, driven by women's agency,<sup>27</sup> but rather it is driven by women's compliance. Or, to be more accurate, claims of agency coexist with demands for compliance.

For an example, look at your own campus. At campuses with nationally recognized Greek fraternities and sororities, only the fraternities are permitted to have alcohol at parties. Sororities are prohibited by charter. So, who has the parties? And which gender controls the flow of the evening, who gets in and who does not? The choice for women is babe or bitch, compliant or resistant.

In the online survey, we also found that hook-up sex is not particularly great sex – it is typically random and almost always accompanied by copious amounts of alcohol.<sup>28</sup> (Just how good can it be if you are so sloppy drunk you can hardly stand up?) We found a significant orgasm gap – to be expected.<sup>29</sup> We asked each student participant whether he or she had an orgasm during his or her last hookup. Men experienced more than twice as many orgasms as women, with 44% of men reporting orgasms, compared to only 19% of women.<sup>30</sup>

But we also found a *perception of orgasm gap* that led us to look further. We asked students whether his or her partner had an orgasm during their last hookup. When the couple had intercourse (and the woman did not receive oral

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<sup>26</sup> *Id.* at 17-46 (describing the evolution of sexual mores over the last several decades and declaring that “[y]oung women are more in control of their sexual destinies now than probably ever before”).

<sup>27</sup> *See id.* (describing the attitude of many young college women, who choose to engage in hookups rather than relationships so that they can control their own time and spend time studying, working, and developing their careers).

<sup>28</sup> Paula England et al., *Hooking Up and Forming Romantic Relationships on Today's College Campuses*, in *THE GENDERED SOCIETY READER* 578, 581 (Michael Kimmel & Amy Aronson eds., 4th ed. 2011) (“The median number of drinks men had drunk the night of their last hook up was 6, whereas women had consumed 4.”).

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

sex), women reported that they experienced an orgasm 34% of the time, but 58% of men believed that the woman had had an orgasm.<sup>31</sup> And the men did even worse on oral sex: only one in four women experienced orgasm from cunnilingus, while 60% of the men who performed cunnilingus were certain their partners had an orgasm.<sup>32</sup>

What is going on here among all these sexually agentic women, out for their own pleasure? Could it be that at the same time that there is a dramatic increase in sexual empowerment among women, there is also some backsliding? Can women be faking it? We asked. One woman said that she faked orgasms “to make that person feel good, to make them feel like they’ve done their job.”<sup>33</sup> She said that she faked orgasms sometimes “just really to end it,” and noted that “a lot of people say they’ve faked it just because they’re like bored with it.”<sup>34</sup>

The hookup culture is not, as Rosin writes, simply an “engine of female progress”<sup>35</sup> – not when some other gender is driving the train.

#### CONCLUSION

However hyperbolic, Rosin does, I believe, focus the conversation on the right issues. Interestingly, in the book’s conclusion, Rosin changes course. This is not the “end of men” at all! Even Calvin, her working-class “muse,” is turning things around.<sup>36</sup> Men, Rosin writes, “will learn to expand the range of options for what it means to be a man.”<sup>37</sup> Cardboard Man is becoming more plastic.<sup>38</sup> And, Rosin adds, “I want to teach them to bend.”<sup>39</sup>

She can help, thank you, but actually, the brothers are basically doing it for themselves. No, it is not because of the emergence of detumescent, domesticated daddies or some corporate castrati. It is because, regardless of race or class, American men are quietly accommodating themselves to greater gender equality than our country has ever seen. Whether it is in forging inter-sex friendships, sharing more housework and childcare with their wives,

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<sup>31</sup> *Id.* at 582.

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> *Id.* at 584.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> Hanna Rosin, *Boys on the Side*, ATLANTIC, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/09/boys-on-the-side/309062/> (last visited Mar. 11, 2013) (“Actually, [the hookup culture] is an engine of female progress – one being harnessed and driven by women themselves.”).

<sup>36</sup> See ROSIN, *supra* note 2, at 263 (describing how Calvin, one of the Cardboard Men described at the beginning of the book, ultimately decides to apply to nursing school).

<sup>37</sup> *Id.* at 263.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.* (opining that Cardboard Men will “learn to decode the new flexibility, and will begin to adopt it for themselves”).

<sup>39</sup> *Id.* at 270.

creating corporate partnerships, or voting for a woman in the White House, the sexes have never been more equal. Ever.

Rosin's quotation of sociologist Bradford Wilcox may be the most muddle-headed and misguided statement in her entire book. She quotes him claiming that the changes in marriages have certainly been bad for men and for children.<sup>40</sup> The data point decidedly in the other direction: gender equality is win-win, not zero sum. What has proven to enable women to live the lives they say they want to live makes it now possible for men to live the lives that they say they want to live.

The data here are clear. The more egalitarian men are in their relationships, the better their children do in school – they have higher grades, lower rates of absenteeism, and are less likely to see a child psychiatrist or be diagnosed with ADHD.<sup>41</sup> Kids are happier and healthier and they do better in school. And the wives are happier – uh, duh.<sup>42</sup> And healthier. And the *men* are happier – they report higher levels of marital satisfaction and lower rates of drinking, smoking, and recreational drug use.<sup>43</sup> They are more likely to have routine medical screenings but less likely to go to the emergency room.<sup>44</sup> Men are also less likely to see a therapist or be diagnosed with depression or take prescription medication.<sup>45</sup> Oh, and they have more sex.<sup>46</sup>

*The End of Men* is a book about the end of patriarchy, not the end of men. It is the end of that unquestioned entitlement that straight, white men have felt to access to positions of power, to corner offices, and to women's bodies. It is the end of that casual assumption that all positions of power, wealth, influence, and, let's face it, fun are reserved for us and that women's presence is to be resisted, if possible, and tolerated if not.

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<sup>40</sup> *Id.* at 93.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Kimmel, *Has a Man's World Become a Woman's Nation?*, in THE SHRIVER REPORT: A WOMAN'S NATION CHANGES EVERYTHING 323, 352 (Heather Boushey & Ann O'Leary eds., 2009), available at [http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/10/pdf/awn/a\\_womans\\_nation.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2009/10/pdf/awn/a_womans_nation.pdf) (“Research by sociologists Scott Coltrane and Michele Adams looked at national survey data and found that when men increase their share of housework and child care, their children are happier, healthier, and do better in school. They are less likely to be diagnosed with ADHD, less likely to be put on prescription medication, and less likely to see a child psychologist for behavioral problems. They have lower rates of absenteeism and higher school achievement scores.”).

<sup>42</sup> *Id.* (“When men share housework and child care, it turns out, their wives are happier.”).

<sup>43</sup> *See id.* at 353.

<sup>44</sup> *See id.*

<sup>45</sup> *See id.*

<sup>46</sup> *When Dads Clean House, It Pays Off Big Time*, U.C. RIVERSIDE NEWSROOM (June 9, 2003), [http://newsroom.ucr.edu/news\\_item.html?action=page&id=611](http://newsroom.ucr.edu/news_item.html?action=page&id=611) (revealing that studies have found that women are more likely to be sexually interested in men who share in housework).



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The end of male entitlement – economic, political, familial, and sexual – *does* accompany the rise of women. And that end cannot come soon enough, for it also offers the possibility for men to become three dimensional the way women have become.

In 1914, on the eve of the great suffrage demonstration in New York, the writer Floyd Dell sat in his Greenwich Village apartment thinking of how to engage men in supporting gender equality. He was one of the founders of the Men’s League for Woman Suffrage. In an article in *The Masses*, entitled *Feminism for Men*, he came up with a line that I think captures my argument: “Feminism is going to make it possible for the first time for men to be free.”<sup>47</sup>

The rise of women is not at all the “end of men” – it is a beginning.

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<sup>47</sup> Floyd Dell, *Feminism for Men*, *MASSSES*, July 1914, at 19, 19.