

The Ethics of Labelling

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1



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2

Who are you? What do you do?



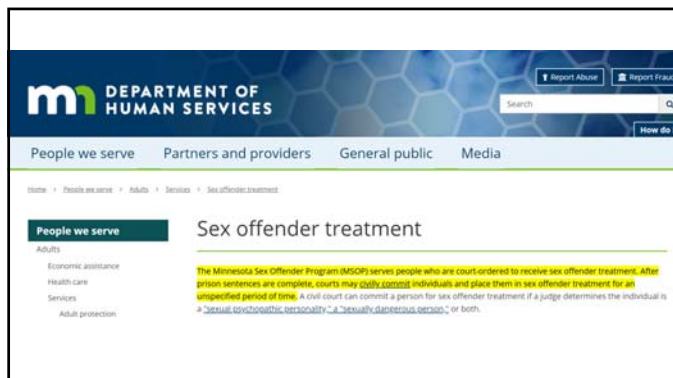
How do you respond to the stranger sitting next to you on the plane?

How do you describe the *people* at the centre of your work, research or practice?

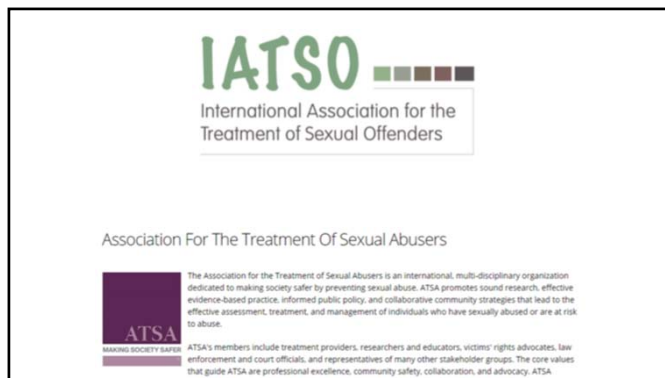
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Labels assigned *to* our clients

4



5



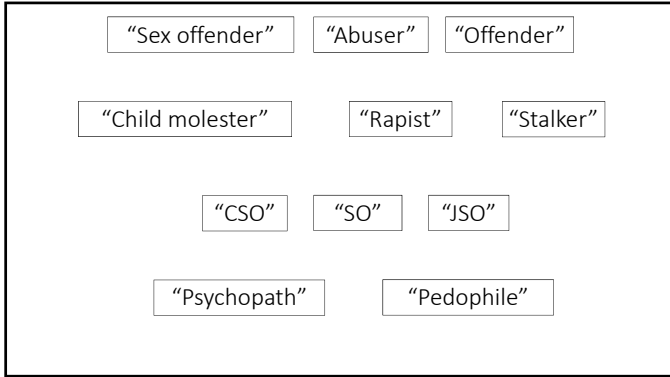
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7



8



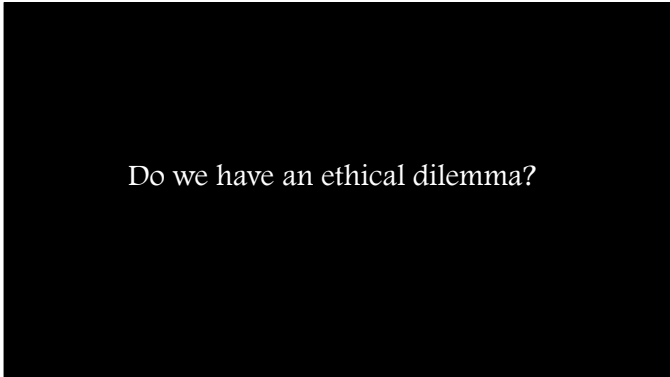
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10



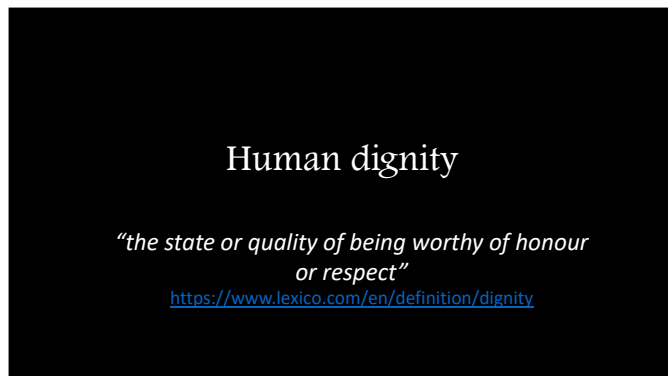
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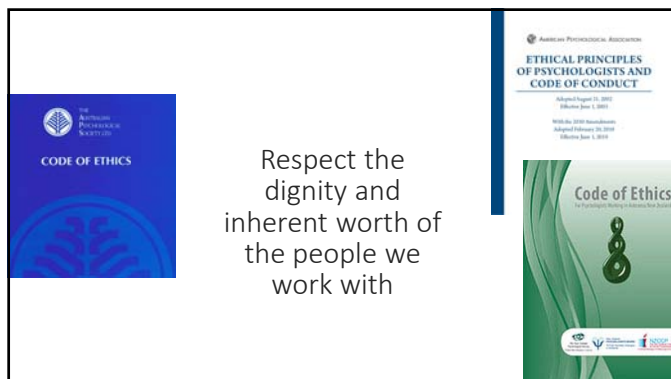
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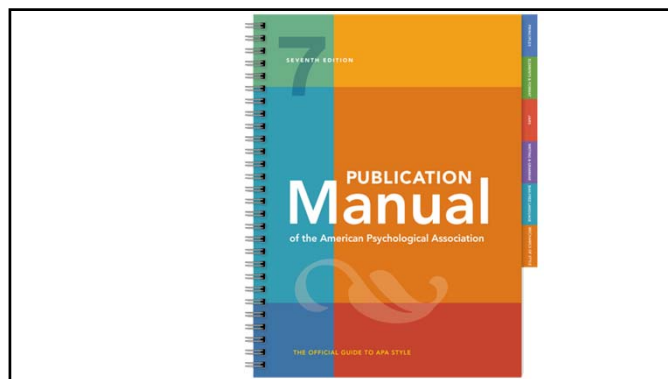
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14



15



16

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association

"Respect the language people use to describe themselves; that is, call people what they call themselves."

"Avoid using adjectives as nouns to label people (e.g., "the gays," "the poor") or labels that equate people with their condition (e.g., "amnesiacs," "schizophrenics," "the learning disabled," "drug users"). (p. 133)

17

Professional integrity

A professional is one who willingly "adopts" and consistently applies the knowledge, skills, and values of a chosen profession

<http://catalog-ngcsu.ung.edu/2011-12%20Graduate%20Catalog/3948.htm>

18

Do labels perpetuate misperceptions?

- Harris & Socia (2016): "sex offender" and "juvenile sex offender" labels = ↑ support for sex crime policies (vs. neutral language)
- Lowe & Willis (2019): "sex offender" label = less likely to volunteer with people who have committed sex crimes (vs. neutral language)

"People who have committed crimes of a sexual nature"

19

Beneficence and nonmaleficence

Beneficence: the quality or state of doing or producing good ...

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/beneficence>

Nonmaleficence: ...not to do harm intentionally

<https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/nonmaleficence>

20

What works to prevent reoffending and promote desistance?



21

Pgymalion effect = the power of supervisory expectations on subordinate performance (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968)

Higher expectations → Improved performance

22

An Alternative Dialogue

Separate the person from the behaviour, diagnosis, construct or offence.
Put the person first!

Individual convicted of a sexual crime
Man with paedophilic sexual interests
Person with a history of violent offending

23



24



25

Sexual Abuse submission guidelines

<https://au.sagepub.com/en-gb/ocx/sexual-abuse/journal201888#submission-guidelines>

Authors are encouraged to be thoughtful about the connotations of language used in their manuscripts to describe persons or groups. Person-first language (e.g., "persons with sexual offense histories"; "individual who has been adjudicated for...", "child/adolescent with sexual behavior problems") is generally preferred because it is often more accurate and less pejorative than terms like "sex offender". Terms like "sex offender" imply an ongoing tendency to commit sex offenses, which is inaccurate for many persons who have been convicted for sex offenses given current sexual recidivism base rates. Similarly, the term suggests a homogeneous group defined and stigmatized on the basis of criminal behaviors that may have taken place infrequently or many years in the past. Person-first language is also consistent with APA style guidelines for reducing bias in written language (see American Psychological Association, 2010). Authors will sometimes need to refer to current legal terms such as "Sexually Violent Predator" laws in the US; in such cases the legal term can be placed in italics or in quotation marks. Additional guidance on this recommendation can be found in the 6th edition of the APA Publication Manual, Willis (2018), and Willis and Letourneau (2018).

26

What the critics say

It's too hard and clumsy, my writing will suffer

Is it worth the effort? How hard is it when referring to people with schizophrenia? Or an Intellectual Disability?

My papers won't appear in keyword searches

They will if truncated search terms are used (sex offen*; child molest*; abuse*)

But that's how my clients refer to themselves

How is that for them? Would they prefer to see themselves differently?

27

Person-first or identity-first?

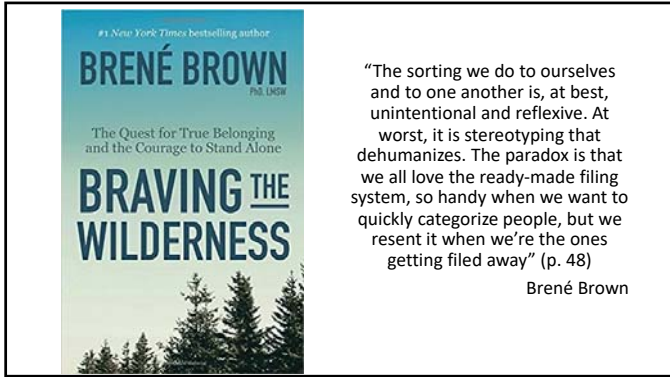
"Minor Attracted Person"
"MAP"

"Nonoffending pedophile"



Identity-first language "allows the individual to claim the disability and choose their identity ..." (p. 136)

28



29



30