

Professor Hall

English Composition 2

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Gender Generalizations: The “Tomboy”

“Tomboy” - “ a girl who enjoys rough, noisy activities associated with boys”, what a bunch of nonsense. I’ve been labeled this word for the majority of my life by children, their parents, and random adult strangers. I am not a “Tomboy” do not call me a “tomboy”.

As if wearing pants made me less of a girl, but of course this was the early 2000s I was expected to wear a skirt. In elementary school I had to wear a uniform, imagine it a white collared shirt, high white socks, a navy blue skirt/criss cross jumper, and the tie i didn’t want a criss cross tie. We would buy my uniform at the Cookie’s department shirt, I begged my mother to let me wear pants, I would cry simply because I didn't understand why I couldn't just wear pants. I eventually convinced her with the tears running down my face to let me wear pants. When we shopped for clothes I didn’t want to go to the girl’s section, the shirts didn’t have my favorite heroes on them at the time. Now at the age of 18 I still don’t entirely shop in the women’s section. Women's jackets accentuate your waist, shirt sleeves are smaller, I personally felt exposed to them and still do, it's just not my taste. Everyone else besides me always had a problem with this, in all honesty I think I made them uncomfortable because I was so willing to be myself as a child. I get told all the time that I dress like a guy, do women not wear sweatshirts or baggy clothes? Am I missing something?

Constantly being told that I was a “tomboy” let me know at a young age that I wasn’t a “girly” girl and that for some reason I was enough to be a “normal” little girl. I remember my family would say “why can’t you just be a normal girl” as I ran to my room crying, it was incredibly hurtful. What I've realized as I've gotten older is that I suppressed a lot of my childhood due to the fact that I wasn't “normal”, I was never enough, I was too boyish. I’m working on healing my inner child from all that pain I received from just expressing myself the way I wanted to. I hated the fact that I wasn’t girly, I would think to myself why can’t I just wear that skirt, thoses dresses, or play with barbies. What's wrong with me?

Nothing was wrong with me, that word just put me into a box, the “abnormal” one. The word absolutely frustrates me, who are you to label a young girl a “tomboy” because she doesn’t follow traditional gender norms. This word made me feel small for so many years, what do I have to do to prove to you that I am a woman? I hate that I felt the need to prove to so many people that I was a girl, why do I have to please you. Why do women have to be restricted to being one or the other. I just don’t understand how a woman can be labeled a “tomboy” when she’s simply existing. Women don’t owe anyone a sense of “femininity” for your own comfort. In my research I’ve learned that people are quick to label a woman a “tomboy”

simply because she doesn't wear make-up or a skirt and apparently cursing is a trait of being a "tomboy" how could these people be so dumb.

I constantly felt guilty for not being the "girly" girl that my mother wanted or at least I thought she wanted. So I started to let my hair down not for me but to give others hope that this "tomboy" phase could be over someday. My long hair wasn't me but for so long people wanted it to be me, in 8th grade I asked my mom if i could get a pixie cut obviously she said "no! That's too short you'll look like a boy". I think at the moment she had only one vision of what a young girl was, but she could tell that my hair was holding me back. I cut my hair the day before my 14th birthday and I've never looked back since, I felt in control and confident in how I presented myself, free. However what I came to realize was that I had made myself a target for people to bluntly call me a lesbian in a derogatory way, people who didn't know me I couldn't pretend anymore. That's when the stares began, the comments under someone's breath, and lastly but certainly not least the slurs. The number of times I've been called the f slur on trains or a h*mo by complete strangers. At that point in my life I had been called a lesbian by everyone and constantly told who I apparently already was at a young age. I was labeled when i didn't even know what a lesbian was, it became more confusing as time went on.

I denied my sexuality for years because I was already known as the "lesbian" and I didn't want to be attracted to women because that would mean they were all right, and I couldn't give that to them. It was a self hating journey that led to me realizing my truth, I'm not a lesbian I am a bisexual woman. My boyishness didn't define my sexuality. I did.

I am not a "tomboy" and I don't want to be labeled as one by anyone else, I hope that the "tomboy" trope and term continues to fade away. The moment you call young girls this word you let them know that they are different, that they shouldn't be true to themselves it's a cold feeling. You begin to doubt yourself and everything around you seems to be silent. I am hopeful for the future where young boys and girls don't have to experience the worthlessness I felt as a child because I wasn't "normal".