

Gender Differences

I was surprised finding out that the topic for our paper was about our feelings of belonging to the other gender. I think the title of the book "Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus" by John Gray applies to how different men and women are in their attitudes, feelings and lifestyles. This experience for me will be enjoyable for me since I have never thought what it would be like to be a female and also to hopefully give me a better insight on a few questions that have interest me about women since I was a little kid.

Both, men and women, are constantly concerned about looking "good" even though they are physically different. In order to look appealing to others, men are supposed to be big, strong, and athletic, whereas women are supposed to be thin, pretty, and big-breasted. I often wonder why we put so much emphasis on the way a person looks. I think females feel more of the pressures of looking "good". In the past, I've talked to some of my girlfriends and they told me that the pressure and competition they are faced with is stressful and painful. I told them that I am not too critical when checking out girls and when it comes to seeing other males bigger or stronger than myself, that I don't feel too much pressure of trying to look better than them. I am rather more concerned of my own health and ways to improve it. I was really surprised when they told me that other girls are the ones who usually criticize or pressure them. When I was aware of this, I did notice, at times, while walking around casually with my girl

friends, when they weren't looking appropriate, would get stares, hisses or comments from other females. I was even surprised when I heard my girlfriends talking about other girls right in front of me, even though most of these times I didn't notice anything wrong or different about the other girls they were talking about. From this observation, I think the pressure of always looking good would be greater if I was to be a female. I would always try to look good and to please others. Girls, I think, are faced with enormous pressures to look good. Television, for example, almost never features old, heavy, or unattractive women. Even if a character is a doctor or a scholar on television, she looks like a Playboy bunny.

When it comes to sexuality, I think there is great confusion for both males and females. One contributing factor is the double standard still existing. For instance, the same girls who are pressured to having sex on a Saturday night are called "sluts" and "hoes" on Monday morning. The boys, or the "studs", who coaxed them into sex at the parties avoid them in the halls at school. Also, our society doesn't have clearly defined and universally accepted rules about sexuality. We live in a pluralistic culture with contradictory sexual paradigms. We hear diverse messages from our families, our churches, our schools and the media, and each of us must integrate these messages and arrive at some value system that makes sense to us. Another reason there is confusion is that we are taught by movies and television that sophisticated people are free and spontaneous while we are being warned that casual sex can kill us. Double binds and

impossible expectation trap us.

Becoming a female Asian Catholic, I think my parents and older siblings would be more protective of me. I am the youngest of 7 boys and 2 girls. I still remember times when my younger sister was my age and the trouble she sometimes faced to just go out on a date or with her friends. Sometimes she would ask me to tag along with her so my parents would think she was out with me. During these times, I remember worrying about her safety even though I am 8 years younger than she is. I can't imagine how hard it would be for me if I was a girl and the baby of the house. I would probably have to hear the words "curfew" or "be home at ten" for the first time without laughing. I would definitely remember all the times I have taken for granted such as being able to freely go out and not get in trouble, when I was a boy.

Another thing I would be concerned with, if I was a girl, is sex and violence. Since females are on average smaller than males they are more prone to sexual attacks such as rape. In one of my psychology courses, I was surprised when the professor asked her students to raise their hands if they were or knew a person who has been a victim of rape and mostly all of the students, including myself, raised their hands. One thing I would do before I considered being intimate with a male is to take a self-defense course and learn to "shout, push, punch, and escape". I think it's healthy for girls to enjoy their own developing sexual responsiveness and to want to explore their sexuality, but there is no easy or established way to stop a sexual encounter. Some of my friends avoid dating and touching because they do not know how or when to draw a line in order to say stop.

Not knowing how to say "no", I think, makes a female more prone to rape and violence.

One of my friends had confided in me of her incident while on a field trip.

Her

rapist came into her tent to borrow a butterfly net held her down, choked her

and raped

her. The next morning she pretended it never happened. She denied the experience until

a year later when she went camping with her family. She crawled into their

tent and

stopped breathing as memories flooded her. She told her mother what had

happened and

her parents reported the crime. The boy involved claimed consensual sex.

After a year,

it was hard to prove otherwise and she dropped the case. I felt deeply for

her but without

much knowledge on the subject I only could provide her comfort. I

think if I

was a girl

and I was raped I would be emotionally scarred and fear getting

pregnant and

sexual

transmitted diseases. I can't imagine how I would feel if I got

pregnant or

contracted a

STD by a non-consenting partner. Both are life-changing events that would be

hard to

accept and understand. If I did become pregnant, I would probably

consider,

for the first

time, having an abortion or giving the baby up for adoption, even

though I am

Catholic.

Coming to the end of my paper, I want to bring up issues and questions that I

have

always wondered about and would like to be finally answered through

this

experience of

becoming a female. First off, I would like to know what is all the

fuss about

PMS and

are there actual syndromes such as being cranky, having cramps, and a

few

others not

appropriate to mention at this time. I would also like to know how the feelings of having

sex would be like and the truth about multiple orgasms. Also, why women talk when they are in the restroom and what they could possibly talk about. Another question I would ask is how a woman feels while pregnant and the joy of giving "actual" birth to a child. These are just a few things I am curious about. By writing this short paper, I have gained a deeper insight and appreciation on how it would feel to actually be a woman. I would like to also give credit to all the women out there for who and what they are and for what they have to go through.