



VIRTUAL TRAINING WORKBOOK

Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable: Engaging in Dialogue About Race and Bias

with Dr. Sandra Miles (she / her)

We have organized this training companion workbook according to the agenda:

- Setting the Stage
- Sources of Bias
- Intersectionality
- Triggers of Bias
- Unpacking Bias
- Your Action Plan

We will first introduce you to an example scenario that we will use as our lens throughout our time together. We will discuss the key elements of each section, then explore together how they came into play in the scenario. We will end each section with activities, tools, and resources to take with you as homework to help you move beyond simply understanding the definitions of these key concepts and begin the hard work of making meaning of how they play out in your life and in any conversation you enter.

We recognize that everyone is starting from a different place and that the example scenario may seem either mundane or extreme depending on your perspective. Our hope is that it will help to you reflect on where you fall on the spectrum of any given competency and allow you informally assess your areas of discomfort and define some next steps.

Special thanks to Dr. Sandra Miles for supplying the content for this resource.
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Setting the Stage

Learning Goals

- Increased capacity to recognize and accept personal, internalized bias.
- Increased capacity for interrupting personal biased reactions and responses in real time.
- Increased ability to understand the impact of intersectionality.
- Tools to help continuously uncover and deepen the understanding of personal biases.
- Tools to compassionately help others recognize their own biases.

Ground Rules

- We agree that this workshop centers around educational experiences in the United States and acknowledge that there are participants from other countries who may have other experiences.
- We agree that this workshop will not teach you how to not be racist or biased.
- We will assume that everyone participating is a good person.
- We need to agree that we are safe and not in any danger, even if we feel uncomfortable.
- We need to be willing to be uncomfortable.
- We will be honest in a way that prioritizes honesty, not what people think of us.
- We will resist the urge to get defensive.
- We will share and consider examples of our own behavior.
- We will give grace.

The Scenario & Characters

Each person referenced holds a similar “rank” in different areas of Equity University. There is no overt power differential between them. They are colleagues, peers, and friends. The three of them have had a standing lunch appointment every Thursday for the past 2 years. Initially, these lunches were to make sure their respective areas remained in communication, but each of them have come to value this time and each other. In fact, they have begun to have occasional "no work allowed" dinners just to relax outside of work.

- **Shana Stanford** – African American woman; Associate Professor of Statistics at Equity University (EU)
- **Angela Harvard** – White American woman; Dean of Business Services at EU
- **Raphael Princeton** – Puerto Rican man; Director of Academic Support Programs at EU

Please Note: For the purpose of this scenario activity, we will focus on more surface-level identities. We acknowledge that identity is complex and that there is much about these characters that we do not know.

The Uncomfortable Conversation

During a conversation related to a campus budget meeting, Shana, Angela, and Raphael debrief and try to think of ways they can work together to increase student enrollment.

Shana: I'm thinking about reaching out to Admissions to ask if their recruitment team could increase their engagement with some of the local high schools where we place our student teaching interns. We really haven't done everything possible to tap into our local market. Ang, how many additional students would we need to enroll to add \$1 million to the budget?

Angela: Well, I don't think recruiting at our local high schools will work.

Shana: Why not?

Angela: Well, you know- most of the high schools here are very urban and we don't have the academic support structures in place to be able to cater to their needs. Right Raphael?

Raphael: I'm not sure what you mean.

Shana: I'm also confused. Are you saying that students of color can't do well here academically?

Angela: Listen, I know we want to increase diversity and everything, but in terms of the budget, I just don't think it would be wise to bring in a group of students that we know we can't retain. That will cost us more in the long run.

Shana: Wow... I can't believe you're saying this – there is so much bias in your comments I don't even know where to start. All I asked you for was a number. Let Raph and I handle student recruitment and support. That's our job and we do our jobs very well.

Angela: You don't have to get hostile; I'm trying to be helpful. I'm not a bigot – I'm a woman, I know it feels like to be discriminated against. I just don't want us to take advantage of anyone. Ethically, it would be wrong for us to take these students money when we know they won't be successful.

Shana: Hostile? So now you're placing your stereotypes on me? Listen – it is not a fact that local students won't do well here based on the color of their skin.

Angela: I never said that!

Shana: Raphael – what did you hear her say?

Raphael: Well, she didn't say they wouldn't do well based on the color of their skin but, Ang, it did sound like you were suggesting that students from urban areas were less capable without any evidence other than where they are going to school. And it is a known fact that most of the students in those schools are black and brown.

Angela: So now you're ganging up on me?

Shana: No one is ganging up on you. We are holding you accountable for what you said. It was unnecessary, inappropriate, and wrong.

Angela: **starts crying** I just don't understand why you are attacking me. Faculty always do this. You speak to people like their feelings don't matter. I was only trying to help. I care about those kids and I don't want to put them in a situation where they will be set up to fail.

Shana: This is ridiculous. So, you're a victim now? What difference does it make that I'm a faculty

member? You are basically saying these students don't belong here without seeing a single transcript or test score. But *you're* the victim? You may be a woman, but I'm a *Black* woman and I have seen people like you try to stop people like me from having opportunities and disguise their racism as care and concern my whole life. As long as I'm here, all prospective students will get a fair chance.

Angela: **sobbing** I can't believe you are accusing me of being racist! I have never been hateful towards anyone in my life!

Raphael: It's ok, Angela – you don't have to cry. Shana isn't calling you racist, she's just saying that your comments were hurtful and could have a negative impact whether or not that was your intent.

Angela: **continues crying** That's easy for you to say, no one is calling you racist or putting words in your mouth. I'm really hurt right now.

Raphael: Ang, no offense but this is why people don't want to have honest conversations about race with white women. The minute someone makes you uncomfortable you start crying and the whole conversation shuts down and becomes about your feelings instead of the real issue.

Angela: What?! So, you don't want to talk to me because I'm white? Who is racist now? If I said the same thing about you then you'd want to report me to HR! I'm not going to report you, but if I did you'd be in a lot of trouble.

Raphael: Are you threatening me? I'm literally the only man of color at the Director level and you would threaten my job? I'm trying help you understand how Shana is feeling, I didn't say I didn't want to talk to you because you're white.

Shana: I can't believe this is happening. Raph – you can stay here if you want, but I no longer feel safe to speak freely. From now on, if we need to discuss anything work related let's just discuss it via email.

Angela: Shana – are you saying you don't want to have our lunches anymore?

Shana: I'm saying this conversation has revealed something in you that is making me very uncomfortable, so no – I don't want to have these lunches anymore.

Angela: What do you mean? What has been revealed? I have always been kind to you.

Shana: Kindness doesn't matter if you don't respect me.

Processing Space: Take a moment and use the space below to write down 2-3 words that describe what emotions you felt while reading the conversation.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to write down 2-3 words describing their emotions while reading the conversation.

Understanding Bias

What is Bias?

- Bias is the core of unwelcoming environments and the cause of microaggressions.
- Implicit/Subconscious bias is bias that we are **unaware** of or **mistaken** about their nature.
- Rather than being neutral, we have a **preference for** (or **aversion to**) a person or group of people.
- When we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them **without our conscious knowledge** that is subconscious bias.
- **When we are clear and feel justified** in having attitudes towards people or associating stereotypes with them that is overt/conscious bias.
- Bias causes us to have **feelings and attitudes** about other people based on characteristics such as **race, ethnicity, age, and appearance**.

How Does Bias Develop?

- Over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age
- Through exposure to direct + indirect messages
- Through every type of media
- With reinforcement (or reflection) from our peers, family, teachers, coaches and others.

Characteristics of Bias

- Pervasive – Everyone possesses biases – even those committed to being impartial
- Implicit and explicit biases are related but distinct mental constructs. They are not mutually exclusive and may reinforce someone.
- Our implicit associations do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or explicit stances.
- We tend toward biases that favor our own ingroup but could be the reverse, too.
- Implicit biases are malleable and can be unlearned with debiasing techniques.

Subconscious Bias Can Lead to...

- **Discrimination**
 - EX: Calling the police on someone who is not breaking the law.
- **Incorrect Assumptions**
 - EX: Assuming a person with a disability will be “too much trouble” to hire.
- **Stereotypes**
 - EX: Assuming all students of color come from broken and/or low-income homes.
- **Microaggressions**
 - EX: Asking a person of color about their credentials.

Sources of Bias *the chart below was developed by Dr. Kathy Obear and is included with permission.



PRIVILEGED GROUP		MARGINALIZED GROUP
Late 30's to late 50's/early 60's	1. Age	Younger; Older
White	2. Race	Person of Color; People who identify as Biracial/Multiracial
Male	3. Sex Assigned at Birth	Female; Intersex
Cisgender	4. Gender Identity	Transgender; Gender Nonconforming; Gender Queer
President, Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors, Faculty, Supervisors	5. Hierarchical Level	Students, Graduate Teaching Assistants, direct service staff
Heterosexual	6. Sexual Orientation	Gay; Lesbian; Bisexual; Queer; Questioning
Upper class; Upper middle class; Middle class	7. Social Class	Working class; Living in poverty
Graduate or 4-year degree; highly valued school; private school	8. Educational Level; Credential; Certificate	High school degree; 1 st generation to college; less valued school; public school
Christian (Protestant; Catholic)	9. Religion/Spirituality	Muslim, Jewish, Agnostic, Hindu, Atheist, Buddhist, Spiritual, LDS, Jehovah Witness, Pagan, ...
U.S. born	10. National Origin	"Foreign born;" Born in a country other than the U.S.
Not disabled	11. Disability Status	People with a physical, mental, emotional and/or learning disability; People living with AIDS/HIV+
"American;" Western European heritage	12. Ethnicity/Culture	Puerto Rican; Navajo; Mexican; Nigerian; Chinese; Iranian; Russian; Jewish...
Fit society's image of attractive, beautiful, handsome, athletic...	13. Size, Appearance, Athleticism	Perceived by others as too fat, tall, short, unattractive, not athletic...
Proficient in the use of "Standard" English	14. English Literacy	Use of "non-standard" English dialects; have an "accent"
Legally married in a heterosexual relationship	15. Marital Status	Single; divorced; widowed; same sex partnership; unmarried heterosexual partnership...
Parent of children born within a 2-parent heterosexual marriage	16. Parental Status	Unmarried parent; do not have children; non-residential parent; LGBTQ parents...
More years on campus	17. Years of experience	New; little experience on campus
U.S. citizen	18. Immigration Status	People who do not have U.S. citizenship, are undocumented
Suburban; valued region of U.S.	19. Geographic region	Rural; some urban areas...less valued region
Light skin; European/Caucasian features	20. Skin color; phenotype	Darker skin; African, Asian, Aboriginal features...
Nuclear family with 2 parents in a heterosexual relationship	21. Family Status	Blended family; single-parent household; grandparents raising grandchildren; foster family...
Extrovert; task-oriented; analytical; linear thinker	22. Work Style	Introvert; process-oriented; creative; circular thinker

Uncomfortable Conversation Scenario Activity 1

How did bias show up for each person involved in the Uncomfortable Conversation?

Shana Stanford	
Angela Harvard	
Raphael Princeton	

Action Plan Items: Bias Homework Activities

- How Does My Privilege Turn into Bias?
- How Does it Feel When It Happens to You?

Homework 1: How Does My Privilege Turn into Bias?

Think of times when you have judged others who are different from yourself by your standards. In the space provided below, list a few examples of when those times went beyond internal judgement and became behavior.

Example: I chose not to hire an older candidate for fear of them being too difficult to train.

<u>Impact on Me</u>	<u>Impact on the Other Person</u>

Now, considering the examples above, in the columns below, list the impact this biased behavior had on you vs the impact on the other person.

Homework 2: How Does it Feel When It Happens to You?

In the section below, list a few examples of times when you have perceived or experienced bias directed towards you.

Bias Incident Towards Me	How it Felt

In consideration of the above exercises, did you find it easier to write down examples of times when you were biased or times when you experienced bias? Please explain.

What do you think it would take for you to become equally comfortable discussing the times when you displayed bias and when you experienced bias directed towards you?

Intersectionality

Intersectionality

- Intersectionality, a concept defined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), describes the social, economic, and political ways in which identity-based systems of oppression connect, overlap, and influence one another.
- Intersectionality adds layers to privilege and marginalization and compounds the impact of bias.
- Individuals with intersecting identities tend to identify primarily with the most marginalized identity.

Uncomfortable Conversation Scenario Activity 2

Thinking back to the Uncomfortable Conversation Scenario, what role did intersectionality have in the conversation for each person involved?

Shana Stanford	
Angela Harvard	
Raphael Princeton	

Action Plan Items: Intersectionality Homework Activity

- Intersectionality Reflection Questions

Homework 3: Intersectionality Reflection Questions

Take some time individually to reflect on the following questions.

- How might intersectionality impact conversations around race and bias?
- What nuances should be considered when entering these conversations with students or colleagues?
- What role did the Faculty vs. Staff dynamic play?
- In what ways do your social identities impact your personal and professional life?
- How do they show up during difficult conversations?

Triggers of Bias

What Does it Mean to be “Triggered”?

Triggers are anything that remind someone of previous trauma. To be **triggered** is to have an intense emotional or physical reaction, such as a panic attack, after encountering a **trigger**.

Related words: content warning.

Dialogue vs. Debate

Our goal is to engage in healthy and meaningful dialogue, not debate. So how does one tell the difference?

- Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding.
 - *Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.*
- In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.
 - *In debate, winning is the goal.*
- In dialogue, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning and find agreement.
 - *In debate, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.*
- Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.
 - *Debate affirms a participant's own point of view.*
- Dialogue reveals assumptions for re-evaluation.
 - *Debate defends assumptions as truth.*
- Dialogue causes introspection on one's own position.
 - *Debate causes critique of the other position.*
- Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.
 - *Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.*
- Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude: an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.
 - *Debate creates a close-minded attitude, a determination to be right.*
- In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, knowing that other people's reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it.
 - *In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.*
- Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.
 - *Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.*
- In dialogue, one searches for basic agreements.
 - *In debate, one searches for glaring differences.*
- In dialogue one searches for strengths in the other positions.
 - *In debate one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other position.*
- Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate or offend.
 - *Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person.*
- Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they can put them into a workable solution.
 - *Debate assumes that there is a right answer and that someone has it.*
- Dialogue remains open-ended.
 - *Debate implies a conclusion.*

Adapted from a paper prepared by Shelley Berman, which was based on discussions of the Dialogue Group of the Boston Chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR).

Identifying Triggers

Bias incidents are easy to identify in hindsight, but how can we recognize the signs of bias in real time? Here are some tips to help you recognize when you are being triggered:

1. Notice that you are having a strong internal reaction.
2. Notice that your reaction is disproportionate to the overall content of the conversation.
3. Notice that your perspective is debatable.
4. Notice that others have grown silent or are debating intensely.

Uncomfortable Conversation Scenario Activity 2

Thinking back to the Uncomfortable Conversation Scenario, what trigger responses showed up for each person involved?

Shana Stanford	
Angela Harvard	
Raphael Princeton	

Action Plan Items: Triggers of Bias Homework Activity

- Identifying Triggers of Bias Reflection Questions
- Trigger Response Questions

Homework 4: Triggers of Bias Reflection Questions

- Have you reflected on any other signs not mentioned in the list above? If so, describe them below:
 - How can we engage in conversations in a non-triggering way?
- What steps can we take to remove our defensive posture and come to the table ready to effectively listen and learn with, and from, one another?
- When should you step up and when should you step back during these dialogues?

Cues That You Are Defending/Leaning into Your Bias

If you are engaging in a conversation and it is stated or suggested that you are displaying bias, how can your own justifications make you seem more biased rather than less biased?

1. **Excuses Required** – When describing your reaction you find yourself volunteering excuses or being asked to explain yourself.
2. **Fear of Judgment** – You are more concerned with what people will think of you than resolving the situation itself.
 - Responses like, “I don’t have a racist bone in my body” or “I’m not the enemy here”, etc.

Homework 5: Trigger Response Questions

Have you witnessed any other bias defense tactics? If so, describe them below:

Instead of defending your bias, what else could you do remain engaged in a difficult conversation?

Unpacking Bias

Moving Forward and Unpacking Bias

- Accept that bias is a part of life
- Acknowledge what you're feeling
- Experience what you're feeling
- State what you're feeling... Every. Single. Time.

Revisiting the Scenario at Equity U: A More Productive Uncomfortable Conversation

During a conversation related to a campus budget meeting, Shana, Angela, and Raphael debrief and try to think of ways they can work together to increase student enrollment. Read their conversation below and consider the differences in how they each showed up compared to the initial example.

Shana: I'm thinking about reaching out to Admissions to ask if their recruitment team could increase their engagement with some of the local high schools where we place our student teaching interns. We really haven't done everything possible to tap into our local market. Ang, how many additional students would we need to enroll to add \$1 million to the budget?

Angela: Well, I don't think recruiting at our local high schools will work.

Shana: Why not?

Angela: Well, you know- most of the high schools here are very urban and we don't have the academic support structures in place to be able to cater to their needs. Right Raphael?

Raphael: I'm not sure what you mean.

Shana: I'm also confused. I don't think you mean any harm, but it sounds like you're suggesting that students of color can't do well here academically. Is that what you believe?

Angela: No, I didn't say anything about students of color.

Shana: Well, you didn't explicitly say students of color, but most of those students are students of color. So, if I'm misunderstanding, please clarify for me because this conversation could easily take a very unfortunate turn.

Angela: Ok, I admit that I do know that most of the students in our local high schools are students of color, but it's not their race that makes me feel like we can't support them. I can see how it could be interpreted in that way, but I promise that's not what I meant.

Shana: So, what did you mean?

Angela: To me this is a class issue, not a race issue. Many of our local schools are underfunded and don't have the same rigorous academic preparation as many of the schools we currently

recruit from. Ethically, it would be wrong for us to take these students money when we know they won't be successful.

Shana: I agree that ethically that would be wrong if we knew they wouldn't be successful, but we don't actually know that. Can you see how problematic it is that you dismissed my idea without any facts other than an assumption that students from "urban" schools who also happen to be students of color are so academically underprepared that they aren't worth our effort to recruit them.

Angela: I never said that!

Shana: Raphael – what did you hear her say?

Raphael: Well, she didn't say they wouldn't do well based on the color of their skin but, Ang, it did sound like you were suggesting that students from urban areas were less capable without any evidence other than where they are going to school. And, as you said earlier, it is known that most of the students in those schools are black and brown.

Angela: I can't believe that both of you just completely misinterpreted what I was saying.

Shana: Well, if we both misinterpreted you, then can you consider that maybe your premise is flawed?

Angela: **takes a deep breath** I want to try to explain myself, but I'm getting nervous that anything I say will only make it worse. I was only trying to help. I care about those kids, and I don't want to put them in a situation where they will be set up to fail.

Shana: Ok. Let me stop you. The last sentence you said is where I am getting stuck and it's making it difficult for me to continue to give the benefit of the doubt. We have said multiple times that until we actually look at their academic records, we have no way of knowing if the students from local high schools are prepared and yet you keep stating that they are not good candidates as if it is a known fact. Do you believe that students from similarly resourced schools in rural communities are also not worth our effort? Because we spend quite a bit of time and money recruiting from those schools and you've never mentioned it.

Angela: I've never thought of it that way. This conversation is making me feel judged and I was sincerely just trying to be compassionate.

Raphael: It's ok, Angela – I know this may be hard to hear, but I appreciate you being willing to listen without being defensive. I think what Shana is trying to convey is that your comments, at face value, were hurtful and could have a negative impact whether or not that was your intent.

Angela: I understand, but I have to admit that I really do want to defend myself. Saying that race was a factor in my comment is really hurtful.

Raphael: Angie, no offense but if us reflecting back to you what we heard is hurtful, imagine how it felt to absorb it. I don't mean to minimize your feelings, but right now I think it would be better to focus on identifying and correcting anything that may subconsciously make you assume that students from urban areas are not worth our outreach. Even if you believe it came from a compassionate place, that compassion feels condescending.

Angela: You guys are putting words in my mouth again. I never said they aren't worth our time. Maybe we should just end this conversation. Shana, the answer to your original question is 78. 78 students would add \$1 million to our budget.

Raphael: Please don't shut down. If you really want to get on the same page with us, I think we need to continue to talk this out.

Shana: Raph – maybe we should stop here. We've given her a lot to think about and she may need time to process. Thank you for the number, Ang. If you really want to stop right now, would you be willing to revisit this conversation during our next lunch meeting?

Angela: Shana – are you saying you want to continue to discuss this until I agree with you?

Shana: I'm saying this conversation has revealed something that is making me a little uncomfortable so, yes, I'd like to continue to discuss it. Not necessarily until you agree, but at least until we all feel heard and understood.

Angela: What do you mean? What has been revealed? I feel less "seen" in this conversation than I ever have. But I do trust you both and it is important to me that I understand and am understood. Thank you for giving me some time to process and thanks for giving me some grace.

Shana: Of course. These conversations are always unexpected and are never easy, but they are always worth it.

Processing Space: Take a moment and use the space below to write down 2-3 words that describe what emotions you felt while reading the updated conversation.

Uncomfortable Conversation Scenario Activity 3

After reading the updated conversation, consider the differences of how the participants showed up compared to the earlier example. Where did you see the participants push through their biases?

Shana Stanford	
Angela Harvard	
Raphael Princeton	

Action Plan Items: Unpacking Bias Homework Activity

- Unpacking your Bias
- Getting Vulnerable

Homework 6: Unpacking your Bias

ACCEPT

Accept the reality that sometimes you act in ways that are rooted in bias AND that bias within you is not always benign.

Take some time and list examples of your own behavior that has been rooted in bias.

Ex. When I saw a Black woman walk into a store with a very large purse, I watched her to see if she would steal.

ACKNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

When you notice your behavior is being influenced by bias, rather than focusing on shame, just consider what you're feeling and try to identify the origin of the bias.

Take some time and try to put into words what bias *feels* like.

VERBALIZE IT

Practice verbalizing the bias that is infiltrating your thought process.

Take some time and practice how you might describe your bias in real time.

Ex. I am uncomfortable in this neighborhood. My bias is that I usually associate this community with crime.

Homework 7: Vulnerability

Practice Being Honest with Yourself

- Identify the false notions you have adopted to protect yourself from the hurtful reality of your own bias.
- If racism, bias, prejudice, etc. were still socially acceptable would you be here?
- What are you most afraid of as it relates to engaging in conversations around bias and racism?
- If you could wave a magic wand, how would you address the racial bias of others?
- If you could wave a magic wand, how would you address your own racial bias

Your Action Plan

Use this space to track your progress as you work your way through the different homework activities and identify your next steps.

- How Does My Privilege Turn into Bias?
- How Does it Feel When It Happens to You?
- Intersectionality Reflection Questions
- Identifying Triggers of Bias Reflection Questions
- Trigger Response Questions
- Unpacking your Bias
- Getting Vulnerable

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