Vagina Monologues Follow-Up Essay

In American culture today, there are many different perceptions of gender, and its role in society. One gender views itself in a different light than the other gender does of itself. Males have different ideas of what they want to do than females, and expect different things from not only themselves but from other males. For my essay, I did a survey of many of my peers in my dorms, asking them certain question that could spark different opinions on gender roles, and how they view not only their own gender, but the opposite gender as well. The survey basically stated, “What comes to mind when you hear the word …? Male? Female? Penis? Vagina? … Do you think that males have a different perception of females than females do males? Out of the two genders, which do you think is held to a higher standard? Why?” There was also a section at the top where the person taking the survey could check whether they were male or female. So the basis of this paper is going to be the opinions of the people who were surveyed and then my take on that.

What did females think of when they heard the word male? Many similar answers came about, many referring to the male point of view on sex. A lot of the women surveyed felt that men were sex-obsessed and horny all the time. Another point of view of many women was that men should be tall, strong, and not too skinny. Athleticism also came into play. They felt that men were the dominant type, and expected to take control in relationships, and just in general as well.

What did males think of when they heard the word male? Again, the opinions were agreeable. Many of them said dude and penis. Many of them viewed their gender as
strong and masculine. Some even went as far as to say not female. Another opinion was the “historically predominant gender”.

What did females think of when they heard the word female? The opinions on this section varied a little bit. A general answer was bitchy and stuck up. Another common one was caring about looks too much. A lot of the women said weak, frail, should be petite. They said that women are cliquey, have attitudes, and talk about each other a lot.

What did males think of when they heard the word female? Many of the males had an image of the perfect female in their mind. A lot of them said long-haired, beautiful, and elegant. There were also a lot of derogative remarks, such as bitch, whore, ho, and slut.

What did females think of when they heard the word penis? The word that showed up on almost every paper was sex or intercourse. A lot said erection and pleasure as well. Many of the papers also said large. Some even said too easily aroused.

What did males think of when they heard the word penis? The majority of them looked at this word as just what it is, the male reproductive organ. Only one male that was surveyed ventured to say something outside of this. He said an uncontrollable organ, exemplifying his inability to control himself. This can be used to counteract or backup the argument that men are aroused too easily, depending on one's point of view.

What did females think of when they heard the word vagina? Many of the responses to this had to deal with distaste and the vagina being an unpleasant area. Words and phrases such as gross, nasty, dirty word, and I hate it, were used to describe this area. One girl even said, “They are gross, why do we have them? I have vaginas. They are just
ugly.” These answers could all potentially portray the shame that males have inflicted on females in society.

What did males think of when they heard the word vagina? The major answers were sex, intercourse, and boning. Many of them also said female sex-organ. A lot of the responses were positive, such as the answer one male gave, “good stuff”. This shows that males like vaginas, simply because they bring them pleasure. They said nothing like beautiful or anything along the lines of the fact that they like pleasing them. The male answers were geared towards themselves.

How did females respond to the question, “Do you think that males have a different perception of females than females do males?” These responses were, for the most part, very similar. Females seem to think that men view women as inferior and weak, and that females are people that need the help of males, and need to be rescued. They think that men treat women like objects, and that men search for women based on their looks, whereas women look for men that are kind, nice and genuine.

How did males respond to the question, “Do you think that males have a different perception of females than females do males?” Males felt as though men look at women much more sexually than females look at males. A lot of males also felt like the level of competition between males is much greater than the level of competition between females.

How did females respond to the question, “Out of the two genders, which do you think is held to a higher standard? Why?” The answers in this category were split pretty evenly. Some women felt as though women are held to a higher standard, making the point that women must always watch what they have to say and look presentable. These
women said that women are expected to be skinny and dress nice all of the time. Another wrote that women are held to a higher standard because they have to work harder for what they want. One woman wrote about how women are always trying to impress men because society and popular culture have formed this ideal that women are expected to conform to. Another response was that as men age, they are expected to get fatter and women are expected to stay slim until the day that they die. Other females feel that men are held to a higher standard. The basis of all of these answers went back to history and tradition. One woman said that it is evident in many aspects of life, such as the work force, where a woman and a man can hold the same job but the male will be paid more.

How did males respond to the question, “Out of the two genders, which do you think is held to a higher standard? Why?” Again the answers for this question were split. Some males said that females are held to a higher standard, explaining that males are given a lot of leeway with many things, where as when a woman does something wrong, it is simply because she is a woman. An example is how men can have sex with many different women and be praised for it but if a woman has sex with many men she is considered a slut. Another male said that since females only recently gained empowerment in society, anything they do will be scrutinized. Some males, however, felt that males are held to a higher standard. The basis of this is that males tend to be looked to more when it comes to supporting a family and also having successful careers.