Is This Biased?

How Editors Can Identify Hidden Traps in Language

#ACESbiasedlang #ACES2018
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Is This Biased?

tl;dr
Yes. (Frequently.)
(Don’t despair ...)

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Catching discriminatory language requires more than an awareness of slurs and pejorative terminology. In this session — a follow-up to the 2017 panel “Is This Racist?” — we will discuss how many -isms can take subtle forms, connoting biases not just in terms of race and ethnicity but also in class, gender, age, and other factors. These include the lack of fair and equal media representation, prejudicial words arising from juxtaposition, and the unintentional “othering” of the people we write about.
Exclusion = Bias
Using inclusion to fight bias

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Bias Takes Many Forms

BIAS

A mental leaning or inclination; partiality

- Webster’s New World Dictionary

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Inclusive Storytelling

Accurate
Appropriate
Fair

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Do We Have Everyone?!
Not With Those Earrings

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Guys, Don’t Dress Like J.Lo

I read a blog post, Dressing for Respect in the Office on wardrobeoxygen.com that talked about work clothes. You may find this article useful in HAP’s relatively conservative environment. This blog post got me thinking about how you can dress for respect without sacrificing personal style.

Using J. Lo speaks to women only. In fact, this whole list predominantly addresses problems with women's clothing. If you are going to use these as examples, you need to include men's examples as well.

Think J Crew, not J Lo.

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Dressing for Respect in the Office

WARDROBE OXYGEN
Since 2005, Wardrobe Oxygen has helped women realize their beauty and personal style and express it through their wardrobe. With years of experience as an apparel visual merchandiser and personal shopper, Alison Gary provides advice on how to achieve personal style no matter your age, size, or budget.
Read More

wardrodeoxygen.com

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Inclusion Checklist

- Presume innocence
- Question your assumptions/Get feedback
- Ask somebody; Be guided by people's preferences
- Avoid labels
- Make time

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Inclusion Checklist

Say something!
We are advocates & gatekeepers.

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Our Blind Spots
Women, Latinos, Gender Pronouns, Trump

Ruthanne Salido
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This scandal had legs
Well-made but dramatically challenged 'Chappaquiddick' tracks 1969 tragedy

KESWICK Tures

If you lived through the 1969 political sex scandal that nearly derailed Ted Kennedy's political career, your memories of the infamous Chappaquiddick incident might be a little hazy. But for moviegoers, the tale has been retold many times on film. Now, director Steven Zaillian's "Chappaquiddick" brings the story back to the big screen in a new and compelling way.

The film opens with Kennedy driving his car off Bridge No. 1 in Chappaquiddick, the quaint island off the coast of Massachusetts, where he spent many summers. The accident killed his girlfriend, Mary Jo Kopechne, and injured another woman. The incident cost Kennedy his political career for a while, but it also helped him become a Democratic Penthouse over time.

"Chappaquiddick" is a well-made film that captures the tension and drama of the event. The actors, including John Slattery and Kedi Bruno, deliver powerful performances that bring the story to life. The film also features interviews with people who were there, adding a layer of authenticity to the story.

The film's pacing is steady, and the directing is fluid, allowing the audience to connect with the characters and the events that took place. The film also offers a glimpse into the political climate of the time, particularly the role of women in society.

Overall, "Chappaquiddick" is a well-crafted film that offers a fresh look at a scandal that has been told many times before. It's a story of love, loss, and the struggle for power in politics. The film is a must-see for anyone interested in history or political drama.

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A crash, a death, a delay

Well-made but dramatically challenged 'Chappaquiddick' tracks 1969 tragedy
Lessons Learned

Always get a second pair of eyes on your work. Ask if the clever wording is worth it and in good taste.

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A couple and their two sons walk past a mural on Downey Avenue in Downey. A wave of second- and third-generation Latinos has transformed Downey and other suburbs over the last two decades.

Latinos’ Beverly Hills

Downey is where residents of working-class cities aspire to live. They changed the city — and it changes them.

By Cindy Carcamo

When Nick Rodriguez Sr. moved into a three-bedroom house in Downey in the 1960s, he recalled a neighborhood dominated by Anglos and Japanese. He asked a question: “Why are we the only people of color living here?”

Rodriguez, 54, one of a few Latinos in what was then a mostly white suburb, quickly realized he needed to “keep the Asians away from the neighborhood.”

After founding the state’s largest Latino-owned private security firm, Rodriguez eventually settled down and bought himself a $1.5 million house on a quiet street. He and his wife have lived there for 16 years.

The move was part of a national shift toward local activism on gun laws. Legal challenges are expected.

By David A. Pogue and Adam Wagner

Frustrated with Congress’s lack of action on stricter gun control laws, Los Angeles leaders have joined other cities in trying to stop the bleeding by imposing stricter gun regulations at the local level.

Last week, Los Angeles joined San Francisco and San Diego in banning possession of certain assault weapons that hold more than 10 rounds, a move that is expected to reduce the cases of mass shootings, but that has prompted threats of legal action by gun rights groups.

And so, the debate rages on. The city council recently voted to allow the carrying of concealed weapons, but the measure was overturned by a court. Now, the city is considering a law that would ban the sale of certain guns.

With 45,000 felons regaining voting rights, California officials say support privileges for those convicted of crimes.
Big draw for Latinos

Downey is where residents of working-class cities aspire to live. They changed the city — and it changes them.

By CindyCaro amo

When kids Rodriguez Jr. moved into a two-bedroom house in Downey in the 1960s, he called a neighbor interrupting his pattern with a question: "Are we going to be one of those straight families in the hood and we don't even run around here that way?"

Rodriguez Jr., one of a few Latinos in what was then a mostly white suburb, explained, "We're all going to keep the city clean from the start!"

After founding the state's largest Latino-owned private security firm, Rodriguez Jr. worked to educate others and build a community.
Lessons Learned

Ask a Latino. Try substituting a different ethnicity. Hire a diverse staff.

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A fabulous history

Performance artist Taylor Mac hopes his musical retelling of America's story will both inspire and challenge his audience.
A fabulous history

Performance artist Taylor Mac hopes musical retelling of America's story will both inspire and challenge the audience.
Lessons Learned

Ask an LGBTQ person. Proofread everything YOU write, especially if on deadline. Look up your organization’s style guidelines on “transgender” or push to establish such guidelines.

Another smart option is to ...

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Address the issue in the story as well as somewhere in the display type.
El Pollo Loco owner had pluck

During that year, a rumor circulated among her colleagues that Mendelsohn must have cancer. Why else would she disappear? At Pollo West’s annual Christmas party, the director of operations told the crowd of nearly 500 employees and their families, “I have someone I think you’re going to want to meet.”

“I got up to the microphone, and I told them who I was, and I told them my story, and I asked for their support for me, and especially for my family,” Mendelsohn said. “About three, four minutes into it, I was very nervous, and one of the senior managers jumps up and yells, ‘You go, girl!’ and that broke the ice, and I felt so much better.”

Since then, Mendelsohn’s employees have been supportive, taking time not only to get to know Mendelsohn better but also telling her more about their lives.

“I was a little bit up front before because I wasn’t in my own skin, and that was to be living in poverty, under $30,000 a year, because of difficulty in getting employment,” Mendelsohn said. “And so when I heard her story, I realized now excited I was to have transitioned as the boss of my own company.”

Be nice or leave: Over the span of her career, Mendelsohn considered leaving the business world more than once because of its cutthroat nature. Her approach has long been to treat her employees and colleagues with dignity and respect.

“The same philosophy we have in life with our friends and our family, we should have in business,” she said.

Order up: Mendelsohn has ordered the same thing at El Pollo Loco for more than three decades: a two-piece chicken meal with corn tortillas, rice, beans and salsa, and an iced tea. “I still eat El Pollo Loco, like, three or four times a
**How I Made It:** Michaela Mendelsohn

El Pollo Loco owner had pluck

She found courage to shift from male to female, help other transgender people.

By Sabina Costa

The gig: Michaela Mendelsohn, 46, is chief executive of Pollo West Corp., a franchisee of El Pollo Loco since 1984.

Polo West Corp. operates six restaurants in Los Angeles and Ventura counties and has 175 employees. It is owned by founders Michaela and Barbara Mendelsohn, along with two minority owners: Chief Operating Officer Ed Sanderson and Chief Financial Officer Tony Shepard.

At its peak, Polo West Corp. had nearly 600 employees, and in Mendelsohn’s lifetime, the company has become more involved with the community. They are considering expanding the business once again.

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Lessons Learned

When the issue is new and controversial, practice extra caution. Consult a website such as www.glaad.org/reference/transgender.

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Lessons Learned

Don’t assume your audience thinks just like you.

Ask, can my audience tell how I feel about this person or issue and is that appropriate given the point of this particular communication?

Use the substitution trick.

Be the calm voice, not the hyperbolic one.

Push for a fair, reasonable tone.

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Our Blind Spots: Summation

It is our job, as editors, to point out the blind spots.

Speak truth to power in the room (i.e., client, writer, reporter or supervisor).

Ask the unpopular question.

Use a fair, reasonable tone, but ... be fearless.
Detecting Bias
A Listener’s Guide

Henry Fuhrmann
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Checklists

Big picture

- Who is my audience?
- Who is my client or organization?
- Whom am I serving?
- Will the subject matter touch on race?
- Do they/we have formal guidelines?
- What are my standards?

Editing concerns

- Who said it?
- And where?
- How is the term being used?
- Is the term essential?

Next steps

- Whom do I consult?
- Who can make the call?
- Where else can I get help?

#IsThisBiased #ACES2018

@hfuhrmann, hfuhrmann@aceseditors.org
Checklists

Big picture

- Who
- What
- Where
- Why
- Will they endure?
- Do they?
- What are my standards?

Editing concerns

- Whom do I consult?
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Just listen ...
illegal aliens. This is the simplest term that can be applied to citizens of foreign countries who have come to this country illegally, with no passport, visa or other document to show that they are entitled to visit, work or live in the United States.

There is no reason, however, why illegal immigrants or illegal migrants, whichever is more appropriate, should not be used as a synonym.
illegal immigrants Use this term in referring to citizens of foreign countries who have come to the country with no passport, visa or other document to show that they are entitled to visit, work or live in the United States.

Do not use illegal aliens or illegals except in direct quotes.

The nouns alien and illegal should not appear in headlines.

The term undocumented immigrant is acceptable as a synonym for illegal immigrant under certain conditions, such as when a form of the word illegal already appears in a sentence. Example: Although their parents are not legally eligible for welfare, the children of undocumented immigrants qualify...
immigration ★

Basic guidelines and definitions for the use of immigration-related terms:

**illegal immigration** Entering or residing in a country without authorization in violation of civil or criminal law. Except in direct quotes essential to the story, use *illegal* only to refer to an action, not a person: *illegal immigration*, but not *illegal immigrant*. Acceptable variations include *living in* or *entering a country illegally* or *without legal permission*.

Do not use the terms *alien, an illegal*, *illegals* or *undocumented* (except when quoting people or government documents that use these terms).

Do not describe people as violating immigration laws without attribution.
Los Angeles Times Style Guide, 1938

“Exercise care in all racial references. Chinese, for instance, are neither *Chinamen* nor *Chinks*. An Englishman is not a *Limey* and a Frenchman isn’t a *frog*. Hence, a German is no *Heinie* nor is an Italian a *Wop*. By the same token, a Japanese is not a *Jap* and a Jew is never a *Kike* or a *Yid*, etc.”
VIII. Use *Asian* or *Asian-American* in preference to *Oriental* when referring to groups or persons, except in direct quotations or the proper names of organizations.

IX. The word *Jew* should never be used as an adjective, nor should the word *Jewess*
III. Asian Americans

1.) Asian American is the preferred term for citizens of Asian descent. If the information is relevant to the story, try to specify the nation of origin.

2.) Asia covers a lot of territory, and it often is most appropriate to use a more specific term, such as Japanese American, Chinese American or Korean American.

3.) Do not use Oriental when referring to groups or persons, except in the proper names of organizations.

4.) In headlines, use Asian Groups or Asian American. Asians should be a last resort because it may mislead the reader.
Drop the Hyphen in *Asian American*

On the historical divisiveness of an unnecessary punctuation mark.

*By Henry Fuhrmann • January 23, 2018*
When author Viet Thanh Nguyen told his Facebook followers in May about a new essay of his in *The New York Times*, he noted that he and the paper of record differed on a seemingly minor detail: the punctuation. Elaborating on the piece, “The Great Vietnam War Novel Was Not Written by an American,” he pointed out that he had used *Vietnamese American*, “but the Times hyphenates it.”

Nguyen serves as the Aerol Arnold Chair of English at the University of Southern California, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for *The Sympathizer* in 2016, received a Guggenheim Fellowship in April, and was granted a
Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts. Many described the California-born author as Chinese, she noted, whereas “I am an American writer, who, like other American writers, wants to write the great American novel.”

“I have been thinking that we ought to leave out the hyphen in ‘Chinese-American,’ because the hyphen gives the word on either side equal weight, as if linking two nouns. ...Without the hyphen, ‘Chinese’ is an adjective and ‘American’ a noun; a Chinese American is a type of American. (This idea about the hyphen is my own, and I have not talked to anyone else who has thought of it; therefore, it is a fine point, ‘typical’ of no one but myself.)”

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thread: “Words are expressions of power and identity. And even something as trivial as punctuation can say a lot about what it means to become American,” wrote Eric Liu, a former speechwriter in the Clinton White House, in his 2014 essay “Why I Don’t Hyphenate Chinese American” at CNN.com.

“Chinese is one adjective. I am many kinds of American, after all: a politically active American, a short American, an earnest American, an educated American. This is not a quibble about grammar; it’s a claim about the very act of claiming this country.”
Re: Question No. 9: Please consider this, by @hfuhrmann

Drop the Hyphen in "Asian American" | Conscious Style Gu...
On the historical divisiveness of an unnecessary punctuation mark.
consciousstyleguide.com

12:19 PM - 29 Mar 2018
Thank you so much for sharing this with us! Our team has talked it over and we've updated our guideline to reflect Henry's points, and also link out to his piece. The internet rocks!

3:22 PM 29 Mar 2018
Shelby Coffey III, letter to Washington Post, 1993

“Looking at how language has affected those who have been scorned, ignored and excluded is a worthy task for a newspaper.”
“Language can be a tricky thing. It devolves and evolves, and terminology can embed our prejudices, at least until our thinking and usage around those terms change. ... Yet in the march of progress, we don’t make the same strides at the same time. We use language offensive to some, but not to others; slurs enter our everyday lexicon. And because we often are out of step with one another, calls to change offensive language—often made by those targeted by the slurs—are sometimes answered with ferocious resistance.”
Checklists

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Resources

Journalism Organizations & Community Guides

- Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA) | Covering Asian America: www.aaja.org/ajahandbook
- National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ)
- South Asian Journalists Association (SAJA)

For more, visit consciousstyleguide.com

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