



Women on the way up

Is it really 'The End of Men'?
It's sure beginning to look that way

THE END OF MEN: And the Rise of Women, by Hanna Rosin. Riverhead, 310 pp., \$27.95.

BY MARION WINIK
Special to Newsday

Everything you know about men and women — everything that's been true for 200,000 years — is now wrong. People don't prefer to have boy babies over girls; in fact, "orders" for girls at sperm banks are running at 75 percent. Traditional family roles are over — the average age for marriage in this country is 32, and the majority of women under 30 who have babies are single. Far from being victimized by hookup culture, college women actively use it to postpone commitment. Forget the geisha girl stereotype — Asian women now number among the most ambitious in the world. Here at home, many regions and economic sectors have become matriarchies, with women dominating both the workforce and the family, and men struggling to find their place.

This is the surprising news

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"The End of Men"
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brought by "The End of Men" by Hannah Rosin, based on her cover story for *The Atlantic* magazine. To some, it will sound ridiculous, and Rosin knows it. She acknowledges that men still dominate the reaches of power, make more money and do less child care than women. "But given the sheer velocity of the economic and other forces at work, these circumstances are much more likely the last artifacts of a vanishing age," she writes. "The End of Men" backs up that assertion with statistics and reporting.

For me, news of the power shift was less suspicious than exhilarating, helping me identify changes I've sensed for a while, giving me a vehicle to discuss them with others. First on the list I want to lend the book to are my 20-something sons. They'll be sucked in by the first chapter, which deals with sexual mores on campus. Guys "are the new ball and chain," one senior told Rosin,



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explaining her attitude about relationships. The focus on career over romance comes at a cost, though, and Rosin worries about how things will turn out for the supergirls.

Similarly, the progressive

young married couples interviewed in a chapter called "The Seesaw Marriage" are still working toward happy. The plan is to trade off bread-winning and staying at home depending on who has more

earning potential at a particular moment. But the adjustment is still in progress. A Vancouver dad comments on passing a compadre on the playground: "Yeah, he haunts me. . . . It doesn't matter how Brooklyn-progressive we (urban, educated men born after 1980) are, we still think he's pitifully emasculated. . . . I want that guy to exist. I just don't want to be that guy." On the other hand, he's read the research — he will live longer, be happier, healthier and wealthier if he has a wife.

Moving to the Bible Belt, Rosin looks at the dramatic social changes caused by the shutdown of manufacturing and the recession in general. Women are finding jobs where men cannot, and if they aren't married yet, they avoid it. For them, marriage means not health and wealth, but "just another mouth to feed," as one economist puts it. If the heartland is changing so much, you may wonder, why are the voices of reaction as loud as ever? Could it be panic? (Maybe we should ask Rep. Todd Akin.)

Rosin investigates the secret affirmative-action practices favoring male applicants now used to keep the gender balance at colleges anywhere near 50-50, then traces it back to the better-known problems of boys in elementary school. She examines a new wave of violent female criminals to underline what we've already begun to sense — perhaps the New World Order won't be sweeter and kinder after all. Not if you look at the corner-office barricadas and "Gold Miss" types from South Korea she visits in her final chapters.

As Stephen Stills wrote of another social transition, there's something happening here. What it is is quite a bit clearer after you read "The End of Men."

Naomi Wolf's anatomy of a woman

Back when men were in charge, they were seen as running the world with their phalluses, whether they were conquering civilizations or building skyscrapers, siring dynasties or playing ball. If both Hanna Rosin and feminist scholar Naomi Wolf ("The Beauty Myth") are right, this situation is about to flip-flop. Wolf's new book, "**Vagina: A New Biography**" (Ecco, \$27.99) asserts that a woman's sexual organs are the key to her sense of self, the

origin of her creativity, courage and power. Apparently it's just like the "little brain" and the "big brain" we joke about with men — women are just as profoundly controlled by their sexuality. Wolf brings together an encyclopedic set of sources — neurobiology, tantra, current war crimes and pornography research, linguistics, history and literature — to mount a case for rethinking our treatment of the vagina on a personal and cultural level.

— MARION WINIK

