

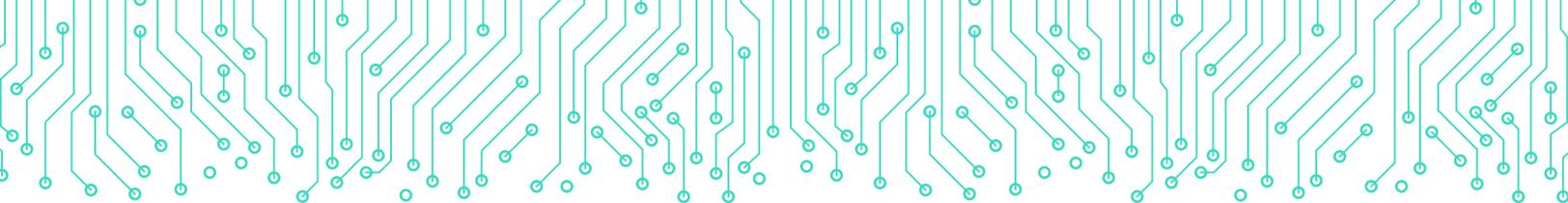
A SCIENTIST'S QUEST TO RECLAIM
OUR HUMANITY BY BRINGING EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE TO TECHNOLOGY



Girl
Decoded
Rana el Kaliouby

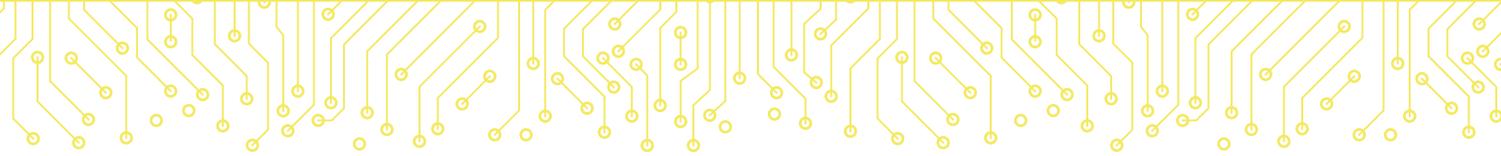
WITH CAROL COLMAN

Reading Group Guide

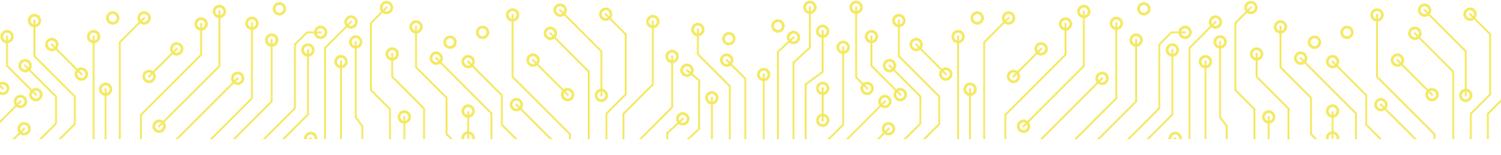


Discussion Questions

- At the beginning of the book, Rana writes that she and others in the social science sphere believe we're in a dire "empathy crisis." Do you agree? What evidence have you seen in your daily life that supports this? Have you seen any evidence to the contrary?
- When Rana is considering moving to Cambridge for her PhD, she sees the career sacrifices her own mother had to make for the first time. How does Rana's life differ from her mother's? How are their lives similar?
- Rana illustrates the shortcomings of online chats by showing her emotionless ICQ Chat messages with her then-husband and family and then telling us what she was actually feeling at the time (miserable, homesick, unsupported). How might this conversation have gone differently if they were face to face? How did this become an "aha moment" for Rana's work?
- When Simon Baron-Cohen shared his database of videos of facial expressions with Rana, it helped move her work forward by years. How does Rana continue to pay this forward to other people and companies, and why is it important to her?
- Rana writes, "There is no true connection without the sharing of emotion." How does she illustrate this throughout the book?
- "Perhaps if ethics had been a mandatory part of the core curriculum of computer scientists, [tech] companies wouldn't have lost the public trust in the way they have today," Rana writes. Do you believe tech companies should be held responsible for their ethical and moral shortcomings—or those of their technology—or is it the customer's responsibility to use the technology ethically? Did *Girl Decoded* influence your thoughts on this issue? If so, how?
- In Cambridge, Massachusetts, Rana is shocked to see Roz and Len splitting household duties, like cooking, equally. Do you think couples like Roz and Len are rare, even today? What can we do—culturally, at work, and in our own homes—to make egalitarian households more attainable?
- Affectiva works with sensitive data—people's faces and emotions—so it was very important for Rana, Roz, and their colleagues not to let their technology facilitate surveillance in cases where there are no "opt-in" terms. This commitment lost them some lucrative contracts. Do you think they did the right thing in standing firm? Why or why not? Is there ever a good reason to abandon one's principles?
- VC firms—and the men who run them—were so skeptical about the word "emotion" that Rana and Roz had to use euphemisms and synonyms to avoid saying it. How might this have been different if the group they were pitching to had included women? Do you think the perception of emotions is different today?
- Rana and Affectiva went to great lengths to make sure that their hackathon wasn't just open to a diverse subset of people, but accessible to them as well. For instance, they shut the hackathon down at night so parents could go home to their families instead of working around the clock, and they hosted a supervised, parallel program for kids to build their own projects (and to give the parents some free babysitting). Why is it crucial for companies to take measures like this to make opportunities accessible for everyone? Why do you think more companies don't?



Enhance Your Book Club



COOK

RECIPE: EGYPTIAN KOSHARI

Get a taste of Rana el Kaliouby's roots with this traditional Egyptian comfort food that mixes chickpeas, pasta, fried onions, and tomato sauce—all served on a bed of rice and brown lentils. Find a recipe at themediterraneandish.com/egyptian-koshari-recipe.

LISTEN

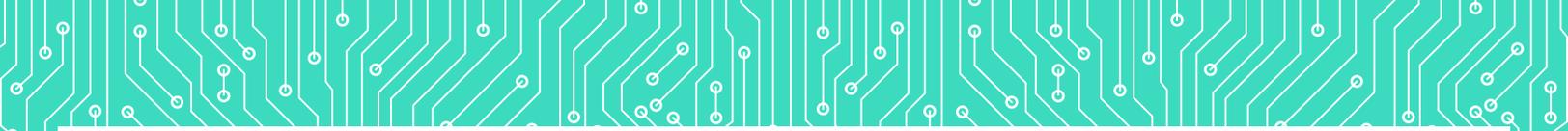
As a nod to Rana's harpist daughter, Jana, listen to Spotify Orchestra's Harp playlist as you read or discuss.

WATCH

Watch Rana's TED Talk at TED.com and then check out her Reading List, which includes *Affective Computing* by Rosalind W. Picard (the book that started it all!) and *Mindblindness* by Simon Baron-Cohen.

LEARN

If *Girl Decoded* left you hungry to learn to code, check out Google's Grasshopper, a free coding app for beginners.



Facts About Affectiva

AFFECTIVA WAS SPUN OUT OF MIT MEDIA LAB IN 2009 AND WAS COFOUNDED BY DR. ROSALIND PICARD AND DR. RANA EL KALIOUBY.

AFFECTIVA'S SOFTWARE IS USED:

- By 25% of the Global *Fortune* 500 companies to test consumer engagement with ads, videos, and TV programming.
- In the automotive industry to improve road safety and transportation experience.
- In social robots, healthcare, and for research in many other areas.



Facts About Rana

- Prior to founding Affectiva, Rana was a research scientist at the MIT Media Lab where she spearheaded the application of emotion recognition technology in a variety of fields, including mental health and autism research.
- She was featured in the 2018 *Fortune* 40 Under 40 list, *Forbes's* list of America's Top 50 Women in Tech,"and the 2016 *Wired* Next List.
- Her TED Talk has been viewed over 1.6 million times and translated into 28 languages.
- She is a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader and a member of the Young Presidents' Organization (YPO).
- She was featured in the 2015 *New Yorker* article "We Know How You Feel." She cohosted the PBS NOVA series *NOVA Wonders* and is also featured in the YouTube Originals series *The Age of A.I.*, hosted by Robert Downey Jr.