ODS: OBSERVATIONS OF DISCRIMINATION IN THE SQUADRON

Always Accessible, Always Anonymous, Always Actioned

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ODS is an anonymous reporting form that enables you to inform your command team of any microaggression or discrimination that you may face or witness in the squadron. Please follow the QR code below to the form.

SECTIONS

Welcome to the ODS Guidebook

This document is a starter guide for becoming more knowledgeable about everyday microaggressions and their effect in the workplace. Through this education, we aim to give leaders and supervisors the tools to create positive cultural climates in your units. We wantto emphasize that this is not a fully comprehensive tool for eradicating harmful language, nor is it a cure-all for resolving these issues of injustice entirely. Our goal is overall **harm-reduction**.

This document will enable you to normalize discussions about discrimination on a more frequent basis than yearly training events, as well as give you an access point into the inner social structure of your flights. Through this process, squadron members are empowered to bring the issues they face to light.

Please feel free to reach out to our team with questions or feedback. We are excited to assist in any way we can. Thank you for working toward a more inclusive and equitable Air Force with us.

Sincerely,
Captain Kingsley (966th AACS) & Lt Allen (960th AACS)

A big thank you to those who have helped us put the ODS program together:

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Introduction to Microaggressions

It's vital to examine how we address issues of discrimination in unit culture. The language we use, the solutions that are presented, the ownership we take as a community are all important aspects of connection. The language we use around these topics exists on a continuum of action. Data show us that language and behavior are connected on this spectrum, and we have to understand how they are linked. Posselt (2016) calls this the "linguistic-symbolic dimension", describing the interaction between words and action (p. 14). In essence, the cultural climate set by language used (by individuals or in a group) has the power to impact a group's behavior for better or worse. Language is the symbolic act, and the potential catalyst for violent behavior. We care about eradicating discrimination at the source both to better the lives of our service members and to better the culture of this service. A shift in military culture could result in greater trust in military leadership (Gedney, Wood, Lundahl, & Butters, 2015), and consequently increase workplace productivity and group trust (Harned, Ormerod, Palmieri, Collinsworth, & Reed, 2002). We hope you as leaders can normalize discourse around these topics through frequency of conversational exposure, thus diffusing cultural tension and priming your squadron for future dialogues.

Microaggressions received quite a bit of public attention on various platforms in the 21st century. Coined by Harvard psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce in 1970 with regard to Black Americans, the term described the dismissals and insults regularly endured by this group (DeAngelis, 2009). Now the term is known to encompass unconscious acts or statements toward any marginalized group (Ong & Burrow, (2017). Microaggressions may not be overtly harmful or even intentional, nonetheless they communicate a negative message to members of marginalized groups. Researchers delineate three categories of commonly harmful language, or microaggressions: microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations. Each term is defined as follows, specifically with regard to racial microaggressions.

- "A microassault is an explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions"
- "A microinsult is characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity"
- "Microinvalidations are characterized by communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color"

(Sue, Capodilupo, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 274)

These definitions describe seemingly very deliberate attempts to harm someone through use of language or action, and they absolutely can be. Microaggressions, however, are often far more subtle and difficult to recognize, which can create an illusion of a positive cultural climate. Even some "niceties" are unrealized and unintentional microaggressions. Galupo and Resnick (2016) report that microinsults in particular often occur unrecognized by the offending party. For instance, telling someone they are a "well-spoken" member of their race or ethnicity is an extremely common example of a racial microaggression. Disguised as a compliment, this statement implies negative racial stereotypes.

Microaggressions both communicate and create social status disparities. These inequalities can exist in a number of group identities, including race, gender, age, physical and mental ability, class and financial status, rank, religion, and culture. Understanding the intersection of various identities is the crux of intervening in many discriminatory situations. Kimberle´ Crenshaw crafted the theory of intersectionality, which postures that discrimination must account for multiple identities when critically examined (Crenshaw, 1991). Race, gender, sexuality, class – they are all intertwined, and for many create many levels of social barriers. Understanding the complexity and layered effects of microaggressions is vital to intervening. Respect means different things to different people based on their intersectional identities. Learning about these differences is the key to preventing microaggressions and fostering equality.

This topic isn't truly relevant to the military unless it aligns with the specific cultural context of the organization. Kahan and Braman (2006) discuss this idea utilizing cultural cognition, or the phenomenon through which, "cultural commitments are prior to factual beliefs on highly charged political issues" (p. 148). Many of the microaggression examples in this guidebook are Air-Force specific, so that we can examine ourselves with greater accuracy.

Most of us aren't oblivious to the existence of microaggressions and their impact. In fact, the majority of service members endeavor to interact in a respectful and positive manner, and plenty of us experience microaggressions ourselves. So how do we address the hidden or unconscious biases that we all have? Education is a start, but it's difficult to get millions of people to invest the time, energy, and resources required to unlearn 100% of their implicit biases. This is where leadership can step in and play a vital role.

Often issues with discriminatory or micro-aggressive language coincide with a lack of visibility surrounding the various identities all airmen have. It's easy for microaggressions to go unnoticed because the Air Force prides itself on being a diverse organization with equal opportunities for all. Diversity in demographic doesn't negate the opportunity for discrimination, however. Microaggressions also range in detectability, existing on a spectrum from overt to subtle (Basford, Offerman, and Behrend, 2014). Misguided diversity efforts may even detract from equality efforts; Roberson (2006) notes that a focus on the overall diversity in a workplace distracts from a focus on creating a genuinely inclusive workplace. The gap between diverse groups and an inclusive climate may be alleviated by eliminating microaggressions. Commanders and supervisors can place a positive spotlight on these topics, helping their Airmen to feel supported in the workplace.

It's also very important to refrain from using micro-invalidating language. With regard to any of the issues discussed in the following sections, it's vital for leaders to use language that doesn't dismiss their gravity. Invalidating language is a commonly overlooked barrier to inclusivity in the workplace. Some such reductive language examples include:
- "I am shocked to hear this is happening/this happened."
- "I can't believe this is happening/still goes on."
- "Please tell us what we're doing wrong/how we can fix this."
- "I don't understand it (i.e. a sexual orientation/gender identity, etc.) but I don't judge what people do in their free time."

- "I hear/I believe what you're saying (re: discriminatory behavior/event), but I've never personally seen that (in our workplace)."
- "That's not the Air Force I know."
- "That (form of discrimination/language) is typical (of this career field, this generation, etc.)."

Some positive examples of affirming language include:
- "I hear you, this issue is important to address."
- "Thank you for sharing your experience(s), how can we best support you?"
- "My/our door is always open if you'd like to share your experiences/complaints, but there is no pressure to talk about this unless you'd like to."
- "The onus lies with us to learn about this and make the workplace safer for you, you are not responsible for teaching us unless you would like to."
- "We take this issue very seriously, here are the ways we are actively working to better the workplace…"
- "Your perspective/experiences are valid and I take them very seriously."

Leaders should be careful not to tokenize marginalized members of your workplace in an attempt to correct microaggressive or bigoted language or behavior. Common examples of tokenism include:
- Singling out someone from a marginalized community during discussions on discrimination.
- Asking a member of a marginalized community to do the emotional labor of correcting discriminatory language/behavior.
- "As a member of [a marginalized group], please tell me your opinions on this issue (concerning said group)."
- Asking someone from a marginalized group to educate others on discrimination they experience.

Racism and Racial Discrimination in the Workplace

The Department of Defense is a racially diverse organization, but there is still progress to be made eradicating racism in the ranks (Webb & Herrmann, 2002). Diversity does not automatically translate to equality, although they are often conflated. This can result in a lack of visibility of the racism that many service members experience. Understanding unconscious bias, prejudice, and racial microaggressions are vital to the effort of countering the effects of racism in our units.

The *American Psychologist* journal published an informative article on racial microaggressions, broken down by type of microaggression and its impact:
- excerpts from: RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The following website is a great resource for learning about Indigenous and Native lands throughout the Americas:
- https://native-land.ca/

Microaggression	Meaning/Context	Intervention
"Where are you really from?"	Your race/ethnicity makes you an outsider. This others the individual.	"Why do you ask that? Where do you assume I/they are from?"
"Your name is hard to pronounce."	Your name is culturally different and not worth my time.	"Everyone deserves the respect of having their name pronounced correctly."
"You're so articulate."	It's surprising that you don't speak with the accent I expected based on my stereotyped idea of your race/ you find it unusual someone of their race sounds "intelligent."	"Why is it surprising that person sounds articulate?"
Confusing a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color) with another BIPOC in the same workplace.	An act of implicit or same-race bias.	Unlearning implicit bias takes work and time. Remind the individual who misnamed/confused a coworker that this is a form of racism, and to take the time to learn people's names.
Non-black people using AAVE (African-American Vernacular English).	An act of cultural appropriation and erasure of a specific dialect and Black	Let someone know they are using AAVE, and that it's not culturally theirs to use. Educational resources are available:

	culture, perpetuating racism via the belief that standard English is superior.	(https://web.stanford.edu/~zwicky/aave-is-not-se-with-mistakes.pdf)
"____is my spirit animal."	A statement of cultural appropriation and erasure of Indigenous/Native culture.	"Unless you're culturally Indigenous that's not appropriate to say."
"I don't see color."	An act of erasure of a BIPOC's identity.	"This statement conveys ignorance of the racial discrimination faced by people of color. We can't achieve inclusivity if we don't acknowledge our diversity."
"As a woman (or LGBTQ+ individual), I understand your struggles as a minority/marginalized person."	This statement ignores differences in discrimination and levels of privilege that people of different identities have. Being queer is not equivalent to being BIPOC.	"The discrimination we both have experienced is different, and saying they're equivalent hinders achieving inclusivity based on our different communities' needs."
Commenting negatively on how foods from different cultures smell/look/taste.	An act of othering/discriminating against individuals by creating a hierarchy based on cultural differences.	"Your reaction to this food furthers negative stereotypes."
Imitating accents, especially for a joke/humor.	This others marginalized people both by mocking and perpetuating negative stereotypes.	"Why is that accent funny?" OR "When you imitate someone's accent, you make them seem inferior."
"That's savage."	Using this word in everyday language erases the history of violence done to Indigenous peoples.	"Please refrain from using that word, it's offensive to Native/Indigenous persons."
"Let's have a Pow Wow in five."	Using this term white-washes the history of Native oppression.	Instead one can say, "let's have a meeting, huddle, how-goes-it, chat, etc."

Using the callsign "G-word##" (ethnic slur for Romani peoples).	This term has been extremely white-washed to erases the history of persecution, slavery, and genocide against the Romani people.	"That word is an ethnic slur and we should refrain from using it."
White people saying they feel uncomfortable/exhausted talking about race.	This statement puts the comfortability of white people over the safety and freedom of life of BIPOC.	"Imagine the discomfort of having to live with racism affecting you every day, and not being able to ignore it."

Many everyday microaggressions are veiled under the guise of personal belief systems, but that doesn't detract from the harm they may do to BIPOC. They may not even be verbal. For instance, sometimes squadron members will hang "Stand for the flag, kneel for the cross" posters in their offices. While this may seem like a benign display of Christian and patriotic values, the context of this statement is an expression in opposition to a specific form of anti-racist protest. While it is unethical to limit someone's religious or political ideologies, we must acknowledge that certain expressions are microaggressions and subvert the messages of social rights movements. This poster, for instance, is a direct response to the protest act of kneeling during the national anthem. This may seem like a gray or neutral area, but it's the oppositional subtext to a pro-Black movement that makes it a racial microaggression.

Intervening in situations like these might feel like limiting your squadron members' right to personal opinions. This is a necessary step, however, to ensure your squadron members aren't further marginalized and forced to interact with visible microaggressions every day. Combatting the nuance and subtlety of microaggressions such as these is incredibly difficult. Emotions are deeply intertwined with people's ideologies, and questioning them can feel like a personal attack. Or even worse, an infringement of their right to free speech and opinion. The bottom line when it comes to microaggressions is asking what will cause harm and create an unsafe or non-inclusive environment. We suggest you use this as the foundation for intervening in situations like this. The following are some suggestions for questions you can ask your squadron members to create a safer and more inclusive workspace.

- Intervention script examples:
  - "I'd like to talk with you about the poster you hung. Can you tell me what it means to you?"
  - "I want to hear your perspective, and talk about the unintentional implications that this poster carries."
  - "I want you to feel safe expressing your opinions and beliefs with coworkers, and I want you to feel included. I'm concerned this will make others feel excluded however, as it's a statement that relates oppositional to the Black Lives Matter movement."

Gender Discrimination in the Workplace

While gender diversity exists throughout all branches of the military, gender discrimination persists despite efforts to eradicate disparities. This discrimination can take both verbal and nonverbal form, and has lasting effects on individual service members as well as unit ethos. Military social structure is based on standards of masculinity, which still lends itself to gender inequality (Morris, 1996; Silva, 2008; Wood & Toppelberg, 2017). Anyone who does not fit the traditional construct of a masculine soldier, the most obvious example being females, is subject to ostracization (Holland, Rabelo, & Cortina, 2014). Units can combat this by using consciously gender-inclusive language and intervene when microaggressive language occurs.

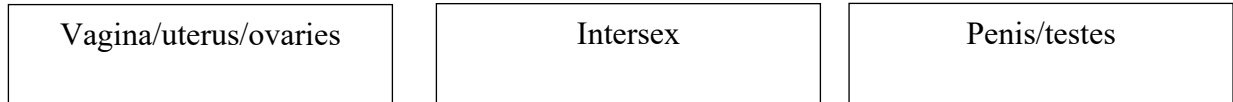| Microaggression	Meaning/Context	Intervention
"She's in this job because they had a gender quota." OR "She took my/his place at work for the sake of diversity/affirmative action."	This statement implies that a woman isn't qualified for a work position, or that she has less of a right to be there than someone because of her gender.	"Does that mean that she's not qualified or capable of this job?" "How do you know she doesn't deserve this job?"
"Women are great execs." OR Handing off clerical tasks to women because "they'd be good at them."	This statement exemplifies how heteronormative gender roles restrict women in the workplace by pigeonholing their career capacity.	"Any gender is perfectly capable of being an exec/doing clerical work."
"Are you upset? Why aren't you smiling?" "You have RBF." (directed at women)	An incredibly common form of harassment/invasion of women's bodily autonomy for public consumption. It also perpetuates the sexist standard that women's character is judged on their appearance.	"Would you say that to a male coworker?" OR if comfortable taking a direct approach: "While you may not have intended this, it's a form of sexist harassment to tell women to smile."
Not knowing female appearance standards.	As a supervisor, this implies that you have not taken the time to understand the rules that govern all airmen. It implies male regs are	"We are all expected to hold each other accountable when it comes to dress in appearance. You should know all standards in

	norm and female standards are not a real part of the group.	order to effectively lead all Airmen."
Discussions about "annoying" behaviors of female dependents.	Perpetuates negative sexist stereotypes.	"Does it seem fair to say this about an entire group of people?"
"This (gendered issue) happens to ALL people, not just women. It's not really sexism." (e.g. getting interrupted at a work meeting).	While rude behaviors happen to everyone, this statement negates the disproportionate discrimination certain groups face and the way in hinders their careers/work.	"It's important to acknowledge these issues in the context of sexism. It's true everyone gets interrupted, but this happens disproportionately to women."
Telling someone to "toughen up."	Gender assumptions about emotional displays and resilience exist on all ends of the gender spectrum. They contribute to potentially harmful standards of masculinity in individual mental and physical identities.	"When you say that, it implies that someone isn't good enough as they are."
Addressing family planning only to female service members, or saying, "when you have children" to female coworkers.	This contributes to the reduction of women to caregiving and parenting roles, and also often makes the false assumption that all women intend on parenting.	Challenge this when it's brought up by coworkers, medical professionals, family readiness, etc. Ask them to be more inclusive of the audience they direct this language at.
"He's not tough, he's a (slang word for vagina)."	By using this word as an insult, this statement perpetuates both sexist stereotypes about women's physicality as well as harmful standards of masculinity.	"There are a lot of terms we toss around every day that have negative impacts, but we should think about the consequences of them."

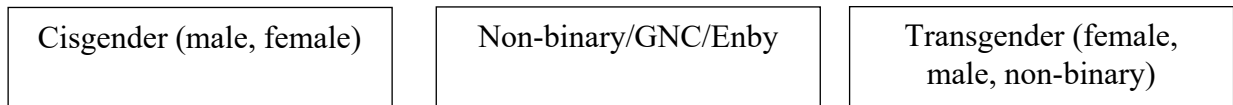|		
"She's bossy/crazy/hysterical/moody/rude."	This is an attempt to discredit the woman trying to assert her voice in the scenario by using dismissive and sexist language. This language undercuts female social capital in the workplace.	"These words are disproportionately weaponized against females and have a really negative impact. If someone's behavior is frustrating, there are other ways to describe it."
Confusing women's names at the same workplace.	Because women are a gender minority in the military, implicit bias plays a frequent role in their lack of visibility. This is an extremely common example of women and their identities being made an afterthought.	Unlearning implicit bias takes work and time. Remind the individual who misnamed/confused a coworker that this is a form of sexism and to take the time to learn people's names.
"Be a man."	An insult meant to shape behavior to adhere to gender performance norms, can have negative impacts on male mental health.	"What about this person implies they are not a man?
"She always talks about sexism, she's such a feminazi."	This colloquialism is meant to cut someone's social standing down and discredit/dismiss the issues of marginalization she's speaking about.	"Why does speaking about sexism make someone the equivalent of a Nazi?"
"It looks unprofessional when women have their hair in the new regs."	Professionalism is subjective fluctuations in rules and regulations, which change with time.	You can remind this person that the new reg is a result of medical research, or that standards of professionalism change.

LGBTQ+ Discrimination in the Workplace

Gender, sex, gender presentation, sexual and romantic orientation - all of these aspects of human identity exist on spectrums. Often these aspects of human identity are viewed through a heteronormative lens, meaning straight cisgender individuals are considered the norm. Understanding the spectrums of human identity is a vital part of being an ally for the LGBTQ+ community. Please refer to the following charts for a baseline lesson on gender and sexuality.
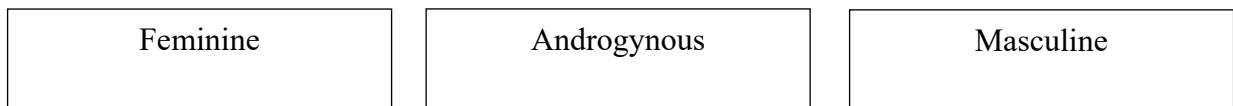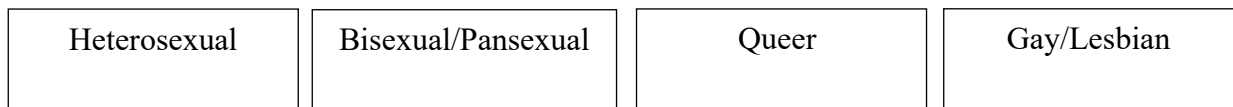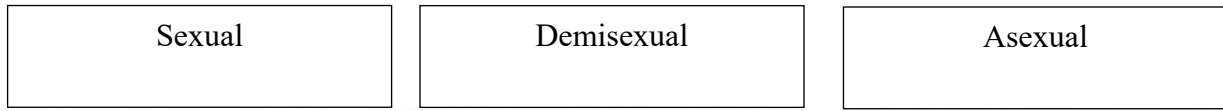
Sex

Vagina/uterus/ovaries	Intersex	Penis/testes

Gender

Cisgender (male, female)	Non-binary/GNC/Enby	Transgender (female, male, non-binary)

Gender Presentation

Feminine	Androgynous	Masculine

Sexual Orientation

Heterosexual	Bisexual/Pansexual	Queer	Gay/Lesbian

Romantic Orientation

Heteroromantic	Bi/Panromantic	Homoromantic

Sexual Identity

Sexual	Demisexual	Asexual

Romantic Identity

Romantic	Demiromantic	Aromantic

Even with LGBTQ discrimination protective legislation in the workplace, microaggressions still occur on a regular basis (Galupo and Resnick, 2016). Often the first homophobic expression that comes to mind is: "that's so gay". It's a classic example of blatant homophobic microaggressions; not entirely aggressive, but demeaning nonetheless. As a widely-recognized statement, it's generally understood to be inappropriate to say. There are a host of other microaggressions, however, that are far more subtle and yet still as common. Here are a few examples:

Microaggression	Meaning/Context	Intervention
"Who is the man/woman in the relationship?"	This statement superimposes heteronormative standards, which restrict the freedom of the LGBTQ+ community.	"Why would there be a man/woman in the relationship if it's a same-sex relationship?"
"Saying they/them is so confusing, it sounds like I'm talking about multiple people."	This invalidates gender identities that fall outside of the binary, creating a lack of support for nonbinary or gender-nonconforming persons.	"They/them is used all the time as a singular. For example, 'Have you met MSgt Crane yet?' 'No, but I've heard great things about them.'". OR "We should do everything in our power to make our coworkers feel safe and that includes respecting their pronouns."

"You don't look gay." OR "I never would have guessed you are gay."	The assumption that LGBTQ+ individuals appear a certain way furthers a lack of visibility for the community. It reduces LGBTQ+ to stereotyped ideas of presentation.	"What about this person makes you assume they are straight or gay?"
"I don't care what people do in their own lives, as long as it doesn't affect me."	This statement others LGBTQ+ persons because it implies that they should remain invisible and not a normalized part of society.	"How would LGBTQ+ persons impact your life?"
"You're so brave for doing_____[i.e. a normal thing] as a LGBTQ+ person."	Saying someone is brave for being LGBTQ+ may hold some truth, but verbalizing it often reinforces the "non-normalcy" of being LGBTQ+.	"It's a normal thing that all people do. While you likely didn't intend this, it sounds like you're saying being LGBTQ+ is abnormal."
Asking about a queer person's romantic/sex life in a way that indicates it's "different" than a straight person's.	This is harassment and an invasion of privacy that fetishizes LGTBQ+ persons and contributes to the reduction of their identity.	"Is this a question you would ask a straight or cisgender person?"
"What led you to being gay?"	This statement implies that sexual orientation is a choice and assumes heterosexuality is the norm.	"Would you ask a straight person what led them to being straight?"
"I have a/you are/they are my gay best friend."	An example of tokenizing LGBTQ+ individuals.	"Although you are likely trying to relate and make someone more comfortable, it can be uncomfortable to be reduced to a tokenized identity."
"How do you know you're gay/lesbian/pan/bi? Have you ever had a 'straight' relationship?"	This invalidates being LGBTQ+ by questioning the truth of their existence.	"How does someone know they're straight?"
Language that reinforces heteronormative narratives. (e.g.	This heteronormative rhetoric results in LGBTQ+ erasure and	Challenge this narrative. Use

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asking a woman about their spouse and assuming that partner is male, referring to certain activities like shopping or carpentry as gender-specific, or refer to someone as he or she based on their appearances alone).	invisibility. These narratives assume their sexual orientation and invest social capital in that false narrative. This marginalizes this community and creates a lack of safety and support in the workplace.	gender-neutral terms like "partner" or "significant other". Don't assume that someone is straight or cisgender. Don't let your coworkers make these assumptions, and challenge their rhetoric.
Asking bisexuals and pansexuals if they're actually gay or straight.	This statement furthers erasure of individuals who don't exist on either end of the sexuality continuum/spectrum. Bisexuality and pansexuality are just as valid as being gay or straight.	"Why do you assume someone might be gay or straight if they identify as bisexual or pansexual?"
"I don't know any gay/lesbian/bisexual/pansexual people."	Everyone has met LGBTQ+ individuals and to say otherwise indicates ignorance, even if it's not conscious. This also indicates to queer individuals that someone might not be safe to come out to.	"How are you sure you don't know any LGBTQ+ people?"
"I don't judge, I've seen a lot of weird stuff in my day."	Categorizing LGBTQ+ identities as "weird" others and further marginalizes the community.	"Why is being LGBTQ+ weird?"
"I support LGBTQ+ people, I just don't need to see it/know why it is being shoved down our throats all the time."	In this heteronormative society, straight cisgender persons are the "default". This is the foundation for social norms that marginalize being LGBTQ+. Heterosexuality is well-represented in media, which means that it's already very visible, it's just seen as "normal."	"Modern media is full of heterosexual relationships, and heterosexual love is regularly celebrated as a positive thing. Why is LGBTQ+ visibility offensive to witness?"

Transphobic comments often go unnoticed by cisgender people in conversation. The following are common examples of transphobic language to avoid

- o Saying someone was born a gender they don't identify with (i.e. "born male"), or saying "when I knew/met this person they were previously male/female".
- o Referring to someone as a member of "the opposite sex." While the DOD may not recognize multiple genders legally, that doesn't mean military members exist with a wide spectrum of gender identity. The phrase, "the opposite sex" implies that only the gender binary exists, and also falsely conflates sex and gender identity.
- o Referring to someone by their former name, if they have legally changed it. This is called "deadnaming" and is a transphobic microaggression.
- o Tokenizing transgender people by: telling them they're the first transgender person you've met, that they're really beautiful "for a trans person", that you "couldn't tell" they're transgender."
- o Calling someone a "real" woman/man. This implies that transgender people aren't "real" men or women.

- Stonewall Education provides a great resource for addressing homophobia, biphobia, andtransphobia shares some tips that may help you address your unit leadership:
  (https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/hbt_language_final_low_res.pdf

Mental Health Discrimination and Ableism in the Workplace

Focusing on mental health and neurodivergent wellness is a continued effort throughout the Department of Defense. Resilience is a key focus for military leaders, and a factor in promoting accessible mental health care. Leadership can encourage a positive environment through supportive and inclusive language. The following are scripted examples leaders can use when addressing their units to increase a culture of positivity around this topic:

- "We acknowledge we don't address this topic enough. Mental health is about so much more than times of distress, and much more than a reminder to remain resilient. Resilience is important, but impossible to develop without treating your mind the way you would the health of your body. Just as nutrition helps you function, so do regular mental health check-ins and self-care. All humans have fluctuations in their mental health, and mental illness is incredibly common. Mental illness does not define who you are, and there is no weakness in accessing health care for your mind. Here is a list of resources for you to access."
    - Mental health (can connect members with trained therapists for the treatment of diagnosed mental health conditions. If the member is dealing only with life stressors, they should seek services with the other avenues listed)
    - Behavioral Health (embedded in primary care, Active Duty members and dependents can access several 20-30 minute sessions that focus on a specific problem area (i.e. sleep, stress))
    - Airman Family Readiness Center (offers support and services for resiliency)
    - Military One Source (offers confidential counseling)
    - Chaplain (offers confidential conversation and spiritual guidance)
- Hand out lists of resources, or post them around your squadron. Concrete and visual examples offer a different lasting impact on the importance of mental health.

Script for speaking on mental health to one or several squadron members (or questions your flight leadership can address with their members):

- "How can I best support you without overstepping?"
- "I know you've been working hard lately, how is your physical and mental health?"
- "I believe it's incredibly important to prioritize your mental health. That can look like any number of care measures, from exercise and time with loved ones to seeking treatment from a professional."
- "I use these methods_____to prioritize my mental health, do any of those resonate with you?"

In asking these questions, you not only normalize discussing mental health but example its importance. https://hbr.org/2020/11/talking-about-mental-health-with-your-employees-without-overstepping

Microaggression	Meaning/Context	Intervention
"That's crazy." OR "I have OCD, I'm such a perfectionist." OR That's manic."	Non-literal or joking expressions of mental illnesses trivialize these conditions. This has harmful effects on individuals living with mental illnesses by increasing their invisibility, as well as creating a social barrier to seeking out and accessing care.	"When you say those things as figures of speech, it changes the meaning and/or impact of those words."
"Toughen up/ don't be (insert any colloquial term for weak)."	Equating weakness for displays of vulnerability is a common expression of toxic masculinity that stigmatizes mental health, especially for males.	"What about this person is not tough?" OR "What do you hope to achieve by saying that?"
"Kill me now." OR "I'll just go kill myself." (sarcastically)	Not only could this be difficult to hear for someone that has struggled with suicidal ideation/attempts or lost loved ones, it also trivializes an issue that plagues the armed forces and takes lives.	Instead, you could say, "That's intense!" OR "That's so frustrating!"
"She's so bipolar, she has such crazy mood swings."	There are two facets to this microaggression: the equation of female behavior to mental illness (sexism), and the trivialization of mental illness (ableism). Both of these components contribute to negative stigmatization.	"Why do you categorize her feelings as mental illness?"
"I totally have ADHD." OR "I'm so dyslexic." (sarcastically)	Joking about attention difficulties may seem harmless, but these conditions can have serious impact on people's lives.	"People with ADHD or dyslexia may not appreciate that being joked about."
"That's so/ they are r-word."	The r-word is a derogatory term that further marginalizes populations with intellectual disabilities.	"I'd appreciate it if you didn't use that word."
"It's not that traumatic." OR "It's not that big of a deal."	Minimizing the effects of traumatic events stigmatizes mental illness, especially PTS & PTSD, ultimately hindering access to mental health care.	"What is the reason for diminishing the emotional impact of that?"

"Did I stutter?"	This phrase is used to convey the confidence of someone's message. This implies, however, that a stutter invalidates the confidence and authority of someone speaking. This harms the credibility and social status of individuals who may speak differently.	"I understand you want to convey the seriousness/importance of what you just said, but what does that say about people with stutters?"
"Are you deaf?"	The implication is that someone is stupid because they didn't hear or didn't understand what was said. This connection is offensive to the deaf and hard of hearing community and contributes to their marginalization.	"Would you say this with the same intent to someone who is deaf?"

Continued Learning

All forms of microaggressions can negatively impact coworkers' relationships, work productivity and job satisfaction (Galupo & Resnick, 2016). Galupo and Resnick (2016) report that microaggressions aimed at LGBTQ+ members led to the perception of a hostile workplace environment. Basford, Offerman, and Behrend (2014) report that organizational commitment is negatively impacted by discrimination.

Tapia and Kvasny (2004) address retention issues due to discrimination, with regard to women of color working in IT. Some of their workplace suggestions are relevant to all marginalized groups in the workforce. Specifically, they suggest fostering open dialogues and means of communication about the forms of discrimination that are occurring every day. They also suggest supporting minority groups' voices through networking and inclusion in decision-making processes in the workplace. When addressing microaggressive language in the workplace, Dr. Nadal, an associate professor of psychology at the City University of New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, recommends focusing on the language used rather than the individual or persons using it (Clay, 2017). Exampling non-microaggressive language is an excellent intervention strategy.

Here are some ways you can set positive cultural precedent in your units:
- Be the example. When you as leaders are careful with the language you use, you set important precedent for your unit's cultural climate.
- Educate your flight leaders, give them the resources to educate themselves.
- Some examples include asking your flight commanders the following:
  - "Do you know what microaggressions are? Can you name some examples?"
  - "Do you feel confident you can identify microaggressions when you hear them?"
  - "How often do you hear microaggressive language in the workplace?"
  - "Do you feel comfortable intervening when discriminatory language is used?"
- Always focus on the microaggression itself rather than the perpetrator. Engaging their actions directly will remove some potential for intervention to be seen as a personal attack.
  - Engage the person saying the microaggression by questioning the intent of their statement. Ask them about the context of and meaning behind their words.
  - Have flight leadership role play microaggression intervention tactics.
  - Share these intervention scripts with flight leadership:
    - "You probably didn't intend it, but when you say/do_____…"
    - "I am not ok with this/the thing that was said."
    - "I'm going to interject here..."
    - "It sounds like you're saying...do you mean this?"
    - "Let's take a moment to understand the context of that statement."
    - "What do you mean by_____?"
    - "I think we should rephrase/reframe that statement…"
    - "When you say_____, it comes across as offensive because…"
    - "The underlying message of that statement/action is…"
  - Encourage flight leadership to check in with the victims of microaggressions they witness and ask them if they are ok. Give flight leadership some signs to look for:

- Quiet, non-participatory in conversations
- Signs of frustration or disengagement
- Retaliatory or confrontational

We suggest distributing this webinar PowerPoint to your flight leadership as a quick reference for learning about microaggressions:
https://www.ala.org/tools/sites/ala.org.tools/files/content/Microaggressions%20Webinar_TRHT_GSC.pdf

Continued Learning Resources

Air Force Resources:

https://www.af.mil/Diversity/

https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2314621/watch-seek-to-understand-microaggressions/

https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2453681/department-of-the-air-force-releases-findings-on-racial-disparity-review/

https://www.airforcemag.com/black-airmen-talk-race-in-the-air-force/

https://www.airforcemag.com/review-shows-widespread-racial-disparity-in-the-department-of-the-air-force/

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/misc/edoigdeiannualreport2020.pdf

Book Resources:

So You Want to Talk About Race – Ijeoma Oluo

Women Race & Class – Angela Davis

A Leader's Guide to Unconscious Bias – Pamela Fuller and Mark Murphy and Anne Chow

Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People – Mahzarin R Banaji and Anthony G Greenwald

Diversity in the Workplace: Eye-Opening Interviews to Jumpstart Conversations about Identity, Privilege, and Bias – Bärí A. Williams

Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives – Howard J Ross

Better Allies: Everyday Actions to Create Inclusive Engaging Workplaces – Karen Catlin

Inclusify: The power of Uniqueness and Belonging to Build Innovative teams – Stefanie K. Johnson, PhD

This is How We Rise – Claudia Chan

Subtle Acts of Exclusion: How to Understand, Identify, and Stop Microaggressions – Tiffany Jana and Michael Baran

Inclusive Leadership: The definitive guide to developing and executing an impactful diversity and inclusion strategy – Charlotte Sweeney and Fleur Bothwick

We can't Talk About That at Work!: How to Talk about Race, Religion, Politics and Other Polarizing Topics – Mary-Frances Winters

Erasing Institutional Bias: How to Create Systemic Change for Organizational Inclusion – Ashley Diaz Mejias and Tiffany Jana

Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot - Mikki Kendall

<u>Glossary</u>

AAVE - African American Vernacular English, also known as Black Vernacular or Black English Vernacular. Born out of the American slave trade, linguists refer to AAVE as either a dialect of Standard American English or a language separate from it. (https://www.dictionary.com/e/united-states-diversity-african-american-vernacular-english-aave/)

Othering: Creating an "us vs. them" narrative by out casting those who do not fit into our social norms. This causes these "others" to experience marginalization and discrimination.

Intersectionality: The idea that one person can belong to many different social categories. The overlapping of these identities in turn effects the way that person moves through the world and the different types of discrimination they may face. These social categories include but are not limited to race, class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc...

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This term is used so that not all persons of color are lumped together and shows the different identities that exist. Indiscriminate use of this term can be harmful (saying BIPOC experience police brutality at a higher rates, hurts the black community because in truth they are the ones who experience it the most).

Erasure: The act of erasing, excluding or denying a minority group's role in history, their identity, or their culture. It can also be done by imposing the majority culture on these marginalized groups.

Deadname: To use the birth name of a transgender person after they have declared a new name.

Misgender: Using a pronoun other than the one the person identifies as (using "he" to refer to someone with "they/them" pronouns).

Token/Tokenize: When a perfunctory or cursory effort to include marginalized persons, to include fetishization.

Fetishize/fetishization: When someone or a group is made an object of desire based upon an identity (e.g. race).

Internalized racism: Racial prejudice we all learn that manifests itself in our thoughts, conversations and actions. This can take the form of internalized oppression or internalized privilege.

Internalized sexism: Misogyny that manifests itself in our thoughts, conversations and actions. This can take the form of internalized oppression or internalized privilege.

Implicit bias: Prejudice or preference towards certain groups of people that are not conscious.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them.

Intersex: A person who is born a variation of both male and female sex characteristics. There is no singular way to be intersex, being intersex can take multiple forms.

Demisexual: A person needs to have an emotional connection with another to have sexual feelings for them. Demisexuals fall somewhere on the spectrum between sexual and asexual people.

Asexual: A person with little or no sexual attraction to others. They may have romantic attraction but little to no desire to have sexual experiences in their relationships.

Pansexual: A person who is sexually attracted to a person no matter their gender or sex

Demiromantic: A person needs to have an emotional connection with another to have romantic feelings for them.

Androgynous: A person who's gender expression is neither purely feminine nor masculine

Non-Binary "ENBY": A person who does not identify as either male or female, but lives somewhere on the gender spectrum

Gender Nonconforming "GNC": A person who does not conform to what society expects of their gender identity (A man who stays at home with his children or a woman who doesn't shave her legs).

Gender Fluid: A person whose gender identity is not fixed, it may fluctuate

Gaslighting: A form of manipulation used to discredit another person's feelings, thoughts, or experience

Social capital: Shared cultural values that denote worth of persons or their identities

Ableism: A form of discrimination that excludes anyone who is not able-bodied (to include differences in physical abilities and non-neurotypical persons)

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