

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: How the Little Things Make a Big Difference (AoC Session) - Background on the 58 MicroTriggers®

Abstract

The term microaggression was first coined by psychiatrist Chester Pierce, M.D., in the early 1970s. Dr. Pierce, emeritus professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School described microaggressions as the subtle, stunning and often automatic and non-verbal exchanges which are put downs. Dr. Pierce's work was focused on people of color. He described racial microaggressions as brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color. Because they are often unconscious they can be more difficult to identify and address than overt forms of discrimination. Perpetrators of microaggressions may not realize the impact of their actions.

Later MIT professor Mary Rowe coined the term microinequities to describe the glass-ceiling phenomenon, referring to the real but almost imperceptible forms of discrimination that reinforce the stereotypes and inequity that persist in the workplace today. Professor Rowe's work was focused primarily on gender. Others including Dr. Wesley E. Profit and Dr. Derald W. Sue continued research on microaggressions and microinequities.

Ivy Planning Group (Ivy) was introduced to microinequities in the early 1990s when JP Morgan Chase hired Ivy to co-design and conduct microinequities workshops for its workforce of 30,000+ employees.

Ivy then designed and developed new microinequities workshops for other clients based on continuing research, reflecting their unique industries, environments and corporate cultures. With thousands of interactions and discussions around this topic, we learned that participants wanted the microinequities conversation to be a very personal one.

We learned that microinequities mattered differently to different people based on their identities (race, gender, age, function, background and more). We conducted additional research to understand which micromessages mattered most to whom. Data collection methodologies included written surveys and facilitated sessions. Ivy coined the phrase

MicroTriggers® to include both the negative and positive subtle behaviors that matter

most to individuals across a broad mix of demographics.

After collecting thousands of data points the book, *58 little things that have a BIG impact: What's your MicroTrigger?*[®], was born in 2006 to share what we learned. The book, now a bestseller, lists the top 58 MicroTriggers[®] that people said mattered most to them. An online ballot box was created to capture more data points. Ivy has the largest proprietary repository of information on the subtle behaviors of inclusion, and to whom they matter – by several demographics (gender, race, age, function, industry and more).