Avoiding Bias[1]

The use of certain words or phrases can express bias based on gender, ethnic, disability or race, either intentionally or unintentionally. This language in many instances can express negative and disparaging attitudes.

Disability Bias[2]

1. Put people first, not their disability. For example, use "person with a disability," rather than "disabled person."
2. Do not label people by their disability. For example, use "people with a mental illness or psychological disability," rather than "the mentally ill."
3. Do not label persons with disabilities as patients or invalids.
4. Do not overextend the severity of a disability. For example, use "children with specific learning disabilities," rather than "the learning disabled."
5. Use emotionally neutral expressions. For example, use "individual who had a stroke," rather than "stroke victim."
6. Emphasize abilities, not limitations. For example, use "uses a wheelchair," rather than "confined to a wheelchair."
7. Avoid offensive expression. For example, use "person who has a limp," rather than "cripple."
8. Focus on the right and capacity of people with disabilities to express their own goals and preferences and to exercise control over their own services and supports. For example, use "care coordination," rather than "patient or case management."
9. See people with disabilities as a resource and contributing community members, not as a burden or problem. For example, use "family supports needs," rather than "family burden."

Heterosexual Bias[3]

1. Avoid connotations of voluntary choice that may not be appropriate. For example, use "sexual orientation," rather than sexual preference."
2. Omit discussion of marital status unless legal marital relationships are the object of the writing. Marital status per se is not a good indicator of cohabitation (marital couples may be separated; unmarried couples may live together), sexual activity, or sexual orientation (a person who is married may be in a gay or lesbian relationship with a partner). Describing people as married or "single" excludes lesbians, gay men, bisexual persons, and cohabiting heterosexual people.
3. Use sexual terminology that is relevant to lesbians and gay men as well as bisexual and heterosexual people. For example, use "sexual activity," rather than "sexual intercourse."
4. Avoid stigmatizing or pathologizing language regarding gay men and lesbians (e.g., "sexual deviate," "sexual invert").
5. Use parallel terms when comparing members of different sexual orientation groups. For example, compare lesbians with "heterosexual women," rather than to "the general public" or "normal women."
6. Avoid the use of the term "homosexual" and use the more specific terms of "gay men" and "lesbians."
7. Avoid stereotyping. For example, use "sexual abuse of male children by adult men," rather than "homosexual abuse of children."

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[1] Adapted from www.apastyle.org
[2] Adapted from American Psychological Association. (1992) Guidelines for non-handicapping language in APA journals. *APAStyle.org*. Retrieved July 9, 2003 from http://www.apastyle.org/disabilities.html
[3] Adapted from American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Avoiding heterosexual bias in language. *APAStyle.org*. Retrieved July 9, 2003 from http://www.apastyle.org/sexuality.html

Racial/Ethnic Bias[4]

1. When relevant, fully describe human subject samples with respect to gender and race or ethnicity. Where appropriate, additional information should be presented (e.g., generation, linguistic background, socioeconomic status, national origin, sexual orientation, special interest group membership, etc.). For example, use "250 Whites (125 males and 125 females) and 150 Blacks (75 males and 75 females)," rather than "400 undergraduate students."
2. When possible, identify American Indian groups by specific nation. Although there are some exceptions, American Indians, Africans, and other groups prefer "people" or "nation" to "tribe." For example, use "Choctaw," rather   than "American Indian."
3. Avoid the use of qualifying adjectives that may subtly suggest an exception to the norm. For example, use "the Mexican American professor," rather than "the articulate Mexican American professor."

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[4] Adapted from American Psychological Association. (n.d.) Guidelines for avoiding racial/ethnic bias in language. *APAStyle.org*. Retrieved July 9, 2003 from http://www.apastyle.org/race.html