

New York Times: Responses To A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting

Loved the article so much that I devoted a blog post to it. I hope you'll visit and weigh in.

Thank you for courageously writing about "A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting."

Over the course of my 20+ year career, I have experienced career sabotage three times at the hands on of other women. What's most alarming is that these all occurred when I had finally broken the glass ceiling and entered the most senior levels of management. I too "grew up" embracing girl power, looking for opportunities to support other women and naively thinking I could always count on sisterhood. Early in my career women were my greatest allies, and I continue to count on the advice and counsel of some amazing, talented and powerful women, so I was totally blind sighted when on three occasions and at three different employers other woman sought to discredit me. It took a career coach to point this out to me. Further my coach explained that women are socialized to compete for status and recognition from men, so in a scarce and highly competitive job market (especially the c-suite) this is more common than one might think. I haven't given up on being a champion for other women in workplace, but I now know not to expect that universal support in return. Your article should be required reading for all women entering the workplace, and I would welcome attending a workshop on the topic.

Here, here! I've been discussing this at work with my colleagues for years now! I have been driven to the point where I SEEK opportunities to be the only woman on teams now. It is pathetic and frustrating to have to deal with this day in and day out, but not be able to have frank and open conversations with our managers about it. We can discuss it with peers and workplace friends, but bring it up to your manager - who may in fact be a women - and it either falls on deaf ears or puts you in a position of looking like the complainer.

But, it holds true nevertheless. I took on a new role beginning January Xth. And, in the 7 days I've been in the role, I have had two issues (with the only other two women on the team) and wonderful experiences (so far) with the men. Is there no place to go to get out of this trap?

Thanks for a very insightful and timely article!

We just turned aside all the war news here and preoccupation with our son-in-law's call to active duty in the Israel Defense Force Sunday morning to read your stirring article instructing women to put aside their own women-made wars in the workplace. Keep up the good work; someday the peace-pipe will appear at the water-fountain and your advice will take hold... Best regards From Jerusalem

I really appreciated your article in the NYTimes about a sisterhood of workplace infighting. I have been studying about women to women dynamics with a collaboration of women for the last 3 years. This has lead me to try to apply this learning in my own work place. I find it very difficult to start the conversation with professional women that there is in fact a dynamic in the work place between women that impedes our progress. It helps to have others speak out about this as I think one of the most important ways to stop this cycle is to first acknowledge that it exists and examine our own behavior when we are engaging in a women to women dynamic—which while may not be outright infighting or sabotage but is certainly often less than respectful.

I just passed this on to every female in my office. Thank you so much. We don't have too much of this here (we acknowledge how lucky we are) but it's good for us to pass onward for others.

First, let me commend your Sunday piece. I'd like to be more Viennese in my selection of Why in referring you to a book you probably know and which, to my mind, is not only right on but whose emphasis on the root of the problem is avoided at our peril: Dorothy Dinerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*. As you remember, she asks why women at the top of the ladder don't reach down to those on lower rungs, thus helping their sisters. Because, D says, they no longer consider themselves as women but rather as men, or something in between. She sees the genesis of this in their own mothers' view of themselves: not so hot, there to please men, i.e., low self-esteem that is passed on to their girl children very very early on. D's solution (which I can't entirely agree with) is to have men spend equal energy/time as parents. I think the nastiness of woman toward woman is an awful projection of what women have felt to be directed toward themselves. What D says isn't new, of course, but I think it essential to go back into our upbringing and bring forth the data that work against us.

Klaus' comparison of workplace infighting among women to mean-girl behavior in middle school is exactly on point. As a junior associate at a New York City law firm, I quickly realized that the "plastics" had simply grown into women's bodies and had acquired JDs and designer clothing. Intimidation tactics are still used in the lunchroom, the hallways and in the hush of gym locker rooms, but the stakes are much higher. Infighting now jeopardizes the careers and reputations of young professional women, rather than the chance to win the homecoming crown. The "insignificant nuances" over which some women hold grudges are especially dangerous as they are often too subtle for men to pick up on, and too petty for junior associates to feel comfortable bringing to the attention of management. How does a young woman tell her superior that she is frustrated at being given the much dreaded head to toe once-over every morning, or that she has received one too many passive aggressive emails? Worst of all, what if her gut tells her that the attention of a dashing senior associate seems to have worsened her plight? As women, we owe it to one another to leave popularity on the playground and behave like intelligent professionals.

I read your article with great interest. As someone who graduated from college in 1975 and medical school in 1981, I share your view. Maybe we have all evolved such that we no longer expect help or want help? I, for one, would still like a mentor, here and there.

I read your article in *The New York Times* with great interest. I'm a nurse who now works in a corporate environment. I found the mistreatment of nurses toward each other to be astounding, to the point where I left "bedside" nursing.

One factor in the terrible way nurses treat each other is nurse managers. Nasty, unprofessional nurse managers have driven so many capable women out of the field. I suspect upper management chooses a certain type of woman to promote. They don't want anyone who is going to make waves or stand up for the staff so they choose nurses who are willing to sell out their fellow nurses in order to please management. Typically, a nurse manager has no backbone and is easily manipulated. There is a lot of gossiping, backbiting, and vindictiveness in nursing.

I can't help but feel the main problem is: MEN. I know I'm playing the victim and that women should take responsibility for their actions. However, in my experience as an RN, upper management has been all male. The males in healthcare seem to want weak women as nurse managers so they can bully them. They encourage the infighting by promoting weak, indecisive women over competent nurses who show signs of leadership.

But the question still remains: why can't women work together? I think women feel they won't be treated fairly. It's that simple. If you feel that no matter how capable you are, no matter how hard you work, no matter what you've accomplished, if all your hard work will be ignored once a man enters the scene, you become manipulative to survive.

The healthcare field really illustrates this point. Let's say you work in a hospital; you catch doctor's mistakes, detect problems before the doctor ever thought of it, provide terrific care to really sick patients and guess what - you are treated like dirt by the hospital and doctors. Doctors hate suggestions from nurses, especially good ones. The patients gush over dr so-and-so but never remember the nurse's name. So you start to think "what's the use?". Many nurses like me leave. And the ones who stay become frustrated, bitter, and angry. You can't show your frustration to management, patients, or doctors so what happens? You channel your emotions to a safe target - your fellow female.

It's the same thing as the race riots in the 70's (and yes, I'm old enough to remember them). I remember watching Newark burn and asking my mom "Why are they burning down their own neighborhood?" And my mom replied: "They're afraid to leave their own neighborhood". I think women are still afraid to leave their neighborhood. It's much safer to lash out at our own kind than to confront men. Men still hold too much power.

Thanks for raising this point in a public manner.

Thank you for the article about women in the NY Times today....(!)

I work at X here in the Bay Area....and have been waiting for a very long time for women (someone other than me) to finally start talking/writing about this destructive issue...

Thank you....

I enjoyed reading your article "A Sisterhood Of Workplace Infighting" and agree this issue has been sadly neglected. Women need the wisdom of female as well as male role models and mentors, but after nearly 20 years in the workplace, I have rarely experienced that.

I envy the way men stick together in business, watching each other's backs, and often taking their past (male) co-workers from company to company as they progress in their careers, where they all benefit over time. The women that get promoted? Many lord it over past (female) co-workers rather thinking of ways to interact beneficially in their new role.

At one large corporation, I was an executive on a par with a woman I'd known for years. Her area was more established and billed more dollars, whereas I'd been brought in to turn my area around, and was doing so successfully. Out of the blue, I had a call from her offering me a position reporting to her. She had thought about it long and hard, looked at many qualified candidates, but in the end, she thought of me. The move represented a step down. I reminded her we were at the same level. Without missing a beat, she said, "yes, but my area is so much more prestigious." Much later, I was told she had been unsuccessfully angling to run both areas for years, and had undermined my efforts to succeed behind the scenes. And that woman would count me as a "friend."

Let's hope each new generation in the workplace improves upon the past!

I just read your column in today's NY Times and oh yes, you are so right. I am a woman in my mid 50s and I am frankly fed up with the way women treat each other. I have seen it throughout my career, and I just personally experienced bullying from another woman (younger, but physically bigger) and it was jealousy in its rawest form. It's no wonder men still rule the world. Quite distressing.

I wanted to let you know I really enjoyed your article on women vs. women in the workforce. I had a really horrible situation with my former woman boss and I totally related to what you wrote.

I just read your piece in the New York Times and really enjoyed it. Kudos to you for saying aloud what we've all experienced. It's funny that the woman who most noticeably hung me out to dry in my former life is now quite supportive. I guess 15 years removed and the reality that we will never work for the same firm makes the relationship safe for her.

Have worked for "women's organizations" (incl. those in reproductive rights) for years - as a staff member and consultant. The stories I have about the treatment of women by other women are even worse than your article portrays.

Have always worked hard to change that and continue to do so through my work in the hospitality community.

Thanks for writing it. We need a new breed of feminist.

I was very excited to read your NYTimes piece this morning. It has been a topic that I have been aware of the past 30 years - but it usually has been a politically incorrect discussion point - even among senior women . They will talk about it privately but I have seen the topic brought up in women's meetings - and someone usually tries to censor the discussion. So many congrats for the courage to speak on it so publically.

Today's essay on women and women in the workplace is on target. I often feel like a fish in a barrel with my co-workers, and I am the boss.

The notion of Big Cat is something I've thought of over the years, and I see the clawing more than ever now.

I have a Big Cat on my hands and I feel reluctant to confront her.....

Thank you for your article and bringing this issue to light. The problem though, I think, is more deep-seated than "why don't we all just get along."

I am a new attorney...My particular office happens to be on the smaller side and my department is even more intimate. It is mainly all female. While my relationship with the department head (who is also female) is excellent, the other women in the department refuse to accept me as part of their team. I am in my late twenties and they are all at least in their late thirties. There is no direct competition between us and yet their behavior borders on rude most of the time. At first, I took it personally but soon realized that it's just the way it is. Friends in other departments and other firms have the same experiences with their female colleagues.

What saddens me is that the women I work with are all smart, educated and presumably should be above playground antics but they're not. I sometimes wonder if I'm at a law firm or in 5th grade again. Discussing this situation with anyone at the office would just be perceived as emotional sensitivity at best (and tattle-tailing, at worst) and there's really nothing that can be done. At this level, no one is going to lecture anyone about playing nice.

I suspect there are jealousy, insecurity and related confidence issues to blame. What I find interesting (just as you describe in your article), is that the men in the office that dislike each other don't play games. They each stick to their own corners. Women, on the other hand, mostly through passive aggressive behavior, constantly let you know that you are not one of "them".

I'm not sure there's any way to change the status quo although I commend you for trying!

I LOVED your article A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting! I loved it so much I had to write you.

Your article addresses something I have been hoping for that someone would speak up about for years, and I applaud you for having the courage to expose this less than attractive female behavior. I hate to say this, but I think another reason this happens between women is that many times infighting occurs because often and maybe even unconsciously women want to make an impression on male colleagues, and/or that a man's opinion is still somehow more valued than a woman's. "When push comes to shove" a woman will side with the male perspective even if he is outnumbered 12 - 1. I have seen this happen repeatedly. I have also learned in the professional environment, as well as in family dynamics, that if my perspective is not being taken seriously by a female superior/boss/matriarch then to save time, strife and heart ache, it's more effective to put my ideas in the mouth of a male colleague/friend/family member and having him present them as his own. 99% of the time this strategy gets the job done!!

I have never articulated that, so in addition to writing the article, offering your e-mail, I must also thank you also for giving me the opportunity to put these thought in writing.

While I find this article interesting, I think it would be appropriate to add how important it is to be respectful to all women. Give a woman (and men as well) a title, a card, a desk, and a suit and an ego trip begins that does not stop at the office door as they leave for the other world. I have had young women with their computer briefcase tell me to move my airline bag from the overhead so theirs can be put closer to them. I have been yelled at by a self-important, arm-waving woman who rear ended me at a red light because she was in a hurry to a meeting. I was costing her time and money.

Yesterday, I was addressed by a paper pushing, arrogant, uninformed woman as, "Sweetie, you don't understand!" My response was, "And you are not reasoning! It is wrong to assume superiority because one has a card with a title to pass out. "All the world is a stage". It is my view that today's woman needs to temper the arrogance that may be part of the job in the office. However, treat other women with equal respect.

I want to thank you for your article - I think its a subject that needs so much more attention. As a therapist working with all ages of women (and as a former woman in management) I think women's relationships with each other re power and influence reflects not only the personal stories of each woman (including her relationship with her own mother) but of course as a reflection of some of the split messages/expectations that still pervade our culture with regard to women and our cultures definition of what power is. In my experience, women need help learning how to view assertiveness and anger with other women as ways of being in authentic relationship rather than as sources of conflict which lead inevitably to disconnection and abandonment.

Maybe you should write a book on the subject ? ;)

I really liked your article, and it addresses issues that have plagued me at every job I've had. One complicating factor I've found with women bosses is that it's very important to all of them that we be good friends. I find this kind of odd and unfair. It blurs the line between boss and friend, and makes it harder to be up front about issues and problems. It can also be a way for bosses to manipulate their subordinates without simply using their authority. I'd prefer to remain professional, and I try to, but it's kind of a losing battle, I find. It's not that they aren't great people, but I'm not sure any of them have recognized the fact that these friendships present a number of conflicts of interest and complications. And, it's simply unfair to ask your subordinates to commiserate with you about personal problems one minute and then to take orders the next.

I never write to newspaper columnists, but I just had to comment on your article. I couldn't agree with you more. I've been sabotaged so many times in the workplace by other women, I finally left the corporate world and started my own businesses where I could treat the women who work for me with the respect and dignity that they deserve. In one of my companies, we employed about 22 women and five men - all professional. We encouraged and mentored the women, trying to create an ideal environment for them. And guess what? They started to fight among themselves. Amazing.

One of the best managers I ever had was a woman..she had a high school education, had worked her way up in the corporation and demanded the best from everyone. She was fun, funny kind and fair - to everyone, men and women. And I believe, the one factor that was different for her, was that she was completely secure with herself. The women who sabotaged me and mistreated me, I believe, were insecure and for some reason, apparently I threatened them. So, rather than teaching me and mentoring me, they abused me to the point that I would finally leave for another job.

My sister is...very close. She's had several managers over the years and has run into the same situation on occasion, and we have discussed this subject many times. I believe it will take another generation of women in the workplace before this starts to dissipate.

Thank you for the article. Have you thought of writing a book on it?

Thank you for writing that article on women bullies in the workplace! it's like you've been shadowing my career. at times, I even convinced myself that it was my imagination -- or not unlike a battered wife-- that I "deserved" the poor behavior because I wasn't smart enough, I didn't work hard enough, etc. (I have 2 master's degrees and 25+ years of experience, am world traveled, and have expertise in at least 3 industries...

at this stage of my career, I thought I was finished with all that...took a freelance position wit....and ran into it again! the manager is in her early 60's and can go from 0 to 80 in about 2.2 nanoseconds. it's remarkable.

Am really hoping younger woman "grow out" of that behavior. they don't seem to be as driven to scratch and claw their way to the top...they seem a little more balanced. but not all, I'm sure.

Your article was complete validation for what I've experienced. seeing it in black and white made it seem more objective, more real to me.

I just wanted to thank you for the excellent article on female workplace infighting. As a X, I work predominantly with other women and have unfortunately been the "victim" of workplace bullying. As a young X professional I just chalked it up to paying my dues and had the "this is part of your growth" talk with myself umpteen times. I have had similar discussions as to what your article depicts with my mother over the years as it has been hard for me to grasp and understand why women pit against each other. In some situations, the bullying did thicken my skin and helped me build confidence as I started to stand up to bullies. At this stage in my career, I've come to the conclusion that only I am in control of how I treat other women coworkers and I strive every day to set an example not only for myself but for the younger women that I work with. In fact, I just forwarded all of my contacts to another freelance colleague as she is in need of work -- some may think that is foolish but as I told her, we're kind of in this together and I figure what goes around comes around.

Thanks again for a well-written article. I'm keeping in on file for my own daughter once she enters the lion's den of the workforce.

I can't get the time of day from corporate, non-profit or political women who could help me get a job or contracts...they're too busy protecting themselves...not everyone can be an executive woman, but every woman should be able to get a good paying job according to her experience and capabilities.

I need a job now and can't wait until the Obama Economic Recovery Plan kicks in. Can you help me? I have 2 kids in college, and my husband is unemployed, too! (Resumes attached) We're part of the 11.4% unemployed African Americans in the US.

I enjoyed your article. It was your closing sentence that takes us back to the Golden Rule we learned in elementary school, or at least I did ~ "Treat others as you would want to be treated, or do unto to others as you would have them do unto you."

Some lessons are never to be forgotten.

Thoroughly enjoyed your article in the New York Times. After reading it, I would swear that you performed a case study on our office.

At least I know it's not just our office. I could give you an earful. Thanks so much!

I had to reply to this article because this has been something unsaid in my mind for years but now I know that I'm not imagining or am I crazy. I'm a woman and have ALWAYS much much more preferred to work with men any day than women. Too much baggage too much drama, too annoying, too much gossiping and just too much estrogen! It's really sad to say but I've been working for a while and women make the worse co-workers.

20 years ago, in a group of high-powered, well-connected...women, I commented that "we are our own worst enemies". You could have heard a pin drop in the room after I spoke. I felt instantly ostracized... As I was leaving, only 1 woman came up to me and she said - she agreed with what I had said...

What better way to keep power in the hands of the white male establishment! Keeping women fighting amongst themselves (on all sorts of issues - career vs. stay at home, adoption vs. abortion, all concentration on how women should look etc. etc.) derails us from all sorts of advances: education, social, business etc.

To this day, I have never understood why all of the women's organizations; NOW, Planned Parenthood, YWCA, Girl Scouts, NARAL et al. can't get around a table and agree on a JOINT agenda.. There's power in cooperation, bodies and \$\$\$.. Just think of what we could be, accomplish, if we realized the threat is not "the other women, the "shes" but the white male establishment (which by the way is laughing behind our backs) who gets to keep their places, power and prestige....

Regarding the article A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting, I am surprised by the tone in this article and fear it paints a picture of the past and serves to support the very stereotype it attacks. I think times have changed. Of course there are women in leadership roles who behave like the "Queen Bee" (the stereotype defined by researchers of leadership thirty years ago with a more modern version called The Devil Wears Prada) but there are as many men who mistreat subordinates and bully when they can get away with it.

In my experience teaching some of the brightest women in business I conclude they have little time for backstabbing and petty infighting. Most women are trying to win at our jobs, manage our lives in a way that supports and grows our families and communities and build caring and supportive networks of women to help us lead meaningful and useful lives.

I just read your article on infighting in the workplace between woman. It was funny to see your article today because it is a pressing issue that unfortunately I'm experiencing and have been thinking about all week.

I am 53 years old. I have the best job I've ever had in my life. I love every aspect of it except for the way two of the woman here treat me. It's as if we're back in high school. We are so blessed to have these wonderful jobs at this scary economic time that our country is going thru and yet my reaction is such that somedays I feel like walking away. It seems to be coming from a place of jealousy in my case. It's so petty I hate to even verbalize it but I'm a thin woman and they both have weight issues (one is obese) and it manifests to me as a complete lack of respect towards me. I have children and grandchildren and they are both single with no children.

I have decided I can only control my reaction to their unkindness and so I work on that everyday.

THANK YOU for your article on women in the workplace. I have long been bothered by this really unrecognized phenomenon. Years ago when I worked at a university and attended a luncheon for female colleagues, I voiced this concern - that women don't help each other in the workplace. My concern was pretty quickly dismissed by some powerful (female) guest speakers. It was a really uncomfortable lesson for me to learn.

So, I was extremely happy to read your smart appraisal of this trend. We do a disservice to ourselves and to each other when we not only fail to help, but in some cases actively take down each other in the workplace. It doesn't have to be that way.

There are no words to express how much I agree with your thoughts expressed in the Sisterhood article. Thank you for addressing a topic that means so much to young professional women, like me, and on a topic that indeed is the "Pink Elephant" in the room. I would go one step further and add, if I may, that in my experience as a young female lawyer for 5.5 years, it has always been the women who have expressed no interest or downright disdain against other women lawyers (especially if the young female lawyer happens to be reasonably attractive and/or thin). In short, it seems to me that the politically correct advancement for women will be stunted, at best, by the very gender who contends diversity in the workforce (i.e., more women in management positions) is needed. If anything, our "sisterhood" will see to it that any advancement will be made by men. Sad indeed.

Thank you for your article that appeared in the New York Times today on Women Mistreating Each Other in the workplace. It is a topic that could use some limelight. Thank you.

What a timely article! In the past year, I have been dealing with the sisterhood of workplace infighting and being the oldest of four girls, used many of the skills that I learned growing up to deal with the "bully." [All of us took on that role over the years] While on the surface the techniques seemed to work, I have since found that that they were not as successful as I had originally projected. Your observations and viewpoints really helped me to put the situation into perspective.

I work in a hospital; there are many strong, well educated, and highly motivated women vying for a small number of positions if one is a nurse and while it does not excuse the behavior it does explain the actions that are taken. Since I'm not a nurse, nor am I a doctor, this creates a whole other area of murkiness and suspicion...Your article helped me to readjust my thinking and hopefully, I will develop strategies to overcome these challenges. Additionally, this piece has made me think about how to avoid the being part of the sisterhood of infighting and instead, be a helpful "sister" in the workplace.

Men are results driven, they don't have to like you so long as you deliver. As a female in the workplace for 35 years, I've noticed that with some women bosses, if they don't like you, it doesn't matter how good a job you do. They'll make work life unpleasant.

Every point you made in your article about how women do not support each other in the workplace can be made about African Americans in the workforce. Can you imagine my struggles as an African American woman working in a large corporation.

I am sorry to know that the two identity groups that I belong to are so unsupportive of each other. Oh, to be an average white guy.

I am 62 years old and have worked with women in Nursing in a variety of settings.

If a well constructed professional survey were conducted among professional nurses and also support staff and co workers, I think you would find that one major reason women leave the field is the "nastiness" between the professional nurses. I do not know why, but it has been there for a long time.

I have wondered if it is the hormonal cycle, whether it is the tension of the job and setting, or what. Someone could look can actually tease it apart, and then discuss and train to overcome the problem.

There is also the friction between nurses and physicians. Nurses in the US are really intent on getting more of that turf, and will get it by means fair and foul. That includes each other. You could also look at how professional; nurses deal with the increasing number of women who are physicians. Lots of tension there many times...It is also a given in the professional nursing fee that there are a disproportionate number of gay and lesbian nurses. I think that can bring its own interpersonal issues.

Finally, it appears to me that the current crop of professional nurses come from the Community Colleges as opposed to Hospital Schools of Nursing or BSN programs. That also makes for class conflicts with many of the Community College grads being more blue collar and technical nurses while the BSN's were more white collar. The Hospital School Graduate was already incorporated into the hospital culture, and that made life easier for all. Hospital School programs are still employed in the US, and in many countries.

I enjoyed your piece in the NYT 1-10-09 that suggested women in the workplace should be more supportive of each other. It made me think of an experience I had in the 1980s that you might find amusing.

I had already been a journalist for 15 years or so when I found myself swept up in one of those inevitable "reorgs" that seem to arrive like recurring locusts in every newsroom. After learning who my new boss was to be, I tried to gather some newsroom intel about her from colleagues. The buzz I got was that she was demanding, difficult, often unreasonable and a general pain in the ass. Oh boy, I thought, I'm in for it now.

Rather than flogging the obvious, X turned out to be one of the best bosses I've ever had. Yes, she was demanding, often bringing out the best in me and the other people who worked for her. She was difficult, if you consider someone who expects you to do your job competently and thoroughly to be difficult. She was never unreasonable. I concluded quickly that she was a born leader and I was happy to follow.

X also turned out to be something of a mentor for me, despite the fact that she's five years younger. My mind was already turning to those exciting new phenomena called the Tech Revolution and the World Wide Web. After she made the leap to that new digital world, she generously called me and invited me to come along. As a result, I'm now a Web guy wondering if he's going to lose his job instead of a newspaper guy wondering if he's going to lose his job. She long ago moved on to greener tech pastures and I also moved on to another tech job.

Several years after I first went to work for her, I searched my memory banks to try and remember why I'd been so apprehensive. What I remembered baffled me. I hadn't particularly noted it at the time, but all of the bad reviews I had gotten of her had been from women. Men had been neutral or positive. Really puzzled me. Thanks for shedding some light.

From mom to wife to daughters to coworkers to the current woman in my life (and my ex-wife is still a good friend), I've been always been surrounded by strong women. I often say we never have to worry about competition from countries that waste half their population or make them wear chadors. But, female folks, the male half of the population makes it tough enough! Don't make it so tough on each other.

Thanks for a thoughtful and valuable piece.

I read the article you wrote online in the NY Times. Bravo for addressing this persistent issue. It drives me NUTS.

I am a 56 year old, now self-employed, consultant. I have a group of female executive friends who actually do help, coach, promote and network with each other. We also identify key women of all ages to bring into our unofficial network. It's rewarding, but rare behavior among women.

I do have an observation about certain age groups relative to this behavior issue. I am essentially a pre-Title IV woman. But I have always been involved in both team and individual sports wherever and whenever I could. As a result, I compete for the goal and consider myself part of the "team". Most women over the age of 40 did not have the benefit of competitive sports, so they compete for the goal of men's/bosses attention. Misplaced competition. They view other women as threats to that attention.

With more women coming into the workplace, who have for years participated in competitive sports, I see less inter-personal competition. I have yet to see much mentoring and promotional activity, however.

So, I feel really lucky to have concentrated on finding other women who compete to the goal and mentor, support and network for the good of each other.

Maybe other women will read your article and take a look at their own behavior and fix it. One can hope.

Just a quote from Betty Davis I would like to share:

"The birds always pick on the good meat"

These women who chose to tear down rather than to rise up to the challenge of unifying women in the work place.

YOU ARE SO RIGHT!

I'm retired now - but boy! could I have benefitted from coaching. So much of what goes on - between women - is

it's on the whole more out there. So - this is a wonderful wonderful article. But it needs to go hand in hand with some direct psychotherapy for many ambitious women. It ain't going to come with cumbayah either.

I believe that Peggy Klaus is guilty of the very sabotaging she accuses others of. Clearly she is not "just getting over" having been mistreated by some women along the way, but rather chooses to present all women as emotional disasters and bullies in the workplace. The tone of the article is that all women do this all the time. Thank God men are so much less emotional, according to Ms. Klaus, keeping their natural impulse to compete in check by "whipping each other's butts" in sales contests.

This "job coach" presents no data, but her own experience and other women who talk behind closed doors. Thought we'd come a lot farther than this.

Pitiful.

Since personal experience is the source of authority here, let me offer this from my own experience. People of both genders are perfectly capable of being jerks at work AND at play. Both men and women can be colleagues from hell. On the other hand, both are also capable of appropriate professional behavior and mentoring. I've worked with some great women along the way. So cut with the stereotypes and generalities already and take 'em on one by one.

Loved your observations and sadly, couldn't agree with you more. I tend to think that it's a combination of resentment for having to DIY and the fear that there are too few positions to be too generous that fuels much of girl-on-girl friction. (But it also makes sense that women take things personally-I've done it myself.)

I'd add another element, which, won't be very PC but, here goes, cause I think it's a factor: age-ism that whacks women harder than men. I can't tell you how many times men (and 20 somethings) have said to me, in all seriousness: You're 43? I thought you were, like, 36...Men will say, "I didn't know you were that OLD." The implication is, 1. once you're over 40 you're face must slide off your bones, otherwise, why would 36 be perceived as so much younger than 43? (I think of them as in the same general ball park.) 2. you're ancient and ought to be hidden away someplace; 3. you don't have value unless you have perky POA value. It gets a little annoying and it can make me feel alienated from younger women and men. Just a thought.

Thank you so much for this long overdue article. I've worked in offices for over 35 years; it took me too long to learn that some of my female co-workers never a kind word or honest "team inspired" intention toward me and any other woman in the office. Call it bullying, jealousy or insecurity, it's ugly and counterproductive for all of us. In the early days, I let it ride thinking "the truth will win out". The truth was sound asleep on another floor. Now I address it early-on in private conversation. If no resolution is forthcoming, I discuss it with someone who can take action or I find new employment. Why we would choose to be our own worst enemies is a mystery.

Perfect Timing!

I'm a Business Owner since 1995-- and the oldest in a WONDERFUL family of 4 sisters and a middle brother, and THE sweetest Dad (my wonderful mom too, passed away) we are CLOSE and TOTALLY supportive of each other--- and our DEAR "surrogate" sisters & brothers

NOW
in the outside world---
Quite a different story---

Your piece, 'A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting' said it ALL!

Thank-YOU!

Thank you so much for the article on how women treat - mistreat - one another in the workplace. I'm having all of these experiences with the women in my office. One woman begged our male boss to fire the supervisor, but now she and the supervisor are buddy buddies -- at least until the supervisor ticks her off again. This supervisor is an office nightmare; I've characterized her as passive-aggressive, using malicious compliance, creating chaos in order to clean up and say see what I did they couldn't do that; and she's 60 years old. She is the classic bully and I am so sick of it I could scream. What I have been doing lately is giving back to her what she's been dishing out. I've even said to her at least 3 times that she needs training in order to be a proper supervisor; the male boss knows this; and knows that she is a nightmare, but he doesn't do anything about it. She withholds information and interferes with my job, micromanages, pulls rank and is just a psycho. I need to quit and find another gig so help me. What can I do?

Thank you for the informative article about women sabotaging other women in the workplace. As I make my way in the legal field, I have run into countless women who fall into the "DIY" category you mentioned. When they went to law school 30 years ago it was an all boys club and they were likely treated like dirt. Years later, and in light of much professional and personal successes, that bitterness still remains and I am amazed at the lack of generosity and mentoring that occurs when I contact them. They're like ferocious monsters guarding their territory, as if my wanting to be successful is crimping their style.

Your article was timely and thought provoking. Great work!

"A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting" showed rare candor about an important workplace issue. Throughout my 30 year legal and business career, women peers, subordinates and mentees consistently said that their women bosses were the least supportive and their women colleagues the least trustworthy. My women classmates in the 1970's often talked about how their generation would change the workplace for the benefit of all women; since then, a lot of them made a lot of money, but very few seem to have helped a lot of women.

Thank you for writing A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting. Needless to say, I've experienced this - and perhaps I've committed the same kind of insensitivity to other women. I used to work at this NGO established by so-called "feminist" professors in one of the state universities here in [XX country]. Not a few times have I encountered co-workers who have lost their admiration for women referring to themselves as "feminist" because they have seen how they (feminist women) can be cruel to fellow women.

Anyway, it's a good read. And it takes a good writer to make one.

I read with great interest your piece on women's poor treatment of other women in the workplace. I am a general surgeon in X and have seen this terrible truth in our profession for years. I've been on the receiving end more times than I can count and on the delivering end more times than I care to admit. So, your last paragraph really struck a chord. It's time we all acknowledged this pink elephant and changed how we treat each other.

I just finished reading your article "A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting" and I wanted to comment.

I agree wholeheartedly with the idea that women are adept at sabotaging each other in the workplace, often in a very mean-spirited and backhanded manner. I think this has a lot to do with the way girls are socialized; somewhere along the way, young girls receive encouragement from peers that mean behavior will be rewarded with popularity and/or boyfriends. This behavior carries on to the workplace, which in many ways is no different than high school in its hierarchy, and women continue to be competitive in a non-constructive way.

My own personal experience in the workplace, working for women, has been negative. In certain work situations, I felt that I was being critiqued unfairly because my boss had a bad day, personal problems that were unrelated to me, or had misinterpreted a comment or action from me the wrong way. I had one experience where I confronted a female co-worker who I heard loudly complaining about me to my boss when she thought I was out of earshot. Her response was to try and downplay the complaint, but the fact that she would go behind my back really made me second guess her motives.

I have read a few articles about women sabotaging each other in the workplace, but it never appears to have any lasting effect on their behavior. I don't think women should be afraid to speak up about vicious or vindictive behavior from other women for fear of disgracing themselves and reinforcing stereotypes. In order to shatter stereotypes, one has to acknowledge they exist and work to change them.

Peggy, you are so right. American women in the work place and academia are the worst. After more than 30 years in the workplace, I've found my male counterpoints to be more level headed, will do the job and not bitch, and mostly level with women co-workers. Not so with the women. Unfortunately, I've found most women and even professional types with advanced degrees to be neurotic and uneven in their treatment of women co-workers. Indeed, if I'm going to be screwed in the workplace, let it be from a male associate . . . !

Thank you for that essay. It's an under-discussed topic. In my experience, it's often generational. In my circle of friends (mostly in our thirties and forties), we have often felt that the boomer women ahead of us not only didn't lend a hand up, but also often actively sabotaged us in many of the ways you mentioned. I have tended to work in female-dominated fields and they appear to be frequently worse about woman-on-woman bullying.

Great article on a Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting.

My only suggestion would have been to more sharply stress the gossip and backbiting among women at work. And women say it's men who don't allow them to get ahead!

I can recall at one workplace hearing women rip a "friend" who had just left the lunchroom table to return to her desk. It was SOP.

Then women wondered why they failed to flourish in their workplace. Gosh, what a mystery. They were too busy excoriating one another.

You have nailed every point I have experienced as a male working for female managers in California. In conversations with other male friends, they have had similar experiences as well. My roommate and good friend, has had nothing but bad experiences working for women and your points mirrored his experience verbatim.

Your fourth and fifth paragraph listing the examples of bad behavior are right on. It's not only other women that these bullies abuse, but their male co-workers and subordinates as well. In the Bay Area, where competition for professional level jobs is fierce, these behaviors are very pronounced.

The theories you list are interesting, but in my experience, women do how favoritism toward other women. When I have applied for positions at firms where the department is all female or largely female, I have not gotten hired. When I did -- for a boutique direct marketing firm in X-- I was pigeonholed to my position. I was told by my department manager (who was a woman) when I offered some suggestions on how to improve our workflow about a month into the job that she set the tone and direction for the department, and not me. Suffice to say, I was let go shortly after. I was told that I did a good job, but I "wasn't a good fit."

I have been a manager, and my approach has been to encourage my subordinates to improve and grow. I train them to replace me. A good manager is not afraid of being replaced because the reward is a promotion when you have concrete proof of your department's performance gains. But in my experiences working for women managers, it seems they feel they are the only ones who can (or should) do their jobs, and so they do not train their subordinates to take over if they have to.

After those experiences, I am reluctant to take a job where I will have a woman supervisor unless there is a male with equal authority in the department. I could go on, but I do not want to seem like I am whining.

Thank you for writing the article. I hope that it reaches the audience who needs to read it most: the bullies.

I really appreciated this article on women and infighting and feel it's long past time that women begin to address this issue.

There is one thing I'd like to bring up. The article seemed to focus on women in a corporate structure, in other words, peers of a sort. I experienced another unfortunate tendency. Right after September 11th, the job I was to start that October dried up and I had to take a job in a nonprofit association of women in the financial industries. There was the usual politicking and infighting among the members but what was really depressing was the way they treated the staff, all of them women.

They were constantly told how "dynamic" they were. There seemed to be assumption that if one wasn't in that business, but was in a service job, one was not an equal and thus, was stupid. This was reflected in the way the benefits and other job related issues were handled. It was the most miserable work experience of my life made even worse because these women were constantly congratulating themselves.

Of course, now with the financial service industries in disarray, maybe some of these women may end up in a similar job themselves. I confess I would get a grim chuckle out of that.

I found your article "Preoccupations: A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting" to be quite interesting. However, I am disappointed that you devoted quite a bit of space in your column to repeating stories (or "theories") about how and why women mistreat one another. It is true that you use the word "sometimes", but the overall impression given by the article is that this mistreatment occurs very often, and that women choose to do it to women more often than men choose to do it to women or men choose to do it to men. The average reader is likely to carry away the impression that women are b*****s, just as he (or perhaps, unfortunately, even she), always thought.

The study about the genders of those that a bully chooses to mistreat does not prove your point, since the aggregate amount of bullying by each gender is not taken into account. Moreover, given the gender disparity among higher-level positions, a female who bullies may have a hard time locating a male to bully who could not also put her job in danger. She would thus face a built-in barrier toward bullying men, and would be forced to choose women.

Overall, my own experience does not reflect what you write. Of course, my experience is anecdotal, but so are the stories you have gathered.

Nonetheless, this is a fascinating topic. There is plenty of room for a formal study, and you are in the position to organize such a study and analyze the results. I hope you do.

I'm XX

I'm writing to you from my country: Italy.

I have read your article.

Indeed also in my workplace I think it is the same.

We as men tend to create a more common strict friendship than the woman.

For example we (men) go out after the work to drink a beer or eat a hamburger.

Instead the woman never!!!

I don't know why.

It is quite strange.

Growing up with a divorced, independent, NOW member mother, I understand the struggles women go through in the work place. My sister and mother could do anything a man could, water ski, snowmobile, dirt bikes and even whoop them in sports. Some of the most brilliant engineers I work with now are women.

Working in a "good ole boy" environment of Road Construction, I saw all the chauvinistic pig attitudes you can imagine. But I have always said to all my girlfriends, wife etc, that you are your own worst enemies. I can see the instant disgust even in her generally very open and loving eyes when that "woman" thing comes up. I think it has more to do with competition, self preservation, etc. Like they say, women dress to impress other women, men could care less, unless it's sexy.

My father always used to say in his engineering office, if there were one or two women, it was alright, if there are three, two will always gang up on the other. Now I see that in our office as we got more women assistants.

Just want to thank you for your article on what many young women are finding out with surprise and astonishment. Not only will other women in your office NOT like you, they'll go out of their way to sabotage and smear you. From someone well versed in the rah-rah sisterhood of women's studies classes, this was a rude awakening. My goal is to lead my example, carefully allying these women away from the dark side, and show them we work better as a team. It's difficult, but it can be done...

Thank you so much for your article on workplace infighting among women. I am the victim of a terrible female bully at work, and I am still trying to figure out how to deal with it. It can be all-consuming, and her toxic, sociopathic behavior makes what is otherwise my wonderful job exponentially harder. Although it is difficult, it was so helpful to read your article and know that I am not the only one experiencing this! Over and over I say that I just wish people could grow up and stop behaving so poorly. Maybe one day they will - until then, I will just have to deal as best I can. Your article is helping me in that process, so thank you again.

wow - finally someone is actually writing about it!! I live in X and used to work at X (before they closed the facility here), and the competition between women was rampant. I used to tell people that if there were 3 people in similar roles, two women and a man, and their supervisor leaves and they are all considered for the job, if one of the women did not get it they would rather lose to the man than the other woman. Why is that?? Because we think the man is more qualified so we can rationalize it to ourselves easier? Or is it simply jealousy of the woman. In looking at what drives the competition in the workplace I would look no further than middle school .They are evil to each other. I DREAD my daughter going through that time, I know how hard it was myself. So WHY does it happen in middle school? I think its just in our nature to compete against each other for attention and to be the "special one", whether it be with friends or at work. Some sort of power thing.

Good news for me, who is by nature not a competitive person. I am now at X, and find it much less competitive and that women work more closely together, which I attribute to more the type of person that might gravitate to academia vs. business.

Hi Ms. Klaus, as a male, recently retired corporate HR professional I must agree with your observations about women often not helping each other in the workplace. It never made any sense to me. The Company (male dominated leadership until the last 10-15 years) was actively trying to recruit, retain and advance women through the management ranks, but when it came to female executives cooperating with each other, that could never be counted on. My own experience however was that the younger the women involved, the more likely they would share advice, mentor another woman or make another woman's job easier through cooperation. So perhaps there's hope that our observations will change over time.

Your article in the New York Times, "A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting," is very interesting. You've talked about gender differences that hinder women in the workplace, which makes sense. However, I'm curious if these really apply to the newer generations in the workforce. I've been working for three years and I've never perceived and disadvantage because I'm a woman. The only time I get treated differently, is when a male colleague will offer to carry a heavy binder back to my desk. I think there may be a generational difference as well. I agree that many women paved the way and battled gender discrimination at work. In my group, there are two female partners and 10 male. However, this could be because a lot of women give up their careers to assume other responsibilities before they have a chance to advance to a senior level. As an increasing number of women stay in the workforce, shouldn't the gender inequality in management positions also decrease. It's just that women, like men, need to work their way up to that level. Therefore, while older women may not be as willing to help the less experienced ones, I think women of my generation are smart enough to find the mentor that's best for them irrespective of sex.

Hi. I read with interest your "Preoccupations" article (1/16/09). I primarily want to make a comment on the explanation for why women might be more likely to bully other women that you seem to favor. But first I'd like to say something briefly about your claim that there is such a phenomenon to be explained.

I'm a philosophy professor...Philosophy as a discipline is like physics in its gender make-up. Gender imbalances are greatest in research departments and tend to be worst in the best ones.

So, that's my background. I was surprised by the empirical findings you report. It's true that some more senior women do not mentor younger women. But it seems to me that mentoring younger women, given the numerical imbalances, is a job equally for senior men and women, and certainly women do more than their fair share of that.

It's not been my experience that women actively aim to undermine each other, though I think it is often true that women value more the networking relationships they've developed with men than with women, but that's simply self-interest, not spite or jealousy. It's a sad fact about my field that men are better connected than women are and, if you want to get ahead, it is their networks you should seek to be a part of.

This is a shame, but women's altruism has for a long time, I think, worked against them. One of reasons that women tend to be less well represented at the top of our discipline is that they tend to be less shamelessly well promoting than equally talented men. Since the best kind of mentors for women, in my own experience as a graduate student and then a junior faculty member, are the professionally successful ones, it is a good thing for all of us if some smart women are self-promoting.

It also seems to me that professional success is in and of itself the best way to mentor younger women. Some of the senior women in the department in which I was a graduate student were not particularly nice or encouraging. But they were at the top of their field, clearly demonstrating to any doubters that women not only can be, but are, as good philosophers as the best men. (Historically, unconscious sexism has pretty clearly also been a factor that keeps women out of the best and most prestigious jobs, although that is slowly changing.) Someone needed to clear this hurdle for us and the women who did it weren't going to do it by being nice.

That said, it wouldn't surprise me if the experience of women in academic fields is not like those of the vast majority of working women. What I'm wondering about then is the right explanation for the phenomenon that you point to: Women actively undermining the careers of their female counterparts. From your article, it appears that you favor the one that appeals to women's "hyper-emotionality", since you seem to go on to buttress it. ("Research shows that women are the more emphatic sex...")

As someone who gets paid for rigorous debate with my peers, it has been surprising to me to note the extent to which non-philosophers, men and women alike, enjoy making pronouncements (affirmative action is unjust, abortion is wrong, tax cuts for the wealthy benefit everyone) but deeply resent being asked to give their reasons for their views. So, it is not clear to me that what you call "hyper-emotionality" is a predominantly female phenomenon.

But suppose it is. How would that explain the phenomenon? Wouldn't hyper-emotional women take offense equally at the criticisms of men? And if hyper-emotionality causes women to try to sabotage the careers of their critics, wouldn't it make them equally sabotage those of their male critics? But, if you're right, 70% of all bullying by women is woman-on-woman. So, unless women are also more critical of other women than they are of men, I don't see how hyper-emotionality could explain the phenomenon.

But maybe I'm wrong that you're attracted to that explanation. Either way, it doesn't seem like a very good one, absent research that suggests that women are more critical of other women. Maybe there are. That would be really interesting--and, if we were to combat it, important to explain.

I read your article and I have a response. I think that women passive-aggressively (and sometimes blatantly) attack each other due to insecurities. I'm talking deep insecurities, so deeply rooted in them that they are often times oblivious to the reason for their resentment of other women. I am in my second job after college and have encountered a few types of these "bullies" already and am not looking forward to meeting more of them. I have found though that in each case the bully or the aggressor is in a job that exceeds their skill-set and/or under extreme pressure from their superior and what winds up happening is they choose a whipping-girl. Frequently the whipping-girl is a perceived threat to the bully but still junior to the bully. This article you wrote raises awareness, but the real problem is the bullies often don't even know why they feel such animosity towards the "pretty, smart, go-getter" and furthermore, witnesses often describe the treatment as a manifestation of jealousy. Logically the dragon-bosses aren't jealous of the green go-getters, they're a little threatened by them, and very insecure of their own worth. Now that's my take thus far in corporate life, hopefully the next few years will not be wrought with more of these women.

Loved the article, I'd really love to see more on this topic,

I'm a male who's been working in the wonderful world of nursing for thirty plus years. Just read your article on A Sisterhood of Workplace Infighting! Truly amazing.

As a male working in a female dominated environment for these many years I have to say that you have hit the proverbial nail on the head!

I've often pondered my opposite working in a male dominated workplace and while many think that men can be aggressive and hard to deal with there are many male nurses who know from personal experience that female power structures can be every bit as vicious, if not more so.

While this is a profession that is known for "eating it's young" it's interesting to note that there are never any conferences on the subject of getting past these tendencies.

Thanks for the great article!

What a great article - boy did you hit the nail on the head- and boy could I use your help!

I run a successful non-profit with an office of all women- love my work- struggle with the daily drama in the office

I try to figure out why I feel responsible for each of their personal happiness during work hours
(did I not give her enough time for that assignment-? she looks tired..)

Really do my men counterparts worry about this at all?

I saw that you do some personal coaching- would love to learn more about that- seems like your thoughts are right on target with what I hope to achieve-

I look forward to hearing from you-

Thanks again for saying out loud what many of us were thinking- or feeling- but could not define-

Interesting article. Some of the explanations certainly ring true to me. Let me suggest one that you didn't mention: for millennia, women had to compete tooth and nail for the real prize: a man to support them. It has become part of women's behavior to bare their claws mercilessly, because survival was riding on it. A patriarchal society will promote unhealthy competition among women: divide and conquer. I have been associated with academic Women's Studies programs for many years, and I have seen the worst amongst women who are seriously committed to advancing the cause of women, particularly at work, but cannot shed what is practically inscribed in their DNA.

FINALLY!

I was so pleased to see your article in the NYT of 1/11/09. How women in business treat each is indeed a pink elephant in the middle of the room.

As a woman who has spent most of her adult life in business, first in market research and then, for the most part, as an advertising writer and creative director in Madison Ave agencies, I have always been stumped by the way women were willing to treat each other.

My career started in the "Mad Ave" era and spanned the years of women's lib, the power-suit days and is now winding down in the age of entitlement. As an agency creative I was in and out of many corporations over the years. And, in the beginning was often the only woman at the conference table.

But I grew up as a tom boy and an army brat. No dollies for me, but lots of outdoor stuff, animals and guys for role models.

So I had no problem with the locker room humor and jockeying around that guys exhibited. But I had huge problems with how women operated.

And I think I know why as a tribe we act the way we do. It comes down to this:

Guys see others as competitors to be bested.

Women see others as rivals to be pushed back.

And the distinction between competition and rivalry is huge.

Competition makes us strive to be better. Rivalry makes us scared and defensive.

When a guy looks at another guy who's good at something, he says damn that guy is good, he's competing with me. I'm going to be better.

But all too often, when a woman looks at another woman who is good at something, she says damn that girl is good, she's a rival for my limelight. I'm going to hold her back.

Translate this to runners and you can see how the guy who is willing to be better can set records. And the woman who is holding others back may win but will never set any records.

Maybe its the old pack mentality kicking in, when only the alpha female got the top male. Whatever it is, you see it at every level in our willingness to be bitchy, gossip and spread rumors about any new woman in the office who might have power or upset the pecking order. I'm sure it's a lot of what went on in Hillary's bid for the presidency among her inner circle. They just didn't play nice. They couldn't keep their eye on the ball...would rather keep teammates from scoring than move the ball down the field.... with predictable results.

Anyhow, thanks for your time and for bringing this issue forward. I'm glad to see it emerging as something we have to work on.

I had a bully of a female boss several years ago. The harder I tried to do a good job and help her achieve goals, the worse she treated me. She did everything from accusing me of sabotaging a project to criticizing my hairdo in a written evaluation. I hung in for four years and then quit, leaving a nonprofit organization that I enjoyed and cared about. I just couldn't take it anymore.

I think there were two problems. I always understood that she was threatened by me professionally, that she was worried I would crowd her position. But only later did I learn from coworkers that it was more personal. She and I worked at an administrative level that was dominated by males. She had once been the cute young woman on the rise, but now she was 10 years older and had put on a little weight. Then I came along and became the new cute young woman on the rise, shifting the male attention from her to me. I am told by others that she fumed about it often.

At that time, I was happily married with young children, and my social life happened away from work. The male attention at work was sometimes flattering, usually annoying. She was married to a man she never mentioned and no one ever saw, had no kids, and she socialized with people from work frequently- lots of conferences, event lunches, TGIF. Looking back, I can see that all that was very important to her and I undercut it.

My first boss was also a woman. She was wonderful; did everything she could do help me along. When an interesting project came along, I did most of the work, she helped, and when the big bosses loved it, she gave me credit, always. And it wasn't just me—she helped everyone grow. We still keep in touch; what a great lady! So it cuts both ways...

I read your article in the New York Times regarding women sabotaging each other at work. I think you've really written an important article here. I wanted to share something else with you.

Formerly a businesswoman in XX, I never had any trouble personally as you describe. But I did have trouble at my current workplace (I'm an elementary teacher overseas) with a woman bully who was my boss. She used to bully others, as well, but I actually got fired (it seemed she was looking for an excuse for a couple of years). Anyway, some parents convinced me to contact her boss, and so I did. He rehired me immediately. A couple years later I read an excellent book, which I recommend to you, called *The Bully at Work* (available through Amazon). If only I had had this book at the time the bullying was going on! But at the time I didn't recognize it for what it was. Anyway, this is just an anecdote in passing.

I spend a lot of time talking to my elementary students trying to help them solve problems they have with other kids (our school doesn't have counselors). Many of these problems involve bullying. I'm in my 50's now, and what I have seen from my life experience is that while kids think the problem of bullying goes away when one grows up, it doesn't! In fact, I have shared that with some of my kids, that there are even some adult bullies, and that it's important to stand up to them, not let them get away with getting worse and worse (and I try to help them with strategies and even role-play with them, in preparation). I think some of the kids who are bullies indeed grow up to be adult bullies in the workplace. Sometimes kids who are bullies indeed have parents who are bullies and teach them to "bully" their way through life situations (not always, but sometimes).

I just wanted to let you know that I enjoyed and appreciated your thoughtful article. Thanks for writing it.

I just wanted to thank you for a great article. As a woman who has had two bullying female bosses in my career, it's nice to finally see this subject being addressed in the mainstream media. I have seen the Workplace Bullying Institute's website as well, and was relieved to see that I'm not the only one, unfortunately, who has experienced this behavior in the workplace.

I'd like to point out one thing. There is also a lot of information coming out about how bullying, whether done by a man or a woman, is not professional nor competent workplace behavior. Both of my bullying bosses, who were also female and seemed to take pleasure in singling me out for their bad behavior, were eventually fired by either the CEO of the company or the X. Ultimately, when those in charge use bullying tactics, it isn't conducive to company productivity.

Right now, I work for a company that has a female CEO, who I think is a great leader. The company also has a code of conduct policy that prohibits hostile behavior or creating a hostile environment. Employees of this company have recourse if someone should choose to single them out or treat them in a hostile manner.

Lastly, I agree wholly that women shouldn't be backbiting each other at work, but supporting each other. Putting each other down or fighting until someone drops was probably not what women pioneers who have fought for equality had intended!

Thanks again. I look forward to your future articles.

I really enjoyed this article...

Ironically I was speaking to a good friend about an incident I am having at work with a women and she immediately referred me to this article. It at least makes me feel better that I am not the only one. I am still trying to figure out how to resolve it. I am new to the company and this women is a direct report of mine. She has been with the company for 6 years and according to her did not want my role... so I have no idea why she appears to be undermining me. The tension is getting increasingly worse...my thought is an off sight meeting and opening talk about the situation. I am just not sure how she will react.

Any suggestions would be great!

I hope you are the reader of this.

I enjoyed your article: keen observations on the impact of the workplace on women.

I've been a worker and a student of the workplace for over 40 years.

I think of the workplace as an institution that brings out much less than the best in people, both women and men. Probably worse, it confuses understanding of what personal and political freedom really is.

My point of departure: The social system at the workplace is driven by the forces of hierarchy and specialization, the political scientist's definition of fascist political organization. (See Four Systems by Carl Cohen, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Cohen).

All your examples of bad behavior by women at the workplace are explained by such political organization. (See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Origins_of_Totalitarianism> (1951)). Such organization always fails for lack of honesty and cooperation. At the national level, fascism is tried at most once; at the workplace level, workers just move on to the next job.

The best solution I see is a shorter work week, which I hope would reduce the personal damage for all and give us sufficient time to understand and practice real democracy. The first step is to make people aware of the problem and its dangers. Your article is a start, although I fear its discussion won't go too much further than the feel-good, I'm-OK-Your-OK, what-can-we-do-about-it-anyway conversations among friends.

Thanks for the inspiration for this. Best wishes to you.
