The Use of Race and Sex/Gender in Timely Warning Notices

1st Annual Mid-Year Conference

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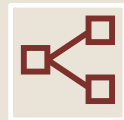University of Virginia's College at Wise

AGENDA

Pros & Cons

Using Race and Gender Identifiers

Suggested Language and Practices

Discussion & Q&A

What Do You See?

University of State Police Report of a Rape

On the morning of January 6, 2022,University Police received a report from a female lacrosse player that she was sexually assaulted by two brown males in Common Hall. The victim reported that she was sleeping in her residence room when she was awoken by two individuals entering her room on the 7th floor which she left unlocked. When the female student got up one male slammed her against the wall and then onto the bed where he ripped her clothes off and raped her while the second individual held her down.

The student has requested to not proceed with an investigation at this time and University Police are respecting their decision and are not investigating this incident.

"Consent" means an active agreement to participate in a sexual act. An active agreement is words and/or conduct that communicate a person's willingness to participate in a sexual act. It is important to communicate during sexual encounters as consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Consider Your Community

Every Institution is DIFFERENT

- What works for one school may not work for another

- There is no "one size fits all"

- Recruit your campus partners

- Create messaging that supports a unified community

Using Race and Gender Identifiers

PROS
Could help identify a suspect or assist police to locate perpetrator(s)
Clarity of what was reported
Ongoing threat

CONS
Potentially singling out an already marginalized group
Creating a culture of "fear" or misidentifying/profiling
Reinforces potential harmful racial and gender stereotypes

Using Race and Gender Identifiers

- Research suggests the use of race used in media can reinforce stereotyping (Lind, 2017).

- 80 percent of Blacks and 60 percent of Whites felt racial profiling was widespread in the United States (Higgins et al, 2010).

- Community racial tension had significant contextual effects on residents' perceived racial profiling by the police which in turn affected their trust and attitudes towards legitimacy, discouraging cooperation with police investigations and other practices. Additionally, negative attitudes held by citizens can cause police officers to become cynical toward the public (McNeeley & Grothoff, 2015).

- John Hopkins University Research articulated how the combination of both race and gender-based discrimination can undermine institutional trust in police and compromise health and safety (Decker et al, 2019).

- As race relations improve in the community, so will relations with public safety officials and profiling will feel less widespread (Higgins et al, 2010).

- A report by NAACP found that a quarter of LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV who reported in-person contact with law enforcement said they experienced harassment or misconduct—including profiling, verbal or physical assault, sexual harassment, or assault and false arrest (HRC, 2021).

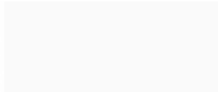# CASE STUDY

Taking Race Out of Crime Alerts?

University of Nebraska at Lincoln is under fire by students who thought police should not have mentioned in a campuswide bulletin that two men accused of sexual assault were black, believing that it reinforced harmful stereotypes.

By Jeremy Bauer-Wolf   // January 17, 2019

Description of Suspect(s):   Suspect (1): black male, short hair, wearing white pants, white jacket, black shoes, and black stocking hat, approximately 5'8"-5'11"

After a University of Nebraska at Lincoln student was sexually assaulted in her dormitory last month, some on the campus have condemned the email bulletin that warned about her assailants because police noted that the two suspects were black.

So vehement was the criticism among students that university officials are now re-evaluating when and how racial identifiers should be included in such warnings.

The debate on whether race is relevant in campus crime alerts crops up repeatedly nationwide.

Opinions on the matter differ.

Some Nebraska students and certain advocates believe that broadcasting a suspect's race -- which may seem innocuous and quite typical for an alert -- instead breeds fear because the notices can be

"Some Nebraska students and certain advocates believe that broadcasting a suspect's race -- which may seem innocuous and quite typical for an alert -- instead breeds fear because the notices can be vague and reinforce harmful stereotypes that black people commit crimes frequently.

Campus police officers, however, have said that federal law forces them to publicize information they have on violent crimes in a timely way, especially if suspects have not been detained and may pose a threat. They have said that descriptors, including racial ones, are important to warn the public and help police locate a perpetrator -- in the case of the sexual assault at Nebraska, the survivor didn't know the suspects well, and so they were still a threat to campus, university officials said."

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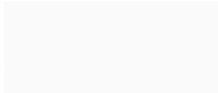Colleges Resume In-Person Classes   Bomb Threats at Black Colleges

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One student, Temi Onayemi, questioned in a tweet that was retweeted more than 300 times and liked 3,100 times (as of Wednesday) why the university had publicized the assault.

Out of all the sexual assault's that happen at UNL, why is it that the first one ever blasted to every student's email deals with two black men. Before anyone tries to make any "not a race thing statements", walk down Greek row, think about it, and get back to me. I'll listen.

— temi. (@TemiOnayemi) December 4, 2018

Sue Riseling, former Executive Director of the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators:

"Riseling said she supports campus police forces sharing a suspect's race because that informs the public and helps with an investigation. Only when a racial descriptor is all police have -- "a black man committed X, for example" -- should race be omitted, Riseling said.

"That doesn't help anyone," Riseling said. "And I understand the sensitivity -- we don't want to reinforce that black men are raping women. But I want to ask the students, I understand you're upset -- but how else would that have gone better? What could have been stated better?"
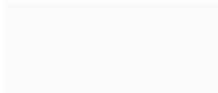
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"Researchers from Harvard University conducted an experiment in 2008 in which participants read two notices about a violent crime -- they were identical, except one listed the suspect as black, the other white. The psychologists reported that those who read the crime alert blaming a black person were more likely to associate African Americans with hostility and criminality.

Their findings showed "how a single word, indicating the racial identity of an alleged crime suspect, can shift implicit and explicit stereotypes toward entire racial groups," the researchers wrote."

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- Notably, at the University of Minnesota in 2015, following student complaints, the institution said it would limit references to race in its crime warnings to only "when there is sufficient detail that would help identify a specific individual or group."

- Brown University has also excluded race from its crime alerts since 2015.

- Faculty at Cornell University approved a resolution that would remove a suspect's race from crime alerts. 2021

Defining Race and Gender

- The Oxford English Dictionary currently defines **race** as:
  "A group of people connected by common descent or origin" or "any of the (putative) major groupings of mankind, usually defined in terms of distinct physical features or shared ethnicity" and ethnicity as "membership of a group regarded as ultimately of common descent, or having a common national or cultural tradition.

- The Oxford English Dictionary defines **gender:**
  Through the psychology and sociology lens as the state of being male or female as expressed by social or cultural distinctions and differences, rather than biological ones; the collective attributes or traits associated with a particular sex, or determined as a result of one's sex. Also: a (male or female) group characterized in this way.

Deciding to Use Race or Gender Identifiers

Remember: Language matters

- ✓ Timely warnings are a communication tool used by the institution to their community – despite what department they come from, will likely perceive the message of the timely warning reflects the attitude and opinions of the institution as a whole.

- ✓ Your messaging will paint a narrative to the reader how the institution perceives its culture and community.

Deciding to Use Race or Gender Identifiers

- Will using race or gender identification be helpful in warning others of a criminal incident to enable them to protect themselves and prevent similar crimes from happening?

- What other identifiers do you also have?

- Is the gender or race known and how was it identified in the report?

- Is the Complainant certain they identified the race/gender correctly?

- Can you use other institutional departments for review and support of language? (Title IX, Equity and Diversity, campus cultural centers)

Suggestions for More Inclusive Language for Public Disclosures

- Terminology, usage, and word choice are critically important, especially when describing people and when discussing race and ethnicity. Inclusive language supports diversity and conveys respect. Language that imparts bias toward or against persons or groups based on characteristics or demographics must be avoided.

- Language and terminology should be clear and reflect fairness, equity, and consistency in use and reporting of race and ethnicity.

- The reporting of race and ethnicity should not be considered in isolation but should be accompanied by reporting of other sociodemographic factors and social determinants.

- Many people may identify with more than 1 race and ethnicity; therefore, categories should not be considered absolute or viewed in isolation.

(Flanagin & Christiansen, 2021).

Suggestions for More Inclusive Prevention Language for Public Disclosures

- Consider public perception.
- What is the state of your current campus culture and climate?
- Is there a current unrest about race, sex/gender?
- Will your language fuel chaos or bring understanding and education? (Multiple sexual assault timely warnings, identifying a racial group without any other identifiers)
- Don't just check a box – know what you are saying.
- Plan ahead – don't wait till crime or crisis to occur to come up with language. Have conversations/committees to create templates, plans, and policies to go to and pull from in times of need.
- "An individual perceived to be…"

Suggestions for More Inclusive Prevention Language for Public Disclosures

IDENTITY

Capitalization

The names of races, ethnicities, and tribes should be capitalized, such as African American, Alaska Native, American Indian, Asian, Black, Cherokee Nation, Hispanic, Kamba, Kikuyu, Latino, and White. There may be sociopolitical instances in which context may merit exception to this guidance, for example, in an opinion piece for which capitalization could be perceived as inflammatory or inappropriate (eg, "white supremacy").

Adjectival Usage

Racial and ethnic terms should not be used in noun form (eg, avoid Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, or Whites); the adjectival form is preferred (eg, Asian women, Black patients, Hispanic children, or White participants). The adjectival form may be used as a predicate adjective to modify the subject of a phrase (eg, "the patients self-identified as Asian, Black, Hispanic, or White").

Most combinations of proper adjectives derived from geographic entities are not hyphenated when used as racial or ethnic descriptors. Therefore, do not hyphenate terms such as Asian American, African American, Mexican American, and similar combinations, and in compound modifiers (eg, African American patient).

17

Suggestions for More Inclusive Prevention Language for Public Disclosures

GENDER

Eliminate Pronouns
The use of Complainant and Respondent (or terms used in Policy) and defer from any pronouns unless needed for purposes already processed. Language continues to evolve, and it's important to stay up to date with these changes. That way, you can ensure you are promoting LGBTQ inclusive language throughout your organization at all times.

Trauma Informed and Reducing Stereotypes
Timely Warning Bulletins should use gender and culturally inclusive language and avoid victim-blaming.

Campuses need to acknowledge historical trauma and experiences, cultural stereotypes, biases, and myths associated with sexual and relationship violence as part of a trauma-informed approach of prevention, response, and advocacy services—for example, debunking the concept that men are not victims of sexual and relationship violence while building systems that are inclusive of addressing all types of victimization. (SAMHSA, 2018)

What Do You See?

Timely Warning per Report to University Police

Content warning: this warning addresses a report of sexual assault. Supportive resources are available on and off campus. (← Hyperlink to resources)

In an effort to provide timely and accurate information to our students, staff, and faculty members, the following information is being provided to you so that you can make informed decisions about your safety.

At approximately 2:30 am on January 6, 2021, University Police received a report of a sexual assault occurring on campus in a residential hall. The student reported two unknown individuals entered the room while they were asleep and was raped. The complainant was unable to provide a full detailed description of the suspects at this time.

The student has requested to not proceed with an investigation at this time. The university is providing supportive measures to student.

Please note that any race, ethnicity, gender, or religious affiliation are based on the perceived judgment of the complainant and provided to aid in suspect identification. These identifiers are not used as a basis for suspicion or guilt.

A sexual assault is never the fault of the complainant.

Roundtable Discussion

Questions & Answers

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