
KEYNOTE ADDRESS

THE END OF MEN AND THE RISE OF WOMEN

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I noticed when I was being introduced that I was almost called professor at some point by mistake. This is an unusual and, I must admit, somewhat uncomfortable position for me, because I am a journalist, as you all know, and I am vastly more accustomed to being at the other end of this podium listening to academics give talks. And I have to say that most of the people invited to this conference are people whose work I have read for a long time and greatly admired and heavily leaned on, so that makes it even stranger for me to be up here.

The idea that so many of you have written direct responses to my book¹ is something that I should perhaps find flattering but actually find quite terrifying. But I will say that the benefits to me have been tremendous. I have learned a lot from all of you deepening certain elements of this concept and refining my thinking on a lot of these questions. And, in fact, you all have changed greatly the way I talk about the book, because books are imperfect. And as I have this book out there and have people responding to it, I certainly have learned a huge amount about many of these topics. That is just a note of gratitude to all of you who have taken the time to think about it and respond to it.

I want to start in a very minute place, with a chapter that got left out of the book. As I was doing the research, I did a survey for *Slate* magazine about couples in which the woman makes more money than the man, not necessarily married couples. I don't think this survey would rate as sociology in a research institution because the readers of *Slate* are skewed; they are much more educated and they make a lot more money than your average population. But nonetheless, I had a sociologist help me write up a survey asking a lot of questions and gathering a lot of data.

Some 8000 people answered the survey and then we sort of graphed the material. I just wanted to get a sense of power dynamics – how these couples

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¹ HANNA ROSIN, *THE END OF MEN: AND THE RISE OF WOMEN* (2012).

saw each other, how the men and women viewed each other. And then I did a couple of hundred follow-up interviews, which I am sorry to say did not make it into the book. We decided ultimately not to include that chapter, but I want to start with that.

Here is a couple that I talked about, let's call them Andrea and Bill, because those are their names. They were not married, actually; they were engaged. They were both working at the same firm at the time. It was a computer consulting firm. And the reason that I chose them is because they were literally in the same job when they started out and then she got promoted a little bit faster than he did, and at the end of a few years she was making some \$8000 more than he was. This was a fairly typical situation, I would say. I interviewed some couples in which the wife was making vastly more money or in which the husband did not work at all, but often in cases of people who answered my survey the wife was making just a little bit more money than the man. Sometimes this would unsettle the man in the relationship.

This once totally rare occurrence of a woman making more money than her husband or her boyfriend has now become a somewhat more common phenomenon, certainly not for the majority of couples, but it is an increasingly common situation, especially among young couples as they are starting out their lives. So, you can imagine a range of reactions that Bill would have. He could be proud of his wife. He could be somewhat jealous. He could be resentful. He could be relieved or he could feel totally emasculated. Or he could feel all of these things at once. And generally what I found in the interviews is that you would find elements of all these things happening in these couples.

So I am going to read you the testimony that Bill gave me, which is cobbled together from emails and phone interviews I did:

My wife Andrea and I both started at the same IT company straight from college and after a few years she overtook me professionally. I sat around thinking maybe she had better opportunities or some great breaks, but the reality is she worked harder, she was more organized, and she made better use of her time. There is nothing to ascribe it to except she is better than me.

The most painful moment was when we were at a party and one guy turned to us and said, "You guys are doing great. Andrea, you're a vice president, and Bill, well, we don't know what you are." I laughed along with everyone else, but eight years later I can still remember that moment very clearly. I was like, "Wow. I'm the naked emperor here." Ultimately it's not that I wish she was less successful. It's more that I wished I was less unsuccessful. It's a guy thing. It sucks to be beaten up by a woman. Maybe that sounds misogynistic, but it's hard to break that mold.

Now I will point out that Bill and Andrea described their relationship as very happy and having a low risk of divorce. This was not the ultimate commentary on their relationship. This was just one strain of what he felt about the situation as he was recounting it.

As many of you know, and as Linda McClain mentioned, my book started out as an article in *The Atlantic* in 2010² and in the early days of writing this I was actually thinking mostly about this in economic terms. I started doing the research in 2009. That was the year in which women became the majority of the American workforce for a brief moment; they make up something closer to fifty percent now.³ That was the height of the recession, when a lot more men were losing their jobs.

And I just started to wonder about that. How was it that even when I was a kid the idea of a working woman was unusual enough that there were several sitcoms devoted to her existence and we would think it was so cool that there was a woman in a pantsuit on TV and how interesting was that, and then yet here I am, a grownup, and women are the majority of the workforce? And so I just wondered: was this purely an economic question, were they having an easier time adapting to the new economy?

But as the years went on and I started researching the book I actually began to be much more interested in how these economic changes were affecting relationships between an individual man and an individual woman, the two people, and their marriages. Were there larger trends that you could look at on how the rise of women was affecting intimate relationships both for young people and for older people? So that is what my book research was largely about.

You can hear in Bill's testimony that he is proud of Andrea, but he also feels stung and ambivalent about the situation, and I think that is to be expected in an era when on the one hand fathers are much more involved and expected to be much more involved in their children's lives, and on the other hand you have whole swaths of society in which fathers are hardly able to be involved in their children's lives at all. So I think what it means to be a modern man is a little bit confusing.

And what about Andrea? You can imagine her range of reactions. She too could be psyched, empowered, self-conscious, resentful. I had so many different reactions from the Andreas that I am going to read you two different versions of Andrea. Here is resentful Andrea, who constituted, I would say, about a quarter of the women I interviewed in the survey:

Since earning my law degree in 1989 I have felt hunted like a deer by men as a desirable wife because of my wage-earning capability and good job. I'll never forget my good friend's husband announcing at their

² Hanna Rosin, *The End of Men*, ATLANTIC, July/Aug. 2010, at 56.

³ ROSIN, *supra* note 1, at 4; Casey B. Mulligan, *In a First, Women Surpass Men on U.S. Payrolls*, N.Y. TIMES ECONOMIX (Feb. 5, 2010), <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/05/in-historical-first-women-outnumber-men-on-us-payrolls/>. Women on average made up 46.9% of the U.S. workforce in 2012. See *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, U.S. DEP'T LAB., BUREAU LAB. STAT., <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat03.htm> (last modified Feb. 5, 2013).

wedding reception, “Now that I’ve married a lawyer I won’t have to work anymore,” and he didn’t.

That’s the resentful Andrea. Now here is what delighted Andrea had to say:

I’m the one who is career oriented. I don’t want to come home to someone I have to compete with. Let’s see, who can climb to the top of the career ladder? Who can make the most money? I was so sick of it. I wanted someone who didn’t want to talk about their job all day but who would rather go for a bike ride on the beach, so his making less money was kind of a plus for me.

So you lawyers should appreciate those powerful female attorneys.

I am not giving you those examples because I want to show you young men and women as being pitted against each other forever in a battle about who gets to be top dog. I just think that, because these arrangements are fairly novel, it is quite interesting and important to plumb a little bit what they mean and how they manifest themselves. I do not actually think that this is necessarily good or bad. I think it is decidedly mixed and I think it runs the gamut, as you can see from the couples I interview in my book, from exciting to totally heartbreaking. And I think it depends on how old you are, where you come from, how you started your life, and what your parents do.

Just the other day I got an email from someone who said, “I don’t know what your problem is. This is really awesome. You’re going on and on about how difficult this is. I’m a stay-at-home dad. All anyone ever does is applaud me.” And then I looked at the signoff of the email and of course the guy was from Portland, so I thought, “Well, okay, in Portland maybe that’s what they say, but it’s not how it is everywhere else.” So for a woman and a man, say, from Alabama, which is where I report one of my chapters, where they have been used to living life in a particular way, I think these changes are a lot more unsettling.

Now that I have talked about this individual couple, I want to zoom out a little bit and imagine a single American town. Why did I choose this particular American town? I chose it for several reasons. I suppose I wanted a very tight lab experiment of the waning of the manufacturing economies. I wanted to choose a place in which a lot of the adults had been employed by a single manufacturer. I originally went to Kansas City, which is where my 2010 article in *The Atlantic* was reported, but because Kansas City is so big and diffused it is actually hard to track something so intimate as changing relationships in a place that is that big. So, I began trying to zoom in on a place that was a little bit smaller, and I chose this town called Alexander City, which had previously been home to a textile manufacturer.

You will find no feminists in this town. If there are feminists in this town they are deeply closeted. Many times I heard the words “bra burner,” including from the first female Mayor in the town, as well as from both young women and older women. So this is not a story about the feminist revolution taking hold in Alexander City, except by accident.

This was a place where, until very recently, a man was able to have a pretty prosperous middle-class existence working as a manager in the factory. There were many men there who were making \$70,000, \$100,000 working as managers. Further, in a university town we think of patriarchy as something that we read about or learn about in a gender studies textbook, but in a place like Alexander City the patriarchy is extremely tangible. It literally runs the town. You have the Russell family who built the plant, and then you have their relatives, and then you have the managers of the town. They are all heads of the Lions Club and the little league clubs and the civic society. The patriarchy is visible every place that you go.

About ten years ago, Alexander City had the same thing happen to it that happened to any manufacturing town. The town found itself in a very new situation, because it was such a tightly knit town and so many people worked in this factory. A new thing happened between the men and the women, something very different than had happened before: more women than ever before found themselves as the only providers of the steady paycheck and the health insurance in their households.

And I think this really did a number on people's understanding, especially their biblical understanding, of what the role of a man is and what the role of a woman is. I will relate to you a little bit about one of my favorite people there, a man named Charles Gettys. Charles was somewhat of a high-level executive with Russell who then lost his job. His wife turned out to be extremely successful in the medical center, because medical centers are places that thrive in small towns.

Charles was looking for a job one day and called the unemployment office. The voice that answered the phone sounded very familiar, and it turned out that it was his old secretary there working at the unemployment office. She then transferred him to her manager and it turned out that the manager was another woman who had worked for him back at the Russell factory. And so that was a moment when a light bulb went off for Charles, and here is what he told me:

You're going to laugh at this, but it was harder on the men than the women. It seemed like their skills were more, what's the word, transferrable? I was born in the South where the men take care of their women. Suddenly it's us who are relying on the women. Suddenly we got the women in control.⁴

And he didn't say this, by the way, with any bitterness. He just was trying to work out in his head what had changed in his life and had turned upside-down.

So why do I call this a matriarchy? I realize that is a word that makes a lot of you out there, who are much more careful with your words than we journalists are, bristle. But I will just explain to you why I use the word matriarchy in relation to this situation. It seemed to me that what I was witnessing happen in Alabama was almost precisely what had happened in

⁴ See ROSIN, *supra* note 1, at 84.

inner-city Chicago as described by William Julius Wilson⁵ and what Daniel Patrick Moynihan later described in the 1960s as an emerging “matriarchy” in African American communities.⁶

So, you had the blue-collar jobs disappearing and, as a result, the men having a hard time finding their way. Now, the older couples had been living in a certain way long enough that they were able to reconcile the new economic realities with their biblical philosophy and the sort of lodestars of their life. So I would not say that their lives were necessarily turned upside-down. They were fairly genteel about it.

But for the younger generation the picture really looks quite different. You get the first hints of a situation in which marriage is becoming less frequent and the families feel like they are falling apart. And you have a man and a woman who are not married but have children and the woman is pregnant, and the situation looks a little shakier.

In her book on fathers, Kathryn Edin describes the young men in this situation (her words, not mine): they get derailed because, as she puts it, they do a lot of “stupid shit,” which is really a situation that I encountered.⁷ A couple of her insights were things that I witnessed myself. First, the ties between the younger generation of these men and the mothers of their children are not very strong.⁸ Second, and this is the most insightful thing, the mother has become a kind of authority figure that the men feel like they have been fighting against all their life.⁹ So, here you’ve got this mother who is trying to boss you around, tell you what to do, get money out of you. They treat the mother like she is the man, basically, like just another man hassling them, and I think that’s something that I noticed too.

I would like to highlight another couple from my book, Shannon and Troy. Troy described himself to me as married when I first met them. I think it was on my fourth visit that he said to me, “married in here,” which meant to me that they were not actually married, they were married only in his heart and he had a tattoo with her name on it.

He had not worked for a long time. He had your sort of basic profile of a guy who the poignant thing about him is that he, as his friend told me about him, was waiting for the Russell factory to come back the same way some

⁵ WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON, *THE TRULY DISADVANTAGED: THE INNER CITY, THE UNDERCLASS, AND PUBLIC POLICY* (1987); WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON, *WHEN WORK DISAPPEARS: THE WORLD OF THE NEW URBAN POOR* (1996).

⁶ DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN, OFFICE OF POLICY PLANNING & RESEARCH, U.S. DEP’T OF LABOR, *THE NEGRO FAMILY: THE CASE FOR NATIONAL ACTION* 30-34 (1965) (“A fundamental fact of Negro American family life is the often reversed roles of husband and wife.”).

⁷ KATHRYN EDIN & TIMOTHY J. NELSON, *DOING THE BEST I CAN: FATHERHOOD IN THE INNER CITY* 74-77 (2013) (describing how many inner-city fathers intend to “transform their lives” and be a good parent upon fathering a child, but often fail to “fully shape up”).

⁸ *Id.* at 77-85.

⁹ *Id.* at 83.

people wait for Elvis to come back. He had a sense of the factory as though it was almost a phantom limb that existed in this town and would somehow sort of rescue him, even though it was perfectly clear that it was not coming back. I write at the end of the chapter about how Shannon takes him to the factory just to throw it in his face that it is completely rusted out and it is never coming back.¹⁰

Troy has this expression that he uses, “ain’t a man,” and he uses it in a lot of different ways. Here is a short paragraph describing the ways in which he uses it:

Troy’s favorite expression is “ain’t a man,” which he uses in several contradictory ways. Sometimes it’s a kind of boast – “Ain’t a man who wouldn’t want my lady, even if he’s gay,” he will say, and enumerate all the ways in which Shannon is “smokin’ hot.” Sometimes, though, the expression betrays his own humiliation: “Ain’t a man who would take that from his wife,” he says, recalling the time when, for three nights straight, Shannon came home at four in the morning, with no explanation. “Ain’t a man would do that” refers to night three, when he waited up for Shannon to come home and then choked her until she passed out. “It was my darkest hour,” he says. To make it up for her he bought her a choker with a really big silver heart to cover the bruise.¹¹

I think that is just another indicator of the great ambivalence that some people feel about this changing situation.

The last thing I will say about this matriarchy is that I believe there is a standard criticism of which I am quite aware that we define these growing number of single-mother households as immediately dysfunctional and against the norm. It is possible that I talk about it that way in my book, but I actually do not feel that way. I think I am more in the Andrew Cherlin school of the “marriage-go-round,”¹² the idea that in fact our American obsession with marriage has become somewhat dysfunctional and we refuse to recognize couples like Shannon and Troy, or give them any help, or in any way socially support these couples that are thinly stitched together. I think this is something we should start doing if we are going to have an increasing number of single-parent households.

We have gone from the individual couple to the town. Now I want to zoom out even more and talk about what is going on in the nation and what I started to notice when I began this research. These statistics will undoubtedly be familiar to the academics in the room and might be familiar to anyone who follows this argument at all. I started doing this research in 2009. I was running a women’s website at the time. In the introduction I recount the story of what

¹⁰ ROSIN, *supra* note 1, at 110-12.

¹¹ *Id.* at 104-05.

¹² See generally ANDREW J. CHERLIN, MARRIAGE-GO-ROUND: THE STATE OF THE MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY IN AMERICA TODAY (2009).

in many ways initially started me on this research,¹³ which has to do with a couple that I befriended. I am going to leave that to you to read, but the background story of what I was thinking about was the numbers that were coming at me; it was in 2009 that women became the majority of the workforce. As I said before, now it is about fifty percent.¹⁴ According to the most recent Labor Department numbers that came out, men are at their lowest labor force participation rate since the 1950s.¹⁵ And so the height of the recession was when a lot of economists were describing this as one of our greatest social crises – the idea that men were no longer in the labor force at the rates that they had been and were heading into disability roles in much greater numbers.

And if you look over the long course of the century, as I am sure many people will point out, male and female incomes have not converged, but male incomes have been slowly declining, or rather stagnating, while women's incomes have been rising and then leveling off. Those are the differences between men and women on a broad scale. That was also the year that Pew conducted a study about "breadwinner wives."¹⁶ That term began to enter the conversation about women who make more money than their husbands, how this was a growing phenomenon, and what it means. Moreover, 2009 was also the time when we began to talk about the boom in single motherhood and why this was happening and why fewer people were getting married.

So what is behind this shift? I will speak about it in very broad terms, because we will speak about it more specifically during the employment panel. Largely, it is the waning of the manufacturing economy and the beginning of the service, technology, and information economy. In the list of jobs projected to grow the most going forward, women dominate twelve out of fifteen.¹⁷ Now, this is not because these are great jobs. A lot of these jobs are health-service-industry jobs. Later, we will talk about whether women are ghettoizing themselves or taking advantage of opportunities in this economy. But the fact is that the kinds of jobs that are growing in this economy are jobs toward which women tend to gravitate.

¹³ ROSIN, *supra* note 1, at 1-4.

¹⁴ See *supra* note 3 and accompanying text.

¹⁵ Derek Thompson, *The Great Jobs Mystery: Why Are So Many Men Dropping Out of the Workforce?*, ATLANTIC (Sept. 7, 2012, 12:40 PM), <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/09/the-great-jobs-mystery-why-are-so-many-men-dropping-out-of-the-workforce/262100/>.

¹⁶ PAUL TAYLOR ET AL., PEW RESEARCH CTR., WOMEN, MEN AND THE NEW ECONOMICS OF MARRIAGE (2010), available at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/11/new-economics-of-marriage.pdf>.

¹⁷ ROSIN, *supra* note 1, at 4-5 (citing *The 30 Occupations with the Largest Projected Employment Growth, 2010-20*, U.S. DEP'T LAB., BUREAU LAB. STAT., <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.t06.htm> (last modified Feb. 1, 2012)).

One concept that occurred to me when I was writing my story was something called the “traveling sisterhood,” which is this idea that as women enter the economy at the top as lawyers, accountants, and pharmacists, whatever women tend to do they open up jobs at the bottom for things that women and wives used to do for free, like childcare, eldercare, and food preparation. All the things that we traditionally call women’s work are jobs that open up as someone like me works outside the home. I hire my babysitter, eat out, and do all sorts of things that I would have been doing for my children at home (not that I ever see my children while I am on a book tour, but the things that I used to do for my children before I wrote this book).

And then the important concept, of course, which we will discuss, is education and its meaning, the fact that for every three degrees that women earn, men earn two.¹⁸ And I think that is an increasingly important part of the story, especially in the United States, because whether we like it or not, a whole lot of jobs now require college degrees or some sort of credentialing in skills that they did not previously require. I think that is a big part of the story, especially for young women. Why are young women more successful at getting college degrees than men and what does that mean?

So, what is driving women forward? Here is the part of my talk that people find insulting, so forgive me. There was a concept that came to me as I was trying to define the differences between men and women, and the characters that came to me were Plastic Woman and Cardboard Man.¹⁹ I am mostly talking about roles that men and women play, with the idea being that women have been more flexible. I am talking about an individual woman whose personality is more flexible.

If you look over the course of this century what you see is that women have vastly changed the ways that they behave in the public sphere. So it used to be that women did not work when they got married or they did not work when they had children. Over time what you see is women slowly changing those roles. You see women moving into once male-dominated professions over the course of the century, but you very rarely see men moving into professions that women traditionally occupied. That is something men have always been very reluctant to do.

Economists often warn me when I talk about growing jobs that it is not that interesting to look at which specific jobs are on the list, because technology can make a job obsolete in a second. They say that the important quality to look at is how able and how quickly one is able to adapt to changes in the economy. So I think that is the key element right now.

I also think one interesting thing to note concerning women is that it is essential to the story that women have been marginalized, they continue to be marginalized in terms of wage differences, and they are starting at the bottom. I believe those who are marginalized in any situation are more adaptable. So

¹⁸ *Id.* at 4 (citing OECD, EDUCATION AT A GLANCE 2011: OECD INDICATORS 60 (2011)).

¹⁹ *Id.* at 7-10.

when I look at the women that I write about, they almost appear to me like immigrants. In other words, there is something, some sort of demonic force driving them forward and they feel like if they do not move forward, they are going to fall through the cracks. And I think that is an essential part of why women move forward.

Stephanie Coontz, in her recent op-ed on this subject, came up with the term “masculine mystique.”²⁰ This term stuck in my head, and her argument is that what we did to women in 1962, which was paint a fairly narrow band in which they could exist in the public sphere, is maybe something similar to what we are doing to men. We must consider whether we are doing that to men now, and whether they exist in too narrow a band, something that does not serve them well, either for domestic relationships or for the workplace.

The final thing I want to say on this subject is I do not believe that these qualities are innate. I do not know enough about this, because I am not a biologist – this is something on which I have to be educated. But there have been other periods in history during which men had a tremendous amount of flexibility, such as World War II. Men came back from the war and wanted to basically reassert their patriarchal privilege in society. The G.I. Bill was passed, and many men went to college. There have been plenty of moments in history at which different people respond in different ways. I simply think now it is an accident of history and culture and the opening opportunities of feminism that allow women to move forward in the way that I am describing.

So, what are the social consequences of the shifts that I describe? Let’s start with younger women. You are starting out in life, and you have graduated from college. One of the things that I discuss, some people say most controversially, in this book is the “hookup culture.”²¹ And I do not think I have to define it for you. If you do not know what it means you can turn to the young person sitting next to you and ask them what it means. But let’s just briefly define it as the ability to have emotional intimacy without long-term commitment. We will just leave it at that for now.

This has largely been described as a disaster for women and as women being wholly the victims of this culture. And I think in this book what I tried to do is complicate that picture a little bit, and maybe we will talk about whether I complicated it too much and argued too much on the side of women’s empowerment. I was leaning on the study by Elizabeth Armstrong and Linda Hamilton, who, to my great amazement, spent four years camping out in a college dorm which they described as a party dorm.²²

²⁰ Stephanie Coontz, Op-Ed., *The Myth of Male Decline*, N.Y. TIMES (Sep. 29, 2012), http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/30/opinion/sunday/the-myth-of-male-decline.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

²¹ ROSIN, *supra* note 1, at 17-46.

²² Laura Hamilton & Elizabeth A. Armstrong, *Gendered Sexuality in Young Adulthood: Double Binds and Flawed Opinions*, GENDER & SOC’Y 589, 595 (2009).

Their aim initially was to look for sexual violence in college relationships. What they found was something very interesting, which I, in my very cursory research, could pick up on. Any women you talk to and any book about the hookup culture will say this; you will pick up lots of individual complaints about the way men behave and their inability to commit and how unpleasant it is for women to exist in the hookup culture. There is somewhat of a day-to-day timeline that operates, but there is also a whole other timeline, a long-term timeline that is in the back of women's minds. This long-term timeline concerns their desire at that stage in life not to get pinned down in long-term relationships, and that is actually the big picture that women are thinking about.

So, contrary to this idea that women always want commitment and men are always just trying to squirm out of commitment, it is in fact quite dangerous for women to be pinned down. Armstrong and Hamilton described in the course of their study many women who were actively avoiding being pinned down and actually feeling that was quite a dangerous and unsuccessful way to go about things.

Since my excerpt in *The Atlantic* first talked about the hookup culture, the chapter in the book became quite a bit more complicated. I think this is because I am genuinely ambivalent about it. In the book, I describe a woman who starts out as being the most trash-talking and one-night-standing, vulgar, straight-from-the-movie-*Bachelorette*²³ character that I follow – she actually ends up getting engaged by the end of the chapter.²⁴ I think that is because ultimately, I believe, we do seek human connection, and I discuss this briefly at the end of the book. I do not think you want to leave it at women just being sort of on their own and never wanting to get married, because that is obviously not true. By the time she gets to be in her thirties, she really does want to get married.

I want to read to you this letter. Since I wrote that chapter I have had a lot of young women write me saying, “Thank you for giving a different view. I think you are right that we neither want one night stands, nor do we want totally committed relationships, but I think you did not do a good job of defining what it is that we do want.” And so I have had a lot of women write me about this third form of relationship that they do want, and I am going to read one of these letters I thought was quite eloquent:

This new type of relationship we're after is different than what has come before. We want a person to hook up with but also to hang out with, but none of the stifling constraints and stodgy strictures of the old school boyfriend/girlfriend commitment. We don't want to be compelled by expectations to do each other's laundry or bring each other chicken soup when one of us is sick. We don't want to see each other every day and watch a sappy movie on a Friday night and snuggle.

²³ BACHELORETTE (The Weinstein Company 2012).

²⁴ ROSIN, *supra* note 1, at 32-34, 46.

By the way, this completely describes my life, so it's insulting, but that's okay. I'm in my forties; it doesn't matter anymore. She continues:

We want a relationship of freedom, the freedom to be there for each other and available sexually when it suits the both of us and also emotionally when it suits the both of us. We want it to be fun and involve some dates and long talks over coffee, but we certainly don't want these "relationships" to have an expectation of long-term commitment. Some people might call that selfish. We call it smart and independent and secure.

I have to admit that sometimes when I read about the hookup culture, a chill goes down my spine of the thought of my children going to college, but actually when I read these letters I do not feel that way. The situation she is describing is quite different than how I dated when I was in college, but it does not seem to me like the worst thing in the world.

Okay, let's move on. You are older now. You have gotten married. Now I will talk a bit about what I write about in terms of marriage, which we will talk about more in the family panel. I think the rise of women is having a significant effect on marriage patterns and driving marriage in not merely two different directions but two quite opposite directions, depending on what social class one is in.

One of the types of marriages that I describe I call the "seesaw marriage."²⁵ While I don't actually know if it is statistically accurate, the educated classes, people with a college degree, are getting married and having more solid marriages than they have ever had before. So it is actually interesting to note that the same people going through the hookup culture also have marriages they rate as happy or very happy, have a pretty low rate of divorce relative to previous decades, and are very unlucky to have a child and not be married. I do not know how those two things work; I do not know why the hookup culture prepares you for a happy marriage, but it seems that it does.

What I mean by the seesaw marriage is different from, say, a marriage in 1962. To understand what a marriage was like at that time, think about what was portrayed in *The Feminine Mystique*²⁶ or a novel like *Revolutionary Road*,²⁷ in which men and women felt effectively trapped in certain kinds of roles. The men felt the burden of being a breadwinner, something that was enforced fairly brutally in the late 1950s and early 1960s in literature, psychology, and sociology. The women felt the need to be a homemaker in a fairly brutally enforced way. We have eased our restrictions somewhat on that among the progressive educated classes, so that in today's marriages, theoretically, anybody can play any role at any given time. This seesaw

²⁵ See *id.* at 47-77.

²⁶ BETTY FRIEDAN, *THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE* (1963).

²⁷ RICHARD YATES, *REVOLUTIONARY ROAD* (1961).

marriage is only theoretical; I do not mean to say today's marriages always work out this way.

For an example of a seesaw marriage, look at the Obamas. Initially, Michelle Obama was working as a healthcare executive and making a lot of money while Barack Obama was doing his public service, and now she is in the supportive role while he is the President. They are an extreme example, but they represent this idea that you can switch places, an idea that I think young people actually take more and more for granted.

I interviewed a lot of young people who actually use the word breadwinner and it seems to me it has for them actually no gender attachment at all. They will say things like, "Whoever is playing the breadwinner role at the time." This was certainly not true for me; when I was younger, I still associated breadwinner with the man.

Now why do I say this is only theoretically true? Because, of course, certain patterns do take hold and women do end up ultimately decreasing their work to do more childcare in a lot of these marriages. So I think it is only theoretical, but it does still have an important psychological effect. Now what's the problem with this system I describe? The consolidation of privilege. Rich men in the *Mad Men* era used to marry their secretaries. Even though on the one hand we might find that somewhat annoying when we see Don Draper do it, on the other hand it spread the wealth to a certain extent, whereas now the wealthy marry the wealthy. And so you consolidate knowledge and wealth and you create what one sociologist described as "marriage as a class luxury."²⁸ So just like everything else in America, marriage is something that is reserved for the educated and the elite.

And so what happens to everybody else's marriage? When people talk about marriage declining, they are specifically talking about marriage declining for people without college degrees. What you see there is a pretty clear pattern of fewer people getting married and divorce rates that have stayed just about as high as they were in the 1970s. One of the great red-state/blue-state ironies, as Naomi Cahn and June Carbone might call it,²⁹ is that the college educated have become the standard bearers of traditional conservative marriage, while the sexual revolution basically destroyed everyone else's marriages.

I think the interesting question to discuss is, why is this happening? If I were Charlie Murray,³⁰ I would say that this was happening because people's morals or values have declined. That is the conservative view. And if I were someone

²⁸ See Jason DeParle & Sabrina Tavernise, *For Women Under 30, Most Births Occur Outside Marriage*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 17, 2012), http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/18/us/for-women-under-30-most-births-occur-outside-marriage.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

²⁹ See generally NAOMI CAHN & JUNE CARBONE, *RED FAMILIES V. BLUE FAMILIES: LEGAL POLARIZATION AND THE CREATION OF CULTURE* (2010).

³⁰ See generally CHARLES MURRAY, *COMING APART: THE STATE OF WHITE AMERICA, 1960-2010* (2012).

else, I would say that it is because women like the women I describe are judging men like Troy as inappropriate marriage partners.

I will close off with “where are we now?” Obviously women have many more roles than they used to. They are lead TV anchors and Ivy League college heads. There are a lot of things women do that they have not done before. But of course, I live on this planet and, more specifically, I live in Washington, D.C. So I know that there are many places at the top where women are missing, and I hope that we get to talk about that much more.

One of the papers being presented at this conference is from June Carbone and Naomi Cahn. A phrase they use, the “rise of the elephant seals,”³¹ really stuck in my head, and you could just as easily see it in the situation I describe. What they mean by “rise of the elephant seals” is the idea that wealth is consolidated at the top and that the very richest are still largely male. And so, if I were to project into the future, I suppose I would simply say that I see a lot of different possibilities taking hold. It might be that you have breakthroughs by superwomen, like Yahoo’s Marissa Mayer, who like work and do not take lengthy maternity leaves. They are very unusual, but you could have an Obama situation, where we suddenly have a woman we can elect as President and that changes the way we view things.

It might be that we get better at figuring out structural arrangements around childcare. But the best of all possible options for me, because when I think about what I want after the “end of men,” I obviously do not want to ship all the men to the moon. I think the situations I am describing in which men are absent from the picture are actually dysfunctional situations and are not good. What I hope for is a situation in which we become a bit more flexible about gender roles. My true hope is not that we all start working much more so we can make much more money and close the wage gap that way. My actual deep hope is that we all become like the Swedish and the Dutch and we work much less and women get to remake the economy in their own image. But I realize that is completely idealistic.

When I think more realistically about what I would like for my own two sons, it is a world in which my son can decide that he wants to work four days a week and on the fifth day take care of his kids or do his sculpting or whatever it is he wants to do. And absolutely no one who might pass him by on a playground at three o’clock on a weekday afternoon thinks, “What’s wrong with that guy?,” or asks themselves, “Does that guy not have a job?,” or interviews him for a book, or puts him on a TV show, or writes a front-page *New York Times* story about stay-at-home dads. Instead, his situation hopefully will become a fairly normal situation that does not cause him to feel emasculated or his wife to think any less of him. So that’s my hope for the post-end-of-men era. Thank you all very much and I look forward to the discussion.

³¹ June Carbone & Naomi Cahn, *The End of Men or the Rebirth of Class?*, 93 B.U. L. REV. ***, *** (2013).