1.1 Questioning “Order”

Objectives
Encourage students to develop an awareness of the effects of hierarchical ranking in language.
Help them examine assumptions about the “natural order” in gender relationships.

Materials needed
Copies of the handout

Time needed
Five to ten minutes

Instructor directions
Have students individually write brief responses describing their perceptions of each phrase.

Variation
Have your students diagram or sketch the relationship among the words in each phrase.
1.1 Questioning “Order” Handout

Directions
Read the following phrases and notice the mental images they evoke. Jot down a descriptive word or phrase to describe each.

- His and hers
- Male and female
- Romeo and Juliet
- M/F
- Sons and daughters
- George and Gracie
- Man and wife
- King and queen
- Boys and girls
- Jack and Jill
- He/she
- Brother and sister
- Men, women, and children

Now, reverse the order of the words in each of the phrases. Examine your mental image of the reversed phrases. Answer the following questions:

How do your perceptions and impressions change when the order of the words changes?
What assumptions are inherent in the placement of male-gendered nouns and pronouns in the first position in a list?

Variation
Diagram or sketch the relationship among the words in each phrase.