



Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women's Changing Lives

By Anna Fels

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Yet expressing ambition, pursuing it, and getting recognition for one's accomplishments is critical to identity and happiness. In this groundbreaking work, Anna Fels draws on extensive research and years of her psychiatric practice to offer an original and deeply useful examination of ambition in women's lives. In the process, she illuminates just what is necessary for women to articulate--and fulfill--their dreams.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

While a psychiatrist's study of the "vital role of ambition in women's changing lives" hardly sounds like absorbing reading, this book by Fels, an occasional science writer for the New York Times and other popular media, is surprisingly interesting. After introductory comments about how life has changed for modern women, thanks to increased longevity, birth control and other factors, Fels raises a curious question: why do women still feel anxious or evasive about admitting to having ambitions, but men don't? The answer lies in understanding that ambition has two components: the mastery of some specific skills and the recognition of that mastery by others. While many professions have opened to women in the 20th century, allowing them to learn a variety of skills, Fels says, women have still not found a plethora of sources for recognition, or ways of being valued by others for the special skills they've acquired. Lacking "sustaining affirmation," women sometimes settle for mere attention—"sexual attention being the easiest"—or "recognition by proxy," reflected glory from the accomplishments of husband or children. Men, on the other hand, Fels finds, have traditionally had a wide range of sources—"colleagues, mentors, friends, family, spouse"—for "affirming attention." As Fels examines the mixed messages women get about claiming recognition (especially the taboos on outshining one's husband or appearing less than devoted to child-rearing), women readers may see their own goal problems more clearly. This book isn't sexy, nor is it self-help, but career women—or anyone raising smart daughters to do big things—will find a lot within its pages to think about and discuss. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [The New Yorker](#)

Why is it that women who can talk about anything find it so hard to talk about ambition? In this insightful study, Fels, a psychiatrist, argues that women fear—correctly—that seeking recognition will expose them to attacks on everything from their sexuality to their sanity. Although women now have access to schools and jobs, "social resources" like affirmation, support, and simple encouragement are jealously guarded male preserves. Recognition, Fels writes, is something that makes us better at what we do, and without it ambitions die. She comes down firmly on the side of working mothers, and advises those who choose full-time motherhood to get a "pre-nate" contract. She has no patience for "difference feminists," who she thinks simply rationalize women's subordinate position. According to Fels, the barriers are practical, not innate; the problem isn't the poverty of women's "chimerical" ambitions—"half plan, half dream"—but "the miserable job that they're stuck in."

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From [Booklist](#)

As the old saw has it, "he's ambitious, she's pushy." For women, the desire and ability to succeed has long been held to a different standard than that for men. From ambition to acceptance, aspirations to affirmation, the qualities and goals shared by both sexes typically produce an uneven level of response throughout society, but are such disparate perceptions a reaction to inherent gender characteristics or the result of intrinsic cultural adaptations? In a meticulous examination of the broad-ranging implications of such psychological, sociological, and anthropological differences, Fels examines the nature and role of ambition in a woman's life, exploring the ways in which women seek or shun recognition, advance or undermine educational and employment opportunities, master or forsake the skills necessary for success and satisfaction. Interpreting empirical research, reviewing case studies, and conducting personal interviews with women representing a broad demographic spectrum, Fels' thought-provoking study questions established theories and draws conclusions that provide significant insights into the dichotomy of male versus female

ambition. *Carol Haggas*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Eric Ray:

Here thing why this Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women's Changing Lives are different and reliable to be yours. First of all reading a book is good nevertheless it depends in the content of the usb ports which is the content is as delicious as food or not. Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women's Changing Lives giving you information deeper since different ways, you can find any reserve out there but there is no book that similar with Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women's Changing Lives. It gives you thrill reading journey, its open up your own eyes about the thing this happened in the world which is probably can be happened around you. You can bring everywhere like in playground, café, or even in your technique home by train. If you are having difficulties in bringing the published book maybe the form of Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women's Changing Lives in e-book can be your alternate.

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