Gender relationships in the workplace: creating allies

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Today

• We have an hour and a half, which includes time for questions. Don’t be shy
• You may tweet or post during the session
• I will send a PDF of the slides to the organizers
Agenda

• You and your training
• You and your work
• Aspects of current workplace context (2)
• Models for relations at work
• Colleagues and collegiality
• Data
• Allies and allyship
• Moving the needle: women strengthening ourselves
• Moving the needle: creating allies with women and men
• What else do you have to do?
• Suggested reading
• Copyright
You and your training

• You were given your place in college, graduate school, your postdoc, and your job(s) based mostly on your own work
• The results of your work depend mostly on you
• You are evaluated and recommended mostly on your own work
• You are here now because you have succeeded for years within this evaluation framework
You and your work

• The results of your work will depend much more on others than it did during your training

• You will be evaluated much more in the context of your colleagues than you were in your training

• How you interact with individual colleagues and how you work in teams will be a bigger part of your job and matter more to your career than they did in your training

• You will bring habits from your training to your workplace: this is necessary, good, and has consequences to be aware of
Aspects of current workplace context (1)

• Women occupy more roles, more controversial roles, and more publicly visible roles (Marine infantry, Army Rangers, presidential candidates, chair of Federal Reserve) with every passing day
• #MeToo has raised public attention to abuse of professional power in every workplace
• Technology and social media support challenges to “that’s not what happened”:
  • Cell phones record audio and video
  • The internet does not forget
  • Social media have accelerated the speed with which information travels
Aspects of current workplace context (2)

• For men, valued workplace traits (ex.: confident self-promotion, forthright workplace conflicts) and valued social traits are most often aligned

• For women, valued workplace traits and valued social traits (ex.: deflecting credit from one’s self; de-escalation of conflict) are most often misaligned

Women, but usually not men, must ordinarily reconcile tension between how they are valued as colleagues and how they are valued socially
Women and men at work

In the context of workplaces, where your work in the context of your colleagues matters more than it did during your training where your professional behavior was strongly modeled and shaped, and in the current #MeToo context, how should women and men behave at work? When that behavior falls short of the ideal, what should we do about it?
Models for relations at work

• Your current models for interpersonal relations include these:
  • Child – parent (*relative imbalance of authority*)
  • Student – teacher, student – coach
  • Student – faculty, student – staff, employee – employer
  • Student – supervisor / PI
  • Roommates, friends (*relative balance of authority*)
  • Dating, romantic partners, spouses

• Here are some additional ones that can help you at work:
  • Colleagues (*potentially relatively independent of authority*)
  • Allies
Colleagues and collegiality

• You will work with a lot of people over time: some you will like, some you will not
• Collegiality means treating everyone at work well, whether you are friends or not
• Collegiality means treating everyone at work well, no matter what their role or their relation to you
• Collegiality means treating with everyone at work well, independent of any personal attribute of theirs or yours
• Collegiality means assuming every individual has something to contribute at work, no matter their role
Data

• Workplace data show that collegiality is an ideal not always achieved between women and men
  • #MeToo
  • The persistent gender pay gap
  • Talk ratio: [http://arementalkingtoomuch.com/](http://arementalkingtoomuch.com/)
  • Striking disparities in lab funding for men and women in new lab setups
  • Persistent gender disparities at senior positions at organizations and on their boards
  • Persistent gender disparities in government organizations

• We know what collegiality is, and many of us believe in its value: how do we achieve it more often for both women and men?
Allies and allyship

• One tool for achieving broader collegiality is engaging workplace colleagues as allies in pursuit of workplace equity:
  • Allyship at work means believing what other people say is true; *allies start by imagining themselves in other people’s positions as they describe them*
  • Allyship at work means not responding to a colleague with one’s own different experience; *allies first respond by asking “what can I do to help?” and listening to the answer*
  • Allyship at work means recognizing that not everyone starts out from the same place; *allies respond by elevating voices and experiences other than their own*
  • Allyship at work means recognizing that perceptions categorize people; *allies respond by challenging those perceptions*
Moving the needle: women strengthening women

• Identify each other
• Elevate each other
• Tell each other what is going on, positive and negative: money, power, abuses
• Watch for “suck it up because it used to be worse” from senior women
• Engage with each other’s careers
Moving the needle: creating allies with women and men

- Realize not everyone will be or become an ally, no matter how you try: cull the herd that you focus on
- Identify key influencers (women and men): explain what you need them to do to support women
- Identify key influencers (women and men): explain what you need them to do to educate men
- Advocate for early-stage bias training at the outset of graduate programs, postdocs, and fellowships
- Reward the behavior you want to see
- Realize you and others are living with local difficulties in the context of progress at broad scale
What else do you have to do?

• Workplace and social conditions are influenced by laws and regulations that are made by elected officials at every level. Your voice needs to be heard, but as many people have pointed out, if you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.

• Vote. You start to make yourself heard by elected officials when you vote. Register and vote in every election, forever. Nag your friends to vote, and take them to the polls. Use the VoteWithMe app to identify friends whom you can influence to vote.

• Consider running for office, and encourage smart women to run for office.
Suggested reading

• Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, ch. 22, “Expert intuition: when can we trust it?”

• Anne Krook, *Now What Do I Say? Practical Workplace Advice for Younger Women*

• Amanda Littman, *Run For Something*

• Caitlin Moran, *How to be a Woman*

• Michelle Obama, *Becoming*

• Howard J. Ross, *Everyday Bias*
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