*Am I an adult yet? “Linking-in” and other concerns*

I cannot take a good headshot for my LinkedIn profile. I haven’t even tried. I haven’t created an account, because I cannot decide on the right blouse, hairstyle, or background. I feel that these small details are actually major decisions that impact how I package and present myself to strangers. I think about my nonexistent LinkedIn account almost every day, when my barely-twenty-year-old friends and classmates are going off to job fairs and photo shoots, and especially when the director of the health economics company that I recently applied to for a summer internship still has “Camp Counselor: July 2003-Present” as a publically visible accomplishment on his profile. If he was hired as director with *that* on there, I should be able to brush my hair, smile for the camera, and get a job. But I am not ready to constrain myself into headshots and one-page resumes. A LinkedIn account represents a certain willingness to participate in a suit-and-tie, 9 to 5 reality that I am not yet willing to be a part of.

I’m graduating in December (a semester early), which means that I most likely will have a bachelor’s degree before I have a baby. I beat the teenage pregnancy thing last year, and the pregnant-while-in-high-school thing back in 2013. At this rate, though, I will be married with two kids and an English bulldog before I choose a damn headshot.

I often wonder if I am selling myself short by not broadcasting my so-called accomplishments across the internet at the same speed as mid-career men. I am young and inspired (I think), with a reasonably-sized list of professional and academic accomplishments with good titles and admittedly augmented descriptions. I will be graduating soon from a school with a growing reputation and shrinking acceptance rate and entering into a job market that is finally bouncing back from the recession in 2008. So I should just find someone with a camera and get it over with. LinkedIn is the best platform for humble-bragging, and irrefutable proof of adulthood.

But I am only twenty. My dad still thinks he can tell me that my boyfriend isn’t allowed to sleep in my bed when he comes to visit me at college, and my mom insists that I sit in her lap at the kitchen table. I don’t own a car, I don’t pay for my own groceries, and I definitely do not know how to do my own taxes. I am not in a rush to move out of my parents’ house or get a job with a yearly salary. The semester I would be spending in classes will instead be spent travelling alone in central America, drinking too much and sleeping very little. I will be entering the world of salaries, resumes and rent checks in less than a year. Before that, I will remove myself from academic obligations and resist the demands of life outside of Tufts for just a while longer. I will experience absolute liberation from school or work and be responsible to no one but myself. I will, for all intents and purposes, be unemployed. Not something I want to put on my LinkedIn.

Making the decision to leave school a semester early has not been not easy. I have met with my dean, the health professions advisor, the advisors for both of my majors, and googled “will not writing a senior thesis ruin my chances of getting into grad school” multiple times, expecting one of those people or machines to tell me that not writing a thesis *will* in fact ruin my chances and I should stay. With the exception of the computer’s rather unhelpful mess of answers, everyone else told me to go. My first motivation for graduating early was that I would save myself and my family the burden of paying the tuition at this school.  Despite a significant financial aid package, we still struggle to cover the family contribution.  When I realized that by leaving this school early I could afford to travel because it will cost so much less, I took that as a sign to take advantage of that momentary release from obligation.

In many ways, beginning the process of leaving was the least independent decision I have made thus far. I required external reassurance from professionals, parents, and friends that what I want is not completely insane, and not so out of line with my Type A plans for a successful future.

Being broke, alone, and without a job, even for the few months between graduation and graduate school, will be the biggest deviation from my “plan” I have made so far, and I absolutely am a planner. I schedule every week into my dark grey planner, filling in empty squares with checks as I complete each task. I make to-do list on post-it notes, organize my laptop into folders for every class, and I plan and budget six months ahead. I don’t just change my mind, not once it is inked into my planner. I choose to study for exams on the occasional Friday night and I apply for multiple internships every summer. I don’t not *try.* Even so, I am not comfortable with being the owner and controller of a LinkedIn account, I am not comfortable with an uncertain future, and I am not even sure that these decisions to purposely deviate from what seems right *are* right. But I want to travel, I want to be alone, and I want to live momentarily unconstrained by any decisions at all.

I haven’t made a LinkedIn account. I will, eventually, I do know that, and I honestly believe it would naïve to not use such a valuable resource. I am just not yet ready to fulfill another expectation or pay another student for a mediocre headshot taken on a Sunday afternoon when I will most likely be too hung over to look put-together in the slightest. I do not want my primary accomplishments to be those that I can type up and quantify. I want to be pushed, briefly, by immediate passions. I want to participate in experiences and learn lessons that a LinkedIn profile won’t show employers, or reassure me, who I am or will become.

Hi Liliana!

I think that this is a narrative that is familiar—the desire to not conform to the status quo—with a cool/specific angle. I think that it would be beneficial to explain your motivations for not wanting a LinkedIn account earlier. I got a bit lost as to why you were so resistant to it, but the last paragraph kind of sums up your reasoning and I think that this could be stated earlier. The same goes for your decision to study abroad—I think flesh out both your resistance to the system as is/the expectations of the system and your departure from it/why that feels like an important departure to take! Why do you think that even a semester away from the “typical” life will be beneficial? You could even argue that taking this break from the rhythm could allow you to “link in” more fully/wholly/authentically…just a thought!

Thanks,

Maya

Hi Liliana,

I really like your writing style and this is a strong piece that just needs a few tweaks. The thing I’d emphasize most is expanding on your points and orienting your reader a bit more early on. It was never clear to me exactly what LinkedIn symbolizes to you until the end but most of the article was written in a way that felt like it assumed the reader knows the significance of your lack of an LI profile. It may feel verbose or like you’re spoon-feeding the reader but I’d just try to elaborate on the main points you’re making about your reasons for leaving school early to travel and your reluctance to make an LI profile, especially early on. Really good stuff so far.

Will