
SYMPOSIUM

EVALUATING CLAIMS ABOUT THE “END OF MEN”: LEGAL AND OTHER PERSPECTIVES

EDITORS' FOREWORD

Boston University School of Law held a Conference evaluating the claims about the “end of men” in journalist Hanna Rosin’s recent book, *The End of Men: And the Rise of Women*, on October 12 and 13, 2012. Hanna Rosin is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic* and a co-founder and editor of *DoubleX*, *Slate*’s women’s section. Her assertion that we are witnessing the “end of men” due to societal shifts captures the proposition that women have made such remarkable progress in all domains – and men have suffered such declines and reversals – that women are effectively surpassing men and becoming the dominant sex. Although it may seem unconventional to dedicate an academic conference to evaluating a thesis made by a journalist, the editors of the *Law Review* and the faculty organizers believe that Rosin’s thesis provided an important opportunity to evaluate serious questions about equality and inequality – and advantage and disadvantage – with respect to basic institutions like the family, the workplace, the economy, schools, colleges and universities, and government. Thus, Rosin’s thesis about the evident decline of men and ascent of women in these various domains of society raises concerns for lawyers, law students, and legal scholars, as well as for the general public. We believe that this Symposium pushes beyond the sound bites and the media buzz of the moment to a more careful and constructive examination of these significant issues.

This interdisciplinary Conference evaluated claims about the “end of men” and considered implications for law and policy. It examined empirical assertions about the comparative status of men and women in concrete domains, such as education, the workplace, and the family. Feminist diagnoses of sex discrimination have fueled changes in law and policy, as well as in cultural norms; this Conference evaluated whether recent claims about the status of men likewise prompt redress. The Conference examined how the data supporting claims about the “end of men” – and the progress of women – appear when differentiated by class, race, religion, and other categories. It provided historical perspectives on current anxieties about imbalances between the relative power, opportunities, and status of men and women. The

Conference also put “end-of-men” claims in comparative and international perspective, asking whether they are distinctive to the United States.

The Conference included interdisciplinary perspectives on claims about the “end of men,” and prominent scholars in law, anthropology, economics, history, public policy, and sociology gave live presentations. Lively discussion ensued after each slate of panel presentations. Hanna Rosin provided a summary of the key findings of her book in her keynote address on October 12. Professors Ralph Richard Banks and Michael Kimmel provided responses to Hanna Rosin’s keynote immediately following her address, and Professor Joan C. Williams provided a response at a luncheon on the same day. The editors are delighted that the published Symposium includes papers or commentary by most of the Conference participants. Fortunately, the remarks of the other Conference participants are available for view online.¹ The Articles and Essays contained in this issue are organized by the following panels held during the Conference:

Panel I: One Hundred Years of the “End of Men”: Historical Perspectives

The opening panel discussed previous iterations of the “end-of-men” narrative in earlier periods of U.S. history. Panelists evaluated the validity of these prior claims and explored how earlier instances of changing gender dynamics have been both representative of and distractions to discussions of racial and economic inequality. Further, panelists referenced these prior claims in their analysis of contemporary claims about the “end of men.” Professors Kristin Collins, Stephanie Coontz, Lynda Dodd, Serena Mayeri, and Martin Summers participated in this panel.

Panel II: Employment

This panel evaluated claims about the “end of men” in the area of employment, a central theme in Rosin’s book. Panelists assessed whether empirical data substantiate claims of diminishing male power in the workplace and discussed the reasons for shifts in the relative value of men and women in the labor market from biological, economic, feminist, and sociological perspectives. Professors Kingsley R. Browne, Michael Harper, Ann C. McGinley, William M. Rodgers III, and Michael Selmi participated in this panel.

Panel III: Family

Rosin’s book focuses heavily on the changing roles of men and women within families and their shifting attitudes toward the institution of marriage.

¹ Recordings of the full Conference are available at <http://www.bu.edu/bulawreview/symposium/evaluating-claims-about-the-end-of-men/>.

The scholars on this panel emphasized the role that issues of class and inequality should play in discussions about modern families and how and why men and women choose to enter or abstain from marriage. Professors Ralph Richard Banks, Naomi Cahn, Kathryn Edin, June Carbone, Daniel L. Hatcher, and Linda McClain participated in this panel.

Panel IV: Education

This panel provided an analysis of the “end-of-men” narrative as it relates to younger generations in educational settings. Panelists focused on themes such as child psychology and education reform and examined how early development and learning both foster and are impacted by claims about the “end of men.” Child psychologist Dr. Anthony Rao and Professors Caryl Rivers, Katharine Silbaugh, and Rosemary Salomone participated in this panel.

Panel V: Comparative and International Perspectives on the “End of Men”

Extending the evaluation of Rosin’s claims beyond the United States, this panel assessed whether indications of the “end of men” can be found in other societies and settings around the world. Each contributor to this panel focused on a distinct international setting and addressed the applicability of the “end-of-men” narrative to these varying international contexts. Professors Mary Anne Case, Shahla Haeri, Pnina Lahav, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, and Julie C. Suk participated in this panel.

Panel VI: Could These Both Be True?: Reconciling the “End of Men” with Women’s Continuing Inequality

The final panel provided a review and critique of “end-of-men” claims in consideration of men’s persisting dominance in U.S. society. Scholars on this panel focused on how Rosin’s narrative of the “end of men” as a novel and potentially positive development conflicts with empirical data about women’s stalled progress and ignores the important discussion of the destructive interaction between public policy and gender dynamics in African American communities. Professors Khiara M. Bridges, Philip N. Cohen, Frank Rudy Cooper, and Nancy Dowd participated in this panel.

To supplement the discussion that took place at the Conference, the *Boston University Law Review* also published a series of Essays as part of an online Symposium, “Debating Claims About the ‘End of Men’: An Online Symposium.”² The online Symposium provided a space in the months following the live Conference for additional commentary and marked the

² The pieces appearing in the online Symposium are available at <http://www.bu.edu/bulawreview/symposium/debating-claims-about-the-end-of-men-an-online-symposium/>.

beginning of the *Law Review*'s new online supplement, the *Boston University Law Review Annex*. Professors Aziza Ahmed, Libby Adler, Katharine K. Baker, Barbara Stark, and Kara W. Swanson participated in the online Symposium.

The *Boston University Law Review* would like to thank all the contributing scholars. We thank Hanna Rosin for sharing her book and speaking at the Conference. Thank you to the Conference organizers, Linda McClain, Khiara Bridges, Kristin Collins, and Katharine Silbaugh. Most particularly, we thank Linda McClain for her vision, energy, and leadership in organizing this exceptional Conference. Thank you as well to Dean Maureen O'Rourke for her continuing support of the *Law Review* and the annual symposium and to Professor James Fleming, the *Law Review* faculty advisor, for his exceptional guidance. Finally, this special symposium issue would not be possible without the tremendous efforts of our dedicated *Law Review* editorial board and staff.

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