



# Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture

By Ariel Levy

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## Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture By Ariel Levy

A classic work on gender culture exploring how the women's movement has evolved to Girls Gone Wild in a new, self-imposed chauvinism. In the tradition of Susan Faludi's *Backlash* and Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth*, *New York Magazine* writer Ariel Levy studies the effects of modern feminism on women today.

Meet the Female Chauvinist Pig—the new brand of “empowered woman” who wears the Playboy bunny as a talisman, bares all for Girls Gone Wild, pursues casual sex as if it were a sport, and embraces “raunch culture” wherever she finds it. If male chauvinist pigs of years past thought of women as pieces of meat, Female Chauvinist Pigs of today are doing them one better, making sex objects of other women—and of themselves. They think they're being brave, they think they're being funny, but in *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, Ariel Levy asks if the joke is on them.

In her quest to uncover why this is happening, Levy interviews college women who flash for the cameras on spring break and teens raised on Paris Hilton and breast implants. She examines a culture in which every music video seems to feature a stripper on a pole, the memoirs of porn stars are climbing the bestseller lists, Olympic athletes parade their Brazilian bikini waxes in the pages of Playboy, and thongs are marketed to prepubescent girls. Levy meets the high-powered women who create raunch culture—the new oinking women warriors of the corporate and entertainment worlds who eagerly defend their efforts to be “one of the guys.” And she traces the history of this trend back to conflicts between the women's movement and the sexual revolution long left unresolved.

Levy pulls apart the myth of the Female Chauvinist Pig and argues that what has come to pass for liberating rebellion is actually a kind of limiting conformity. Irresistibly witty and wickedly intelligent, *Female Chauvinist Pigs* makes the case that the rise of raunch does not represent how far women have come, it only proves how far they have left to go.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Ariel Levy's debut book is a bold, piercing examination of how twenty-first century American society perceives sex and women. Writing vividly, she brings her readers to places she visited to make her assessment; the elevator of Playboy Enterprises with women auditioning to be Playmates in the fiftieth anniversary edition, a Florida beach where sunbathers urge a woman to take off her bathing suit for the camera crew of *Girls Gone Wild*, a San Francisco Italian restaurant where a lesbian worries she's not dressed up enough for her date, a CAKE party in New York, with women grinding each other's pelvises in time to pulsating dance rhythms, and outside a juice bar in Oakland where a beautiful high school student shares disappointment at her experiences with sex.

Levy cleverly leads us to explore the role models women aspire to emulate. We are not pursuing the confident, self-determined, powerful, free ideal the women's liberation movement would have dreamed for its daughters. Instead, our icons are porn stars and strippers and prostitutes. Paris Hilton and Jenna Jameson flaunt their successes in the pornography industry, and in doing so seem to earn our adulation.

Levy relates our embracing of this raunchy culture to unresolved tensions thirty years ago between the sexual revolution and the women's liberation movement, and amongst feminists; joy at discovering the delights of our clitoris conflicting with disgust at pornography's objectification of women. She creates a convincing argument by analyzing a diverse spectrum of material; presents a fascinating palette of interviews with revolutionary women's libbers, nouvelle raunchy feminists, and everyday women and men. Detailed facts and recurring names are sometimes cumbersome, albeit worth ploughing through for the 'a-ha moments'.

The reality that we model ourselves on images whose "individuality is erased" is harsh, yet Levy's work is imbued with hope – hope that women can celebrate their uniqueness instead of their 'hotness', explore their sexuality as delight rather than consume sex as currency, and succeed professionally because of their brilliant minds and personalities, not because of their brilliant bodies.--*Megan Jones Ady*

#### From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. What does sexy mean today? Levy, smartly expanding on reporting for an article in *New York* magazine, argues that the term is defined by a pervasive raunch culture wherein women make sex objects of other women and of ourselves. The voracious search for what's sexy, she writes, has reincarnated a day when Playboy Bunnies (and airbrushed and surgically altered nudity) epitomized female beauty. It has elevated porn above sexual pleasure. Most insidiously, it has usurped the keywords of the women's movement (liberation, empowerment) to serve as buzzwords for a female sexuality that denies passion (in all its forms) and embraces consumerism. To understand how this happened, Levy examines the women's movement, identifying the residue of divisive, unresolved issues about women's relationship to men and sex. The resulting raunch feminism, she writes, is a garbled attempt at continuing the work of the women's movement and asks, how is resurrecting every stereotype of female sexuality that feminism endeavored to banish good for women? Why is laboring to look like Pamela Anderson empowering? Levy's insightful reporting and analysis chill the hype of what's hot. It will create many aha! moments for readers who have been wondering how porn got to be pop and why feminism is such a dirty word. (Sept. 13)

From [Booklist](#)

*\*Starred Review\** With the rise of such magazines as *Maxim* and *FHM* and the popular video series *Girls Gone Wild*, raunch culture has never been more mainstream. The reason, Levy posits, is because women are getting in on the act and participating in their own exploitation. Levy takes a hard look at this new pop-culture phenomenon to see how smart, intelligent women buy into sexual stereotypes. She tags along for a night of *Girls Gone Wild* filming during which college girls strip down, fool around with each other, and regret it all in the morning. Talented female athletes, actresses, and musicians feel the need to strip down to almost nothing and pose provocatively for men's magazines. Levy notes how the anti-woman attitude has even invaded lesbian culture as sexually adventurous lesbians refer to themselves as 'bois' and resist the attempts of "femmes" to get them to settle down. Even the very traits associated with women are considered inferior as many women attempt to "just be one of the guys." A piercing look at how women are sabotaging their own attempts to be seen as equals by going about the quest the wrong way, Levy's engrossing book should be required reading for young women. *Kristine Huntley*  
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