

Lean In Study Guide

Lean In by Sheryl Sandberg

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Summary

“Lean In” by Sheryl Sandberg is a non-fiction work that chronicles the struggles of women in the workplace – past and present – in facing the challenges and barriers that they encounter in the form of gender-bias. The author provides rich examples and anecdotes from her own career and experiences as well as those of female colleagues, staff members and friends and acquaintances. Sandberg also cites a number of research studies that back up the claims of gender-bias with the obvious conclusion that sexism is not the fantasy of women and that it’s alive and well in today’s workforce.

Sheryl grew up in a stable home with loving parents who supported her and believed in her abilities. Yet her brother was more confident in his abilities than she was. She would sulk over a disappointment and blame herself, while her brother blamed circumstances for any setback and go off and play basketball. Even as a young girl, the difference between how she and her brother viewed themselves and the world was already setting in.

Sheryl Sandberg is a successful business woman who rose to a leadership role at a young age at Google after having worked for the federal government in the Treasury Department. After six years at Google, she was approached by Facebook for an executive position. After multiple interviews with Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, she was offered the position of Chief Operating Officer. Her husband and brother-in-law urged her to negotiate. They would not take the first offer for such a high-level position. Zuckerberg would expect her to negotiate. But Sheryl reminded them that they were men and so was Mark. She was a woman and afraid to negotiate. What if he turned her down? She would have lost the opportunity of a lifetime.

In the end, Sheryl reluctantly took her husband’s advice and turned down Facebook’s initial offer and made a counter-proposal. It was white-knuckle time at her house for a few days but Zuckerberg called and agreed to her terms. She was the new COO of Facebook a multi-billion dollar corporation that was new and still growing. One would think she would no longer have any doubts about her value or abilities, but that wasn’t the case. She was a woman in the hostile corporate world. Although Facebook itself was forward thinking and its policies reflected no gender-bias, rules and regulations do not erase the hard-baked sentiments of others. Sheryl still deals with gender-bias even from her lofty position.

Sheryl Sandberg describes the bias that women in all levels of the corporate world face on an everyday basis. From their first interview, women in the workplace are treated differently than men, and as a result they behave differently. A woman feels qualified for a job if she has 100 percent of the requirements. A man is good to go if he has 60 percent of the requirements. During annual reviews, focus is on a woman’s likability and loyalty and on a man’s performance. Sheryl has often noticed at meetings that men interrupt and talk over women who are speaking. Sheryl, as COO, has had this same experience while speaking at company meetings. Although there are more women in entry-level positions, more men are elevated to management and executive positions.



Women are more likely to have stagnant career or give up their ambitions and leave the work force. When a woman has a baby, it is a whole new set of challenges for women. Even though working men are the fathers of newborns, the events have no impact on their careers. The contrast between how women are men are treated in the workplace by colleagues, subordinates and managers exposes gender-bias in every element of their careers.

Sheryl Sandberg ends her book with a plea for women, men, employers and families to all strive to eradicate gender-bias from the workplace. She urges women to aspire to leadership roles in the government and in all fields. Until that level of leadership is acquired by women, true change will not happen. When change finally happens, the world will be a better place for everyone.



Chapters 1 and 2

Summary

Rosalind Einhorn, Sheryl Sandberg's grandmother was an inspiration to her. At a time when it wasn't important for a girl to get an education, she graduated from UC Berkeley. Sheryl's mother graduated from college in 1965 and felt she had two choices that all women of those days had: teaching or nursing. When Sheryl started college in 1987, she and her female classmates assumed they'd do it all – have the career they wanted and have a family. These young women felt that the playing field with their male counterparts had evened.

Things didn't evolve as the women thought. Twenty years later, all the men Sheryl attended college with are in professional positions. Some of the women work full-time or part-time; many are stay-at-home moms. Many women found that having two careers – one outside the home and one inside the home – wasn't easy. Women got very little help from their husbands in household chores or child rearing. The workplace made no special allowances for the demands of motherhood.

Girls growing up today saw the struggles their mothers had in trying to do it all. They know they can't do it all and when having to choose, they generally give up their careers. Young women on the average do better in school than young men. They are just as capable of performing well in the workplace. However, they are not good at speaking up and selling themselves or at taking risks because they've been taught not to be too aggressive. Entry level professional jobs are overwhelmingly filled by women but as time passes, more men travel up the pipeline to higher level positions. One reason for this disparity is that women are generally not as ambitious.

Recent surveys have found that this trend may be shifting although women are found to be less likely than men to refer to themselves as leaders or visionaries. They are not self-confident and generally not risk-takers. These characteristics start long before a young woman enters the workforce. The differences in ambition and aspirations are obvious in young boys and girls in elementary school. Being referred to as an "ambitious girl" is often a pejorative. It's unacceptable socially for a girl to be aggressive. In pop culture, working women are often characterized as heartless women consumed with career.

Society expects the woman to keep a marriage together and raise their children successfully. Some argue that women aren't less ambitious; they just have loftier and more meaningful goals. However, what men and women aspire to do with their lives is largely formed by societal expectations. Boys and girls are treated differently from the time they're born. Little girls aren't leaders they are "bossy." It's more acceptable for a boy to call out answer in a classroom. A girl is likely to be scolded for breaking classroom etiquette. Sheryl has seen this same scenario acted out in business meetings. Society reinforces expectations by the toys that are made for boys and girls.



Little girls notice that authority figures are usually men. It is human nature to perform to expectations – even negative ones. Society tells girls that they don't do well at math or science – so, in general, they don't.

Forty-one percent of women are the primary breadwinners. The number of single mothers who are the sole supporters of their families is growing, especially among minorities. Yet America lags behind in child care assistance. Men have no worries that they can have it all. Women are constantly warned that they can't. More characterizations of women who are successful at having a career and family would be a better reflection of reality and would be helpful in assuring young women and encouraging them to take risks. Fear of making the wrong choice and of not being liked is a hurdle that keeps some women at bay. Women should be encouraged to aspire to leadership roles. After giving a commencement speech at Barnard College, an all-women's liberal arts school, Sheryl decided she could be one of those voices.

Sheryl saw women on her staff act demure and subservient to Larry Geithner, U.S. Treasury Secretary, and his staff, at a meeting at Facebook. When they ate lunch, the women sat on chairs behind the main table. Geithner and his men sat at the table. It struck her that it was a woman's internal barriers, an inner conflict that can alter her behavior in the workplace. It made her recall the keynote speaker, Dr. Peggy McIntosh, at her graduation. Part of the speech was how many women feel fraudulent when they are praised for their achievements. They feel like impostors and fear exposure – officially called the imposter syndrome. Sheryl was inspired. She saw herself in those words.

Studies show that women judge their performances as worse than it is while men do just the opposite. Men will typically attribute their success to their abilities and talents while women will often cite hard work and luck. When men fail they defend themselves by saying they hadn't really tried that hard. Women will blame their lack of ability. Colleagues and the media also tend to reinforce those sentiments.

No matter how well Sheryl did in college, she realized that she not only felt like a fraud but that she could have profound self-doubt about something she had completely believed in. She recalls how differently she and her younger brother, David, would react to adversity – she would sulk and ruminate the incident and blame herself while David would blame circumstances and run off to play basketball. The lack of self-worth can be a “self-fulfilling prophecy.” Sheryl found that “faking it” for an extended period of time actually can boost one's confidence.

In her six plus years at Google, she noticed that the men would bang down her door to pitch themselves for a new position. The women took a much more cautious approach. She sometimes urged certain women to apply for a higher position who responded that they weren't sure they were qualified.

Sheryl has violated her own rules about equal treatment of women and men in the workplace. After giving a speech about gender discrimination, a female staff member approached her. After Sheryl had said no more questions in a Q & A session following



the talk, the woman put her hand down. Two men called out questions to Sheryl and she answered them. Like a good girl, the woman put her hand down. Like many teachers tend to do, Sheryl answered the questions of the men (boys) who blatantly ignored her rule. Women have to learn to “keep their hands up” until mindsets are changed. Sheryl still struggles with having a position that is considered “powerful.” Rather than enjoy that she was ranked as the fifth most powerful woman in the world by Forbes Magazine, she was horrified, embarrassed and exposed.

Sheryl attributes her success to being lucky, to being born in the U.S., to working hard and to being in the right place at the right time. She has learned to recognize that her success is also due to her abilities. Sheryl had finally taken a seat at the table.

Analysis

Sheryl Sandberg includes the story of her grandmother and, to a lesser extent, her mother to stress the advancements that women in those eras made. She felt that their efforts had paved the way for Sheryl and her generation. Therefore, when Sheryl went to college she thought that their pioneering efforts and the advancements they achieved had created a level playing field between men and women. When she entered the workplace, however, she saw that there was still much work to do on behalf of women. By using the examples of her grandmother and mother she demonstrates how long the fight against gender bias has been going on.

Sandberg is presenting the premise of her book – the struggles that women had and are still having in the workplace in a fight to attain equal status with men. Coming from the point of view of a highly successful woman gives the issue more credibility. Sandberg is in a lofty position and doesn't need to concern herself with workplace bias because she has achieved an executive position well beyond the ordinary.

It is obvious that the subject is very important to Sandberg despite her rise to leadership. She is able to relate to the biases that women face in today's workplace on a personal basis. She lived it and understands and has experienced every aspect of sexism at the office. She has faced gender bias that spans from the beginning of her stellar career all the way to the present. In her position as COO of Facebook she still has to deal with sexism on a personal level.

Sandberg offers sage advice to young women starting out in a professional business career. It is also good advice for young men who will ultimately have to deal with gender bias in their own careers.

Vocabulary

acumen, retrospect, naïve, idealistic, winnowing, dynamic, demographic, millennials, prophecies, breadwinners, diametrically, watershed, sublime, testosterone, logjam, savvy



Chapters 3 and 4

Summary

Studies show that successful men are considered more likeable than successful women. Society evaluates people based on stereotypes like gender, race, nationality and age. Men are fundamentally seen as providers, while women are seen as caregivers. This perception is at the core of why women are held back. When a woman crosses the line, she is in conflict with society's image of her. Journalist Shankar Vedantam provided some of the descriptions that high-profile women were known by. Margaret Thatcher was called Attila the Hen; Gold Meier was referred to as the "only man" in her cabinet. Richard Nixon referred to Indira Gandhi as an old witch. Other women dislike powerful women as much as men do.

Sheryl was known as too political and not trustworthy. Powerful women are aware of the negativity that surrounds them. Throughout her academic and professional careers, Sheryl had to struggle against cautions to not appear too smart or too successful. She had a friend remove the designation as "most likely to succeed" from her high school yearbook before it was published. Women are often seen as either nice or competent which makes it difficult when employers want to hire people who are nice and competent. Most people want to be liked. It feels good and it's good for careers.

Acknowledging one's own successes is essential for building on that success. A woman has to tread lightly when asked to describe her qualifications during a job interview. Women are less likely to be compensated with bonuses or even acknowledged for doing extra work. A woman is often considered "communal" and expected to help. Men are not expected to help or punished for not helping. Women are notoriously bad at negotiating for pay increases. Such negotiations can backfire on a woman. She can lose goodwill and future opportunities and can be seen as too demanding. Men are expected to negotiate.

Sheryl was tempted to take the first offer that Mark Zuckerberg made her until her brother-in-law told her that no man would take the first offer. She spent a nervous night after she turned down his offer but in the end he agreed to her terms. Women can improve their chances in negotiations by first appearing appropriately feminine and by speaking globally. Instead of listing "my" accomplishments, a woman will do better by using "our" accomplishments. Secondly, a woman needs to provide a legitimate reason for her negotiations something a man doesn't have to do. She can legitimize her negotiation by stating that her manager recommended she apply for the promotion and citing industry standards to prove she's not asking for too much. A man can leverage his position by indicating that he's had other offers. A woman is expected to be loyal. A woman can smile a lot and seem nice but she cannot let go of her goal.

Arianna Huffington, founder of the Huffington Post, believes that women should speak their minds and react however they feel – hurt or angry or emotionally – and then move



on. When powerful women are more prevalent change will come naturally. Employees will get used to having female leaders and female leaders will get used to having power. During her first review with Mark Zuckerberg, he told her that there won't be any progress if she tries to please everyone. She took his advice to heart.

Sheryl was impressed when a woman she knew just casually called to ask for a position at Facebook. The woman said she considered calling and telling Sheryl about all her accomplishments. She figured everyone was doing that so she instead decided to call and ask Sheryl what her biggest problem was and how she could solve it. Sheryl was stunned by the approach. The woman was putting Facebook's needs first. Sheryl had a spot for her – recruiting good talent – which wasn't the woman's field but she accepted the position and was highly successful in her new role. There will be more opportunities for women if they are willing to take risks.

Sheryl was raised to pursue a meaningful life. Discussions at home focused on social injustice and civil rights. As a result, Sheryl had dreams about what she wanted to do more than what she wanted to be. She always had long-term goals and dreams. Some dreams require a traditional path while others a more circuitous one. Sheryl's first job out of college was working for Larry Summers at the World Bank. The bank was dedicated to reducing poverty. She ultimately got her MBA and wound up at the Treasury Department working for Summers again. After spending four years there, she was offered a job at Google. She was reluctant to take it at first since her role was undefined. CEO Eric Schmidt told her the most important thing to consider was growth potential. She'd be foolish to turn Google down. She accepted the position.

It can be painful to search one's soul about what's lacking and what needs to be improved. After being at Google four years, Sheryl had never negotiated a business deal. She was at last given the chance by heading a small deal team. She learned that rule one was to let the other side make the first offer. Everyone has some element of their work performance that can use improving. Overcorrecting a flaw is a good way to find balance.

After six and a half years at Google, Sheryl had learned a lot but felt it was time to move on. Luck and risk had landed her at Google which is also what led her to Facebook. She took the position of COO at Facebook although she could have been hired as CEO at several other companies. However, she assessed the growth potential and got on the Facebook rocket. She had learned that growth potential was more important than job title. Women need to be more open to taking risks and being flexible. Being afraid of change and taking risks can have an adverse effect and cause career stagnation. Diverse experience is the ticket for leadership roles. Women often play it safe because of the many responsibilities they have at home. Women are less likely to accept a transfer to another city because of their husbands' jobs or because of a relationship they don't want to leave behind. Men are more likely to take on high-profile challenges than women. Women apply for a new job if they feel they are 100 percent qualified; men are fine with being 60 percent qualified. Taking risks, choosing growth, taking on challenge and seeking advancement are all key to good career management.

Analysis

Sheryl contrasts the experiences of men and women in the workplace. The author wants to illustrate the many challenges and barriers that women are up against in the corporate world. She traces this gender bias to fundamental perceptions that people have of women and men. The importance of this information is that it exposes what the root cause of gender bias is and that it goes far beyond the office. With every step of the way, women have to tread lightly as they pursue their career ambitions.

This is personal to Sheryl since she's personally gone through all the experiences that she discusses. Sheryl offers advice to women on negotiating for a salary or a promotion, taking stock of one's flaws and acknowledging one's own success – three areas that women traditionally have difficulty with. She has first-hand knowledge of these issues since she had been confronted with them frequently throughout her career.

Again, a young woman contemplating a business career is the most likely reader of this book. This reader will benefit from the information provided in this section because it has undeniable credibility given the background and position of the author.

Vocabulary

blatantly, stereotype, communal, derogatory, imposition, paradox, seismic, endemic, meritocracy



Chapters 5 and 6

Summary

It's a mistake to seek out a mentor. After giving speeches, Sheryl usually has several women ask her to become their mentor. She has never had the same request from a man. Mentorship and sponsorship are hot topics at today's women's career seminars and the focus of many articles and blogs. These women act on the faulty advice that in order to make it in the corporate world they have to find mentors and sponsors. Oprah Winfrey is often approached by young women who seek her mentorship. She reserves her mentoring for women or men in whom she sees something special; she likes to see that person grow and develop. Sheryl has observed that young men are interested in seeking a sponsor or mentor who can enlighten them on the business end of a company while young women are more focused on their careers and getting help in being successful. This mindset teaches women to be too dependent on others for their success.

The zealously that young women have in their search for a sponsor or mentor is something that women have essentially created. It has been the hottest subject at women's seminars for the past several years. It is crucial to have mentors and sponsors in order for an individual to advance within a corporation. Men have an easier time making and keeping these relationships. Such relationships must evolve naturally; asking a perfect stranger to be a mentor or sponsor is not advisable. Sheryl has had great mentors and sponsors and has mentored and sponsored other young employees that she sees potential in. Studies show that mentors choose protégés on performance and potential. It should be stressed to young women that excelling in their work is the best way to draw the attention of a mentor or sponsor.

When approaching an executive or potential mentor, a young woman or man should be prepared to discuss his or her career, not waste the person's time and know something about the company he or she is working for. A good mentor/mentee relationship is a reciprocal one. Same-sex mentorships are the most common. Since there are so many more men in leadership roles in the corporate world, male executives and managers should be encouraged to consider mentoring junior women. However, fear of accusations about sexual dalliances or harassment can discourage such relationships. Some companies have begun to develop formal mentoring programs which will take the pressure off of young employees, especially women, in trying to obtain a mentor or sponsor.

Unlike adults, children are unapologetically honest. They will say what they think without hesitation. However, through the years children acquire filters and learn that they have to temper their words. Authentic communication is essential for the success of both the individual and the organization. Yet people are often reluctant to be honest for a variety of reasons. They are protecting themselves and their positions or they are protecting others. This reluctance causes problems to be overlooked and remain unaddressed,



resentments to grow and in some cases allows the “wrong” leaders to emerge. The hierarchy that naturally exists in an organization is one of the factors that discourages honesty. Employees are reviewed by their superiors which makes people timid about reporting others – especially their superiors. Organizations are wise to try to aspire to a nonhierarchical structure. Due to the other challenges that face them in the workplace, speaking up honestly is especially difficult for women.

Sheryl called upon Fred Kofman, a former MIT professor and author of “Conscious Business,” to help her improve honest and open communications at Google. Sheryl rates her association with him as a pivotal one. She feels his teachings changed her life and career. He believes that “great leadership is ‘conscious’ leadership.” The first step in achieving effective communication is for all parties to recognize that there are different truths depending on one’s perspective. Rarely is there one absolute truth. An individual who believes he speaks the truth inhibits others from speaking out. Speaking in plain, simple language fosters the truth. It is his advice to drop the nuances and caveats that diverts focus from the heart of the matter.

Being specific and not speaking in generalities are also good communications skills. There is the yin and yang of good communication. Without an exchange that includes speaking AND listening, no real communication is possible. Restating what another person said is a good way to make a solid connection with an associate. By repeating what the colleague said is evidence that the person actually “heard” what the other person said. Asking direct questions is the best way to get direct answers. A wise leader will ask the newest member of a team for his opinion about a discussion. The new person’s response is important because it will show the level of clarity and honesty with which a topic had been discussed. Critical listening will avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary confusion. Employees should be encouraged to speak up about a rule or change that they don’t understand or that they believe is not working. When speaking up, the individual should be fully prepared to defend and discuss his view. Presenting an honest argument about a matter will bring clarity to what went awry. Perhaps the word that came down had been distorted. Managers must remember that “feedback” doesn’t necessarily equal the “truth” – just an individual’s truth. Asking for advice and feedback are crucial to good communication practices and can build important relationships.

When a leader is honest about his own shortcomings, it opens the door for subordinates to do so as well. Acknowledging the good performance of individual team members in the presence of the entire team is also an effective communications tool. Being good natured and bringing humor to serious issues can break the ice and encourage honest exchanges. An honest one-on-one between a colleague with another team member who is causing a problem on the team is a way to breakthrough to an improved relationship.

While it’s not a good idea for a woman to cry when she’s upset at work, it does happen. Women are human and sharing emotions can strengthen relationships. Recognizing that emotions play a part in everything we do helps in understanding one another. Beginning business meetings with friendly chatter and inquiries about another’s health and family is a way to deepen bonds. Professional decisions are influenced by emotion



and personal issues. The modern leadership trend is away from strategic bullet points toward authenticity and individuality.

Analysis

In this section, Sandberg points out the importance of having mentors and sponsors if an individual expects to advance within a corporation. Once again, it is the female who has the most problem pursuing and attaining a mentor. And again, the struggle that young women have in this area is gender-related.

Sandberg includes this topic because mentorship and sponsorship are two hot topics that draw a lot of attention and are currently being discussed at women's seminars and in articles and blog posts. She is providing this information because she knows that young women are being deluged with discussions about the importance of mentors and sponsors and are being pressured to attain them.

Sandberg is able to speak from both sides of the issue since she had many mentors herself and has mentored many young employees in her career. The importance of honesty, speaking out and good communications skills are covered in this section. As with most everything else, women have more struggles than men do in speaking out and providing honest feedback.

The reader will benefit from the right and wrong way to pursue a mentor. The coaching about good communications will benefit both men and women pursuing a successful business career.

Vocabulary

protégés, reciprocal, virtuoso, candor, hierarchy, nuances, caveat, reciprocal, prestigious



Chapters 7 and 8

Summary

From an early age, girls get the message that they will have to choose between career and family. Too much planning ahead is not productive. The thought of having children is in the back of the woman's mind. As she matures and has a love interest, that notion begins to move to the front of her mind. A young female lawyer may decide not to go for partner status because the thought of children overrides such ambition. A woman who turns down too many transfers or challenges soon won't be considered for them. After the woman returns to the workplace after giving birth, she suffers from her lackluster performance before maternity leave and the missing time during maternity leave. She senses she will never get to the top and scales her activities back even further. Eventually, if she can afford to, she'll leave the workforce.

Women are less likely to leave the workforce if they like their jobs. It's possible for a woman to love her job and her kids. Neither a woman nor a man should be criticized for choosing to be a stay-at-home parent. Having a conversation with a woman who might be weighing a job or promotion against having a child can be extremely helpful. A woman's feelings and choices will vary through the years of raising a family. No woman should feel guilt or shame about the choices she makes regarding family v. career. And she should not be embarrassed if she changes her mind two or three times down the line. It's always a personal choice.

Being a new parent is tough. The two parents must decide who the primary caregiver is. Traditionally that's always been the mother and that's true to this day in most cases. When a couple announces that they are going to have a baby, it's usually "Congratulations!" to the father and "Are you going to quit work?" to the mother-to-be. One of the most challenging aspects of a parent's new reality is providing proper child care.

Studies show that women expect a work-family conflict after having a baby by a far greater percentage than do men. When polled, men expect it will be the woman who will make a career change. Friends and relatives will encourage the new mother to stay home if she can afford to. Unwittingly, others will play the blame game -- "your children need you at home." (99) Once the choice is made to leave the workforce, it is difficult for a woman to return years later and pick up where she left off. Governmental and company policies that would help provide affordable child care, paid leave and flexible schedules would be of great benefit to mothers who want to remain in the workforce. Women need to calculate what they will pay in childcare over the years compared to increased earnings over the same time period. Many would find that keeping the job is a good investment for the future. Both parents should carefully review the pros and cons of keeping their employment versus leaving their position for full-time childcare. All options should be on the table.



Sheryl and her husband Dave were in denial, like most couples, about the huge change that having a baby makes. Since Dave was out of town often, the majority of the childcare fell to Sheryl which was causing some cracks in their relationship. Sheryl had a nanny, but the emotional report and decision-making of the other parent was missing from daily life. The relationship fell into the same pot as most couples with a new baby. The care giving was decidedly lopsided. But they weren't alone. A 2009 study showed that only nine percent of couples polled stated that they shared household chores and childcare evenly after the arrival of a newborn.

The perception that the mother is the primary caregiver is accepted policy by the federal government. The U.S. Census refers to mothers as designated parents. Some men refer to taking care of their own children as "babysitting." Some men consider their children "hobbies."

If women want to enjoy more success at work it may be up to the men to do more at home. Sometimes new mothers reject help. They become so obsessed with their new baby that no one can care for it the way they can. This is called "maternal gatekeeping." A smart woman will let her husband put the diaper on as best he can. Gatekeeping mothers do, on the average, five more hours of work a week than women who eagerly let their husbands help. It's essential that a woman has a true life partner who supports her in every way. The majority of women who make it to the top of the corporate world are married and many with children.

After Dave moved permanently to San Francisco and he and Sheryl were in the same city, it still took some time and effort to arrange their schedules to include adequate time and attention for their children. Although there are bumps along the way, they split responsibilities for their children fairly evenly although it can never be a perfect 50-50 split.

Society expects women to be nurturing but it doesn't have the same expectation of men. Not surprisingly, every survey taken concludes that children benefit from involved parents. Children are psychologically more well-balanced and have greater cognitive abilities when they have involved fathers. Most employment policies allow more maternity leave than paternity leave. The care of a new baby is characterized as pregnancy disability aid. Some employers penalize employees for taking advantage of family leave laws or policy. Men are not only discouraged from taking family time off, they are teased mercilessly about it and it often shows up in annual reviews.

Men are expected to put their careers first and are judged on their achievements. The image of a happy couple to many is a man who is more successful than his wife. Women have to be a good mother, a good wife and not damage their husbands' egos. A woman is wise to look for a man with a healthy ego who can "take" her success. Men benefit from child rearing by developing patience and empathy. A woman benefits from a career by earning money and increasing her decision-making skills at home. However, if a woman stays home to care for her children, it is a real job that she is doing. Parents of today who share responsibility are great examples for the next generation. Men of



younger generations seem more amenable to household duties. More men need to sit at the kitchen table.

Analysis

The main topic of this section is the conflict that working women have when they have children. Although working men also become new parents, it is the women who experience the conflicts, criticism, guilt and indecision about whether to be a stay-at-home mother or return to the office. Gender-bias plays a role in their decisions surrounding motherhood.

Sandberg discusses this subject in full because having a baby changes things forever at home and at the office. Even though Sandberg was an executive when she had babies, she went through the same doubt and frustration about leaving her children with another caregiver and being seen in the office as not as dedicated as she should be.

This section is important because this problem is experienced by literally millions of women across America each year. Sandberg reminds the reader that “you can’t have it all” and “you can’t do it all.” Sandberg didn’t take her own advice and felt guilty because she couldn’t do it all. Sandberg marks this issue as the number one struggle that faces women in the work force.

For the reader who is a working woman with young children or expecting, the information provided will be enlightening and will bring a level of comfort because it comes from an understanding and empathetic source.

Vocabulary

counterintuitive, incompatible, deprivation, imperatives, advent, dissertation, empowered, inadvertently, counterproductive, dynamic, spousal, mundane, inextricably, cognitive, socioeconomic



Chapters 9 through 11

Summary

The phrase “having it all” has been destructive for women. Meant to be inspirational, the phrase has actually been a negative, a fantasy that no one can attain. Nobody has it all. Everyone has to make sacrifices. Aim high but be aware of limitations. No one “can do it all.” The constant questioning about how women juggle everything puts pressure on them. With so much to do, mothers and fathers have to prioritize. No matter how much planning parents do with children there is always the unexpected. Striving for perfection at either the office or home is a futile endeavor. Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good. After Sheryl had her first baby, she was too hard on herself. She tried to stay in the mix at the office when she should have been sleeping. When she returned to work, she felt guilty because her full focus hadn’t been on her baby during her time off.

Women fear appearing to put their families before their careers. To assuage that guilt, they often overwork to prove their dedication to their employer. The bias against women after having babies is not imagined. Employees view women who take full advantage of flexible work policies as being under committed. Technology has eased the situation to some extent because so much work can be done remotely. Leading companies like Google and Facebook are rating employees by results rather than face time. Co-workers who are single without children should not be expected to pick up the slack of married employees with families.

There are tough trade-offs between parenting and career. There has been a trend toward “intensive mothering” which puts undue pressure on the mother to be deeply involved in every aspect of their child’s life. Kids used to just play outside; now mothers are part of their “play dates.” A 1991 report issued by the Early Child Care Research Network found that children were not harmed if they were not exclusively cared for by their mothers. Parents who work outside the home are capable of giving their children the parental involvement they need. “Separation anxiety” is often more about the parents than the children. Despite what the experts say, women still feel guilty about not giving their all to their children. Guilt management is important for working mothers. Admitting that it’s impossible to do it all is a good first step.

At the time Sheryl first entered the workforce women were expected to be “one of the guys.” Sexism in the work place was never addressed although it definitely existed. She began to see the different way in which men and women were treated. Women were rated as much by their ability to fit in as they were by their performance. When she was promoted there were not-so-subtle suggestions that being a woman must have helped her, the hateful implications clear. She ignored the gossip and put her head down and worked hard. Over the years she watched other women who didn’t want to put up with the bias leave the work force or abandon their ambitions.



Sheryl reached a point where she had to speak out. She and other female colleagues at Google formed Women@Google which focused on equality in the workplace and sponsored lectures by the likes of Gloria Steinem and Jane Fonda. This led to Sheryl's association with TED-Women, under the umbrella of TED-Talks, a non-profit organization that focuses on technology, entertainment and design, and sponsors podcast lectures. Sheryl was criticized for her speeches given at TED because of the focus on women's issues instead of business. However, her talks were an inspiration to women across the country.

Women fear to speak out because they worry about keeping their jobs or that the situation they complain about might become worse. It's also difficult for men to speak up about gender inequality. Men and women alike need to feel comfortable confronting this difficult subject. Employers have taken important steps in raising the consciousness of their workplace communities to gender bias issues. Due to legal implications, managers must be careful what they ask prospective female employees. Asking if a woman is married or has kids can be used against a company in a discrimination case. Policy needs to be developed that protects the employee/employer relationship but doesn't suppress communication.

Despite her top position, it was difficult for Sheryl to admit that she left work diligently at 5:30 every day after having her children. She had to nudge herself to speak of it publicly but when she did, she received the praise of women across the nation. A feminist is defined as someone who believes in gender equality in politics, socially and economically. Sheryl now calls herself a feminist because there is gender bias and voices need to be heard in order for real change to take place.

True equality is long overdue and will only be attained when women rise to leading positions in government and in all fields. Real choice will only come when women have the support of spouses, employers and colleagues. The focus must shift on encouraging women to aspire to leadership positions. The lack of female leaders causes women to receive greater scrutiny than their male counterparts. A Forbes blogger referred to Sheryl in 2012 as not having earned her success. She was young, pretty and in the right place at the right time.

It can be women as much as men who deride another woman's success. When a powerful woman tries to keep other women from advancing is referred to as the "queen bee" syndrome. When women engage in gender bias they give it credence. Many male leaders of organizations have seen the light and are encouraging all their employee to actively strive for equality. The perceptions of mothers who stay home and those who work need to be viewed in a realistic - not a stereotypical - way. Having "choice" means a woman can choose to work or stay home. No one should judge that decision.

Once mothers and fathers are viewed as equally responsible caregivers for their children, expectations will balance out. Creating workplace environments that have fair and flexible policies to support parents and family needs will advance the cause. More female leadership will lead to fairer conditions. Many women from past generations worked toward equality. Today's woman is building on that foundation. Women need to



voice their dissatisfaction with the status quo so that the next generation of men and women can choose their pathway without internal and external obstacles that will sabotage them.

Analysis

Sandberg discusses the importance of recognizing one's potential as well as one's limitations. She provides anecdotes about how successful women have faced the same challenges inherent in motherhood and been able to cope with it. It's crucial that women not be too hard on themselves. After having a child, their lives and careers won't be perfect... but they weren't perfect before either.

Sandberg talks about the trade-offs that women have to make in the rearing of their children. She gives a pass to women who want to stay home as well as a pass to the women who want to continue their career. She stresses that it's a personal choice and one that should not be judged by others.

Sandberg is attempting to bring reality to the conflicts that naturally exist when a career woman has a baby. By being honest and realistic about the matter, she will ease the mind of many women by learning that all women – even the top executives – have the same experience.

The reader will benefit from Sandberg's remarks and from her appeal for women, men, colleagues and employers to strive for a true equality in the work place. Since the change has to be a universal one she appeals to women to aspire to positions of leadership in government and in every field of endeavor. The reader will benefit from the inspirational message that Sheryl Sandberg sends.

Vocabulary

bandied, pondering, auspices, cognitive, retrospect, self-flagellation, epithet, colloquially, subjective, status quo, paradox, ramifications, sensitize, benign, semantics, dearth, luminary, marginalizes, tokenism, coalition



Important People

Sheryl Sandberg

Sheryl was lucky to grow up in a loving family with parents who had the same expectations for Sheryl as she had for her younger sister and younger brother. They were all bright children and encouraged to do well in school. The girls weren't burdened with all the household chores. David had to do his share, too. The children were raised to believe that girls could do anything that boys could do. Her insecurities began to manifest in high school.

When she was accepted at Harvard, many of her high school classmates questioned why she wanted to go to school with a bunch of geeks. Sheryl wasn't worried; she'd fit in because she was a geek. By the time Sheryl went to college, she and fellow female students were sure they'd balance career and family with one hand tied behind their backs. They also believed that the playing field was level and that gender-bias was a thing of the past. She struggled in school a bit until she realized that it was her self-doubt that was putting a drag on her college career. She fought it then and has been fighting it ever since no matter what's she's achieved. Self-doubt has a way of creeping back into your psyche when times get rough.

When Sheryl was young, women were urged to marry young and find a good catch before they're all taken. Sheryl married at twenty-four but was divorced by twenty-five. The specter of "divorce" lingered over her for years. No matter how successful her career was, in her mind it paled in comparison to her failure at marriage. Years later she met and fell in love with Dave Goldberg who became her husband and father of her two children. Dave has been a supportive partner and believed in Sheryl. He also took on the real responsibility of caring for his children.

A year out of college, Sheryl took a job with the Treasury Department. Her mentor from Harvard, Larry Summers, offered her a research assistant position with the department. Sheryl was recognized for her intelligence, work ethic and performance. Sheryl was promoted to Chief of Staff at Treasury until she was offered a leadership role at Google. After a successful six years at Google, Sheryl took on the position of Chief Operating Officer at Facebook. As of 2015, Sheryl has maintained that position for over seven years.

Rosalind Einhorn

Like many Jewish families, Sheryl Sandberg's grandmother, Rosalind Einhorn, grew up in the boroughs of New York City in a small crowded apartment. During the Depression, Rosalind had to quit high school to help at home. Boys weren't taken out of school to help because the family saw their future in their boys. No one thought that their daughters would contribute to the family's wealth or status. One of Rosalind's teachers



recognized her intelligence and potential and convinced the family to re-enroll her in school. She went on to graduate from high school and, ultimately, from UC Berkeley.

Rosalind, also known as “Girlie,” worked in retail after she attained her degree. When she resigned to marry Sheryl’s grandfather, four people had to be hired to take her place. Years later, when her husband’s paint business was failing, Rosalind jumped in and made the tough choices that her husband was reluctant to make.

Girlie was diagnosed with and beat breast cancer when she was in her forties. She devoted herself to raising money for the clinic that treated her and sold knock-offs of expensive watches literally from the trunk of her car making a profit that today’s Apple would envy. Rosalind was born before her time.

Dave Goldberg

Dave Goldberg is Sheryl Sandberg’s husband. Dave encouraged Sheryl to negotiate the offer from Mark Zuckerberg at Facebook before just accepting what she was offered. He believed in her value and wanted her to be duly recognized and rewarded. She was fearful that she wouldn’t get the job if she turned the first offer down but she took Dave’s advice, successfully negotiated a better deal and Mark hired her as COO of Facebook.

When Sheryl had their first child, she and Dave weren’t even working in the same city. Dave had founded a company, Launch Media, in L.A. and eventually sold it to Yahoo who became his employer. Dave commuted for a while from LA to San Francisco several times a week after their first child was born. Eventually, he was able to shift his operations to the Bay Area which made life less chaotic for them.

Dave has been a great and supportive partner to Sheryl and has shared as equally as possible in child rearing and the tasks, responsibilities and decision-making that goes with it. When necessary, he accepted the role of primary caregiver to their kids.

Larry Summers

Larry Summers was an important influence and played an important role in Sheryl’s early career. She took his economics class in her junior year. He subsequently supervised her senior thesis. Summers was her long-time mentor and one of her first employers. Her first job out of college Sheryl was working as a research assistant for Summers who was then the Chief Economist at the World Bank. The Bank’s mission was to eradicate global poverty. Sheryl provided facts and figures for the many speeches Summers gave. He arranged for Sheryl to join an India health mission to see up front the work of the World Bank. Sheryl worked for Summers again a few years later at the U.S. Treasury Department. They traveled together to South Africa where Summers was giving a speech on fiscal policy.



Fred Kofman

Fred Kofman is a communications expert who literally changed Sheryl's life and career. When she called up on him to help her improve communications at Google he was a former MIT professor and had written the book, "Conscious Business." Sheryl considered him a top authority on leadership and management. He believed that effective leadership was "conscious" leadership. He stressed that there can be no effective communication unless both sides of a discussion acknowledges that their "truths" may not be identical. Sheryl found his advice and insights on leadership, authenticity and personal responsibility to be invaluable.

Mark Zuckerberg

Mark Zuckerberg is the young wunderkind who founded Facebook and led it to the multi-billion dollar corporation that it came to be. He was only seven years old when Sheryl graduated from college. After Mark offered Sheryl a position with Facebook, she took the advice of her husband and negotiated for a better deal. She became Facebook's Chief Operating Officer. After being on the job six months, Mark sat down with her for her first review. The only slight negative feedback was his gentle comment that if she pleased everyone she wouldn't make any progress. She took the hint. Mark always wanted to learn and stretch himself. He decided to learn Chinese and insisted on speaking the language with Chinese staff members for practice. Mark has a healthy ego like everyone else. But when a subordinate told him at a social gathering in front of a large group that he needed to improve his public speaking skills, Mark didn't take offense. In fact, he agreed with the guy and thanked him. Mark ran a very casual operation. Sheryl's kids love going to the office. There was always pizza galore and Legos to play with. And Mark was teaching her son how to fence.

David Sandberg

David Sandberg is Sheryl's brother. He is two years younger than Sheryl and is a pediatric neurosurgeon. David is one of the people in the world who Sheryl loves and admires most. He is a good husband and father and shares equally in the care of his children. David was always far more confident than Sheryl from the time they were kids. He was always able to put a positive spin on everything and didn't let anything get him down. David's brilliance was underscored when he and Sheryl were taking the same class in college. While she went to all the lectures and read all the books, David only attended two lectures and read only one book. They both earned As, but his was a much easier A.

Gayle Tzemach Lemmon

Gayle Tzemach Lemmon was the deputy director of the Council on Foreign Relations' Women and Foreign Policy Program. Just starting out, she had been encouraged to



choose marriage over career. In her twenties she was offered the opportunity to travel to Germany for an assignment with the Wall Street Journal. She was stunned by the reaction of her family and friends. How could she leave her boyfriend? She might blow her chance to get married! She didn't share their worries and came out just fine.

Ellen Bravo

Ellen Bravo was the director of the Family Values@Work consortium. She observed that most women don't really worry about "having it all; they worry about losing it all – their job, their children's health and their financial stability.

Sharon Meers and Joanna Strober

Sharon Meers and Joanna Strober published "Getting to 50/50." It was a comprehensive report on government and society that concluded that children and marriages are not harmed when both parents have careers. They wrote that sharing childcare and contributing financially led to less guilt for the mothers and more involvement from the fathers and most important, happy children.

Rosalind Chait Barnett

Rosalind Chait Barnett, a professor at Brandeis University, conducted comprehensive research on the balance between career and personal life. The study found that women who carry out multiple roles, those of caregiver and corporate professional for example, have lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of mental well-being.

Peggy McIntosh

Dr. Peggy McIntosh of the Wellesley Centers for Women gave a talk entitled, "Feeling Like a Fraud." She described how many people, particularly women, feel like frauds when praised for their achievements. They feel guilty and that the praise is misguided. The feeling that they are fraudulent is so intense that they fear exposure – even though there is nothing to expose.

Tina Fey

Tina Fey suffers from "Impostor Syndrome." Fey described the condition as vacillating back and forth between extreme egomania and the belief that she was a total fraud. She tries to ride high the egomania periods and enjoy them and withstand the down periods.



Padmasree Warrior

Padmasree Warrior is Cisco's chief technology officer experienced first-hand that women often limit themselves. She turned down several opportunities because she decided she wasn't qualified because it wasn't what her degree was in or that she didn't have sufficient knowledge about the domain. Looking back on her choices, she realizes that one's ability to learn quickly and acclimate easily to new areas matters as much as other considerations.

Virginia Rometty

Virginia Rometty was IBM's first female CEO. Early in her career she learned that a woman has to appear self-confident even though inside she's filled with self-criticism. By appearing uncertain and reticent a woman is not likely to take risks which is essential for rising to the top.

Camille Hart

When Sheryl Sandberg was named one of Forbes most powerful women, she was embarrassed and even apologetic. Her executive assistant, Camille Hart, pulled her aside and told her she wasn't handling the honor well. She gave her some good advice. All she needed to say was, "Thank you."

Arianna Huffington

Arianna Huffington, founder of the Huffington Post, goes against conventional wisdom. She believes a woman should always be herself. If something angers her she should speak out; if something moves her she should cry. But after her show of emotions, the woman should dry her eyes and go on and not feel embarrassed.

Marissa Mayer

Marissa Mayer was hired as CEO of Yahoo when she was at the end of her second trimester. Feminists cheered her until she announced she would only be off two weeks. Although many women would not be prepared to return to work after such a short time after giving birth, it was Marissa's personal decision and it had to be respected and not questioned. She did not make her early return a new policy for other women.



Objects/Places

The Torah

One early account of the disparate treatment of the sexes occurred in her grandmother's day. Education was important for male children but not so much for little girls. Even when it came to religion, it was more important for little boys to study the Torah while the girls did household chores. Even though the timeframe of this anecdote was the early 1900s, in a sense, nothing much has changed.

Impostor Syndrome

The Impostor Syndrome refers to the paradox that causes fully capable and able people to suffer from self-doubt. Although men are vulnerable to this phenomenon, it is women who suffer from it more frequently and more intensely. People with this problem feel that they are frauds and fear exposure. Research has indicated that the Impostor Syndrome is more pronounced among very successful women.

Gender Discount

When a man helps someone in the workplace, the recipient of this assistance feels indebted to the man. He or she needs to repay the favor at some point. Oftentimes when a woman helps someone in the office, the sense of indebtedness is not as intense. The woman is thought of as more "communal." She is the nurturer and she actually wants to help others. If a man declines to help a co-worker, he is excused because he's busy. When a woman doesn't help a colleague, it may well show up in her review. This scenario is referred to as "gender discount" which translates to women paying the price for the perceived desire to be communal.

Jungle Gym

Sheryl refers to her pathway to success as not a ladder but rather a jungle gym. The model is a good one for women since it is difficult for a woman to go straight up to success. Like Sheryl, many women have to take a circuitous route in order to have a successful career. Sheryl refers to this road to success as a jungle gym because a woman are often forced to forge their own unique pathway.

Tiara Syndrome

Carole Frohlinger and Deborah Kolb, founders of Negotiating Women, Inc., coined the phrase "The Tiara Syndrome" which refers to the mindset of a woman who believes that by staying quiet and doing her job someone will show up to place a tiara on her head. If



a woman's achievements aren't recognized, she should forget the tiara and speak up for herself.

Forbes List of Powerful Women

Sheryl Sandberg was selected in August 2011 as one of the world's most powerful women. Instead of being flattered, Sheryl was horrified. She was rated as the fifth most powerful women right behind German chancellor Angela Merkel and more powerful than First Lady Michelle Obama. She told friends the list was ridiculous. It was that old "Impostor Syndrome" rearing its ugly head. She was a fraud and would soon be exposed. Her executive assistant saw what was going on and told Sheryl all she really had to say was "Thank you" and then say no more.

Rubin's Gold

Before his stint as U.S. Treasury Secretary, Robert Rubin was co-chairman of Goldman Sachs' board of directors. He was astonished that the company had invested so much in gold. He was even more astonished when told that it was Rubin himself who approved the purchase. The day before, Rubin who had just been with the organization a week had taken a tour of the trading floor and made an off-hand remark that, "Gold looks good." It was overheard and repeated a little differently, "Rubin likes gold." It was passed around and distorted more until someone spent millions on gold to please the new boss.

Sheryl Sandberg had her own "Rubin likes gold" moment when she told her staff she didn't want to see any more PowerPoint slide shows. She wanted a simple list of topics instead of an elaborate presentation. Word got around that Sheryl was banning all PowerPoint presentations company-wide which upset a number of presentation lovers. A "Rubin likes gold" moment is a slip up in communications on the listening end when one idea is painted with a broad brush over other irrelevant areas.

Maternal Gatekeeping

When a new mother unwittingly keeps her husband from sharing in the care of a newborn it is referred to as "maternal gatekeeping." A mother in this state of mind is fixated on the baby and its care and believes that no one other than herself can take care of the baby adequately. By doing this, the new exhausted mother is rejected help that she sorely needs.

The Queen Bee Syndrome

Female executives in the generation before Sheryl who came to corporate leadership believed that only one woman could make it to the top of the corporate ladder in an



organization. Actually, they were right. So to protect their positions, these women did whatever it took to keep other ambitious female “worker bees” from advancing.

The Heidi and Howard Experiment

In a study by two professors, a true-life success story about a woman named Heidi was given to half the students in a classroom to read. The other half of the students were given the same story but Heidi’s name was replaced with Howard. The students rated their successes and abilities the same. However, when it came to personalities, Howard was found to be more appealing while Heidi was seen as selfish and not someone most would want to work for. The experiment confirmed that success and likeability are generally linked to men while success and negativity correlate more closely with women.



Themes

Sitting at the Table

There is a motif in “Lean In” that begins with an account of a real-life incident and then reappears as a metaphor throughout the work. It has to do with “sitting at the table.” The first mention of “sitting at the table” is in Sheryl Sandberg’s description of an actual occasion when a group of visiting female staff members deferred and wouldn’t sit at the table. “Lean In” is Sheryl Sandberg’s book about the gender-bias problems that women face in the workplace. One of the chief results of this sexism is how women are left with feelings of being “less than,” feelings of being subordinate to men even male peers who are their equals. The incident that established this motif captures that sentiment perfectly. It is such a visual illustration of the point that Sheryl is making that no further words are necessary.

At Facebook, Sheryl arranged for a visit from Larry Geithner who was the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury and members of his staff. She knew the Secretary from her days at Treasury. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the economy. Also invited were executives, mainly men, from various Silicon Valley corporations. After a few pleasantries, Sheryl watched as Geithner and the executives filled their plates and sat around the large conference table. Although she remained silent, she was stunned when Geithner’s female staff members chose to sit at chairs that lined the wall behind the table. There was plenty of room for the women to eat with the others but they chose not to, chose not to sit at the table. The image struck Sheryl and left an indelible mark that lingered for years. It was a real-life enactment of what so many women in the modern work force feel deep down. They aren’t equals to men – they don’t deserve to sit at the table.

During the section that Sheryl discusses the numerous times that she had been interrupted and talked-over by men at meetings, she concludes by saying that through her many experiences she had learned to hang in there, say her piece and “sit at the table.” She also uses the metaphor when she describes how women fear not being liked and often do not “sit at the table” and own their successes. Sheryl refers to the voices in the heads of many women that tells them not to “sit at the table.” She relays a time when she knew nothing about the topic of a meeting and sat in the back corner of the room. She adds, “Yup, not even close to the table.”

Dr. Ruth Chang who had seen one of Sheryl’s TEDTalks was intimidated when she was offered the huge responsibility of overseeing 75 doctors. She then thought of Sheryl’s speech and “heard” Sheryl’s voice telling her to “sit at the table.” She accepted the promotion and was a huge success. When speaking of husbands who should dig in and help with kids and chores, Sheryl writes that more men should “sit at the table – the kitchen table.” In her concluding remarks, she writes that it’s time to cheer on women who “want to sit at the table, seek challenges and lean in on the careers.”



By the end of the book, no reader can have any doubt what the subtext of the phrase, “sit at the table” is.

Gender Identities

Identities are attached to boys and girls at birth. In many cultures, it is desirable for a boy to be a couple’s first born. Therefore, even before a boy is born he has an elevated status from that of a girl baby. Boys are associated with sports and math. Girls are associated with dance and literature. Girls are told they don’t do well at math and science, so they don’t. Building toys that are made for boys are educational and lay the groundwork for complex work in the future. Baby dolls designed for girls get them ready for motherhood. Barbie dolls teach them how they should look. Even in the classroom, girls are expected to behave and follow classroom rules. Boys who speak out without being called on are not apt to be punished.

Since these gender identities are so entrenched in boys and girls and in their families and culture, it is impossible to shake them after reaching maturity. In the workplace, new young men employees are more likely to speak out of turn. Young women are reluctant to speak up sometimes even when they’re called upon. Both had years of training in the way they behave. Just because a corporation has rules against gender bias does not mean that it goes away.

The stigma of gender identity doesn’t go away just because a woman is elevated to leadership positions in corporations and organizations. Sheryl Sandberg has grown weary from being called the “female” COO of Facebook. There are many references in the media and elsewhere to female pilots, female engineers and female race car drivers. No one distinguishes their male counterparts in the same way. The world reminds women that they are women and girls that they are girls. There is a subtext of expectations that accompanies that reminder – “stay in your place, behave and act like a girl.”

Sheryl dealt with the Barbie Doll syndrome herself. During high school, she worked as a page in the U.S. House of Representatives. She had looked forward to meeting the Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill. She was disappointed when after meeting him he had only one question: he asked if she was a pom-pom girl. Being so much younger than the speaker, she grew up with different role models. She had Golda Meier and Sandra Day O’Connor. O’Neill was from a different era. She understood but it still stung because she was a brilliant student and excelling in her academics. By the time she got to college, she supported gender equality but like many women didn’t want to be referred to as a feminist because it had come to be used as a pejorative. Sheryl and her peers mistakenly thought that there was no need for real feminism. So much groundwork had already been done.

It didn’t take Sheryl long to realize that there was much work to do relative to gender-bias in the schools and the workplace. Ultimately, in response to the need for a strong voice, she was eager to speak out and gladly called herself a feminist.



Gender Bias

Gender bias influences how applicants are hired, paid, reviewed and advanced. Everyone has natural biases. Even an individual like Sheryl Sandberg admits that she has biases. Of course, by admitting them, it's easier to recognize when they are surfacing and try to fight against them. No one should have the hubris to believe he is completely objective. If an individual believes such folly he will develop bias blind spots. The bias blind spot convinces a person that has the power of objectivity. By being "blind" to his prejudices, he will not try to correct them and will go on his merry way with his biases intact and cause the pain and problems that they can wield.

People like to work with people who are "like" them but they don't recognize the inherent bias in such choices. A woman who works for a manager who wants to work with people like him doesn't have a prayer. Performance reviews of female employees place more weight on her likeability among peers than do those of male employees. Ironically, male and female reviewers both display this bias. It all goes back to the societal expectations of men and women.

Sheryl was a hard and dedicated worker and learned to speak up at meetings and in enumerating her accomplishments although both were difficult for her to initially address. When Sheryl was hired as the COO of Facebook there was quite a bit of criticism and resentment about the new leader. She was young and new to Facebook. She hadn't worked her way up and of course that old problem... she was a woman. A Forbes blogger posted a nasty article inferring that she had not earned her success but just was in the right place at the right time. There was, of course, no mention of her many accomplishments.

Bias against women in the workplace has roots that were deeply planted decades - even centuries - ago. Women like Sheryl who rise to the top still are encountered with it. It won't go away by itself. It will take everyone - men, women, bosses and peers - to put up an unrelenting fight to eradicate it.

The Leadership-Ambition Gap

A disproportionate number of women make up the entry-level positions in corporate America. At first blush, that would seem to be a plus for the cause of women in the workplace. Traveling up the advancement pipeline, however, there are less women, fewer and fewer the higher one travels. What causes this winnowing out of young females just when the going gets good?

One contributor of the lack of women advance up the corporate ladder is reflected in their mirrors. A leadership ambition gap is prevalent among young female professionals. They can appear to be as ambitious as their male colleagues, however there is a big difference. Digging deeper in virtually all fields, more men have ambitions for higher level senior jobs. In a 2012 McKinsey report the number of men who wanted to advance doubled that of women.



This anomaly shows up before women enter the work force. Surveys have shown that female college students have less aspirations for corporate success than do men. More men call themselves ambitious than do women. This ties in with early childhood development when little girls are expected to be nice and to behave appropriately. It isn't considered nice for a little girl to be aggressive or pushy. This carries over to female college students and graduates who back away from advancement because it presents too much of a barrier that they are not equipped to fight against.

Expectations

From the time a little girl is in school, she is intimidated by the classroom dynamics. Of course, this is speaking in generalities and not all little girls had this experience. But for many little girls they took it seriously when they were told to behave, have good manners and follow classroom rules. Boys were told the same thing but they didn't take it to heart like girls did. It was for many little girls an intimidating experience. There was pressure on them to be polite and not make a misstep. Boys didn't follow the rules and spoke out without raising their hands and often times they weren't punished for breaking the rules the way a little girl would be if she interrupted class in such a fashion. There was one simple reason for this disparate treatment: Girls were expected to behave... boys were not.

From their experience in school and to at least some level at home, girls were subjugated to a lesser status than boys. The boys were more careless about homework and would chose to run outside and play while the dutiful little girls focused on their homework because they had to comply with classroom rules and do their homework. When the little girls completed their homework there were chores to do inside. This mindset that was nurtured in a good number of homes and classrooms set the stage for generations of women who felt intimidated, unworthy and religiously tied to rules and regulations. Girls have been fed the myth that they are not good at math and science for generations. As a result, girls traditionally score lower on math and science tests. What George W. Bush said about the poor performance of minority school children could apply to this brand of sexism. Bush referred to this form of racism as the "soft bigotry of low expectations."

Young women fresh on the job market for entry level jobs bring with them the baggage of low expectations relative to their abilities and conversely high expectations for their behavior and interaction with peers. The entry level jobs in corporations are jammed with young women. However, as time passes it is the men who are advanced and promoted up the ladder. Men are seen as risk takers and aren't shy about touting their accomplishments and abilities. Women work hard and wait to be noticed. When that doesn't happen many women who can afford it fall out of the work force. Others have stagnated careers and lose whatever ambition they may have had.



Styles

Structure

“Lean In” by Sheryl Sandberg is separated into eleven chapters and is loosely organized to display the procession of challenges and barriers that women face in today’s workplace. The book starts out with the question, “The Leadership Ambition Gap: What Would You Do if You Weren’t Afraid?” This sets the premise for the entire work.

Sandberg essentially argues that the number of women who would advance to leadership roles could be much larger if women were more sure of themselves. A person can have ambitions but if she doesn’t have the fire to propel it forward, it will die on the vine. Sandberg goes on to enumerate and describe the ways that women are sabotaged in the workplace including the ways in which they sabotage themselves. She provides many anecdotes from her own experiences and those of other female colleagues and friends to make her case. Sandberg is in a leadership role in a multi-billion dollar corporation. So she does not rely on just anecdotes to prove her arguments. There is a section following the book that contains extensive detailed notes on the studies and comprehensive reports that she used to base some of her conclusions on.

Also following the book is a section entitled, “Let’s Keep Talking.” Sandberg stresses the need to continue the discussion by joining the Lean In Community at Facebook on-line. The introduction at the beginning of the book takes on the topic of global gender-bias and the disparate way that women are treated around the world.

Perspective

“Lean In” by Sheryl Sandberg is written in the first person narrative from the perspective of author Sandberg. In this work she shares many of her own experiences, thoughts, reactions, disappointments and successes in her long and successful business career.

Gender-bias and how it relates to success for women in the workplace and the decisions that women must make about their lives and careers is the main topic of the book. Sheryl provides in a very direct and honest manner the experiences that she has had with sexism and still has even though she has attained phenomenal success. She also includes anecdotes from colleagues, friends and subordinates who have had to deal with the issues surrounding gender-bias.

Since Sandberg started out in an entry level position fresh out of college and has advanced to the top holding leadership positions in the past at the U.S. Treasury Department and Google in addition to her current position as Chief Operating Officer at Facebook. She has been in a position to see gender bias up close and personal and from several different perspectives. This book is a unique and personal work that no one else could have attempted to write. Sandberg gives the topic of gender-bias credibility



because of her vast experience, obvious intelligence, astute observation skills and many leadership positions.

Tone

The tone in “Lean In” by Sheryl Sandberg is erudite yet not stuffy. Sandberg, who narrates the book, comes across as understanding, empathetic and eager to give sage advice on ways to combat gender-bias based on the experiences of others as well as her own personal challenges and struggles when sexism reared its ugly head during Sheryl’s long and highly successful business career.

Sandberg’s tone is knowing yet soft and appealing. Her narrative is open and honest. She admits to being fearful of negotiating and publicly admitting her flaws. After assuming a corporate leadership role, she assumed that things would change. The gender-bias didn’t go away it just came out in different forms.

Sandberg has written a book that is not pretentious and her delivery is not lecturing. In addition to her own experiences with gender-bias in the workplace, Sandberg calls up the many anecdotal incidents of sexism that involved her colleagues, subordinates, superiors, friends and family. Her message is not one of bitterness or anger. She’s way past that and has proven herself.

Sheryl Sandberg comes across as open and honest. What she sincerely hopes for is for everyone – men, women, employees, employers, and the government – to work toward eliminating sexual discrimination in the workplace. She appeals to women to strive for leadership roles in government and in all fields of businesses and entrepreneurship. She strikes a cautionary note when she proclaims that without such leadership, true change will never happen.



Quotes

In comparison to their male counterparts, highly trained women are scaling back and dropping out of the workforce in high numbers.

-- Sheryl (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 12)

Importance: Sheryl is referencing a current trend that is supported by a report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) issued in 2012. This sentiment is at the heart of “Lean In.”

My generation fought so hard to give all of you choices. We believe in choices. But choosing to leave the workforce was not the choice we thought so many of you would make.

-- Judith Rodin (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 13)

Importance: Judith Rodin, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, was the first woman to become president of an Ivy League school. The quote is from a speech that Rodin made before an audience of young women.

Women are not thinking about having it all, they’re worried about losing it all – their jobs, their children’s health, their families’ financial stability – because of the regular conflicts that arise between being a good employee and a responsible parent.

-- Ellen Bravo (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 22)

Importance: Ellen Bravo, the Director of the Family Values @ Work consortium pointed out the struggle that women – especially single mothers – have been trying to keep afloat.

The beauty of the imposter syndrome is you vacillate between extreme egomania, and a complete feeling of: ‘I’m a fraud! Oh, god, they’re on to me! I’m a fraud!’ So you just try to ride the egomania when it comes and enjoy it, and then slide through the idea of fraud. Seriously, I’ve just realized that almost everyone is a fraud, so I try not to feel too bad about it.

-- Tina Fey (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 27)

Importance: Tina Fey captures in a light way what imposter syndrome is. She demonstrates that anyone – no matter how successful – can suffer from the syndrome.

The internalization of failure and the insecurity it breeds hurt future performance, so this pattern has serious long-term consequences.

-- Sheryl Sandberg (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 29)

Importance: The author underscores the long-term ramifications of the internal conflict that women suffer from. They can be ambitious but that ambition can be thwarted by their own lack of self-worth.



I said no to a lot of opportunities when I was just starting out because I thought, 'That's not what my degree is in' or 'I don't know about that domain.' In retrospect, at a certain point it's your ability to learn quickly and contribute quickly that matters.

-- Padmasree Warrior (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 34)

Importance: Padmasree Warrior, CEO of Cisco, describes how she limited herself when she first started off. In contrast, men rarely disqualify themselves from new opportunities even if they don't have the right background.

Self-doubt becomes a form of self defense.

-- Ken Auletta (Chapter 3 paragraph Page 40)

Importance: With this statement, Author Auletta underscores the process that women go through in order to be liked. They question their abilities and slough off achievements before someone else does.

No wonder women don't negotiate as much as men. It's like trying to cross a minefield backward in high heels.

-- Sheryl Sandberg (Chapter 3 paragraph Page 47)

Importance: This quote captures the difficulty that women have in negotiating for raises or promotions. The fundamental problem is that men are expected to negotiate while women are expected to be "loyal."

If you're offered a seat on a rocket ship, you don't ask what seat. You just get on.

-- Eric Schmidt (Chapter 4 paragraph Page 57)

Importance: Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google, gave this sage advice when Sheryl was reluctant to take a job at Google because her role wasn't clearly defined. She took his advice.

The upside of painful knowledge is so much greater than the downside of blissful ignorance.

-- Sheryl Sandberg (Chapter 5 paragraph Page 82)

Importance: This quote captures the importance of good communication and feedback. It may be painful to hear the truth as others see it but it beats being oblivious to it.

Now we know that women can do what men can do, but we don't know that men can do what women can do.

-- Gloria Steinem (Chapter 8 paragraph Page 119)

Importance: The women's activist is pointing out that women have proven that they are equal and perform just as well as men in the workplace. It is time for men to take on more responsibility in the home with chores and child rearing.



Show me a woman without guilt and I'll show you a man.
-- Marie Wilson (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 137)

Importance: Marie Wilson, founder of the White House project, put it aptly when she succinctly described a huge difference between working mothers and working fathers.

All of us – men and women alike –have to understand and acknowledge how stereotypes and biases cloud our beliefs and perpetuate the status quo. Instead of ignoring our differences, we need to accept and transcend them.
-- Sheryl Sandberg (Chapter 11 paragraph Page 158)

Importance: Author Sandberg provides an answer to the gender-bias in the workplace. The solution relies on the participation and hard work of both women and men.

Topics for Discussion

Topic 1

Why is there a trend among young married women with children to give up their careers or at least their ambitions? What are two factors that hold women back from advancing in today's workplace? Describe them.

Topic 2

How do societal expectations impact the decisions that women make about family life and career? How are little boys and little girls treated differently and why? How do these early experiences play out in adulthood?

Topic 3

Describe the differences in confidence and attitude between Sheryl and her younger brother, David. Even though they were raised by the same parents and in the same environment, why were there these differences?

Topic 4

Describe the incident in which Sheryl violated one of her own rules about the treatment of women. It had to do with "raising hands." Why was this incident important and what larger implication did it have? What impact did it have on Sheryl?

Topic 5

Why is it important for a young corporate professional to have a mentor or sponsor? What is the best way to attain a mentor? Why do women have more problems attaining a mentor than men do?

Topic 6

Describe the essential elements of good communications. Why do women have more problem speaking up and being honest? What is Fred Kofman's theory on what the "truth" is?



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Topic 8

What does a new father reveal by stating that he is going to babysit his new arrival? Explain what maternal gatekeeping is and how it can adversely impact a new parents.

Topic 9

Why is taking a pregnancy leave and having a baby seen by some women and some employers as a pivotal point in a woman's career? Describe some of the biases and criticisms against working mothers at the office.

Topic 10

What was a turning point that compelled Sheryl to become a voice for women in the workplace? What actions did she take and what criticism came her way? Discuss what Sheryl Sandberg recommends to eradicate gender bias from the workplace.