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Boys Will Be Boys, Girls Will Be...

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Boys Will Be Boys, Girls Will Be...

Abstract

Lets talk about sex.

Well not really, just the double standard that comes with the topic. It's no secret that men and women are taught to think about sex differently. While there are many (myself included) who fail to accept these culturally imposed ideas and attitudes about sex, it would be incredibly naïve to not acknowledge the existence of the double standard that exists. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, sexuality, gender, virginity, sexual morality, sexual purity

Disciplines

Child Psychology | Developmental Psychology | Gender and Sexuality | Women's Studies

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://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

BOYS WILL BE BOYS, GIRLS WILL BE...

June 10, 2013

Lets talk about sex.

Well not really, just the double standard that comes with the topic. It's no secret that men and women are taught to think about sex differently. While there are many (myself included) who fail to accept these culturally imposed ideas and attitudes about sex, it would be incredibly naïve to not acknowledge the existence of the double standard that exists.



In a speech titled "We should all be feminists" given at TEDxEusten, Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie [said it best](#):

"We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way that boys are...we praise girls for virginity, but we don't praise boys."

As I reflected on the messages in her speech, I found myself clicking back to where she uttered the above-mentioned statement, stunned by the accuracy of her words. The last five words captured my attention the most. In fact, when we discuss issues of virginity and sexual virtue, boys are barely ever mentioned and are often not the focus.

Sadly, this isn't the case for girls. [From a very young age](#), we are bombarded with both implicit and explicit messages about the significance of being a virgin and maintaining the highest level of sexual morality. It may start as early as four years old and being told to keep your legs crossed as you impatiently wait for your slice of pizza at a friend's birthday party. "Sit like a lady," they say, you don't want to show the boys your "business." And seriously, nothing sounds more enticing to a four year old than being considered a lady. But it doesn't end there. As puberty hits and Mother Nature makes her first visit, girls are tortured with having a series of awkward conversations with parents or guardians, where the focus is often not on the changes our bodies are undergoing but rather on the importance of maintaining "sexual purity." Now that we are women, we should be very careful around guys, as they only want one thing, they tell us. In high school, we can easily differentiate the "good girls" from the "bad girls," and the latter of which often acquires the labels on either their appearance or their perceived lack of sexual morality.

In college, we overhear a group of guys talking about their sexual escapades and think very little of it. However, we seem to be taken aback when we overhear a similar experience being shared by a group of girls. We shamefully acknowledge that you just condoned the idea of the “stud” and “slut”; where a male is often championed for his sexual conquest, while a female is often judged negatively, often times by other females, for doing the same. We are taught that it is more socially acceptable for males to brag about their sexual experiences. In contrast, when females discuss sex or their sexual experiences, there is always a subtle attempt to add a disclaimer. Assuring whoever is listening that we are in no way “sluts” or “whores” and are still member of that elite group known as ladies.

Yet despite our awareness about these biases, they continue to be overwhelmingly influential, dictating what is the norm, how we talk about things and in what context. And as would be expected, society has greatly influenced how we view sex. For my mother, seeing her little girl “sitting like a boy” must have almost sent her into a panic attack, not because sitting with my legs uncrossed has any medical implications, but for the simple fact that I might not appear ladylike to the droves of parents walking by. It is safe to say that majority of boys do not spend their adolescent years being told how necessary it is to keep their “goods” away from the preying hands of young females.

Even in Kenya, where I am participating in the Heston Summer Experience, I learned that girls and boys are taught opposing ideas about sex. In fact, boys aren’t taught much about sex. Staff of Kisumu Medical and Education Trust ([KMET](#)), the organization with which I am interning, explained that young boys in Kenya rarely receive the dreaded sex talk, while the complete opposite occurs for girls. Virginity is prized, like it is in many countries and cultures, and girls are even taught to fear sex. Parents only tell their adolescent girls to stay away from boys, not really explaining why or how. And yet again, the boys are not told to stay away from the girls. Which, as you can imagine, makes it even harder for the young girls to maintain the sexual morality that their culture so prizes.

All these double standards leave me wondering. If boys will be boys, what are girls supposed to be? Women? A lady in the street but a freak in the bed? And, why don’t we ever stop to ask, *when will boys be men?*

By narrowly defining what it means to be a sexual being we are doing a disservice to our children, ourselves and our society. We’re trapping ourselves in these narrow definitions. But, what if the expectations were different? What if sexual desires were considered normal for people of all genders? What would it look like if we were all taught similar messages about sex?

Would women experience less violence? Would men feel less trapped by masculinity? Would the rate of unwanted pregnancy decrease? Would the HIV pandemic not be [consuming the lives](#) of so many people? Would contraceptives be a right for everyone? Would the U.S. military [actually be doing something](#) about the rate in which servicewomen are raped? Would KMET be providing post-abortion care to fewer women? Would we be able to have more open discussions that lead to greater sexual health for everyone?

The questions are endless.

The implications of the current messages we all receive are severe.

But, the possibility for a shift in equity is huge.

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<http://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com/2013/06/10/boys-will-be-boys-girls-will-be/>