Looking at Bias

Name: _______________________        Date: ____________

Now, let’s explore your own biases and thoughts a little further. The following activity is designed to facilitate your understanding about the “isms” which exist in our society. This activity presents various vignettes in which you’re asked to identify any potential biases. Remember, too, that we’re all biased to some extent.

These vignettes describe culturally different people. In this discussion you’re asked to indicate whether bias exists or doesn’t exist in the situation you’re reading. If bias exists, describe on paper how you came to that conclusion.

Non-specific Vignettes

1. A woman and a man apply for the same management job. They both pass the qualifying exam, but the man scores ten points higher. Their references and other supporting material are about equal. The woman is hired because all the other managers are male and the agency wants to diversify its staff. Was the man a victim of “reverse discrimination”?

2. You’re on break during a training session. You and a peer happen to get in a conversation about the session’s emphasis on cultural diversity. Your peer remarks, “most of that stuff about race and class and all doesn’t apply to us; we plan to work in a rural area and all of our clientele are white.” Does this statement indicate bias or is it a statement of fact? How do you respond to her comment, if at all?

3. An intern at the agency in which you work born and raised in a South American country. She says that much of the gender equal orientation stuff she has learned in this country and at the agency in which you work is inapplicable to her because she plans to return to her country when she finishes her degree and gender egalitarianism “simply couldn’t work” there. Does her statement indicate bias or is it a statement of fact? How would you respond to her comment, if at all?

Direct Service Vignettes

1. You work in a residential program that provides supports to people with severe disabilities who can’t communicate. Two of these individuals are African American, one is American Indian, and three are European American. This Sunday is Easter and you and the other staff plan a big Easter dinner including ham, dressing corn, beans, bread, and apple crisp. One of the individual’s parents finds out what you have planned and accuses you of being culturally insensitive because the child and family doesn’t celebrate Easter, nor do they eat ham. Were you being biased? How should you have handled this situation?

2. You’re working one night and you overhear a coworker talking very loudly with one of the individuals you support. To you, it seems like the worker is yelling. When you approach the worker and explain your concern, they respond by telling you that you just don’t understand how African American talk and they aren’t yelling. Were you being culturally biased? Explain. How would you respond to this coworker?

3. You’re providing in-home supports to an American Indian child with a disability who lives with his parents. You’re scheduled to arrive at their home at 3:00p.m. You arrived on time but no one seemed to be home. After waiting ten minutes, you described they were being inconsiderate and forgot the appointment and you left. Were you being culturally biased? Explain.