

# Academic BRASS

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## **A Review of *Brotopia: Breaking up the Boys' Club of Silicon Valley***

Chang, E. (2018). *Brotopia: Breaking up the Boys' Club of Silicon Valley*. New York: Portfolio/Penguin.

### **Introduction**

When we look back on 2017, many hope it will stand as the turning point for women's issues in the United States. Through the viral spread of #MeToo, women felt empowered to come forward and share their stories of sexual harassment, particularly in the workplace. Although the #MeToo movement garnered explosive online attention as 2017 drew to a close, its actual origin dates back to 2006 (me too, n.d.). The momentum continued into 2018 with the creation of the Time's Up movement in response to sexual harassment in Hollywood and the entertainment industry. Given the current climate of women's issues, Emily Chang's *Brotopia* could be seen as a logical extension and complement to both #MeToo and Time's Up.

*Brotopia* addresses the exclusion of women, sexual harassment, and "bro code" that reigns in the tech industry. While some may find the revelations of *Brotopia* shocking, many in the Valley have come to accept that tech companies "have created an internal culture that, at least when it comes to sexual harassment and gender inequality, resembles the Mad Men era, without the skinny ties and Martini lunches" (Kolhatkar, 2017, p.55). Chang's book exposes the open secret, not discussed, that many women have labored under for years while attempting to establish and maintain careers in Silicon Valley.

### **Audience**

This timely title will appeal to both public and academic library patrons. A fascinating look into the companies that develop and create products that we never knew we needed is at times both intriguing and shocking. Any student of entrepreneurship may be interested in this book, to learn the history of start-ups in Silicon Valley, how to obtain financing for a company, or how to build and run a company truly differently than others. Historians, economists, technophiles, and sociology and gender studies students may also find this book of interest.

### **Organization and Content**

Over the course of nine chapters, the reader is taken on a historical journey through the technology industry and Silicon Valley with the central question in mind, "How different might the

world be if women had been included in this transformative industry from the start?" (Chang, 2018, p.250). *Brotopia* leans heavily on information from over 200 interviews, some of which Chang conducted in the course of her work with *Bloomberg Technology*. However, the bulk of her interviews took place while researching and writing this work. Those interviewed for the book include such Silicon Valley luminaries as former Yahoo! CEO Marissa Mayer, Facebook's COO Sheryl Sandberg, and former Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers junior partner Ellen Pao.

## **Evaluation**

Chang is the appropriate person to take us on this journey. She has had a front row seat to the ongoing sexual harassment scandals that have come to light in the last few years. Chang's background as the host and executive producer of *Bloomberg Technology* affords her a unique and knowledgeable perspective on this topic. However, Chang does not rely simply on salacious stories that were shared with her by guests. Instead, her book is well researched, and she does an excellent job documenting her sources. There are nearly 30 pages of notes at the end of book, providing readers the opportunity to follow up and dig further into the sources cited in the book.

Chang closes *Brotopia* by taking Silicon Valley to task for its failure to correct the long-standing gender imbalance in technology companies. She acknowledges that reaching the goal of gender parity is incredibly difficult and not likely to happen in any short amount of time. However, she leaves the reader with seven basic principles that, if embraced by both individuals and organizations, will begin the process of moving companies in the right direction.

## References

Chang, E. (2018). *Brotopia: Breaking up the Boys' Club of Silicon Valley*. New York: Portfolio/Penguin.

Kolhatkar, S. (2017). The disrupters. *New Yorker*, 93(37), 52-63.

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