

The Subtleties of Inclusion and Exclusion

July 15, 2026

(Executive Sponsors & Direct Managers)

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Session Roadmap

Subtle Forces of Inclusion and Exclusion

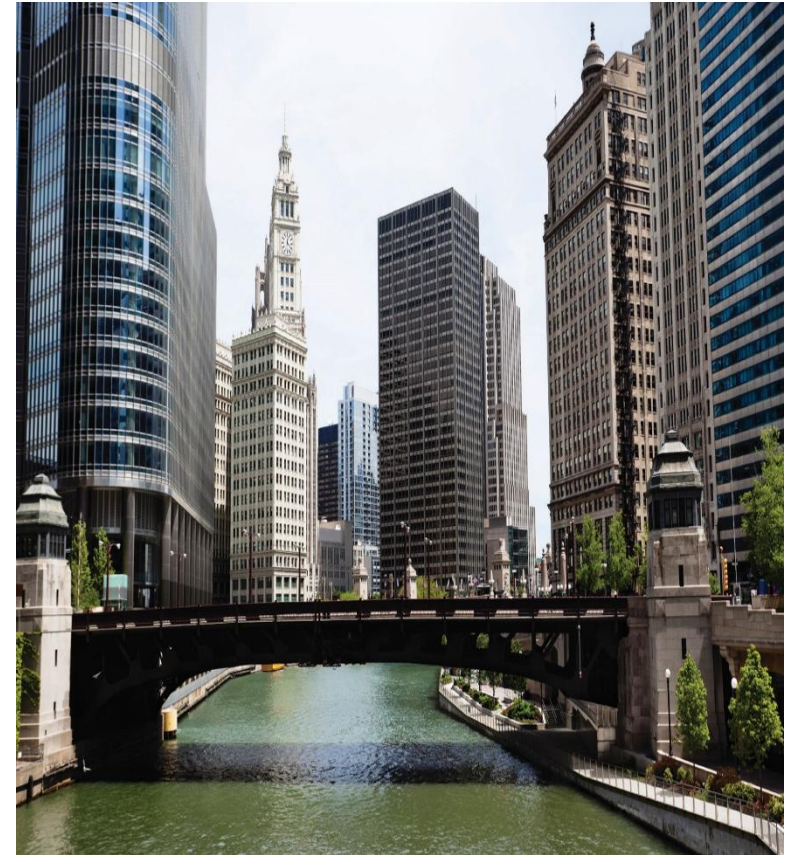
Power & Privilege and How to Empower

Micro-Inequities and How You Can Interrupt

Case Study Application with your Cluster

Ten Minute Break

Implementation Planning



Subtle Forces



Forces that Minimize Inclusion & High Performance

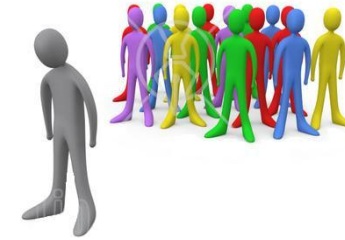
- Micro-Inequities
- Misused Power and Privilege
- Barriers to contributing



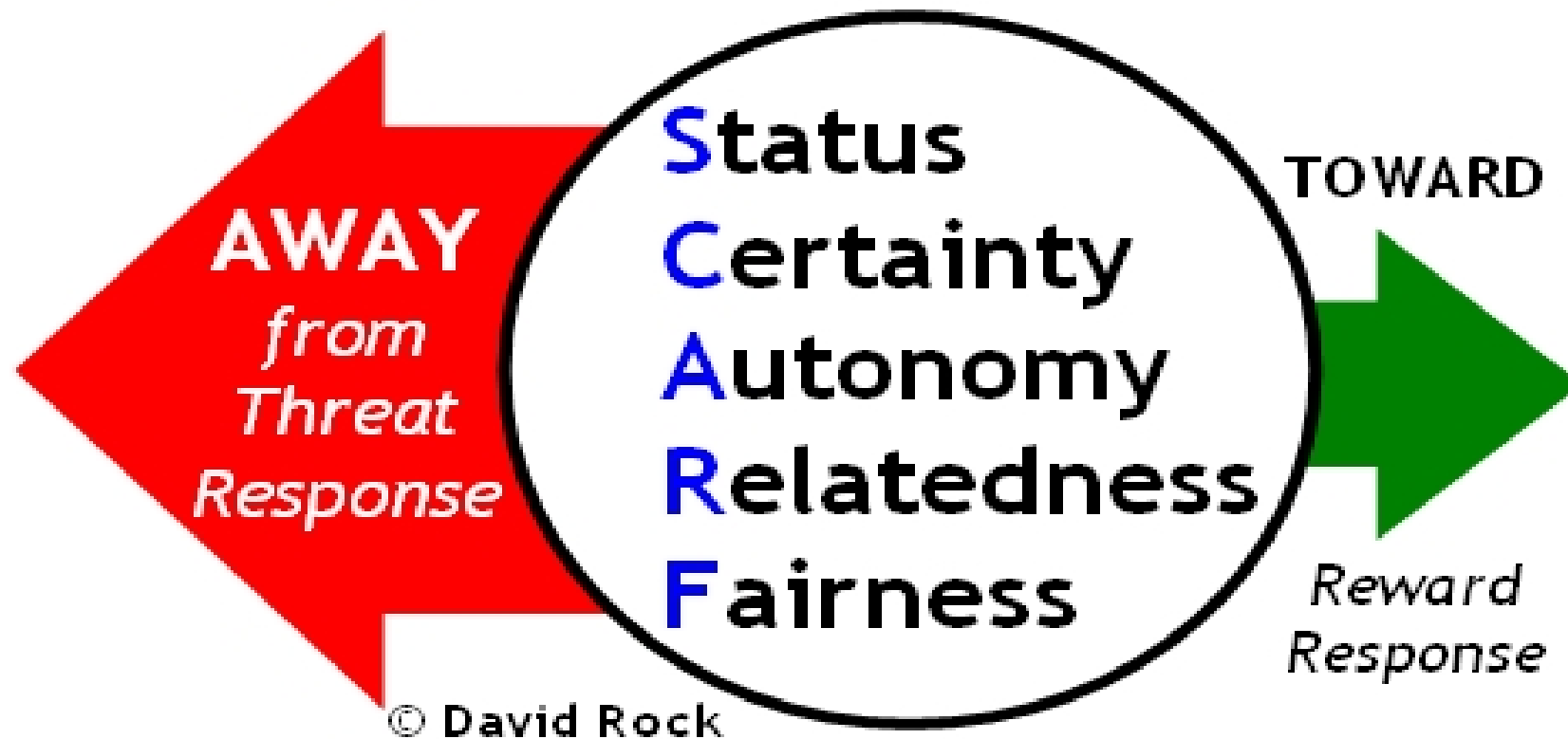
Forces that Drive Inclusion & High Performance

- Sense of Belongingness
- Social support and sponsorship
- Ability to contribute

Threats and Rewards



SCARF Model of Social Threats and Rewards



Applying the “SCARF” Model



Threat Response

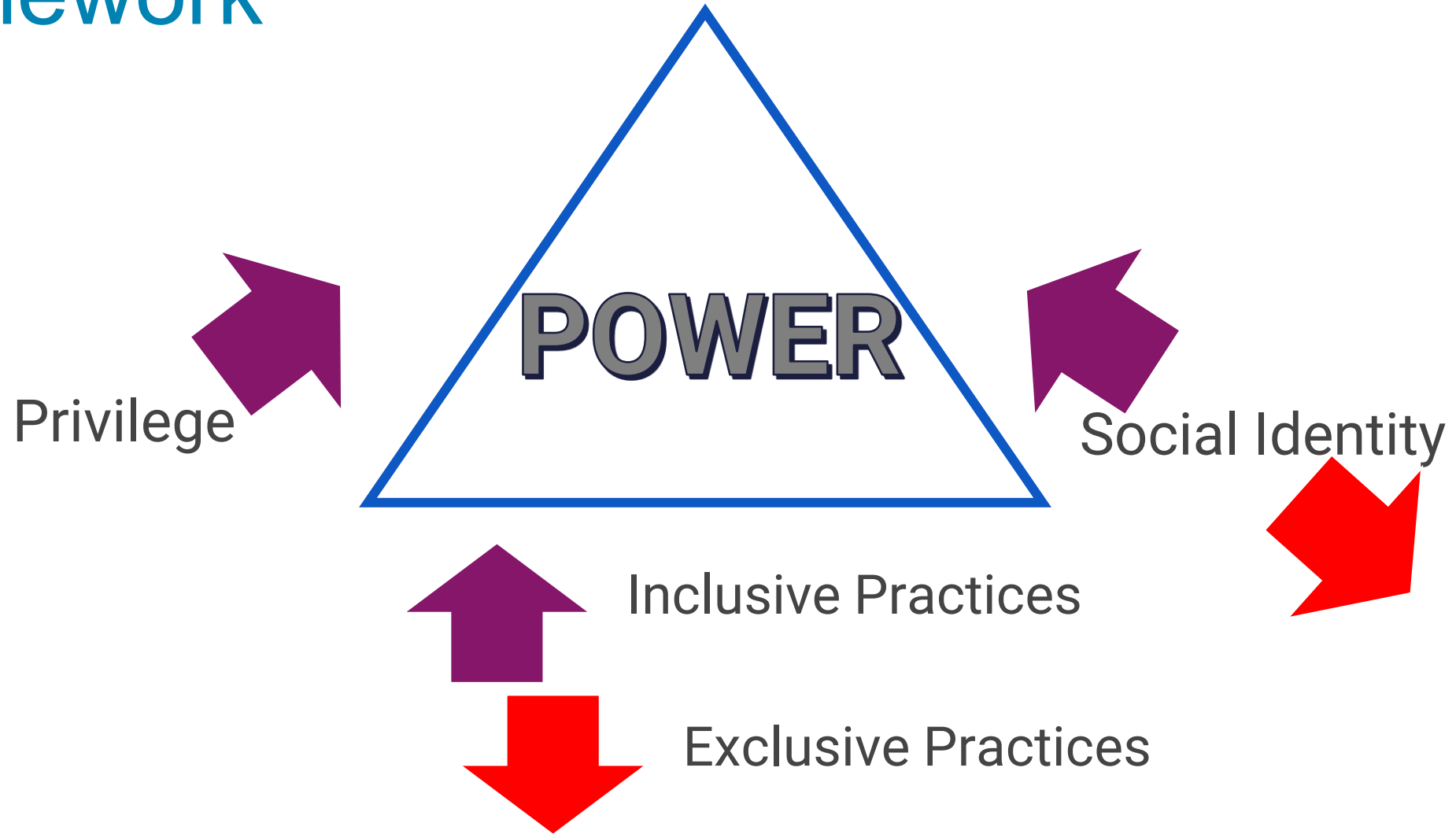
- Micro-Inequities
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- Barriers to contributing

Status
Certainty
Autonomy
Relatedness
Fairness

Reward Response

- Sense of Belongingness
- Social support and sponsorship
- Ability to contribute

Framework



Power and Privilege

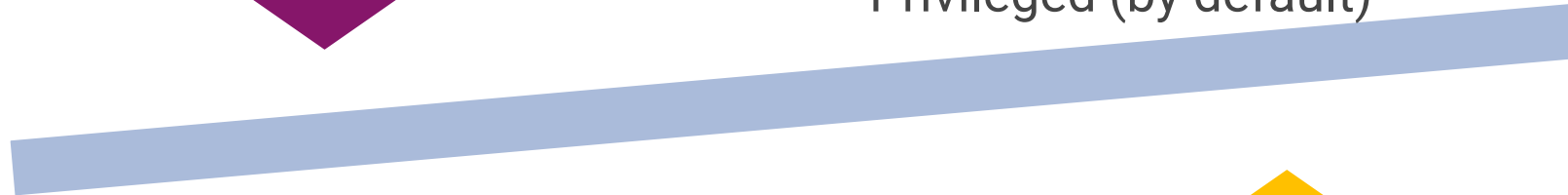
Resources
Unearned
Power
Privilege
Empower
Social Access
Disadvantage
Culture
Capacity
Collective
Advantage
Advantaged
Influence
Equity
Available
Membership
Dominance
Glass

Power and Privilege – How it Divides and Excludes



Dominant or Agent Groups

- Born into these groups
- Have more power
- Considered the norm
- Benefit from the organization's culture and policies
- Privileged (by default)



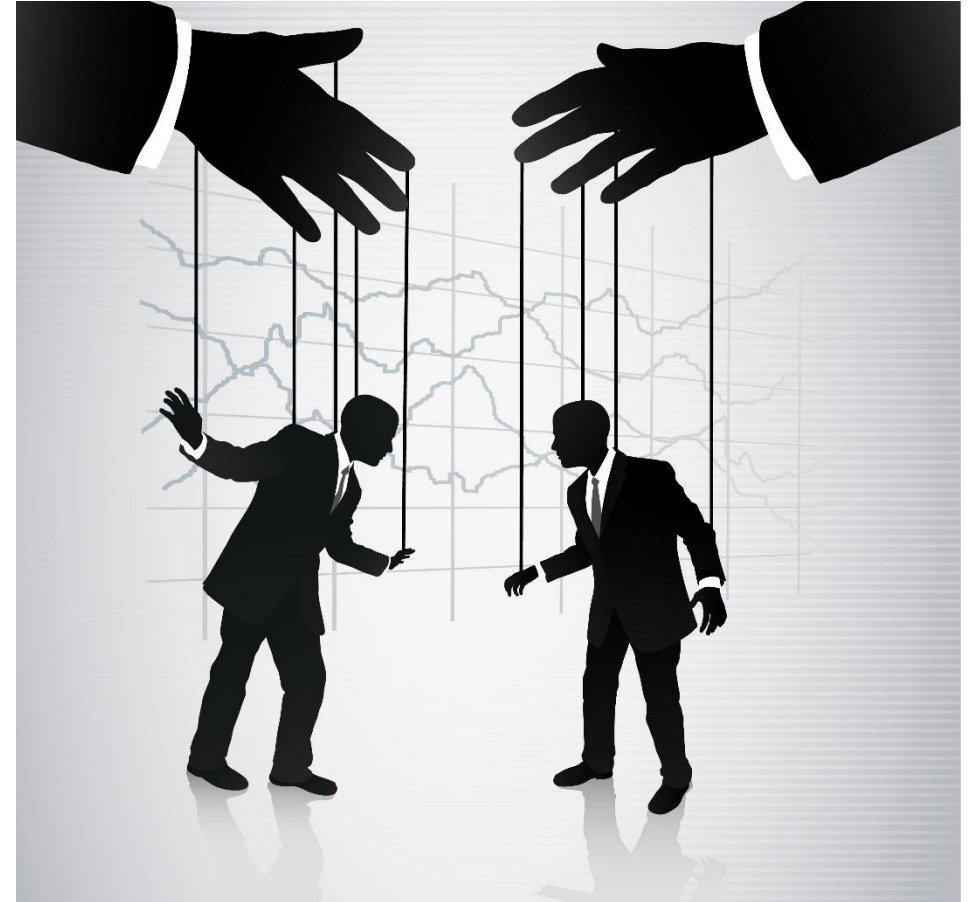
Target or Marginalized Groups

- Born into these groups
- Disenfranchised
- Some invisible
- Face institutionalized obstacles
- Must often assimilate
- Culture is often misrepresented or discounted



Power & Privilege – We all have it

**Power and Privilege are
contextual**



Unpacking Privilege



Unpacking Privilege

White Privilege

I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared.

Christian Privilege

I can expect to have time off work to celebrate religious holidays.

Male Privilege

The decision to hire me will never be based on assumptions about whether or not I might choose to have a family sometime soon.

Heterosexual Privilege

I can talk openly about my relationship, vacations, and family planning that me and my significant other are doing.

Sources of Organizational Power

Legitimate
or Assigned
Power

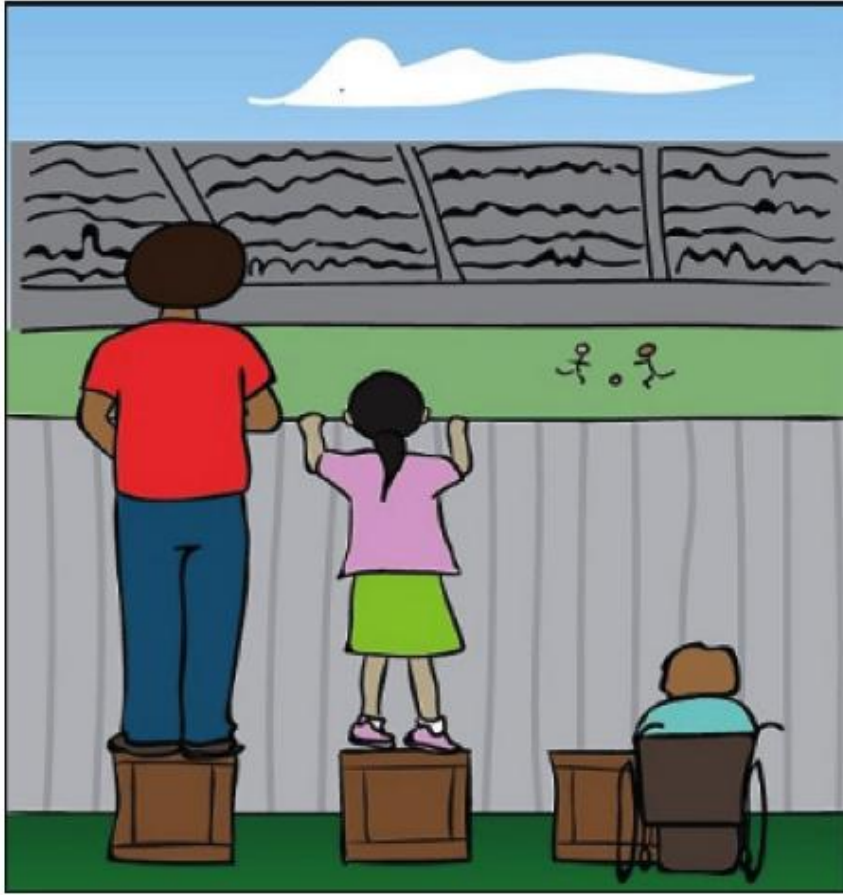
Expert
Power

Rewards
Power

Referent
Power

How to Empower Yourself and Others

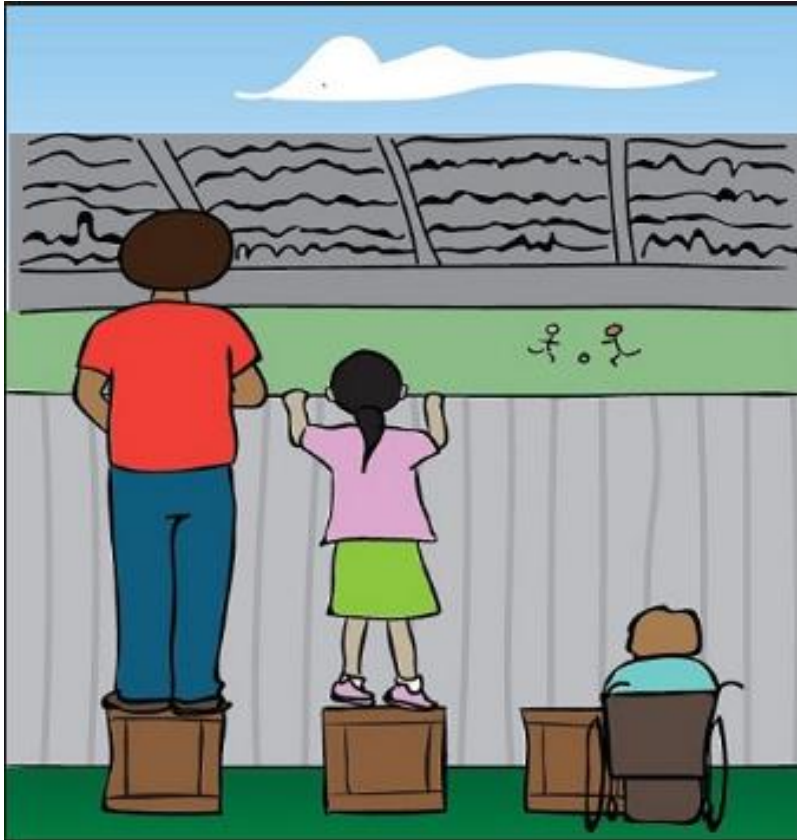
Equality



Equity



Subtle Ways in Which We Perpetuate Inequities



micro-Inequities

Micro-Inequities

Micro-Inequities are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate derogatory or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.



A man with short reddish hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and brown pants, sits on the left in a black office chair. A woman with short white hair and glasses, wearing a green patterned top, sits on the right, resting her chin on her hand. They are at a wooden table with a pen, a notepad, and a purple mug. A thought bubble above the woman contains the text:

**Did she just say
"Old Slow Pokes"?!**

Did that really just happen?



Impact



Anxiety

Depression

Sleep
Difficulties

Diminished
Confidence

Helplessness

Loss of Drive

Internal
Dilemma

Diminished
Cognition

Internal Dilemma - Self Doubt

*What did he
mean by
that?*

*Should I say
something?*

*They'll
probably
think I'm
overreacting*

*Did I hear
her
correctly?*

*Speaking up
will hurt
more than it
helps.*



Different Facets

Often Unintentional and Subtle



Intentional and Overt

Micro-Invalidations

Subtly excluding or negating the feelings or experiential reality of a person's identity

Micro-Insults

Convey insensitivity, are rude, or demean an individual's identity or heritage.

Verbal Assaults

- Deliberate, conscious, and explicit
- Intention is to hurt, oppress, or discriminate

Examples of Verbal/Non-verbal Assaults



Potential Message

Whistles or catcalls are heard from men on the street as a woman walks down the street into her workplace.

You are a sex object and we don't need to show respect.

An assertive female manager is labeled as a "b--h," or "over the top", while her male counterpart is described as "a forceful leader."

You have no right to enter our domain.
Stop acting like a man.

Examples of Micro Insults

Potential Hidden Message

Feeling the need to explain a comment made by a person of color or woman, etc.

You can't convey your message properly. I need to step in so that others understand.

Assuming/Telling a woman that she is in the wrong conference room.

Assumes that she may not be a part of a male-dominated profession - is not qualified or can't find her way around.

Trying to finish a sentence for a person with an accent or with a stutter.

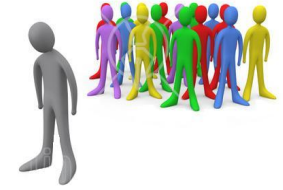
You can't convey your message properly. I need to hurry the process.

Helping a wheelchair user without asking if they need assistance

You can't function independently.



Examples of Micro Invalidations



Potential Hidden Message

Color blindness – “I don’t see color when I see you.”

Minimizes a person of color’s racial/ethnic identity and heritage.

Repeatedly asking someone where they were born

You aren’t American.

Complimenting someone for being articulate or speaking English well

You aren’t intelligent or you aren’t American.

Your Role in Interrupting Micro-Inequities

When directed at you

- Refrain from reacting immediately
- Take a breath
- Model the behavior you want
- Avoid being sarcastic
- Remember that the goal is to educate
- Sometimes humor/ light-hearted feedback helps
- Focus on the behavior, not the person



Your Role in Interrupting Micro-Inequities

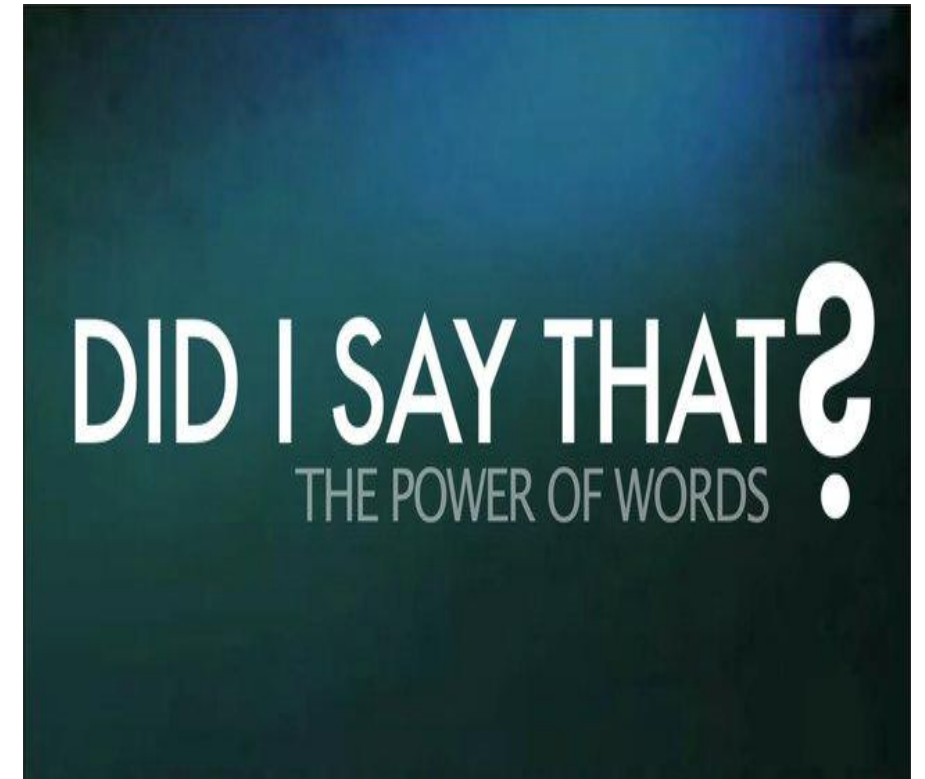
When directed at someone else

- Be an ally
- Speak for yourself.
- Model the behavior you want from the person or people you are confronting



What if you are the Perpetrator?

- Try not to be defensive
- Apologize
- Be open to discussing your own attitudes and biases
- Commit to continued learning . . .



Commit to Observing and Learning

- Recognize that dismissive attitudes are harmful.
- Avoid making assumptions and labeling
- Engage in self-reflection
- Participate in continuing education
- Engage with others from different backgrounds to gain insight and develop empathy



Back to the “Scarf” Model

Threat Response

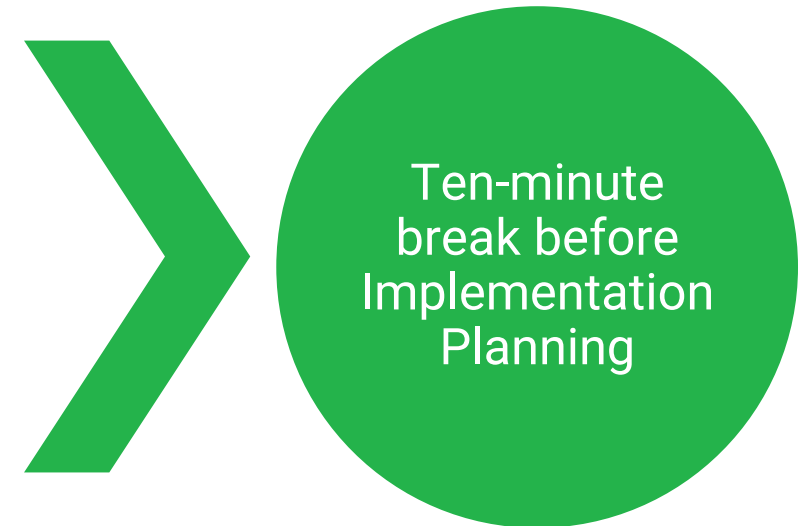
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Wrap-Up





Corporate
Inclusion Institute

An Initiative of **Chicago United**



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July 15, 2026

CII Case Study for Application

Below is a short case study which builds on the concepts and examples presented in today's session. It highlights how micro-inequities, power, and privilege can manifest within teams and among external stakeholders. As you read the case, think about what could be done differently as well as how it compares to what you might observe in your own organization.

Scenario:

During a quarterly review with a long-standing client, the internal team of a mid-size consulting firm presents an update on a relatively new workflow design they helped implement. Midway through the discussion Jordan, a relatively new analyst, walks the client through a graphic which highlights the observed and anticipated benefits to the client organization. As Jordan concludes her presentation, Sydney, a director with the client organization smiles politely and says, "Thank you Jordan, could we also have one of the more senior analysts elaborate on what this really means for us." She then turns toward one of the senior project managers. The project manager, Justin, hesitates for a moment, glances at Jordan, and then steps in to re-explain the same points Jordan had already covered. A few team members notice Jordan's embarrassed reaction, but no one says anything.

CII Case Study for Application (continued)

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After the meeting one of Jordan's colleagues walks up to her and quietly says, “I know that must have been tough to sit through, but I'm sure Sidney probably didn't mean anything by it. This happens all of the time with clients. We've got to keep them happy.”

Over the next few weeks Jordan's contribution in client facing meetings diminishes and she defers to others even when she has all of the information. She believes she is modeling what the clients want. Leadership, however, is somewhat surprised at her behavior, as they were unaware of what happened in the meeting with Sydney.

CII Case Study for Application (continued)

As a team talk through the questions below and be ready to share a couple of insights with the group at large in 15 minutes.

1. How did micro-inequities and power manifest in this case scenario?
2. What could Justin, the project manager, or others in the meeting have done to support Jordan while balancing responding to the client's request?
3. What could Jordan have done, if anything, either during or after the meeting to address how she felt?
4. How might you retell this scenario to match with your organization's culture, dynamics, and external stakeholders (e.g., clients, customers, community)?
5. What three things can members of your cluster commit to when you leave today's session to continue the conversation around micro-inequities, power/privilege to enhance awareness or disrupt the negative impact on employees?

Connecting the Dots

Key take-away messages from case study application:

1. **How did micro-inequities and power manifest in this case scenario?**

- Everyone acted as if the client was right, they have the power, and everyone fell in line. The team knows that the client wants to hear from senior level managers, but they didn't prepare for it.
- The micro aggression is that Jordan did give a complete presentation, but Justin re-explained exactly what Jordan said.
- The title played a big role in how the client accepted the information.
- The need for the client to want to hear from a senior level manager is difficult because you have to manage the relationship with the client.

Connecting the Dots

Key take-away messages from case study application(continued):

2. What could Justin, the project manager, or others in the meeting have done to support Jordan while balancing responding to the client's request

- In the meeting, when setting up Jordan to talk, give his credentials. When the client is questioning what Jordan says, tell them we are aligned with Jordan, then ask the client if they have any additional questions. Explain to Jordan about the relationship with the client. Be careful to support both the client and Jordan at the same time.
- After the meeting Justin could have circled back with Jordan, acknowledged that what the client did was disrespectful, and say Jordan did a good job
- Make sure people in the meeting understand that Jordan is the authority
- There is an assumption that because Jordan is new that he doesn't have knowledge. Show support of Jordan in the meeting.

Connecting the Dots

Key take-away messages from case study application (continued):

3. What could Jordan have done, if anything, either during or after the meeting to address how she felt?

- Jordan could be more open to giving and receiving feedback. It's important to say how he felt and ask what he could have done differently.
- Figure out a way to tactfully talk to the client during the meeting. Ask the client if they need clarification of what Jordan said.
- It's important to have a plan from the beginning on how to approach this situation. They should approach it as a team instead of individuals.

Connecting the Dots

One thing you will start applying after today's session:

- Check in with employees to make sure they are not feeling the impact of micro-inequities such as anxiety, helplessness or depression.
- When a micro-inequity is directed at you, pause and take a moment before reacting. Acknowledge what the person said but address it after taking a pause.
- When a micro-inequity is directed at someone else in a group, it's not necessary to address the individual person that made the micro-inequity, speak to the group about the impact to you. It's important to speak for yourself and not on behalf of the person the micro-inequity was directed at.
- Validate people's background and the great skills they have in their roles to empower them within their roles.

Connecting the Dots

One thing you will start applying after today's session (continued):

- Give grace and gratitude to someone making micro-inequities. Know that the comments are coming from a good space. You should focus on the behavior and not the person. The goal here is to educate.
- When you adapt to a company culture make sure it's a strategic adaptation and that you are not assimilating.
- If you lose it when reacting to micro-inequities, you lose.
- Three questions to check in with employees:
 - What is one thing I don't know about you that you would like for me to know about you?
 - If you could bring more of that to work, how would it enable your contributions and performance?
 - What do you need from me to support you so that you can bring more of that to work?

Wrap-up and next steps

Schedule monthly coaching meetings with your coaching partner

Look for opportunities to apply principles from today's session in your day-to-day

Connect with your coaching partner and ask about ways they can apply or have applied the session principles

Next session: Wednesday, July 22, 2026, Peer-to-Peer Roundtable (ES/DM) – Virtual

Friday, September 11, 2026, Managing Organizational Change and Personal Transitions (ES/DM/CG/Fellow), at Chicago United

THANK YOU