

Oh, Come On, Men Aren't Finished

Women are joining men as partners in running the world, not replacing them.

By Christina Hoff Sommers Posted Thursday, Sept. 15, 2011, at 2:17 PM ET

Read more about the Sept. 20 Intelligence Squared U.S. debate on whether "men are finished," buy tickets, and see who else is debating. Find out why debater and journalist Hanna Rosin says men are finished.



For most of human history, men have been the dominant sex because of their capacity to compete, take risks, conceal emotion, and fight for resources. But some claim these masculine traits have become obsolete in the post-industrial, knowledge-based 21st century. Now, it's the empathetic, socially intuitive fairer sex who reign supreme because *those* inbred traits have become integral to the modern economy. Men, we've been told, are passé.

Don't believe this fantasy. Women are joining men as partners in running the world, but they are not replacing men and never will. Yes, women are flourishing in unprecedented and gratifying ways. But men have hardly vanished from the center. After almost 40 years of gender neutral pronouns, it is still men who are more likely than women to run for political office, start businesses, file for patents, tell jokes, write editorials, conduct orchestras, and blow things up. Males succeed and fail more spectacularly than females: More males are Nobel laureates and CEOs. But more males are also in maximum security prisons. Males commit most acts of wanton violence, but it takes other men to stop them.

The male declinists seem to imagine a world of busy, consensus-building women, happily and competently interacting and managing the new economy. They point to the explosion of jobs in the caring, nurturing, and communicating professions: nurses, social workers, veterinarians, website designers, personal coaches, dance therapists, executive producers. Sorry to disturb this idyll, but you cannot sustain a network of nurturers and communicators without someone paying for it. You will still need hard-driven innovators, manufactures, builders, and transporters—not to mention the military.

We are told that toughness and assertiveness are obsolete. That is ridiculous—and brings to mind an observation usually attributed to George Orwell: "We sleep peaceably in our beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on our behalf." The world is as dangerous as ever. Think of China with all its millions of unattached young men, or those volatile patriarchal

societies where radical Sharia law prevails. Our civilization still depends on the protection of brave men (and some women) who are willing to fight and die to protect us.

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Hanna Rosin's *Atlantic* article, "*The End of Men*," concedes that men are still at the top of the pyramid—but says that "men's hold on power in elite circles is loosening." Loosening, yes, but there is no evidence of a female takeover. Not because women lack the talent—women can be as dazzling as men when they set their mind to it. But fewer women than men *do* set their mind to it. The sexes are equal but exercise that equality in different ways.

Consider science and technology. Women now hold the majority of college degrees and jobs in psychology, biology, and veterinary medicine. Here, they're not just competitive with men, they show signs of overtaking them. But those numbers don't hold in math, physics, computer science and engineering, where men still prevail. In those fields, there's no sign of significant change. According to a recent study from the Commerce Department, men held 70 percent of computer science and math jobs in 2000 and 73 percent in 2009. There are brilliant women who are mathematicians and computer scientists, but all the evidence suggests women prefer to do other things with their talents.

Meanwhile, men continue to file more than 90 percent of patent applications. They drive innovation in technology—and not just with basic hardware. Bill Gates achieved global dominance by designing computers with a friendly, approachable interface. Steve Jobs displaced him by creating elegant, intuitive super-machines that were small enough to fit into an evening bag. A guy named Doug came up with the touchy-feely idea of the mouse. The social network is dominated by women but it was invented by Mark Zuckerberg.

Is the technology industry finished? Is engineering finished? Is the military finished? I haven't even mentioned that men hold the lion's share of dangerous, dirty, and necessary jobs that few women seem to want. Men tend to be the truck drivers, builders, oil-rig workers, roofers, loggers, coal miners, taxi drivers, and window washers. Are those jobs passé?

Why, then, are we even having a debate about man's demise? Because we're living in a society that's enamored with the "WAW", or "Women are Wonderful" phenomenon. WAW, a kind of reverse female chauvinism, is everywhere. Magazines, TV shows, newspapers, and even scholarly journals run endless stories and articles claiming women are the better sex. Women, we are told, are superior leaders and communicators. They're also more charitable, empathetic, and noble than men. The rules of the WAW game make it impossible for men to win: If women do something better than men, that is evidence of their superiority. If men outperform women, that's proof of invidious discrimination against the fairer sex.

To violate the spirit of WAW is to invite havoc. Suggest, as Larry Summers did, that men may have some innate advantages in science and math, and prepare to change your job. Write a book or article titled *Are Men Necessary?*, "*The End of Men*," *Man Down*, or *Women are From Venus, Men are from Hell*," and the gods smile.

The idea that men are finished is absurd. But it *is* true that minimally educated men are in serious trouble. Girls do better than boys in school. They get better grades, score higher on reading and writing tests, and are far more likely to go to college. The reasons for girls' educational success are complicated and likely reflect innate differences to some degree: Teenage girls, for example, tend to sit still and pay attention better than teenage boys. But whenever anyone comes up with a plan to help boys in the United States—boy-friendly classrooms, all-male academies, or vocational education tailored to their interests—women's groups such as the American Association of University Women and the National Women's Law Center cry foul and go on the attack.

Several years ago, Hasbro Toys tested a furnished playhouse it was considering marketing to both boys and girls. But it soon became clear that that girls and boys did not interact with the structure in the same way. The girls dressed the dolls, kissed them, and played house; the boys catapulted the toy baby carriage from the roof. A Hasbro general manager came up with a brilliant explanation: *Boys and girls are different*. I would add that when they grow up, they complement one another. When parents take a child to a jungle gym at a park, the mother typically says, "Be careful." The father, "Can you get to the top?" Today it's fashionable to claim that we no longer need the catapulters or the "can you get to the top" crowd. But we do.

The cartoonist Nicole Hollander once asked, "Can you imagine a world without men?" Her answer, "No crime and lots of happy fat women." Well, crime would certainly decline, and we'd probably put on a few pounds. But would we be happy? Not most of us. Women, alas, love men, and need them. They are our fathers, husbands, sons, brothers, and friends. Their fate is our fate—this is no zero-sum competition.

Men are not finished because neither men nor women will permit that to happen. After all these years, it turns out women need men much more than a fish needs a bicycle.