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Will Hillary Ever Be One Of The Cool Kids?

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Madeleine Albright once said, "Anybody who thinks the world would be a better place if run by women doesn't remember high school."

I think about that. I remember the power players in my own high school. And I think about Hillary Clinton and women voters.

Studies of adolescent female power reveal a world of alpha girls and beta girls. Women never forget which side of the social fault line on which they spent their formative years. Men, generally speaking, can't relate. Their social demarcations - less subtle, but likely not as lasting - tended toward wedgies and slamming people into lockers.

It is the alpha girls who rule fashion, determine dance steps, set the lexicon, assign seats in the cafeteria, and make the iron-fisted judgments about who is in and who is out. Certain alpha female chimpanzees maintain their dominance over their rivals by killing their young. High school girls just cause eating disorders.

The beta girls, by contrast an equally gross generalization, are accomplished. They get the grades. They excel in sports. They play instruments. They run the student council. They are known, but not revered.

Even if we reinvent ourselves in college, and then reinvent that reinvention as adults, I don't think any of us ever fully escapes the gravitational pull of our middle and high school years. The people you like now are very likely to be the same people you liked then.

All of which brings me back to Hillary Clinton.

Laura Sessions Stepp, who writes extensively about adolescents and families, wrote in a [2002 Washington Post article](#) about "gamma girls." They are smart, accomplished, funny, friendly, so universally well-liked, that they transcend alpha and beta.

True, but I don't think the gammas are created whole. They came from the emotional

ranks of alphas and betas, but just repackaged on the power of their intellectual and emotional intelligence.

I would say Hillary is a gamma, except for that part about being universally well liked. And there in lies the issue that her campaign doubtless finds maddening.

Is she the alpha girl who is winning just like she always did? Or is she the beta girl who, forgetting her place, wants to walk right past the cool kids table to sit in the most powerful chair on earth.

Either way, Hillary has a tough job dialing up just the right balance of toughness and femininity - so much so one assumes her speaking notes say: "sniffle here" ... "throw your head back and laugh easily here."

People don't hate Obama. They don't hate McCain. Opponents would simply rather they not be elected president.

What exactly did she do to arouse such emotions among the ranks of the female Hillary haters?

There are many interesting theories.

There is the argument that professional woman don't like her because no matter what they accomplished, she has accomplished more. This is a woman who was chosen to give the valedictory address at the Wellesley convocation. Not content to tell the assemblage to change the world and smell the roses, she polled the student body, solicited ideas and poems, beautifully captured the turmoil and hope of the times, got a standing ovation, and her speech was featured in Life Magazine. Top that, miss thing!

Older women - who, in fairness, are also among her strongest supporters - don't like her because she is too much like a man - willing to do what a girl's gotta do to get what she wants. If there is a collateral body count -- well, suck it up, wuss-boy.

Younger women don't like her because she is one of the over 50, empty nested, cohort of women prone to experiencing their own private summers who Tina Brown recently profiled in a [Newsweek column](#). "Written on their forehead everyday," she wrote, "is "Invisible Woman" ... women who "find themselves steadfastly dissed and ignored." To a certain generation, then, she's still not one of the cool kids.

Maybe I'm making too much of this. Maybe it's like Madonna said when Elliott Spitzer was chasing Martha Stewart through the underbrush. "There seems to be something about blond, powerful women that just pisses people off."

But I think I'm on to something.

Try this: Ask your friends who Hillary reminds them of among the girls in their high school. Almost everybody has an answer.