Discussion guide on *Is It Racist? Is It Sexist?*

<u>1. Before and after reading the book</u>

Look at the vignettes listed in Appendix B, and the storyboard pictures of them in Chapters 1, 2, 5 and 7. How would you answer the questions about whether the scenario is racist or sexist before reading the book? Once you've read the book, would you change how you answer?

STORYBOARD SCENARIOS	Before reading the book: What are your responses to the questions below each vignette?	After reading the book: Are your answers the same or different?
Black speaker is called "articulate" (figure 7.1)		
Female doctor is called "nurse" (figure 2.2)		
Cop shoots Black man (figure 2.1)		
Teacher recommends boys for advanced math (figure 2.5)		
White and Mexican heart attack patients get different care (figure 2.4)		
Wife earns less after taking time away from work (figure 2.3)		
White and Black people trade insults (figure 5.1)		
Entrepreneur won't hire from poor Black neighborhood (figure 2.6)		

2. Compare your responses to the vignettes to get a baseline understanding of each other's approaches to these questions. How much diversity or uniformity of views do you see among you? How do you feel about your similarities and/or differences?

3. How did you reach your judgments on the vignettes? How confident do you feel in your methods of deciding?

4. Tell each other about times these disagreements have come up in your life on any hot-button issues of race and gender. Did the book lead you to reflect on those disagreements, and if so, how?

5. Acquitters tend to use narrow definitions and an investigative method to determine what's racist and sexist. Discuss the pros and cons of each part of their definition and method:
- an intent-based definition
- a case-by-case approach
- focusing on explicit evidence
- assuming the same thing would have happened to a white person or man
- considering alternative explanations besides racism or sexism
- giving the benefit of the doubt to the person or organization accused of racism or sexism

6. Convictors tend to use broad definitions and algorithmic methods to determine what's racist and sexist. Discuss the pros and cons of each part of their definition and method:
- a definition focused on outcomes, implicit bias, and intent
- pattern-matching
- seeing racism and sexism in unspoken places
- assuming the same thing would not happen to a white person or man
- not considering alternative explanations, or conflating them with racism
- deferring to the opinions of impacted people (people of color or women)

7. Of the 4 categories of interviewees profiled in the book – motivated acquitters, moderate acquitters, motivated convictors and moderate convictors – which is closest to your own approach? Which definitions match yours? Do you tend to use more investigative or more algorithmic methods? Do you think you should keep using the same approach you've been using?

8. What do you think of the authors' critique of the downsides of your usual approach? How fair or unfair does it seem? What about the critiques of the other 3 approaches?

9. The authors found that white people's gender and class position do not strongly correlate with their views about what's racist or sexist. This goes against many theories that our social position shapes how we think. Were you surprised? If so, explain why.
   A. Think about any preconceptions you may have had about white Southerners' and Northerners' views, and about white working-class and white professional-middle-class people. Did the book shift how you think about these demographic groups?

10. On the other hand, specific life experiences did recur in the stories of each of the four categories.
    A. What was your reaction to learning that the motivated acquitters, those who think racism and sexism claims are exaggerated and/or self-interested, tended to bring up extreme trauma, while describing their childhoods, domestic abuse, and military service?
    B. How about your response to hearing that the proudly colorblind moderate acquitters tended to mention wanting to be different than the bigots and haters in their families of origin?
    C. Or that the motivated convictors who see racism and sexism everywhere were more likely to have majored in the humanities and social sciences in college, and to have lived in liberal bubbles?
    D. Or that the moderate convictors, whose answers tended to draw on their own life experiences, were mostly raised working-class and high-school educated?
    E. How do you think people's life stories affect their views on race and gender?
    F. How has your own background affected your perspectives?

11. The study suggests that people's views of racism and sexism are based partly in motivated reasoning, or the ways people process information to support what they are already prone to believing. Do you think you sometimes use motivated reasoning? How so?

12. Have you made any efforts to reduce race or gender inequality that fit the description of the surveyor method? If so, how did it go?
    A. Do you think the surveyor method can be effective at identifying and reducing racism, sexism, and other inequities? If not, what would you recommend?

13. Can you envision a realistic future for the United States with less racial and gender inequality? With less red-blue polarization over these issues?
    A. If so, how do you imagine positive change happening?
    B. Do you think the authors' recommendations to act like a surveyor would be effective in reducing unfair inequalities?

14. If you were going to try to persuade someone you disagree with of your views on racism or sexism, what guidance might the book give you about how to communicate with them?