



Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

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.



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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.