



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 4.1 Analyzing Argumentation in Your Major

### **Objectives**

Develop an awareness of how arguments are constructed in professional journals in students' majors or fields.

Analyze the process of argumentation as it relates to social justice issues.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of sample article and the handout

### **Time needed**

Ten to twenty minutes (more, depending on variation)

### **Instructor directions**

Provide students with a sample article from a professional or technical journal in your field. Ask them to read it and come prepared to discuss in class.

Have them divide into small groups and analyze the article using the model provided (identifying information, author's purpose, target audience, thesis, support for thesis, argument against thesis, student analysis of effectiveness).

### **Variation**

Have your students write an analysis of the article using the given model and turn it in to you for feedback.



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## 4.1 Analyzing Argumentation in Your Major Handout

### Directions

Examine an article from a professional or technical journal in your field.

Discuss in small group and analyze the article using the following model. Answer the following questions:

What is the identifying information (author, title, date)?

What is the author's intention or purpose in writing the article (that is, what is the intended effect on the *audience*: to persuade, inform, suggest, etc.)?

Who is the target audience? How can you tell? Are you included in the target audience?

What is the thesis of the article or of the argument? What assumptions is the author making about the race, religion, class, age, etc., of the readers of the article?

What is the main argument in support of the thesis?

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What is one argument against the thesis?

Did the author accomplish the stated purpose? Why or why not?

**Variation**

Write an analysis of the article using the above model. Turn it in to your instructor for feedback.



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## 4.2 Noting Variety

### **Objectives**

Investigate the number of people in students' major classes, work environment, or professional organization who fall into various age, race, and gender categories.

Analyze the findings as they relate to social justice issues.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper or copies of the handout

Possibly, reference materials

### **Time needed**

Twenty to thirty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your student tally the number of people in their major classes, work environment, or professional organization who fall into various age, race, and gender categories.

Ask them to analyze their findings in light of social justice issues.



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## 4.2 Noting Variety Handout

### Directions

Tally the number of people in your major classes, work environment, or professional organization who fall into each of the following categories (not all-inclusive):

Category	Number of individuals
Latina/o	
African-American	
White	
Asian	
Native American Indian or First Nations	
Female	
Male	
Age 17-35	
Age 35-60	
Age 60-90	

Write about your findings. What do they mean? Address the following:

What are some factors that tend to attract women to the field?

What are some factors that might put them off or discourage them?

What are some factors that tend to attract African American people?

What are some factors that tend to put them off or discourage them?

What is the mix of racial and ethnic backgrounds in the group?

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What are some reasons for this mix?

Which age groups are represented in this class or field?

Which ones are missing?

What are some of the advantages of the particular ethnic, racial, gender, and age composition of this group?

Identify which mechanisms contribute to the perception of difference in the major or field.



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## 4.3 Examining the Mechanisms of Power

### **Objectives**

Refine students' understanding of the concept of "power" by using certain definition techniques.

Create an awareness of the mechanisms operating in their own lives.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper or copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Twenty to thirty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your student use one of several listed frames of reference (organizational strategies) to define and describe the concept of "power" as it operates in their discipline.

Have them identify the mechanisms that empower some and disenfranchise others.

Ask them to discuss these mechanisms.

### **Variation**

Have your students use one of the given frames of reference to define and describe the concept of "difference" as it operates in their discipline.



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## 4.3 Examining the Mechanisms of Power Handout

### Directions

Use one of the following frames of reference (organizational strategies) to define and describe the concept of “power” as it operates in your discipline:

Symptoms to diagnosis (or causes to effects)

Hierarchical structure

Most-to-least important aspects or components

Identify the mechanisms that empower some and disenfranchise others. Answer the following questions:

What mechanisms are at work in your major or field?

How do these mechanisms affect you?

How do they affect others in your major or field?

What contributes to the perpetuation of these mechanisms?

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What can you do to change the mechanisms of power?

**Variation**

Use one of the above frames of reference to define and describe the concept of “difference” as it operates in your discipline. Identify which mechanisms contribute to the perception of difference in your major or field. How do these mechanisms affect you? How do they affect others in your major or field?



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## 4.4 Learning About Leaders

### **Objectives**

Encourage students to develop an awareness of the composition of the leadership in their major or professional field.

Help them examine pros and cons of that particular composition for the membership.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

Reference materials

### **Time needed**

Thirty to sixty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Assign students to write a structured essay or report with information about the leadership in their major or field.

### **Variation**

Have your students attend a conference of their professional or technical society and do the following:

Observe the organizers and presenters; compare their age, gender, ethnicity, credentials, and level of education to those of the people attending the conference. Notice who provides support services such as registration, who serves the food, who sets up the facility (moves tables, prepares AV equipment), who cleans up after the conference, etc.

Make inferences about whether and why some members might not be attending the conference.



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## 4.4 Learning About Leaders Handout

### Directions

Examine the masthead of your professional or technical society's journal. Look at the names, credentials, and biographical data of contributing authors.

Ask yourself the following questions and write brief responses:

What can I infer about the age, gender, ethnicity, credentials, and level of education of the people who publish my profession's journal?

What inferences can I make about the contributors?

Who is the presumed audience for the publication? Do the characteristics of the actual audience vary from those of the presumed audience?

Do the leaders in my field comprise a cross-section of the people in the profession (or students in this class)?

What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of a leadership composed in this manner?

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What are the implications for individuals in the field who may not possess similar characteristics as the leadership?

**Variation**

Attend a conference of your professional or technical society. Observe the organizers and presenters; compare their age, gender, ethnicity, credentials, and level of education to those of the people attending the conference. Who provides support services such as registration? Who serves the food? Who sets up the facility (moves tables, prepares AV equipment)? Who cleans up after the conference? Make inferences about whether and why some members might not be attending the conference.



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## 4.5 Thinking About Race in Academia

### **Objectives**

Analyze the influences of race as it relates to academia.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper or copies of the handout

Possibly, reference materials

### **Time needed**

Thirty to sixty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Ask your students to write an autobiography of how experiences in their major have been racialized.

Have them answer questions about ways it has influenced them.

Collect individual assignments or discuss in large group.

### **Variation**

Have your students write autobiographies of how experiences in their majors or fields have been genderized.



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## 4.5 Thinking About Race in Academia Handout

### Directions

Write an autobiography of how experiences in your major or field have been racialized.

Answer the following questions:

Do your instructors look like you? In what ways do they look the same or different?

How do your instructors treat people who are like you? Who are different?

Do other students in your major look like you? How do they treat people who are like you? Who are different?

Do your textbooks contain information by or about people like you?

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What are some similarities and differences between you and the people who research, write, grant funding, and make policy in your major or field?

**Variation**

Write an autobiography of how experiences in your major or field have been genderized.



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## 4.6 Analyzing Assumptions in Academic Writing

### **Objectives**

Discover the assumptions about audience and subjects incorporated into professional or technical writing.

Analyze the definition of the “norm.”

Determine how the definition of the “norm” does and does not apply to the targeted audience and subjects.

### **Materials needed**

Article(s) from a professional or technical journal in your field

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Thirty to sixty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Provide your students with a sample article from a professional or technical journal.

Ask them to analyze the article for assumptions about audience and the experimental participants or subjects of study in the article.

Have them discuss the concept of the “norm” as presented in the article and how it affects them.



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## 4.6 Analyzing Assumptions in Academic Writing Handout

### Directions

Analyze a sample article from a professional or technical journal provided by your instructor.

Answer the following questions:

What is the assumed “norm” for this publication?

How is the article gendered?

What assumptions are made about the gender of the readers? About the gender of the subjects or participants?

What assumptions are made about the class/socioeconomic status of the readers? About the class/socioeconomic status of the subjects or participants?

What assumptions are made about the race or ethnicity of the readers? About the race or ethnicity of the subjects or participants?

Who is missing from the subject pool?

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From the audience?

What kinds of language are used to describe the subjects or participants?

To describe or refer to the readers?

What other assumptions are made about the characteristics of the readers?

Are they valid? Why or why not?



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## 4.7 Recognizing Social Justice Issues in Your Field

### **Objectives**

Develop an understanding of social justice issues affecting various majors.

Analyze the forces behind the process of change in the majors.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

Reference materials

### **Time needed**

Thirty to sixty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students locate news pieces, newsletter articles, or journal articles relating to current affairs in their majors.

Ask them to analyze the articles for evidence of social justice issues and their effects on the people in the field. Discuss or collect individual assignments.



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## 4.7 Recognizing Social Justice Issues in Your Field Handout

### **Directions**

Locate a news piece, newsletter article, or journal article relating to current affairs in your major or field.

Answer the following questions:

What are the “hot issues” in the article?

Do they represent the issues in the major or field as a whole?

How do the issues relate to concepts of difference, power, and discrimination?

What are the characteristics of the people involved in initiating change in your discipline?

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How do their characteristics correspond with or deviate from the perceived “norm”?

How do their characteristics resemble or differ from yours?

How are you affected by the issues in your major or field? Why do you think you are affected as you are?



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## 4.8 Analyzing Audience in Academic Writing

### **Objectives**

Analyze the assumptions about audience and subjects in material from student textbooks.

Discuss how the assumptions relate to social justice issues.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Thirty to sixty minutes

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students select a page or chapter from a textbook for one of their major classes.

Ask them to analyze the assumptions the material contains about the identity of the textbook's readers, and to answer questions about how the material is gendered, racialized, etc.

Encourage them to rewrite or discuss how they would structure the material to be more inclusive.



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## 4.8 Analyzing Audience in Academic Writing Handout

### Directions

Select a page or a chapter from a textbook for one of your major classes.

Analyze the assumptions the material contains about the identity of the textbook's readers.

Answer the following questions:

In what ways does the material include or exclude people of a variety of races, genders, socioeconomic statuses, cultural backgrounds, religions, ages, etc.?

How is the material gendered?

How is it racialized?

What is the identity of the sources consulted and the subjects tested in the development of the material?

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Who is included and who is excluded?

Rewrite the paragraph to avoid biases or assumptions about the audience. Describe how you would choose sources or structure experiments to be more inclusive.



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## 4.9 Profiling Your Major

### **Objectives**

Describe the demographics of students' majors (students and professional members).

Generate possible reasons for the composition of the membership

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper or copies of the handout

Reference materials

### **Time needed**

Sixty minutes or more

### **Instructor directions**

Ask students to research the demographics of their majors (age, race, level of education, gender, socioeconomic status, location, sexual orientation, religion of students or professional members).

Have them prepare reports describing and discussing their findings.

### **Variation**

Have your students compare and contrast the demographics of students or first-year professional members to the demographics of lifetime or senior members and discuss possible reasons for the similarities and differences.



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## 4.9 Profiling Your Major Handout

### **Directions**

Research the demographics of your major or field (age, race, level of education, gender, socioeconomic status, location, sexual orientation, religion of students or professional members).

Prepare a report describing and discussing your findings. Answer the following questions:

What are some factors that may contribute to the current makeup of people working (or studying) in your major or field?

How do those factors operate within your major or field?

How do they enrich or impoverish your experiences in the major or field?

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Do you feel that your field could benefit from participation by a greater diversity of members? If so, what are some ways you could help make participation more attractive to particular groups of people?

**Variation**

Compare and contrast the demographics of students or first-year professional members to the demographics of lifetime or senior members. Discuss possible reasons for the similarities and differences.



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## 4.10 Recognizing Achievements

### **Objectives**

Identify and analyze the contributions made to a particular field by a person of color.

Develop an appreciation of the factors helping and hindering that person's ability to achieve in the field.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper, or copies of the handout

Reference materials

### **Time needed**

Sixty minutes or more

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students identify a person of color who has made a difference in their major or field.

Ask them to describe that person's contribution and to discuss her or his experiences as a person of color in the field.



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## 4.10 Recognizing Achievements Handout

### **Directions**

Identify a person of color who has made a difference in your major or field.

Describe that person's contribution, and discuss her or his experiences as a person of color in the field.

Answer the following questions:

How did this person's contribution enrich the field?

What disadvantages and advantages were conferred by that person's racial identity?

How did that person respond to the challenges associated with being a person of color in your field?

How did that person take advantage of opportunities?

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What does that person cite as being sources of strength or support?

How does or will that person's experiences affect you and your participation in the major or field?



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## 4.11 Examining Class

### **Objectives**

Develop an understanding of the term “class” as it relates to students’ majors or fields.

Identify the relevant factors that affect students’ majors or fields.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper, or copies of the handout

Reference materials

### **Time needed**

Sixty minutes or more

### **Instructor directions**

Ask your students to write an analytical essay describing how class is operative in their majors or fields.

Ask them to define “class,” to identify the factors relevant to their majors or fields, and to identify how those factors affect themselves and others they know.

### **Variation**

Have your students write an analytical essay describing how they see race or gender operating in their majors.



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## 4.11 Examining Class Handout

### Directions

Write an analytical essay on the following question: How do you see class operating in your major or field?

Address the following:

Define “class.” What factors are relevant to your major or field?

Identify how those factors affect you.

Identify how those factors affect others you know.

How does the construct of “class” enrich or impoverish the experiences of those working and studying in your major or field?

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Do you feel that your field could benefit from participation by a greater diversity of members? If so, what are some ways you could help make participation more attractive to particular groups of people?

**Variation**

Write an analytical essay describing how you see race or gender operating in your major.



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## 4.12 Thinking About Gender in Your Major

### **Objectives**

Develop an awareness of how a particular major or field is gendered.

Examine gender roles as they relate to that major or field.

Analyze factors affecting participation of women in the major or field.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper, or copies of the handout

Reference materials

### **Time needed**

Sixty minutes or more

### **Instructor directions**

Ask your students to identify a gendered phenomenon in their major or field.

Have them research and write a descriptive report about it.

### **Variation**

Have your students identify a racialized phenomenon in their major or field.

Ask them to research and write a descriptive report about it following the given directions.



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## 4.12 Thinking About Gender in Your Major Handout

### Directions

Identify a gendered phenomenon in your major or field.

Research and write a descriptive report about it. Answer the following questions:

How does gender operate in your major or field?

What is the proportion of women to men?

What behaviors are expected of women and of men in this major or field?

What factors may have influenced women to enter or to avoid this environment?

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How active or passive are the roles they play in this environment?

What are two positive and two negative aspects for this environment of having women present in this proportion?

**Variation**

Identify a racialized phenomenon in your major or field. Research and write a descriptive report about it. Follow the above directions.



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## 4.13 Reporting on Religion

### **Objectives**

Create an awareness of societal assumptions about the “norm” in religion.

Analyze effects of those assumptions, as they relate to a particular major or field, on a person outside of the religious “norm.”

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper, or copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Sixty minutes or more

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students interview a person in their class, major, or profession who is open about practicing a religion different from theirs (i.e., not just a different sect or denomination, such as Baptist and Episcopalian, but a different faith tradition, such as Christianity and Islam, or Judaism and Wicca).

Have them write a report describing that person’s firsthand experiences, as they relate to that religion, in their major or profession.

### **Variation**

Have your students interview a person in their major or field who is open about having a sexual orientation that differs from their own.

Ask them to report that person’s experiences, as they relate to that sexual orientation, in their major or field.



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## 4.13 Reporting on Religion Handout

### Directions

Interview a person in your class, major, or profession who is open about practicing a religion that is different from yours (i.e., not just a different sect or denomination, such as Baptist and Episcopalian, but a different faith tradition, such as Christianity and Islam, or Judaism and Wicca).

Write a report describing that person's firsthand experiences, as they relate to that religion, in your major or profession.

Answer the following questions:

How do assumptions about the "norm" in religion operate in your major or field? How do these assumptions operate in the academic setting generally? In social situations at the academic institution?

Does your interviewee recognize any challenges or disadvantages in the major or field related to her or his practice of a religion outside the "norm"? How does she or he respond to those challenges? OR Does your interviewee recognize any privileges or advantages associated with practicing a "normative" religion? How does he or she react to that recognition?

What disadvantages and advantages were conferred by your interviewee's religious affiliation?

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What does that person cite as being sources of strength or support?

How does or will that person's experiences affect you and your participation in the major or field?

**Variation**

Interview a person in your class, major, or profession who is open about having a sexual orientation that differs from yours. Answer the questions above.



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## 4.14 Abstracting and Synthesizing Information

### **Objectives**

Gain practice in abstracting and synthesizing information from a professional publication.

Develop an awareness of social justice issues as they operate in a particular major or field.

### **Materials needed**

Sample journal abstract

Pen and paper, or copies of the handout

### **Time needed**

Sixty minutes or more

### **Instructor directions**

Provide a sample abstract from a journal article that deals with the social justice issues focused on in your course.

Provide a separate sample article or suggest how students can locate similar articles.

Have students read an article and write an abstract of it, following the form and style of the sample you provided.



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## 4.14 Abstracting and Synthesizing Information Handout

### **Directions**

Examine the sample journal abstract for content, form, and style.

Obtain and read an article dealing with an issue of difference, power, or discrimination from a journal in your field.

Following the sample's form and style, synthesize and write an abstract of that article.



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## 4.15 Acting on Your Agenda

### **Objectives**

Create an awareness of social justice issues operative in a particular major or field.

Stimulate involvement in an activism project that addresses one of the identified issues.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper

Copies of the handout

Community resources

### **Time needed**

Several hours

### **Instructor directions**

Ask your students to identify a problem related to difference, power, and discrimination that affects people working in, or served by, their major or field.

Have them participate in an activism project related to that issue.

Have them write a report describing the activity and its effects, and making recommendations for future action.



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## 4.15 Acting on Your Agenda Handout

### Directions

Participate in an activism project related to an issue in your major or field.

Identify a problem related to difference, power, and discrimination that affects people working in or served by your major or field. What forces are operating in this situation?

Address the problem, using one of the following strategies, or create your own:

- Head a letter-writing campaign to legislators
- Organize a fundraiser
- Stage a peaceful protest
- Write a script for a film addressing the problem
- Start a magazine or other publication

Write a report describing your activity and its effects and making recommendations for future action. Answer the following questions:

What specific issue or problem did you choose to address?

What strategy or mechanism did you develop to address it?

Who participated? Who did not participate? Why?

What changes do you think your project created?

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Why do you think people responded to your activity as you did?

In future action, what would you change? What would you keep the same?

What would you recommend for others interested in organizing a similar activity?



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## 4.16 Evaluating the Effectiveness of Writing on Social Justice Issues

### **Objectives**

Increase understanding of social justice issues as they relate to a particular major or field.

Develop ability to analyze and synthesize information relating to social justice issues.

### **Materials needed**

Pen and paper or copies of the handout

Book to be critiqued

### **Time needed**

Sixty minutes or more

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students use the form provided to write a critique of a book in their major or field that addresses a social justice issue or issues.

Collect individual assignments and discuss in large group.



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## 4.16 Evaluating the Effectiveness of Writing on Social Justice Issues Handout

### Directions

Using the following form, write a critique of a book in your major or field that addresses a social justice issue or issues.

Turn the critique in to your instructor for feedback.

Student's Name:

Book Title:

Author:

Publication Information:

Relevant social justice issue(s):

Book synopsis or summary:

Analysis of social justice issue(s) covered in the book. (Attach more pages as necessary.)  
What was the author's approach to the issue(s)? What are the book's strengths and weaknesses? What causes and effects of the issue(s) did the author identify? What solutions or courses of action were suggested? How did reading this book alter your thinking?



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## 4.17 Calculating Cash

### **Objectives**

Develop an awareness of the gap between wages at various levels in an organization.

Analyze the financial benefits accruing to employees at the various levels.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

Reference materials

Community resources

### **Time needed**

Several hours

### **Instructor directions**

Have your students visit a place of employment related to their majors (or gather information on a typical place related to their majors).

Have them ask or research questions regarding the salaries of various types of employees.

Have them calculate certain account balances and figures.



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## 4.17 Calculating Cash Handout

### Directions

Visit a place of employment related to your major (or gather research on a typical place related to your major).

Ask or research the following questions:

What approximate monthly salary does the CEO, president, or director earn?

What salaries do management personnel earn?

What salaries do support personnel earn?

What is the range between the lowest and the highest salary?

Create monthly budgets for the CEO and the lowest-paid individual in the company or organization.

Compute the following hypothetical amounts:

An approximate annual retirement account total for the CEO (based on pre-tax contributions of 10% of that person's monthly salary and a current average rate of return on a middle-of-the-road mutual fund)

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An approximate annual retirement account total for the lowest-paid individual in the company or organization (based on pre-tax contributions of 10% of that person's monthly salary and a current average rate of return on a middle-of-the-road mutual fund)

The difference between the two totals in principle contributed only, after five years

After ten years



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## 4.18 Comparing Benefits

### **Objectives**

Develop an awareness of the differences between benefits available at various levels in an organization.

Analyze the effects of benefit availability on employees at the various levels.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

Reference materials

Community resources

### **Time needed**

Several hours

### **Instructor directions**

Ask your students to consider the same place of employment (see lesson *4.17 Comparing Cash*) related to their major as they used in the “Calculating Cash” exercise.

Have them ask about or research certain questions about benefits offered by the company or organization.

Ask them to discuss how available benefits affect employees at various levels of the company or organization.



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## 4.18 Comparing Benefits Handout

### Directions

Consider the same place of employment related to your major as you used in the “Calculating Cash” exercise.

Ask the following questions:

What benefits does the company offer? (Benefits might include things such as health insurance, flex time, paid time off [which might include vacation, sick leave, emergency or compassionate leave, maternity leave, or continuing education leave], on-site child care, child care subsidies, stock options, retirement fund contributions, continuing education stipends or reimbursement, life insurance, disability insurance, and mental health or counseling services.)

Are there any benefits not offered that the employees have requested or would benefit from?

Do all employees have equal access to the benefits?

If not, what criteria determine employees’ eligibility for benefits?

How are these criteria related to gender, level of education, socioeconomic status, race, religion, and physical ability?

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How does availability of benefits affect the ability of employees in support jobs to remain in long-term positions within the company or organization?

How does it affect employees in management positions?

How does it affect the CEO, president, or director?



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## 4.19 Examining the Construct of Race in the Sciences

### **Objectives**

Explore the concept of race as applied to a particular field in science or social science.

Analyze the effects of the construct on that field.

### **Materials needed**

Copies of the handout

Reference materials

### **Time needed**

Sixty minutes or more

### **Instructor directions**

Ask your students to define the concept of “race” as it operates in a particular field of science or social science.

Have them write an etymology of the concept analyzing how the construct of race has affected various aspects of the field.

### **Variation**

Have your students define the concept of “gender” as it operates in a particular field of science or social science.



# Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

## 4.19 Examining the Construct of Race in the Sciences Handout

### **Directions**

Define the concept of “race” as it operates in a particular field of science or social science.

Write an etymology of the concept.

Answer the following questions:

How was the concept introduced into the field?

How has it shaped or affected the field?

How has scientific or scholarly work served to support or to challenge the definition?

How has the discipline’s concept of race affected the design of experiments and the interpretation of empirical results?

How has the concept affected the funding of research projects?

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How has it affected the participation of individuals in the field?

**Variation**

Define the concept of “gender” as it operates in a particular field of science or social science. Follow the above directions.