

[PDF] Woman's Inhumanity To Woman

Phyllis Chesler - pdf download free book



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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Chesler, author of the bestselling *Woman and Madness*, explores the "shadow side" of sisterhood: women treating each other badly. How could her own mother have been so mean to her? How could someone who "borrowed" published ideas from her not acknowledge her or say "thank you"? In this treatise on breaking the "cycle of cruelty" between women, controversial feminist Chesler addresses why sisters fight, why some women prefer to work for men rather than for women, and other highly subjective cases of woman/woman cruelty. From the "demented Demeters" and "murderous Electras" of Greek mythology to modern-day Mommie Dearest, Chesler warns, mothers and daughters are doomed. Whether they acknowledge their mothers' viciousness, as Chesler does, or whether they're "unconscious" and suffer "amnesia" about

the hurt, she says, the patterns are set. Throughout girlhood and into adult life, women repeat the basic lesson in Chesler's words, "maternal envy teaches daughters to be passive, fearful, conformist, obedient as well as similarly cruel to other women." Thus, she says, "an assertive woman manager might be viewed as bitchy and non-maternal." This comment is certainly more digestible than, say, "what complicates the aging process is a woman's life-long experience of all other women as rivals and potential replacements." Chesler draws her evidence from interviews with an unspecified group of women with horror stories: backstabbing by feminist colleagues, sadistic gynecologists, battering lesbians, etc. Needless to say, her book sometimes comes off as quite cynical, despite her claim that "I would like women to treat each other in good ways." (Mar.)Forecast: It's prickly and contentious, but it's Chesler so expect some buzz in the academic feminist circles she inhabits.

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From Library Journal Second Wave feminists have for 30-plus years operated under the assumption that sisterhood is powerful. Indeed, women acting in concert have forced society to redefine gender, domestic relations, and the workplace. Still, despite huge gains in public visibility, female ascendance has been hampered by a rarely acknowledged reality: women often betray, hurt, and humiliate one another. Mothers stymie daughters, biological sisters compete, girlfriends gossip maliciously, and women bosses exert arbitrary and capricious authority. Chesler (*Women and Madness*, etc.) has been studying this phenomenon for 21 years, and her research is fascinating, resonant, and unsettling. While the book focuses on psychological rather than political factors and pays too little attention to race and class, it is nonetheless a groundbreaking look at how women perpetuate oppression. Anthropological, biological, literary, and sociological theories are also tapped, giving the book added heft. Although the text is somewhat repetitious and self-congratulatory, it is highly recommended for all public and academic libraries. Eleanor J. Bader, Brooklyn, NY

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