



Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

1.15 Questioning the “Norm”

Objectives

Create an awareness of the many social and political categories that define individuals.

Discuss assumptions about how certain attributes define the “norm.”

Materials needed

Copies of the handout

Possibly, reference materials

Time needed

Ten to twenty minutes

Instructor directions

Have students write a brief self-definition based on their membership in the listed categories.

Ask them to discuss how they do and don't conform with the “norm,” and how that affects them.

Variation

Have your students describe how they became aware of their membership in three or four of these groups.

Ask them to explain how their membership in these groups affects their perceptions of themselves and their places in society.



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1.15 Questioning the “Norm” Handout

Directions

In several paragraphs, describe “who you are” based on your membership in or identity with the following categories.

Define the “norm” in this society. How do you conform with or deviate from the norm?
How does that affect you?

age

ability (physical/mental/emotional)

class

culture/ethnicity

gender

race

religion

sexual orientation

Variation

Describe how you became aware of your membership in three or four of these groups.

Explain how your membership in these groups affects your perception of yourself and your place in society.

(This exercise is adapted from an exercise by Lani Roberts, Ph.D., assistant professor of philosophy, Oregon State University.)