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Do You Have A Boyfriend Yet?

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Do You Have A Boyfriend Yet?

Abstract

“Do you have a boyfriend yet?”

That was the question that haunted me for most of my teenage years, the one I knew I would be asked at each family event and have to answer as nonchalantly as I could, “No, not yet,” without letting anyone know how embarrassed I felt. The feelings of anguish and anxiety continued in games of “Never Have I Ever,” going around the table with a group of less-than-close girlfriends sharing some of our first or best romantic experiences, so grateful that I had those one or two experiences that “kind of counted but maybe not so I really hope no one asks me to go into detail.” [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, relationships

Disciplines

Gender and Sexuality | Sociology

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 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

DO YOU HAVE A BOYFRIEND YET?

October 23, 2013

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That was the question that haunted me for most of my teenage years, the one I knew I would be asked at each family event and have to answer as nonchalantly as I could, “No, not yet,” without letting anyone know how embarrassed I felt. The feelings of anguish and anxiety continued in games of “Never Have I Ever,” going around the table with a group of less-than-close girlfriends sharing some of our first or best romantic experiences, so grateful that I had those one or two experiences that “kind of counted but maybe not so I really hope no one asks me to go into detail.”

Having my first kiss at 18 and my first real relationship this past semester definitely qualifies me as a late bloomer, an identity that is not too desirable. We are part of a culture that has such a fixation on being in relationships that a culture for late-bloomers is non-existent.

Our romantic-relationship-saturated culture permeates the media. Practically every show about adolescents incorporates some sort of relationship storyline, even those trying to present atypical female protagonists. Lizzie McGuire—a caring, rational, cooperative, and clumsy teen who knows right from wrong and dreams to fit in and be popular—gets noticed by her crush by episode 15. And Rory Gilmore—a smart, driven, and somewhat shy sixteen year old – meets her first boyfriend in the pilot episode! These characters never seemed like they even had to try in their romantic lives. It was just a normal part of their development. Their stories effortlessly reinforced my idea of what life as a teenager should look like. Only, my life didn’t reflect that; without atypical and unattached female protagonists, I found little solace.

So I went through most of my adolescence feeling inadequate and very insecure. I was well-liked, but I did not have any romantic experiences. And it also didn’t help that most of my crushes were based on ideas of guys rather than actual people. Everyone else, however, seemed to be pairing off left and right. By senior year I was really starting to feel the cultural pressure to have “real romantic experiences,” worrying that it was never going to happen for me.



Things started changing in college; I was beginning to get noticed more by guys. Their intentions, however, were different from what I had expected (i.e. the hookup). Left confused more than satisfied, I found myself wanting an honest, traditional relationship. Despite having finally found that last semester, the fact that I am a late bloomer is still ever-present. My relationship is cause for not only celebration but also relief. I'm finally able to tell people, "Yes, I do have a boyfriend." The enthusiastic responses I received have made me realize the weight relationships play in our culture. When we as late bloomers are finally able to "meaningfully" enter into the conversation on romance, people react with such excitement it's as if we have finally been cured of this terrible disease called "singleness." Unfortunately, the joy I should be feeling from being in a relationship is constantly being plagued by the internalized shame I feel from not fitting into the set timeline of sexual maturity or into a culture that still tells us that a person's worth is measured by the ability to attract a partner.

Why am I expected to find a partner (presumably male) in the first place? Why is there such a strict deadline? If I wait "too long", why am I considered abnormal? Intellectually, I now know that our society has constructed these expectations, but emotionally, the pressure is real, overwhelmingly and anxiety-provoking. So I bought into our romantic-relationship-saturated culture that tells us anything less than being in a relationship is not okay.

Boyfriend or not, I am whole on my own, and [a partner should complement me, not complete me](#). I can choose if I want to spend my life with someone, but that's my choice.

In reality, the problem is not that we as individuals are too shy, too awkward – too whatever that makes us doubt our self-worth – for a relationship. The problem is society's prescription of dating norms, telling us when (not if) and with whom we should partner.

I just wish I had the courage to question this long ago.

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<http://surgegettyburg.wordpress.com/2013/10/23/do-you-have-a-boyfriend-yet/>