

ADVANCING RACE EQUITY

How the metaverse can raise awareness of implicit bias and reduce its influence on decision making

We have entered a phase in history when Americans better understand the dynamics of race and racism, including how it impacts our institutions, how it informs the way we make decisions, and how it frames the manner in which we do our work. Racial inequality manifests itself in a multitude of ways that alone and together impact the well-being of all Americans. This includes racial disparities in wealth, education, employment, housing, foster care, mobility, health, criminal justice, and more. **Applying a race equity lens to our work is now more important than ever.**

Our country is ready to take up this cause at the conceptual level. Our government leaders are ready to take up this cause at the policy level. **We must also take up this cause at the practice level** and give public sector staff an opportunity to hone the approaches, cultural competencies, and decision-making skills that might truly move the needle on this complex and systemic issue.

OPERATIONALIZING RACE EQUITY

AVenueS is an award-winning learning method that uses immersive virtual reality and experiential learning to help develop skills in understanding and navigating human behavior. It opens up avenues for all of us to build our capacity for empathy, become more aware of our own bias, and step into positive behavior change.

Tory is a scenario within the **AVenueS** content library that focuses race equity. This experience provides an opportunity to deepen our understanding of how and when racial bias enters our decision-making process. This module could be used to anchor or supplement an organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and agendas.

This scenario involves a young teen named Tory and his family. In it, users spend time with the family and determine if their conflicts can be resolved so that Tory can safely stay in the home.

Unbeknownst to the user, upon putting on the headset s/he will be randomly sorted to one of two scenarios. These scenarios are largely identical: the same set, the same characters, the same dynamic, and the same narrative. The single difference is that in one scenario, the family is white and in the other scenario, the family is black.

The goal of this scenario is to nudge to the surface our implicit bias, and also to prompt complex, reflective conversations about race in an accessible way, without a sense of shame or accusation. It invites users into a deeper understanding of their own bias and is designed to increase the likelihood that they will be conscious of it when interacting with the citizens they serve.

The AVenueS Learning Method

IMMERSION

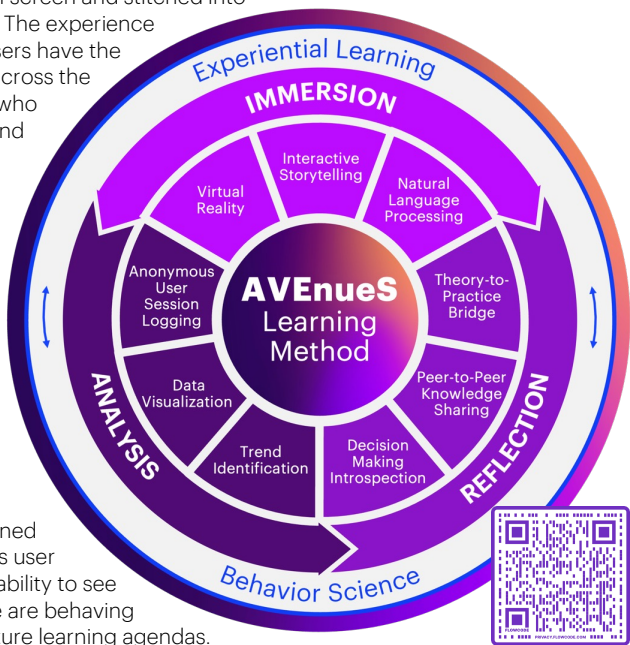
AVenueS immerses users into highly realistic scenarios designed to evoke a response. It uses actors filmed on green screen and stitched into carefully dressed locations. The experience is voice activated so that users have the sense that they are sitting across the table from another person who is looking them in the eye and conversing.

REFLECTION

Next, we bring groups of users together in carefully curated seminars. These interactive workshops prompt reflection about how each of us behaved in the headset and create an opportunity for users to learn from one another.

ANALYSIS

Finally, **AVenueS** is maintained on a platform that leverages user analytics. This gives us the ability to see how large groups of people are behaving in the headset and drive future learning agendas.



Molly Tierney
AVenueS Executive Producer
(443) 799-9700
molly.tierney@accenture.com



Dan Buie
AVenueS Sales Lead
(512) 297-9007
daniel.g.buie@accenture.com

To learn more, visit: www.accenture.com/AVenueS

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