

Final seminar activity

The six immersive experiences, unpacked: questions for the group and discussion keys

This is the closing activity of Workshop 3. Use it **after** the group has gone through the virtual reality experiences, during the final debriefing: each scenario is revisited with the same questions that appear inside the experience, the group discusses them, and only then do you share the explanation and the theory that connects what they just lived through with workshops 1 and 2.

How to run it

1. Project or read out the question and its options. Let the group answer before you comment on anything.
2. Collect the answers, ask why they picked that option, and only then read the explanation.
3. Use the discussion keys to move past the individual case and reach the social mechanism behind it.
4. Close each scenario with the final idea before moving on to the next one.

Where each part comes from

The context, the questions, the options and the explanations are the exact texts of the experience, as seen by the participant. The discussion keys and the final ideas were written by the University of Barcelona team.

0 To open: two phrases from the workshop

Before going through the scenarios, these two phrases reconnect the group with workshops 1 and 2. Read them out loud and ask the group what they have in common.

Phrase 1

"Trans people are pretending to be another gender."

Phrase 2

"If you don't feel you fit your sex, there is something wrong with you."

1. Gender as something you do, not something you are (Butler)

The idea that a trans person is "pretending" assumes there is an authentic, fixed gender. Butler argues that gender is not something you are but something you do: we express it through actions, gestures and the way we present ourselves.

For discussion: if gender is a way of expressing yourself, does it make sense to say someone is "pretending"?

2. Gender as a social construct (Oakley)

The phrase "there is something wrong with you if you don't fit" mixes up biological sex and cultural gender. Oakley explains that gender is a set of social expectations about how we "should" behave based on the sex assigned at birth.

Core idea: when someone does not fit, the problem is not the person but a system that only accepts two rigid ways of being.

3. Social sanctions and exclusion

Saying "there is something wrong with you" works as social pressure to keep people within established norms. Whoever steps outside them can be labelled as odd and pushed out.

For the group: why is stepping outside what is expected punished socially?

4. Heterosexuality as the norm (Rich, Wittig)

Several authors point out that these ideas are not accidental: they are part of a system that imposes heterosexuality and narrows other ways of living identity and desire.

For discussion: recognising the diversity of identities is not only individual respect, it is a way of questioning structures that constrain everyone.

These prejudices are not always voiced with bad intent, but they work because we assume biology determines how we should be. The course invites participants to reflect on how these messages reinforce a system that presents gender as fixed and unchangeable.

1 Workplace bias: "Do you plan to have children?"

Context

The user plays a female candidate in a job interview. The scene shows her interaction with a male interviewer who asks various questions in a professional setting. In this case, you'll experience a job interview as the interviewee. You'll assume the role of Anna, a woman participating in a job interview, and you'll experience the scene from her own perspective (first-person). The interaction will involve only two characters: Anna (you, in first-person, so you won't be visible) and the interviewer, a man. During the experience, questions will be asked that you must answer based on the context and the narrative of the moment, all of which are related to the interview itself and the situation you're experiencing.

Question 1 — Is this OK?. The interviewer's question about "taking longer breaks" is

- a. A polite way to know if the candidate wants to travel
- b. Acceptable, because it's not directly about pregnancy
- c. Problematic, because it indirectly targets family planning
- d. A standard question in modern interviews

Explanation. Even indirect questions about potential breaks due to personal life can constitute discriminatory practices if they target gender-specific experiences.

Question 2 — What Does the Law Say?. Asking a candidate about pregnancy or family plans during an interview is:

- a. Illegal and discriminatory
- b. Acceptable in industries justifying necessary continuity
- c. Only problematic if the candidate complains
- d. It is unfair and discriminatory, but it is not regulated by law

Explanation. In many jurisdictions, including the EU, such questions are legally considered discrimination under employment and equal treatment laws.

Question 3 — What Should the Employer Focus On?. In a professional interview, the employer should evaluate the candidate based on:

- a. Whether they are likely to take parental leave
- b. Their long-term commitment to the company
- c. Their technical skills, experience, and attitude
- d. Their flexibility regarding family responsibilities

Explanation. Recruitment should be based strictly on job-related criteria such as skills, past performance, and cultural fit not personal or family circumstances.

Question 4 — What Would You Do?. Imagine yourself in this situation. How do you think you would have responded?

- a. I would have reacted like the candidate, as it is within my right not to answer such questions
- b. I would have left the interview — I wouldn't want to work for a company with such practices.
- c. I might have lied — if the company is being unfair, I am within my rights to protect myself.
- d. I would have answered truthfully, regardless of the consequences.

Explanation. There's no single right way to respond to discrimination—each person's choice depends on their situation. What matters is knowing these questions are illegal and unfair. Hiring should focus only on your ability to do the job

Discussion keys

1. The motherhood penalty

The interviewer's question about whether Anna will "take longer breaks" reflects the bias that assumes women, especially once they have children, will be less committed or less available.

Link to the sources: the McKinsey report notes that women tend to be evaluated on past performance while men are judged on future potential. That bias makes motherhood look like a workplace "risk".

2. A breach of the legal and ethical framework

Asking about family plans is illegal and discriminatory.

- Spanish Constitution, article 14: prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex.
- Organic Law 3/2007: bars questions about motherhood or family plans during recruitment.
- Similar legislation exists in Poland and Lithuania, where equality in the selection process is also required.

3. The "ideal worker" model

The question stems from the traditional male-breadwinner model, which assumes that full dedication to a job is incompatible with motherhood.

Link to the workshop: this bias reproduces structural sexism and feeds phenomena such as the glass ceiling and the shortage of women in leadership positions.

4. Discrimination without conscious intent

The interviewer may not be aware of the bias, but that does not remove its effect.

The workshop explains that discrimination often operates without intent, especially when it rests on deeply rooted stereotypes. That is why organizations are adopting structured selection protocols to reduce it.

5. Solutions proposed by organizations

- Competency-based interviews, not questions about personal life.
- Mandatory bias training for everyone involved in hiring.
- Transparency and monitoring of hiring and promotion data to prevent inequality.

Final idea

Anna's case shows how cultural norms and gender bias still shape hiring. Even when the interviewer acts without bad intent, he reproduces discriminatory structures. Questioning these practices and adopting inclusive processes is essential to move toward real equity at work.

2 The promotion dilemma: pregnancy discrimination

Context

The user plays Anna, an employee denied a promotion due to her pregnancy. The scene is shown from Anna's first-person perspective and features a conversation with her boss, Mrs. Kowalski. In this case, you'll experience a workplace scenario from the perspective of Anna, an employee who has been denied a promotion due to her pregnancy. You'll assume the role of Anna and view the entire interaction through her eyes (first-person perspective). The scene involves a one-on-one conversation between Anna (you, in first-person, and therefore not visible) and her boss, Mrs. Kowalski, a woman. The focus is on how Anna navigates the emotional and professional challenges of this situation.

Question 1 — Can they say that?. Is it legal to deny a promotion based on an employee's pregnancy or assumed future availability due to parenthood?

- a. Yes, if the job requires full availability
- b. No, pregnancy discrimination is illegal
- c. It depends on company policy
- d. Only if the employee has not disclosed their maternity leave plans

Explanation. Explanation: Pregnancy discrimination is illegal under EU law and many national laws. Employers cannot deny promotions based on assumptions about parental responsibilities.

Question 2 — Double Standards. What kind of double standard can be seen in the way the manager evaluates Anna compared to Tomasz?

- a. The manager assumes women with children will be less committed, but doesn't apply the same standard to male employees.
- b. The manager offers flexible schedules only to new employees.
- c. The manager promotes based on years of experience, not current performance.
- d. There is no double standard — Anna's leave makes her ineligible.

Explanation. women are often assumed to be less committed to work after becoming parents, while men are not judged the same way. Promotions should be based on proven skills and not assumptions about gender roles.

Question 3 — Spot the Bias. Which of the following assumptions in the manager's behavior reflect bias or discrimination?

- a. Assuming the employee won't return from maternity leave
- b. Offering flexible hours only to non-pregnant staff
- c. Denying a promotion because of perceived future absences
- d. All of the above

Explanation. All these actions reflect bias and are potentially discriminatory. Decisions must be based on skills and performance, not assumptions about personal life.

Question 4 — What Would You Do?. Imagine yourself in Anna's position. What do you think you would have done?

- a. React as Anna did it's within my rights to speak up
- b. I would have left I wouldn't want to work for a company like that
- c. I might have stayed silent I don't want to risk conflict or losing my job
- d. I would have accepted it quietly and looked for other opportunities

Explanation. Everyone reacts differently when facing discrimination. What matters is recognizing that assumptions about pregnancy or parenthood should never impact your career—it's unfair, and it's illegal.

Discussion keys

1. The motherhood penalty

The promotion is denied not because of her performance but because of her pregnancy. The assumption is that a pregnant woman or a mother will be less available, less productive or less committed.

Link to McKinsey: women tend to be assessed on past achievements while men are valued for future potential. In Anna's case, her potential is eclipsed by stereotypes about caregiving.

2. Glass ceiling and structural sexism

Her manager's decision is not an isolated case but an example of the glass ceiling, the invisible barrier that blocks women's promotion.

- Organizational culture still follows the "ideal worker" model, with no family responsibilities.
- Discrimination can happen without conscious intent and still reproduce deep-rooted inequality.

3. The decision is unlawful

Denying a promotion because of pregnancy is illegal in Spain, Poland and Lithuania.

- Spain: Constitution, article 14, and Organic Law 3/2007.
- Poland: Constitution, article 33(2), and Labour Code.
- Lithuania: Labour Code, article 26.

4. Consequences for the person and for the organization

For the person: a sense of exclusion and demotivation, a perception of unfairness, and a higher risk of burnout or of leaving the organization.

For the company: loss of talent, legal risk and reputational damage.

Final idea

Anna's case shows how stereotypes about pregnancy directly affect professional opportunities: the decision does not assess her actual merit but an assumption based on traditional gender roles. The solution the sources propose is to set clear, transparent and objective promotion criteria before assessing candidates, so that bias, conscious or not, does not drive key decisions.

3 The care burden: an unequal share of housework

Context

The user plays a woman who comes home late after work and grocery shopping. The scene shows her interaction with a relaxed partner while she continues doing house chores. In this case, you'll experience an everyday domestic scene from the first-person perspective. You'll assume the role of a woman who has just returned home after a long day at work and grocery shopping. Despite being tired, she continues doing house chores while her partner, wearing a white T-shirt, relaxes on the couch. The interaction involves only two characters: you (the woman, seen from a first-person point of view) and your partner, who is present and visible in the scene.

Question 1 — Gender Roles at Home. Is it problematic to expect one partner to handle the majority of household chores, even if they're "better at it"?

- a. Yes, it risks reinforcing stereotypes and uneven effort
- b. It is not problematic, as this way the house runs more efficiently.
- c. No, it lets people focus on what they're good at
- d. No, since it's better than forcing tasks on people.

Explanation. it is expected that the woman is better at house chores if she always does them. Being better at them is not a justification for continuing doing so; rather, it is proof of how unbalanced house responsibilities are, and how urgently this needs to change

Question 2 — Minimizing Emotional Responses. Is the partner's reaction "Woah, relax, relax...", and the joke, an appropriate response?

- a. Yes. Perhaps it wasn't polite, but he's just trying to calm the situation to avoid a fight.
- b. Yes, he is simply trying to lighten the mood.
- c. No, it dismisses her valid frustration and makes her seem irrational.
- d. No, but it was a normal reaction, since she is taking out her stress from work on him.

Explanation. His reaction dismisses her feelings by arguing she is being "too emotional". This can worsen the situation, especially in contexts where there's an unfair burden already placed on her.

Question 3 — Emotional Awareness and Respect. Was it problematic that the partner answered the phone mid-conversation?

- a. No, it would be rude to his friend not to pick up the phone.
- b. Yes, because he had to properly justify why he should not iron the clothes
- c. No. He just needed a break and the call was good timing.
- d. Yes, it ignored her visible stress and dismissed the situation.

Explanation. Interrupting someone when they're clearly overwhelmed shows a lack of empathy. It minimizes their feelings and makes them feel unheard, further increasing the emotional burden they carry

Question 4 — Invisible Labor. What does this whole situation suggest about hidden inequalities and labour?

- a. That both partners contribute, just in different ways which may not be equally obvious.
- b. That one partner is trying to calm down the other one, who is overreacting due to work stress.
- c. That some chores are just more urgent than others, albeit less obvious.
- d. That the burden of chores is sometimes minimised, and it implies a partner making more sacrifices than the other.

Explanation. House chores often go unnoticed, but they demand time and effort—when one partner overlooks them, the other carries an unfair, invisible load.

4 Work-life balance and family expectations

Context

The user plays a pregnant woman having dinner with her partner and her parents. The scene unfolds around the dinner table with family interactions and conversation. In this experience, you'll assume the role of a pregnant woman from a first-person perspective. The scene takes place during a family dinner, where you're seated at the table with your partner, a young man, and your parents, an older woman and an older man. The interaction centers around casual conversation, emotional dynamics, and shared moments at the dinner table. You are not visible in the scene, as it is presented entirely from your point of view.

Question 1 — Gender Roles. When the woman's parents suggest she should quit her job, what belief are they reinforcing?

- a. That a mother can work full-time and still be a good parent.
- b. That men are better suited for earning money, and women for raising children.
- c. That all jobs are too stressful for pregnant women.
- d. That parenting is a shared responsibility.

Explanation. The parents imply that the woman's job is less important and that parenting is her natural role, reinforcing outdated gender roles.

Question 2 — Equal Parenting . Why do the parents resist the idea of hiring help or dividing parental roles?

- a. They feel it shows weakness to ask for help.
- b. They believe in preserving traditional family structures where roles are fixed.
- c. They think nannies are unreliable.
- d. They are unaware of modern parenting resources.

Explanation. The parents hold on to traditional values where the mother raises the child and the father provides, resisting shared or modern approaches to parenting.

Question 3 — Changing Times. What is the key shift in the parents' attitude by the end of the conversation?

- a. They decide to hire a nanny for their daughter.
- b. They fully agree with the couple's plans.
- c. They reluctantly acknowledge their daughter's autonomy and evolving family norms.
- d. They insist the couple move in so they can help.

Explanation. Although they don't fully agree, the parents begin to accept that their daughter and her partner are capable of making their own choices for their family.

Discussion keys

1. Gender mandates and responsibility for care

The parents' advice rests on the traditional idea that women should take on care as a "natural" obligation.

Link to the presentation: gender mandates assign different roles to men and women, reinforcing the idea that women should prioritize the home and men the job.

2. The sexual division of labour

The message follows the historical model of the male provider and the female carer, still alive in many families.

That model frames paid work as a male responsibility and domestic work as a female one, hiding how important employment is for women's economic autonomy.

3. Socialization and the making of identity

Family pressure works as a socialization mechanism that teaches how to "be a woman" according to traditional roles.

Following Simone de Beauvoir, these family messages encourage a female identity defined by others rather than by the woman herself.

4. Impact on the pay gap and the "sticky floor"

- Many women slow down their careers because of domestic expectations.
- Career interruptions feed the sticky floor: lower pay and less access to long-term opportunities.

5. Cycles of inequality reinforced

When a woman leaves her job under family pressure, it reinforces the idea that her work is worth less and that women are less available, which in turn feeds employer biases such as the motherhood penalty.

Discrimination often operates without intent, but its effects are real and sustained over time.

Final idea

The situation shows that inequality is not only produced inside companies but also within families. Even when the parents believe they are giving loving advice, they reproduce structures that limit women's professional autonomy. The course invites everyone to flip the script: share the caring, question traditional expectations and support equal career paths.

5 Trans inclusion: Monica's story

Context

The user plays as Monica, sitting on a park bench with her friend Laura when a group of guys approaches and then leaves. Later, the scene continues at a doctor's office. In this experience, you'll assume the role of Monica from a first-person perspective. The first scene takes place in a small park with trees, benches, and a path, where you and Laura are approached by a group of guys. The second scene continues at a doctor's office. Although the examination cannot be performed from your perspective, dialogues and interactions are adapted so that all necessary events happen.

Question 1 — Just a Joke?. How should we interpret the group's behavior when they say "it was a joke"?

- a. They were simply trying to be funny—there was no harm intended.
- b. They didn't mean it personally, so Monica shouldn't be upset.
- c. Jokes like that are part of normal social interaction.
- d. It was an attempt to minimize their transphobic behavior by making it seem harmless.

Explanation. Even when disguised as a joke, mocking someone's identity is an act of discriminatory violence. Unfortunately, we see it far too often in our everyday surroundings. Just because it's said as a joke doesn't mean it's any less harmful.

Question 2 — Misgender. What does Mónica mean when she says she is being "misgendered"?

- a. She means they insult her by calling her a man.
- b. It means they are mistreating her and want to hurt her.
- c. It means they refer to her by the gender assigned at birth instead of her actual gender identity.
- d. It means she is confused about her gender and unsure how others should refer to her.

Explanation. Explanation: Misgendering or using a trans person's former name is disrespectful and can be deeply hurtful. Even if unintentional, it undermines their identity and has a lasting emotional impact.

Question 3 — Listening to the patient. Did the doctor do anything wrong during the consultation?

- a. No. The doctor was just following standard procedures for abdominal pain.
- b. Yes. It was inappropriate to ask about Monica's sex life during her first consultation.
- c. No. Monica should have explained the situation from the beginning.
- d. Yes. The doctor ignored important clues and made assumptions instead of listening to what the patient was trying to say.

Explanation. The doctor made assumptions based on appearance and legal name, asking irrelevant questions. Respectful care requires listening attentively, using inclusive language, and allowing the patient to speak without interruption.

Question 4 — How one feels. Monica had a bad day. Why do you think that is?

- a. Because of how people treated her.
- b. Because she doesn't fit into her environment.
- c. Because no one can understand someone as "strange" as her.
- d. Because she is concerned about her health.

Explanation. Mistreatment of gender-diverse people often stems from ignorance, not intent, but can still be harmful. Asking respectfully rather than assuming helps avoid hurtful mistakes. Monica's experience shows how much empathy and awareness still matter.

Discussion keys

1. The "joke" as symbolic violence

When the group justifies its behavior by saying it "was just a joke", it is exercising symbolic violence: a form of discrimination camouflaged as humor that reinforces gender stereotypes and inequality.

2. Misgendering and the rigid binary system

Treating Monica according to the sex assigned to her at birth reflects the logic of a system that only accepts two fixed genders. That binary ignores her identity and forces people into preset categories.

3. Gender performativity (Butler)

In Butler's terms, gender is not something fixed that you are but something you do. The way Monica expresses her identity challenges the binary norm, and that is why she meets rejection.

4. Discrimination without intent

Many forms of discrimination are not meant to harm and still have a real impact. The group's "jokes" show how structural sexism operates even without explicit awareness of causing harm.

5. Empathy and inclusion as the answer

The situation shows the need to ask respectfully, listen and validate other people's identity. Practicing empathy and inclusion helps break prejudice and build safe environments.

Final idea

Monica's case shows how gender stereotypes and the binary system work as control mechanisms that punish diversity. That is why education on equality and on diverse gender experiences is essential to transform these everyday interactions.

6 Non-binary experience: Max's first day

Context

Max starts in reception with a receptionist. The boss enters and approaches the desk. The scene continues in a workers' room with machines and two workers. Max stands by a broken machine, then in front of two restroom doors. In this experience, you'll assume the role of Max from a first-person perspective. The first scene takes place in a reception area with a desk and a receptionist, where you begin in front of the desk before the boss enters from another room. The second scene continues in a workers' room with machines operated by two workers, where you first stand by a broken machine and later in front of two restroom doors. Although the machinery is not fully detailed, interactions are adapted so that all necessary events happen.

Question 1 — Gender and paperwork . How would you evaluate the receptionist's handling of Max's identity and the use of gendered lists?

- a. It was acceptable—official records need to be divided somehow, and gender is the
- b. It wasn't ideal, but since Max was eventually found on one of the lists, the system still works.
- c. The receptionist's reaction was inadequate, showing that staff need better training to respect non-binary identities.
- d. The receptionist was confused but not offensive. Max should have explained their gender more clearly.

Explanation. Even if the receptionist found Max's name, the system itself failed to respect Max's identity. Workplaces should move toward inclusive practices that don't rely on binary gender assumptions.

Question 2 — What's so funny?. Why do you think the supervisor and the workers make fun of Max?

- a. Because transphobia (hatred toward gender nonconforming people) is often disguised as mockery.
- b. Because they aren't prepared to work in a workshop.
- c. Because the job is tedious, and they need some entertainment.
- d. Because they made jokes about something unrelated to them, and Max misinterpreted the situation.

Explanation. Transphobia is often disguised as jokes to avoid accountability, but this doesn't make it less harmful. True inclusion requires training staff—not just hiring diverse employees.

Question 3 — Inclusive Facilities. What would be a more inclusive way to design workplace restrooms for people with non-conforming gender identities?

- a. Maintain only two options: “Men” and “Women,” but clarify that people can use whichever they feel comfortable with.
- b. Add a unisex or all-gender restroom option in addition to the existing ones.
- c. Ask employees to vote on who gets to use which restroom.
- d. Remove all signage and make restrooms gender-free without consulting anyone.

Explanation. Inclusive design means creating safe and accessible spaces for everyone. The best practice is to offer an all-gender restroom alongside gendered ones, so individuals of any identity have a respectful option.

Question 4 — First day. Do you think Max had a good first day at work?

- a. No, because they didn’t adapt well to the job.
- b. Yes, it’s no big deal first days are always tough.
- c. It was a disaster people’s refusal to accept their gender identity made things even harder, just as they feared
- d. No, Max was too nervous and didn’t perform as expected.

Explanation. A lack of awareness around gender diversity leads to discrimination and exclusion, blatantly violating the rights of those affected. Max’s bad day reflects what many face regularly change starts with empathy and acceptance

Discussion keys

1. The binary system makes diverse identities invisible

The check-in method only has two categories, men and women, which leaves out anyone who does not identify with either. The result: Max is not recognized from minute one.

2. The receptionist's reaction shows a lack of training

There was no intent to offend, but her confusion shows she is not prepared to deal with non-binary identities. Inclusion is not only about "not being offensive", it is about knowing how to act respectfully.

3. Validating identity is essential

When the receptionist hesitates or keeps looking for Max in the wrong categories, the message is that his identity "does not exist" or is an administrative problem. Validation starts by not questioning the identity a person expresses.

4. Workplace practices should be inclusive

Internal systems (lists, forms, badges, databases) should stop assuming a binary.

- Lists by name, not by gender.
- Forms with open options.
- Ask for pronouns when relevant, and ask respectfully.

Final idea

Even though the receptionist found Max, the system still excludes him. Workplaces need to update their processes so they do not rely on binary assumptions about gender: proper training and inclusive records are essential to respect non-binary people.

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