APA Standards for Non-Biased Language

Many professional organizations now have standards for the use of non-biased, respectful language.

This includes the American Psychological Association, whose guidance includes the following:

- Avoid historically inaccurate, outdated terms, or those with negative connotations
  - For instance: “Oriental” for Asian or Asian American, or any use of the term “retarded”
- When describing a particular individual, ask for and use the term the person prefers
  - For example; does the person prefer Hispanic or Latina? Mormon or LDS?
- And do not presume one group as the “standard” or “normal” to which others are atypical
  - For instance: “Cheryl is a little person, but everyone else in her family is normal.” Or “Abby is now dating a woman, but Abby’s previous relationships have all been regular.”

LGBTQ

- Homosexual can carry a negative connotation for some people, and can be interpreted too broadly or too narrowly. Gay can also be vague if not followed by “men” or “man”.
- Preferable terms = Lesbian, Gay man/men, and Bisexual men/women/persons.
- Use the acronym LGBTQ (or it’s variants) to describe a population, but not a specific person
- Use appropriate pronouns to match a person’s identified gender and use the person’s chosen name, rather than pronouns referring to the sex the person was assigned at birth
- Do not use quotations to refer to the gender identity of a person who identifies as Transgendered or who is gender nonconforming e.g. Caregiver is a “man” who ...

Racial and Ethnic Identities

- APA accepted terms = Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, Caucasian, White, American Indian, Native American, Black, African American, Asian, Asian American, or more specific subgroups such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, etc.
- Do not hyphenate (eg. American-Indian or African-American)
- Capitalize racial identities – eg. Native American, White vs native american, white

Age

- Use older person rather than the term elderly (however, be aware that in many communities the term ‘Elder’ is one of respect which may or may not be conveyed based on age and experience)
- Use the word dementia rather than calling someone ‘senile’
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Disability

Use person first, non-handicapping language. The person HAS the condition, rather than the person IS the condition.

More information can be found on the APA Style Blog: http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/bias-free-language/