



# 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.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 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.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.2 Generating a Description

### **Objectives**

Specify the characteristics that learners think define a person as homosexual.

Discuss and challenge assumptions about the components of that definition.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper, or copies of the next page

### **Time needed**

Five to ten minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have students do a “write and pass” exercise creating a description of the chosen term. (One student writes a specified amount or for a specified length of time on an assigned topic, beginning an exercise, then passes the writing to the next student, who continues writing on the assigned topic for the specified amount or length of time.)

Ask the contributors to each definition to form groups and discuss the definitions, examining elements that are stereotypical.

### **Variation**

Have your students follow the directions, creating a definition of the term “Christian,” “hearing impaired,” or “old.”



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.2 Generating a Description Handout

### Directions

Write the first sentence in a description of the term “lesbian.”

Pass the paper to the person seated beside you, who will write the next sentence.

Continue for one minute.

Discuss the description generated by the group. Answer the following questions:

How does this description reflect a stereotypical view of the term?

How does it challenge it?

Is there anything in your experience that supports this description? If so, what?

Is there anything in your experience that challenges it? If so, what?

### Variation

Follow the above directions, creating a definition of the term “Christian,” “hearing impaired,” or “old.”



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.3 Rating Your Behavior

### **Objectives**

Explore the frequency with which students engage in behaviors that challenge or perpetuate “-isms.”

Uncover attitudes and feelings that affect likelihood of engaging in such behaviors.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of handout

### **Time needed**

Five to ten minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students rate the frequency with which they engage in the listed behaviors.

Afterwards, ask them to discuss reasons why they engage in those behaviors at that level, and what might contribute to lessening or increasing the frequency with which they do engage in them.

### **Variation**

After they have rated their behaviors, have your students examine their responses for patterns. Did they surprise themselves in any regard? Are there any behaviors they would like to engage in less frequently? More frequently? How will they implement those changes?



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.3 Rating Your Behavior Handout

### Directions

Answer the following questions by rating your behavior on a scale of 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). Circle the appropriate answer.

### How often do you:

|   | never |   |   |   | always |
|---|-------|---|---|---|--------|
| Interrupt someone who is telling a racial or ethnic joke?   | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Read about the achievements of people with physical or mental disabilities                        | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Challenge friends expressing a gender stereotype?   | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Send emails to TV or radio stations that broadcast "news" stories with cultural or racial biases? | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Examine your own language for unconscious bias or stereotypes?                                    | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Ask exchange students questions about their countries of origin?                                  | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Recognize compulsory heterosexuality in the media?  | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Volunteer your time for a cause you support?  | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Donate goods or money to shelters for battered women or homeless people?                          | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Intervene when a person or group is sexually harassing someone?                                   | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Think about the definition of "rape"?   | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Truly appreciate a friend's differences from you?   | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Take the lead in welcoming people of color to your class, club, job site, or living situation?    | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Challenge the cultural expectation of slimness in women?  | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Protest unfair or exclusionary practices in an organization?                                      | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Ask a member of an ethnic group different from yours how that person prefers to be referred to?   | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Think about ways you belong to oppressor and oppressed groups?                                    | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Identify and challenge "tokenism"?  | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Examine your own level of comfort around issues of sexual orientation and sexual practices?       | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |
| Celebrate your uniqueness?  | 1     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      |

### Variation

After you have rated your behaviors, examine your responses for patterns. Did you surprise yourself in any regard? Are there any behaviors you would like to engage in less frequently? More frequently? How will you implement those changes?



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.4 Talking About Being “Out”

### **Objectives**

Create an awareness of differences in sexual orientation.

Analyze consequences of the presence of difference in this milieu.

Explore feelings and attitudes around sexual orientation.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper, or copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Five to ten minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have students write individual responses to the first set of questions.

Ask them to share what they feel comfortable with in group discussions of the last question.

### **Variation**

Have your students answer the above questions in regard to people in the class who consider themselves atheist.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.4 Talking About Being “Out” Handout

### **Directions**

Answer the following questions:

Do you know of any people in your school whose sexual orientation differs from yours?

How do you know?

Are you comfortable with that person or those people? Why or why not?

Do you think that person or those people is comfortable with you? Why or why not?

Form small groups and discuss the following:

What are some factors that might encourage or discourage a person about being “out” as homosexual or bisexual in this class or your school?

What are, or what do you think would be, the consequences of a person being “out” as homosexual or bisexual in this class or your school?

### **Variation**

Answer the above questions in regard to people in your class or school who consider themselves atheist.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.5 Uncovering Attitudes About Sexual Orientation

### Objectives

Introduce the concepts of homophobia and compulsory heterosexuality.  
Analyze and discuss the effects these forces exert in students' lives.

### Materials needed

Copies of the handout

### Time needed

Ten to twenty minutes

### Instructor directions

Ask your students to study the definitions of the terms “homophobia” and “compulsory heterosexuality” and identify ways in which these forces are at work in their lives.

Have them discuss ways in which they are affected by each.

### Definitions

*Homophobia:* Thoughts, feelings, or actions based on fear, dislike, judgment, or hatred of gay men and lesbians/of those who love and sexually desire those of the same sex. Homophobia has roots in sexism and can include prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence.

*Compulsory heterosexuality:* The assumption that women are “naturally” or innately drawn sexually and emotionally toward men, and men toward women; the view that heterosexuality is the “norm” for all sexual relationships. The institutionalization of heterosexuality in all aspects of society includes the idealization of heterosexual orientation, romance, and marriage. Compulsory heterosexuality leads to the notion of women as inherently “weak,” and the institutionalized inequality of power: power of men to control women’s sexuality, labor, childbirth and childrearing, physical movement, safety, creativity, and access to knowledge. It can also include legal and social discrimination against homosexuals and the invisibility of or intolerance toward lesbian and gay existence.

### Variation

Ask your students to consider the definition of the term “racism.” Use this definition, or create your own:

*Racism:* The systematic mistreatment of people of color based on the belief in the inherent superiority of one race and thereby the right to dominance. Racism is one manifestation of institutionalized differences in economic, social, and political power in which members of some ethnic and cultural groups benefit at the expense of others.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.5 Uncovering Attitudes About Sexual Orientation Handout

### Directions

Consider the following definitions:

*Homophobia:* Thoughts, feelings, or actions based on fear, dislike, judgment, or hatred of gay men and lesbians/of those who love and sexually desire those of the same sex. Homophobia has roots in sexism and can include prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence.

*Compulsory heterosexuality:* The assumption that women are “naturally” or innately drawn sexually and emotionally toward men, and men toward women; the view that heterosexuality is the “norm” for all sexual relationships. The institutionalization of heterosexuality in all aspects of society includes the idealization of heterosexual orientation, romance, and marriage. Compulsory heterosexuality leads to the notion of women as inherently “weak,” and the institutionalized inequality of power: power of men to control women’s sexuality, labor, childbirth and childrearing, physical movement, safety, creativity, and access to knowledge. It can also include legal and social discrimination against homosexuals and the invisibility of or intolerance toward lesbian and gay existence.

Identify ways in which homophobia and compulsory heterosexuality are at work in your daily life:

Find some examples of compulsory heterosexuality in your daily life. Consider the mainstream media, advertising, political campaigning, your religious milieu, your workplace, the law, your discipline or major, your insurance coverage, your clubs or organizations, and the like. What assumptions and values do these venues represent?

Do the same with examples of homophobia.

Ask yourself the following questions:

How are you affected by compulsory heterosexuality?

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How are you affected by homophobia?

How would you be affected if your sexual orientation were different than it is now?

How would others you know — friends, family members, classmates, members in your clubs or organizations — be affected?

How will understanding these definitions change your thinking about compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia?

Will it change any of your behaviors? If so, how?

**Variation**

Consider the definition of the term “racism.” Use this definition, or create your own:

*Racism:* The systematic mistreatment of people of color based on the belief in the inherent superiority of one race and thereby the right to dominance. Racism is one manifestation of institutionalized differences in economic, social, and political power in which members of some ethnic and cultural groups benefit at the expense of others.



# Writing for Change

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## 1.6 Looking at Looks

### **Objectives**

Explore feelings and attitudes around discrimination based on appearance

Discuss strategies for dealing with this kind of discrimination

Discuss effects and outcomes of this kind of discrimination

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper, or copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Five to ten minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students write for five minutes about experiences they had being discriminated against based on their appearance (size, shape, coloring, visible disability, features, etc.).

Have them answer questions about how it affected them.

Have them exchange their accounts with partners and discuss.

### **Variation**

Have your students write for five minutes about experiences they had being discriminated against based on religious affiliation.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.6 Looking at Looks Handout

### Directions

Write for five minutes about an experience you had being discriminated against based on your appearance (size, shape, coloring, ability, features, etc.).

Answer the following questions:

What aspect of your appearance was disparaged?

Who were the participants in the event or situation?

How did you respond to the incident at the time?

Was your response effective in minimizing or ending the discriminatory behavior?

Did you experience any effects from the incident later?

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Were there any positive outcomes or changes in you as a result of the experience?

Exchange your account with the person sitting next to you. Discuss your insights.

**Variation**

Write for five minutes about an experience you had being discriminated against based on your religious affiliation. Follow the directions above.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.7 Treating People in Parallel Manner

### **Objectives**

Create an awareness of how groups and individuals can be elevated or disempowered by treating them in different ways.

Discuss assumptions about the “norm” that affect how people are treated.

Apply principles of parallel treatment to statements about various groups.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Five to ten minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students examine the listed sentences and ask them to determine in what ways the participants are treated in nonparallel ways (that is, how they are treated with differing levels of formality or familiarity).

Have them rewrite the sentences using parallel treatment.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.7 Treating People in Parallel Manner Handout

### Directions

Examine the sentences below and determine in what ways the participants are treated in nonparallel ways (that is, how they are treated with differing levels of formality or familiarity). Rewrite the sentences using parallel treatment.

The men's competition starts at 7:00, and the ladies take the ice at 9:00.

Heidi sanded the edges, and Mr. Taylor nailed the boards together.

The services are open to all Christians and all pagans.

Hillary's Campaign Accelerates; McCain Withdraws from Presidential Race

Everyone is welcome; and bring the grandparents with you!

We hope that nonwhites as well as whites will participate.

Welcome, sir; and welcome to your little lady!

Over a thousand people attended with their wives and children.

Juan and Mr. Robertson arrived at the meeting together.

We must first determine if they were living as man and wife.

Dr. Phillips placed the sample in the Petri dish, and one of the girls put it in the incubator.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.8 Respecting Age

### **Objectives**

Identify attitudes, biases, or preconceived notions about the temperament, ability, and other characteristics of older adults.

Understand the effects of disempowering language on this group of people.

Examine assumptions about the definition of the “norm” as it relates to age.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper; copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Five to ten minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students consider certain descriptive words and phrases often applied to older adults.

Ask them to identify the assumptions inherent in these descriptors.

Ask them to consider the “norm” as it relates to age.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.8 Respecting Age Handout

### Directions

Consider the terms below and answer the following questions:

To which age group are they routinely applied?

What connotations (assumptions) do they convey about the temperament, ability, and other characteristics of this age group?

How does the use of such terms disempower the target group?

What is the “normative” age group?

Well preserved  
Crotchety  
Spry/Sprightly  
Spunky  
Over the hill  
Decrepit  
Crusty

Fogey  
Alert  
Saintly  
Feisty  
Biddy  
Ancient  
Battle-ax

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Now, write sentences applying each of the terms to the “normative” age group.

Answer the following questions:

Do the descriptors sound incongruous, diminutive, or condescending when applied to the “normative” group?

Is “derogatory” in the ears of the listener or the mouth of the speaker?



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.9 Seeing the Whole Person

### **Objectives**

Create an awareness of ways in which language can reduce people to one aspect of their beings.

Apply techniques of language to “put the person back in.”

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Five to ten minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Help your students examine the sentences on the following page in which a person or group of people is equated with a physical trait, a specific role, or a medical diagnosis.

Have them rewrite the sentence to “put the person back in.”



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.9 Seeing the Whole Person Handout

### Directions

Examine the following sentences in which a person or group of people is equated with a physical trait, a specific role, or a medical diagnosis.

Rewrite the sentences to “put the person back in.”

We are being led by the blind.

After two hours of negotiation, the perpetrator was apprehended.

She is fat.

The psychotics are on Ward One.

In the first sample, subjects were run through the long version of the procedure.

The wives held a barbecue.

Even though he was a liberal and she was a conservative, they got along pretty well.

Dr. Reed specializes in the treatment of stuttering.

The country club does not admit Jews.

He was seen at the premiere with a blonde on each arm.

In the summer, the gays hang out at River Park.

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Ms. Singer prosecuted a vicious homicide in district court today.

The blacks sit by the emergency exit and the whites sit by the kitchen.

Answer the following questions:

Why might we accept at face value statements emphasizing certain traits or diagnoses but not others? (Does “He is zit,” or “She is cancer” sound “right”?)

How does the reduction of a person to one aspect of their being perpetuate power disparities, emphasis on difference, and cycles of oppression?

How are both the oppressor and the oppressed diminished when “the person is left out”?



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.10 Appreciating Diversity

### **Objectives**

Create an awareness of the potential diversity in sexual orientation, religion, and age.

Provide students an opportunity to appreciate their own attributes and those of others.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Five to ten minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students complete the statements on the following page.

Encourage them to imagine what they might appreciate about belonging to a group or groups different than the ones to which they belong.

Have them discuss insights with partners.

### **Variation**

Have your students answer the questions with reference to their ethnic or cultural background.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.10 Appreciating Diversity Handout

### Directions

Fill in the blanks in the following statements:

What I like about being (my religion) is

What I might like about being (another religion) is

What I never want to hear another (person of another religion) say about (people of my religion) is

What I like about being (my sexual orientation) is

What I might like about being (another sexual orientation) is

What I never want to hear another (person of a different sexual orientation) say about (people of my sexual orientation) is

What I like about being (my age or generation) is

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What I might like about being (another age or generation) is

What I never want to hear another (person of another age or generation) say about (people of my age or generation) is

Trade your responses with a partner and discuss your insights.

**Variation**

Answer the above questions with reference to your ethnic or cultural background.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.11 Comparing Instead of Contrasting

### **Objectives**

Identify similarities between groups of people.

Analyze the effects, as they relate to social justice issues, of emphasizing similarities between people rather than differences.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Five to ten minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students list ten similarities between the listed groups of people.

Ask them to concentrate on meaningful rather than trivial similarities.

Encourage them to think about the beneficial effects of emphasizing similarities rather than differences.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.11 Comparing Instead of Contrasting Handout

### Directions

List ten similarities between the following groups of people.

Homosexual people and heterosexual people

Christian people and Jewish people

Poor people and wealthy people

Old people and young people

White people and Asian people

Fat people and thin people

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Women and men

People who walk and people who use wheelchairs

Discuss the effects, as they relate to social justice issues, of emphasizing similarities between people rather than differences.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.12 Challenging Your Assumptions

### **Objectives**

Identify and challenge assumptions based on factors such as age, ability, appearance, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

Rewrite each sentence in neutral terms (to avoid the assumption).

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes, depending on depth of discussion

### **Instructor directions**

In pairs or small groups, have your students identify the assumptions related to the above factors that are inherent in each sentence.

Identify the “norm” (a standard of conduct that should or must be followed; a typical or usual way of being or behaving, usually said of a certain group) and discuss how the assumptions reflect this norm.

Have your students rewrite each sentence in neutral terms to avoid the assumption.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.12 Challenging Your Assumptions Handout

### Directions

Read the following sentences and identify the assumptions inherent in each regarding age, ability, appearance, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic power or status.

Identify the “norm” (a standard of conduct that should or must be followed; a typical or usual way of being or behaving, usually said of a certain group) and discuss how the assumptions reflect this norm.

Discuss how these assumptions operate in your cultural situation. How are you affected by cultural assumptions about the “norm”?

Our founding fathers carved this great state out of the wilderness.

Mrs. Imoto looks remarkably good for her age.

Fashion Tights are available in black, suntan, and flesh color.

Someday I intend to visit the third world.

We need more manpower.

Our facilities all provide handicapped access.

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I'm just a person.

The network is down again. We'd better get Kevin in here to do his voodoo on it.

Our boys were having a rough time of it, and the black regiment was, too.

How Neandertal man existed for so long is a mystery. He must have had the ability to adapt to his environment.

I see she forgot to sign her time sheet. She's acting a little blonde today.

Mitochondrial DNA testing should help us determine when our race split off from the lower creatures.

Confined to a wheelchair, Mr. Garcia still manages to live a productive life.

Pat really went on the warpath when the budget figures came out.

I won't be associated with you and your pagan behaviors!

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The Academy now admits women and other minorities.

We have a beautiful daycare center where women can leave their children while they work.

See if you can Jew him down to \$50.

Personally, I don't think it's right that the foreign students come in here before term and buy up all the insignia bags. Our kids don't get a chance at them.

I completely forgot where I put my car keys. I must be having a senior moment.

Win a fabulous lovers' weekend in Hawaii! Prizes include a day at the spa for her and a relaxing game of golf for him.

That is not a very Christian attitude.

We welcome all guests, their wives, and their children.

May I speak to Mr. or Mrs. Williams?



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.13 Adapting to Cultural Differences

### **Objectives**

Develop an awareness of certain cultural assumptions.

Devise respectful responses to cultural differences.

### **Material needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students read and respond to the scenarios provided.

Discuss in small or large groups.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.13 Adapting to Cultural Differences Handout

### Directions

Read and respond to the following scenarios:

#### Scenario 1:

You have just spoken at an event sponsored by the local Coalition for Tolerance, describing your religious tradition, which is unfamiliar to most members of the audience, and emphasizing the importance of diversity, understanding, and mutual respect among members of different religions. A member of the audience approaches to thank you for your presentation and to shake hands with you. However, your cultural background forbids you to have skin-to-skin contact with this person, since you are of opposite sexes and are neither married nor related. Quick! Devise a response, verbal or nonverbal, that honors the audience member's intention without violating your own values.

#### Variation on Scenario 1:

You are the one making the overture, and realize that the speaker cannot accept your handshake. Devise an alternate way to express your appreciation while still honoring the speaker's cultural values.

#### Scenario 2:

You are bringing your significant other, who is a vegetarian, to your athletic awards banquet. You call the banquet facility to ask about vegetarian entrée options for the meal, and the assistant in charge of the event explains that the menu includes roast beef, chicken, salad, broccoli, and au gratin potatoes, and adds happily that "there is something for everyone." When you repeat that your date is a vegetarian and can't eat a meat entrée, the assistant replies that vegetarians "can choose what they eat." Identify the assumptions the assistant is making, and devise a nonconfrontational way to ask for appropriate accommodations for your date.

#### Scenario 3:

You are making arrangements for an end-of-year party for your school organization. The guest list includes someone whom you know to be hearing impaired. After some investigation, you find out that the guest has oral communication (i.e., speaks rather than uses

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sign language), reads lips, and has a very residual amount of hearing that diminishes in a noisy environment. Decide how to arrange the atmosphere, including furniture/seating, lighting, background noise, party activities, and any other important factors, to maximize that guest's comfort at the party.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.14 Developing Definitions

### Objectives

Help students clarify their understanding and assumptions about various factors affecting people's status and treatment by others.

Establish common referents (consensus) for the terms listed.

### Materials needed

Pen and paper, or copies of the handout

### Time needed

Ten to twenty minutes

### Instructor directions

Have students work in groups to synthesize definitions for one or several of these terms.

Have each group present a definition and discuss the relevance to their daily lives.

### Definitions

*antisemitism*: Systematic discrimination against, disparagement of, or oppression of Jews, Judaism, and the cultural, intellectual, and religious heritage of the Jewish people.

*classism*: A system of power and privilege based on the accumulation of economic wealth and social status. Classism is the mechanism by which certain groups of people, considered as a unit according to their economic, occupational, or social status, benefit at the expense of other groups. The effects of this imbalance are pervasive in the social system, affecting all facets of people's lives.

*complicity*: Collusion, or partnership in wrongdoing, such as the oppression of a target group. Social critic Kate Millett defines complicity as the act of "identifying—even if involuntarily or momentarily—with the society which force has brought into being."

*compulsory heterosexuality*: The assumption that women are "naturally" or innately drawn sexually and emotionally toward men, and men toward women; the view that heterosexuality is the "norm" for all sexual relationships. The institutionalization of heterosexuality in all aspects of society includes the idealization of heterosexual orientation, romance, and marriage. Compulsory heterosexuality leads to the notion of women as inherently "weak," and the institutionalized inequality of power: power of men to control women's sexuality, labor, childbirth and childrearing, physical movement, safety, creativity, and access to knowledge. It can also include legal and social discrimination against homosexuals and the invisibility or intolerance of lesbian and gay existence.

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*co-optation*: Various processes by which members of dominant cultures or groups assimilate members of target groups, reward them, and hold them up as models for other members of the target groups. “Tokenism” is a form of co-optation.

*difference*: A characteristic that distinguishes one person from another or from an assumed “norm,” or the state of being distinguished by such characteristics. Social justice issues such as racism, sexism, classism and homophobia usually center upon the negative perception of difference by a dominant group. Viewed positively, difference can be a catalyst for equity, a recognition of interdependence, and a source of personal power.

*discrimination*: Unequal treatment of people based on their membership in a group.

*dominance*: The systematic attitudes and actions of prejudice, superiority, and self-righteousness of one group (a non-target group) in relation to another (a target group).

*Internalized dominance* includes the inability of a group or individual to see privilege as a member of the non-target group.

*ethnocentrism*: The emotional attitude that one’s own ethnic group, nation, or culture is superior to all others or is the norm by which others are measured.

*gender*: A cultural notion of what it is to be a woman or a man; a construct based on the social shaping of femininity and masculinity. It usually includes identification with males as a class or with females as a class. Gender includes subjective concepts about character traits and expected behaviors that vary from place to place and person to person.

*heterosexism*: A system of beliefs, actions, advantages, and assumptions in the superiority of heterosexuals or heterosexuality. It includes unrecognized privileges of heterosexual people and the exclusion of nonheterosexual people from policies, procedures, events, and decisions about what is important.

*homophobia*: Thoughts, feelings, or actions based on fear, dislike, judgment, or hatred of gay men and lesbians/of those who love and sexually desire those of the same sex. Homophobia has roots in sexism and can include prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence.

*in-group* (non-target group): The people in each system or relation of oppression who are in power in that oppression. Members of non-target groups are socialized into the role of being oppressive, becoming perpetrators or perpetuators of the cycle of oppression, either actively or indirectly. A non-target group may retain its power through force, the threat of force, and/or misinformation about the target group. Members of non-target groups also have a history of resistance that usually is not recognized.

*invisibility*: The absence of target groups from the media, policies, procedures, legislation,

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social activities, and other milieus, which reinforces the notion, conscious or unconscious, that non-target groups are the “norm.” Invisibility contributes to the disempowerment of target groups and the perpetuation of the cycle of oppression.

*oppression:* The systematic, institutionalized mistreatment of one group of people by another for any reason. Oppression is based on a complicated and changing network of unequal power relations.

*out-group* (target group): The people in each system or relation of oppression who are without power in that oppression. Members of target groups are socialized into the role of being oppressed, internalizing the mistreatment and misinformation about the group(s) to which they belong. Each target group usually also has a history of resistance, which may not be recognized by people outside the target group.

*power:* Generally, the accumulation of money or goods, authority, sway or influence. Specifically, the differential ability, based on unequal distribution of wealth, influence, or physical force, to control the economic, political, sexual, educational, and other important decisions of others.

*prejudice:* An opinion, prejudgment or attitude formed without sufficient knowledge about a group or its members.

*privilege:* An invisible set of unearned rights, benefits, or assets that belong to certain individuals simply by virtue of their membership in a particular non-target group. Privilege is a dynamic system of overlapping benefits which may act to any particular individual's benefit in one set of circumstances and to that person's detriment in another.

*racism:* The systematic mistreatment of people of color based on the belief in the inherent superiority of one race and thereby the right to dominance. Racism is one manifestation of institutionalized differences in economic, social, and political power in which members of some ethnic and cultural groups benefit at the expense of others.

*sexism:* The systematic economic, sexual, educational, physical, and other oppression of women as a group; the exploitation and social domination of members of one sex by another.

*social justice:* A combination of laws, behaviors and attitudes promoting equal rights and fair treatment of all members of society. The practice of social justice includes resistance to racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression.

*stereotype:* An exaggerated belief, image or distorted truth about a person or group — a generalization that allows for little or no individual differences or social variation.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.14 Developing Definitions Handout

### Directions

Choose one or more of the following terms and write a one- to two-sentence definition for each.

Discuss how these concepts operate in your school, your community or the larger society.

difference

power

discrimination

stereotype

prejudice

racism

classism

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ethnocentrism

sexism

antisemitism

gender

homophobia

heterosexism

compulsory heterosexuality

dominance

co-optation

---

complicity

in-group (non-target group)

out-group (target group)

invisibility

oppression

privilege

social justice



# 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.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 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

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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.)*



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.16 Re-conceiving Notions

### **Objectives**

Create an awareness of the kinds of assumptions or preconceived notions your students hold about people in ethnic groups different from their own.

Explore the diversity of attitudes and behaviors within ethnic groups as well as between them.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Discuss the idea of assumptions or preconceived notions and their relation to bias and the “-isms.”

Have students identify some of their assumptions and then examine whether they apply uniformly to the listed ethnic groups.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.16 Re-conceiving Notions Handout

### Directions

Identify one specific assumption or preconceived notion you have had about people from the following groups.

### **Ethnic or cultural group**

### **I think people in this group. . .**

Koreans

African-Americans

Jews

Orthodox Russians

Buddhists

Mexicans

Albanians

Muslims

Native Alaskans

Japanese

Ethiopians

Thais

Native American Indians or First Nations

Nicaraguans

Greeks

Vietnamese

Saudi Arabians

Germans

Pacific Islanders

Chinese

Iraqis

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Explain how you became aware of this assumption or preconceived notion within yourself.  
Answer the following questions:

Where did your preconceived notion come from? Why do you hold it?

In what ways has your experience with people from this group confirmed your assumption or preconceived notion? In what ways has your experience challenged your assumption?

How might stereotypes obscure differences between people of a specified ethnic group?  
How might stereotypes obscure similarities between people of different ethnic groups?

How do these kinds of assumptions harm individuals? What opportunities might you have to benefit from associations with people of other ethnic groups if you did not hold preconceived notions about them?



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.17 Uncovering Impressions

### **Objectives**

Explore feelings and impressions connected with various groups or categories of people.

Evaluate the objectivity of these impressions.

Analyze factors contributing to these feelings and impressions.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Ask students to discuss objectivity and subjectivity as they apply to these categories.

Have them discuss the origins of their impressions about the listed groups.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.17 Uncovering Impressions Handout

### Directions

Fill in the blank with a descriptive word or phrase.

Ask yourself if the word or phrase is subjective (based on impressions, feelings, opinions, etc.) or objective (based on facts that are clear and measurable, with a concrete referent).

Identify any feelings you have about the word or phrase.

Ask yourself where you learned this information. What in your experience supports these notions? What in your experience challenges them?

A gay man is

People in wheelchairs should

Jewish people

A White woman really

Lawyers mainly focus on

People over age 65 can't

Environmentalists act

Wealthy people seem

Sometimes, homosexual people

---

Liberal arts majors have

I think people who don't speak English

Why do Black people

Transgender people are

Men from the Middle East usually

Tall people can

Elder sons in a family frequently

People who live in inner cities may

People under the age of 21 don't

If poor people could \_\_\_\_\_, then

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Scientists care about

Society should give men in prison

Southern people think

Teenagers are so

When people move to the United States from Southeast Asia, they

People who practice Wicca seem

Large people should



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.18 Interrupting Lesbian- and Gay-Baiting

### **Objectives**

Develop an understanding of the factors involved in lesbian- and gay-baiting.

Explore feelings and attitudes around the cycle of oppression involved.

Discuss ways to break the cycle.

### **Materials needed**

*Lesbian Baiting and Gay Baiting: How Homophobia is a Tool of Sexism* by Mary McClintock, M.Ed.

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Supply your students with a copy of Mary McClintock's article.

Have them read it before class and come prepared to discuss in small groups.

Ask them to describe the roles of the participants in the situations described by Mary McClintock, analyze the process of oppression that occurs in acts of "lesbian/gay-baiting," and identify points in the process at which the oppressive behaviors can be interrupted.

### **Variation**

Have your students follow the given directions, describing situations they experienced that were motivated by racial intolerance.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.18 Interrupting Lesbian- and Gay-Baiting Handout

### Directions

Describe the roles of the participants in the situations described by Mary McClintock.

Analyze the process of oppression that occurs in acts of “lesbian/gay-baiting.”

Identify points in the process at which the oppressive behaviors can be interrupted.

Answer the following questions:

Have you been involved in situations that could be described as “lesbian- or gay-baiting”?

Who were the participants, and how did they behave? What stereotypical beliefs were expressed?

How did you respond?

Was the process of oppressive behavior interrupted by your response?

How did you feel after the interaction was over?

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Based on the suggestions in McClintock's article, would you do anything differently in future situations? If so, what?

**Variation**

Following the directions above, describe a situation you experienced that was motivated by racial intolerance.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.19 Seeing Racism as Systematized

### **Objectives**

Explore the concept of racism as systematized rather than random or individual.

Discuss ways to challenge racism, including making it visible.

### **Materials needed**

*White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* by Peggy McIntosh, available from the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley MA 02181.

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Supply your students with a copy of Peggy McIntosh's article. Have them read it before class and come prepared to discuss in small groups.

Have them discuss how they have been affected by the conditions McIntosh lists in the article and examine the statement that racism is not "individual acts of meanness," but "invisible systems conferring dominance on [a] group."

### **Variation**

Ask your students to examine sexism in light of McIntosh's concept of "invisible systems."



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.19 Seeing Racism as Systematized Handout

### Directions

Describe how you have been affected by two or three of the conditions McIntosh lists in the article.

Examine the statement that racism is not “individual acts of meanness,” but “invisible systems conferring dominance on [a] group.”

Answer the following questions:

How is racism perpetuated by the idea that it consists of random or unusual acts?

How can we begin to challenge racism once we begin to perceive it as systematized?

How can that perception help us make racism visible?

How can “visibility” contribute to change?

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**Variation**

Examine sexism in light of McIntosh's concept of "invisible systems."



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.20 Changing Your Perspective

### **Objectives**

Stimulate an awareness of how people's attitudes are affected by their perspectives on an issue.

Increase ability to communicate with diverse audiences.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students work in groups to cast an advertisement for three different audiences.

Have them discuss ideas for establishing common ground with audiences different from themselves, especially as they relate to social justice issues.

### **Variation 1**

Let your students choose their own ideas for a business. Have them choose three different markets and target their product or service accordingly.

### **Variation 2**

After completing the above exercise, have your students choose a social justice issue and identify groups or individuals with whom they would like to establish a respectful dialogue. Ask them to identify one or two areas of common ground they share, and open a dialogue with the person or group, based on those areas. Have them report the outcome to the class or to you.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.20 Changing Your Perspective Handout

### Directions

In small groups, develop print advertisements for your new business, “Furry Friends Pet Boarding Service.” Vary the ads to meet the needs of readers of the following three publications:

*The Daily Word*, a Christian newspaper

*To the Seventh Generation*, a monthly newsletter for environmentalists

*Nihon*, a magazine for Japanese exchange students

Address the following:

What are the one or two most important values of the pet owners who read each publication?

What services or items does your business offer to meet those needs?

How can you best present those services?

How can you establish common ground with those readers who are different from you in one way or another?

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How can you use these techniques in communicating with groups or individuals who differ with you on social justice issues?

**Variation 1**

Choose your own idea for a business. Choose three different markets and target your product or service accordingly.

**Variation 2**

After completing the above exercise, choose an issue relating to social justice and identify a group or individual with whom you would like to establish a respectful dialogue. Identify one or two areas of common ground you share, and open a dialogue with the person or group, based on those areas. Report the outcome to your class or to your teacher.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.21 Recognizing Slanted Words

### **Objectives**

Create an awareness of how the slanting of verbs and nouns can be used to depict people favorably or unfavorably.

Practice casting negatively slanted words into favorable terms.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Ask your students to imagine they are observers preparing to report on a hypothetical political, military, religious, or social activist organization or incident.

Discuss how the reporter's perspective influences how an audience perceives the organization or incident.

Have them cast sentences from positive (approving) and negative (disapproving) points of view. Compare the results and discuss.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.21 Recognizing Slanted Words Handout

### Directions

Imagine you are an observer, preparing to write a report describing an incident you witnessed or an organization you saw operating.

Choose two or three of the paired phrases below. Cast two sentences for each pair of phrases, the first from the perspective of someone who disapproves or is not in favor of the activity, the second from the perspective of someone who approves or is in favor of the activity.

cult vs. denomination

demonstrate vs. riot

throwing a tantrum vs. objecting to management's decision

stalked out vs. left abruptly

hysterical vs. adamant

halted vs. paralyzed

preaches vs. advocates

muzzled vs. suppressed

rampaged vs. marched

enthusiast vs. fanatic

---

assertive vs. abrasive

threaten vs. warn

made a scene vs. stood their ground

zealot vs. patriot

Answer the following questions:

How can verbs, as well as nouns, be used to convey an attitude, bias, or agenda?

How can the use of slanted words influence how a person, organization, or incident is perceived?



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.22 Recognizing Slanted Words II

### **Objectives**

Create an awareness of how the slanting of verbs and nouns can be used to depict people favorably or unfavorably.

Identify instances of slanting in online news media.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper or copies of the handout

Internet access

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students conduct some Internet research before class and bring an article describing a political, military, religious, or social activist organization or incident.

Ask them to be ready to discuss the use of slanting in the article.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.22 Recognizing Slanted Words II Handout

### Directions

Before class, do some Internet research and bring an article describing a political, military, religious, or social activist organization or incident.

Answer the following questions:

What verbs are used to describe the actions of each of the participating groups or parties?

What connotations (implications) do the verbs carry?

What nouns and pronouns are used to describe each of the participating groups or parties?

What connotations do the words carry?

Are each of the participating groups or parties presented with the same level of formality, familiarity, or respect?

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How are direct quotes used to present the groups or parties favorably or unfavorably?

What is the proportion of subjective to objective verbs? Nouns?

What is the reporter's or news service's attitude, demeanor, or tone toward each of the parties?

How does this attitude, demeanor, or tone affect readers' perceptions of the events being reported? How does it reflect on the objectivity of the reporter or news service?



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.23 Challenging the Pseudogeneric “Man”

### **Objectives**

Examine the use of male-gendered nouns as “generic.”

Challenge the notion of the generic male as inclusive.

Generate gender-free, inclusive nouns and pronouns.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Ask your students to examine phrases that use male nouns as “generic.”

Have them describe the mental image created by each phrase.

Ask them to substitute a term representing a group of people of a specific age, religion, or ethnicity for the male noun and describe the mental images created by using the substitute terms.

Have them discuss how connotations are affected by word structure and by familiarity.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.23 Challenging the Pseudogeneric “Man” Handout

### Directions

Examine the following phrases that use male nouns as “generic.” Describe the mental image created for you by each phrase. Do you see yourself and people like you in the images?

Next, choose a term representing a group of people of a specific age, religion, class, or ethnicity, and substitute that term for the male noun (example: “childkind”). Does use of the new, specific term sound incongruous or unusual? Why?

Describe the mental images created by using the substitute terms. Do you see yourself and people like you in the images?

Finally, suggest a gender-free, inclusive term for each (ex: for “mankind,” “humanity” or “people”).

For the benefit of all mankind

“All men are created equal”

May the best man win

Prehistoric man

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Man the pumps!

The first manned mission to Mars

Chairman of the Board

We need more manpower

Not fit for man or beast

The relationship between men and machines

Man's best friend

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“To boldly go where no man has gone before”

Man of the Year

“Peace on Earth, goodwill toward men”

The founding fathers

“Crown thy good with brotherhood”

“Friends, Romans, countrymen; lend me your ears”



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.24 Creating Gender-free Nouns

### **Objectives**

Examine the use of male-gendered nouns as “generic.”

Challenge the notion of the generic male as inclusive.

Generate gender-free, inclusive nouns and pronouns.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Ask your students to examine phrases that use male nouns as “generic.”

Have them create gender-free, inclusive terms, following a particular formula.

Have them discuss how connotations are affected by word structure and by familiarity.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 1.24 Creating Gender-free Nouns Handout

### Directions

Convert the following compound words with the suffixes “-boy,” “-man,” or “-men” into gender-free, inclusive terms using the following method:

1. Change the noun root word into an appropriate, related verb OR substitute a non-gender-specific root word from a language other than English.

2. Add the suffix “-er,” “-or,” or “-ist.”

(Note: Because use of the male endings is so pervasive, there may not be “right” or “real” answers for many of the items listed below. You will be inventing some new words.)

| Noun + male suffix | Verb + “-er” suffix | Noun + male suffix | Verb + “-er” suffix |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Ex: Airmen         | Fliers, pilots      | Ex: Statesman      | Orator, speaker     |
| Sportsman          |                     | Craftsman          |                     |
| Stableboy          |                     | Mailman            |                     |
| Policemen          |                     | Layman             |                     |
| Lineman            |                     | Foreman            |                     |
| Spokesman          |                     | Busboy             |                     |
| Workmen            |                     | Salesman           |                     |
| Repairman          |                     | Crewmen            |                     |
| Lumbermen          |                     | Chairman           |                     |

Discuss the changes in the connotation (implications or perceptions) caused by changing the word’s structure. Answer the following questions:

How does familiarity affect your perception of a word’s “rightness”? (Do you think the words “teachman” and “runman” sound “right”?)

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Does use of verbs as root words convey more active, vivid meaning than use of nouns as root words? Why or why not?