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## What I've Learned to Expect

Natalie S. Sherif  
*Gettysburg College*

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# What I've Learned to Expect

## **Abstract**

“Hey bitch!” someone yelled.

“Biiitttch!” I heard again from the car.

Music blared from inside. I pretended not to notice. Don't give them the satisfaction, I thought. Don't do something you'll regret. So I stood there until the cars stopped whizzing past, pretending to ignore a car of boys yelling insults.

When the light changed, I hurried across Carlisle Street, got into my room, and lost it.

I was furious. Being reduced to an insult while walking home from a movie for class is infuriating. But, what really got under my skin was that incidents like this seem commonplace. While surprising in the moment, it doesn't feel unexpected to be called a “bitch” and “whore” by a passerby, to be whistled at provocatively or to be talked about as if I am an object. It's just part of life. [*excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, college, slang, derogatory language, public portrayal of women

## **Disciplines**

Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies | Gender and Sexuality | Social Psychology and Interaction | Sociology | Women's Studies

## **Comments**

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](http://www.gettysburg.edu) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

# SURGE

**[ VERB ] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward**

## WHAT I'VE LEARNED TO EXPECT

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Though I don't necessarily believe every insult I hear, over time, it builds up and is draining

Fifty-seven percent of rock music videos [portray women as sex objects, victims, unintelligent, or refer to them in a condescending way](#). Popular television shows such as the Big Bang Theory somewhat center around the "smart" group of guys versus the "dumb" girl. While they have added intelligent female characters, when hanging out with the unintelligent blonde, even the women with PhDs mentally degenerate and give into their "basic animalistic instincts." Dove research shows that [only four percent of women around the world consider themselves beautiful](#), and only eleven percent of girls are comfortable using "beautiful" to describe themselves.

When we are bombarded by abusive verbiage, objectifying language, indifferent attitudes and blatant stereotypes, we begin to expect it. We even begin to use the slurs ourselves or worse, believe the lies. It happens discreetly and over time but, for so many of us, our confidence begins to be undermined. First by the messages all around us, then in our own voice. Unconsciously, we end up believing that we need to be skinner, sexier, dumber. It's self-perpetuating and limiting as we deprive ourselves of positive thoughts, decision and actions.



I do not believe that I am a “bitch” because some guy yelled it out a window, and other women do not believe they are sluts because some girl in Servo called it out during Sunday brunch, but after years of hearing the same thing over and over, what else are we to believe?

As I sat in my room fuming, I realized that over the last ten years I too let my confidence be overshadowed by pressure. I got the message that I should be rail-thin yet still eat juicy hamburgers and fries because salads are not sexy. I should be innocent yet seductive because, as the mother in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* said, “we are told to be ladies in public, but tigers in the bedroom.” After time, I got comfortable with these unrealistic and harmful images of what I should be, so comfortable that I it became a normal part of my last relationship.

Even when I was abroad, he made me feel guilty for hanging out with my friends, and yelled at me if I appeared happy in pictures with other males. When he heard I would be traveling for a week, staying in the same hostel room as a male classmate, he belittled me. I felt like a slut simply by conversing with the opposite sex. What would otherwise have been normal behavior began to feel like I was cheating on him. I was no longer the carefree, fun-loving individual I was before. The constant criticism, intimidation and manipulation wore away at my sense of self and my ability to trust my own perceptions. I was afraid of what I was becoming. Only with the help of a friend was I able to realize the effects of his emotional and verbal abuse.

During the [Fourteen Days to End Sexual Violence](#), we should reevaluate the culture and society in which we reside. We so easily use or accept slurs and stereotypes and then allow ourselves to believe them to be true. No matter how strong we are, we must acknowledge that the things we see, hear and say on a regular basis do have an effect on us. Ignoring that fact will only intensify abuse, violence and inequity.

*Natalie Sherif '14*  
*Contributing Writer*

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