

Title: Addressing Sexual Violence with Institutional Courage

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Abstract: 

Sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace is almost always a severe betrayal of trust. I will describe research and theory that my students and I have developed over the last 25 years regarding interpersonal and institutional betrayals of trust. My presentation will include an explanation of betrayal trauma theory and information about institutional betrayal. I will present data from some of our research studies, including results from a study of sexual harassment of graduate students. Included will be research-based recommendations for how to respond well to disclosures of harassment and sexual violence as well as steps individuals and institutions can take to constructively address sexual violence and promote institutional courage.

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# Addressing Sexual Violence with Institutional Courage

1 February 2019 for Perimeter

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# Today

1. Betrayal Trauma & Betrayal Blindness
2. Institutional Betrayal
3. Lessons from Sexual Violence on Campus
4. Disclosure and DARVO
5. Institutional Courage

# 1. Betrayal Trauma & Betrayal Blindness

## Memory & Trauma – Consider Frank Fitzpatrick

Frank Fitzpatrick... began remembering having been sexually molested by a parish priest at age 12. ... Mr. Fitzpatrick's retrieval of the repressed memories began, he said, when "I was feeling a great mental pain..."

Mr. Fitzpatrick... slowly realized that the mental pain was due to a "betrayal of some kind," and remembered the sound of heavy breathing. "Then I realized I had been sexually abused by someone I loved," said Mr. Fitzpatrick.

But it was not until two weeks later that he suddenly remembered the priest, the Rev. James R. Porter.

The New York Times, 21 July 1992

# In 1991 we started with a question about human memory:

- Initial research questions
  - Why and how would individuals remain unaware of (or forget) traumas they had experienced?
  - Why are some traumas forgotten (and not others)?
- Proposed answer: Betrayal Trauma theory
  - How: mechanisms
  - *Why: motivations*

# Betrayal Trauma Theory: Consider our Sensitivity to Betrayal

- Ability to evaluate trustworthiness is highly important to our survival
  - We depend on social contracts
  - We are harmed by cheating and betrayal
- When empowered, we have exquisite sensitivity to cheating and betrayal
  - Response is adaptive: confrontation or withdrawal

# Betrayal Trauma Theory: Consider Human Dependence

- Humans are profoundly dependent on others
- Attachment system protects dependent person
- Baby has “job” to engage (love and be lovable)
  - Approach and positive engagement*
- With varying degrees, dependence and attachment continue throughout life
  - Including in workplace



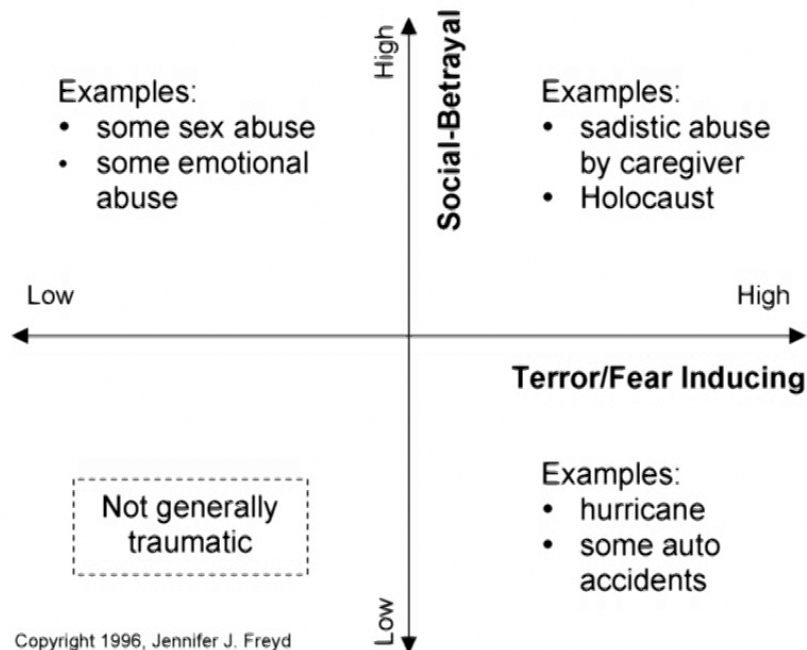


# Betrayal Trauma Theory: Betrayal Blindness as a Survival Mechanism

- What does a dependent person do when betrayed?
  - child abused by caregiver (or employee mistreated by boss) risks further mistreatment if awareness motivates withdrawal or confrontation
  - conflicts with needs of attachment (approach & engage)
- Betrayal blindness is advantageous when awareness would threaten necessary (or apparently necessary) relationships
- *Unawareness and forgetting are sometimes an adaptive response to betrayal*
  - *Short run survival; long run cost*

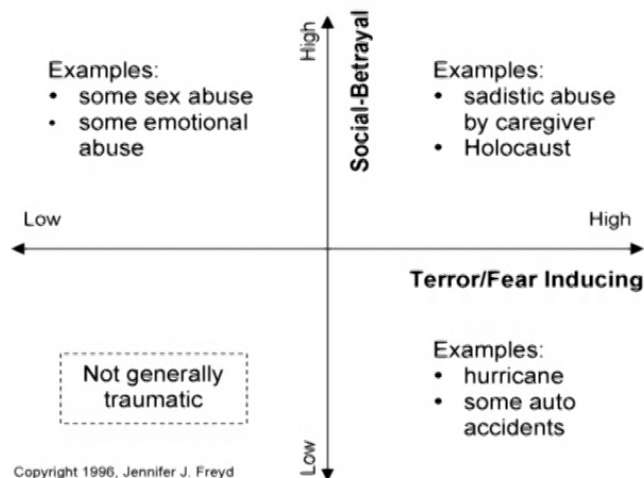


## Betrayal Trauma Theory Suggests Two Primary Dimensions of Traumatic Events



- Physically threatening and terrorizing (fear inducing)
- Social-betrayal (betrayal trauma)
- Would rates of forgetting and symptoms of distress depend on these dimensions?

# Memory Prediction

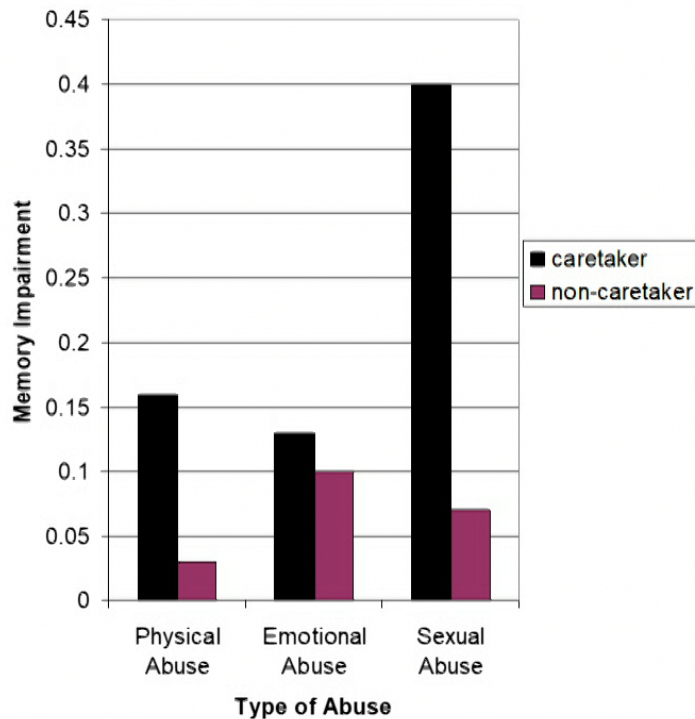


- Betrayal trauma theory predicts that forgetting and unawareness will be greater for betrayal traumas than non-betrayal traumas

# Motivation to Not Remember: A Specific Prediction

- Childhood abuse perpetrated by a caregiver will lead to more forgetting than will abuse perpetrated by a non-caregiver

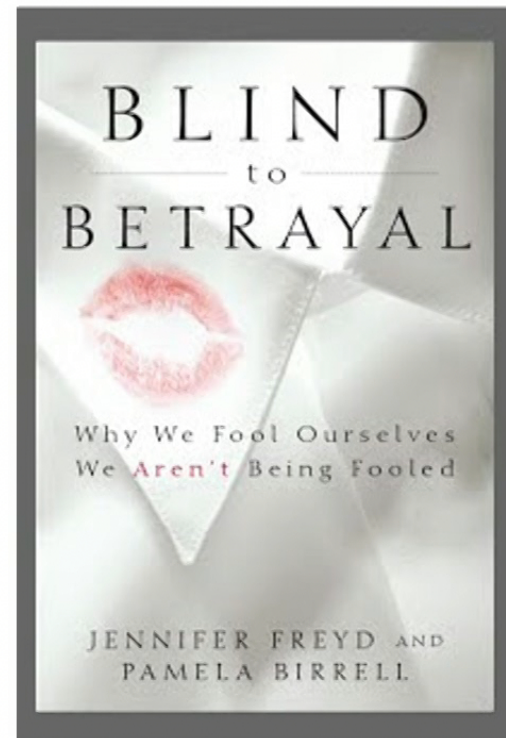
## BTI: Memory and Victim-Perpetrator Relationship (Freyd, DePrince, & Zurbriggen, 2001)



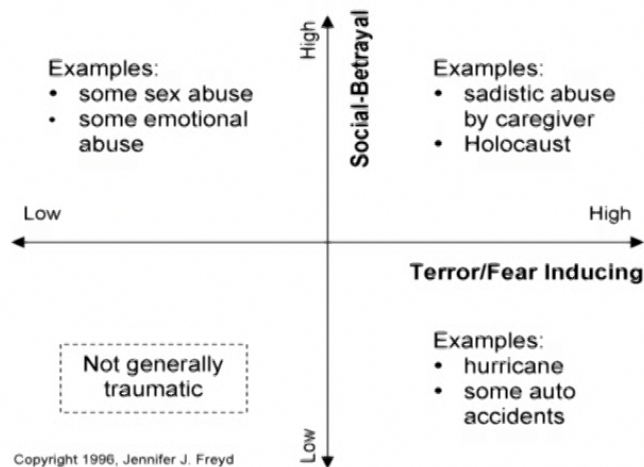
- College student population of 202 participants.
- “Memory impairment” = forgetting
- Abuse perpetrated by a caregiver is related to less persistent memories of abuse.
- Follow-up regression analyses: Age and duration of abuse did not account for findings.

# Research Indicates Betrayal Blindness is Pervasive

- Victims, perpetrators, and witnesses engage in betrayal blindness in order to preserve relationships upon which they depend

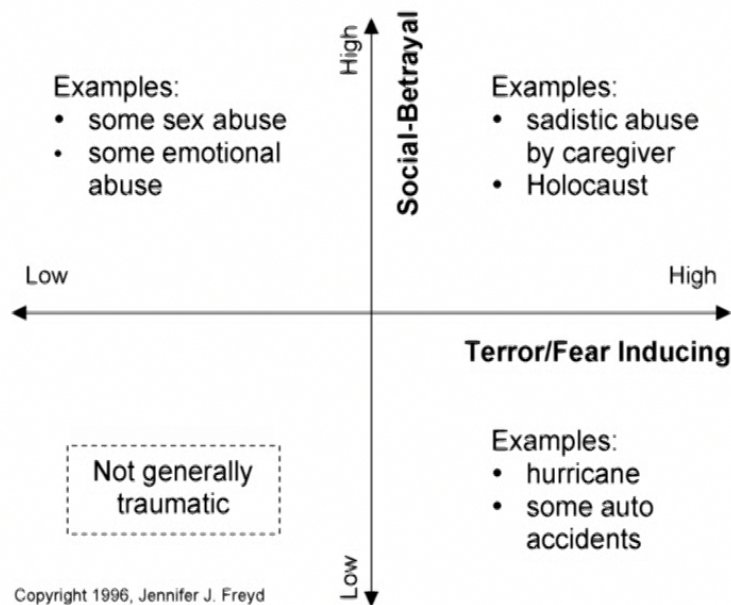


# Are Physical and Mental Health Difficulties Also Related to Betrayal Traumas?



- **Memory/forgetting is related to betrayal.**
- **Is exposure to BT related to other trauma symptoms?**

# Summary of 20+ Years of Research: Betrayal is Toxic

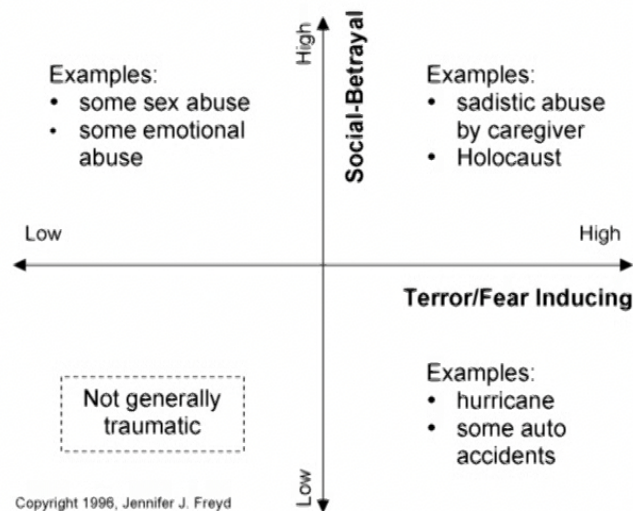


- High Betrayal is associated with forgetting and unawareness and not telling: betrayal blindness
- High Betrayal is also associated with increases in symptoms of

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Dissociation
- Shame
- PTSD
- Physical illness
- BPD features
- Hallucinations
- Self harm
- Problematic substance use
- Revictimization



# What about Gender and Betrayal?



- Combining across events, men and women have similar overall rates of trauma
- But gender differences emerge for different types of event categories

## Lots of Gender Differences for Different Types of Event Occurrences (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006)

Significance Levels for chi-square test of gender differences (Likelihood Ratio).

**Violet** indicates women report more; **blue** indicates men report more. Significant effects in bold. \*\*\* means  $p < .001$

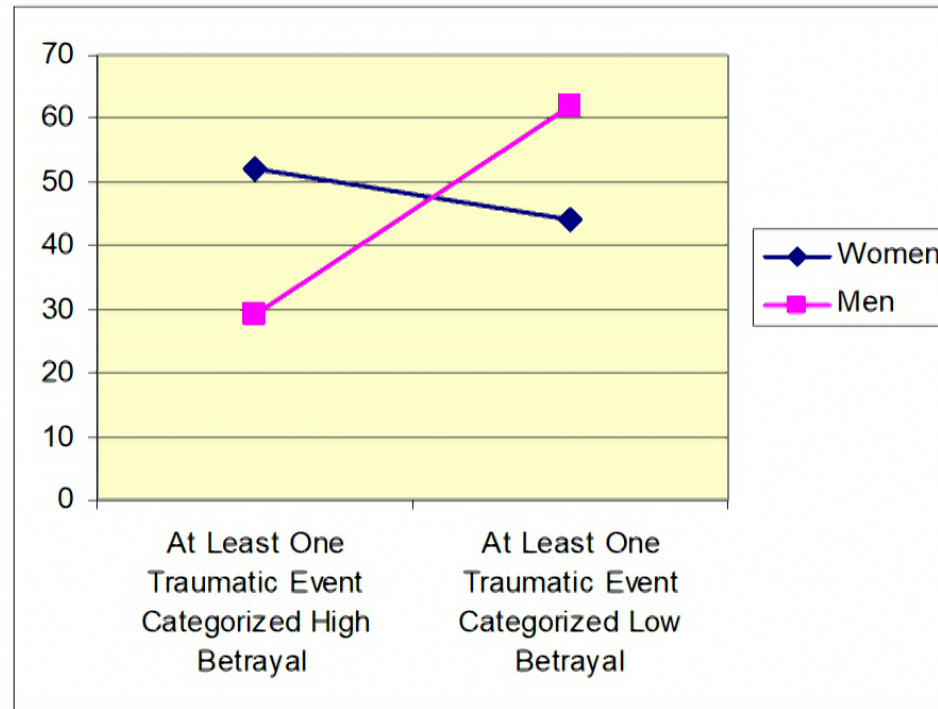
[Eugene-Springfield community sample: 422 women; 304 men]

	<b>Before 18</b>	<b>After 18</b>
Earthquake, fire, flood	.27014	.19245
Automobile, bike accident	.29703	<b>.00025***</b>
Witness...close...killed	.37203	.25018
Witness...not close...killed	<b>.00000***</b>	<b>.00000***</b>
Witness...close...attack family member	.04805	<b>.00057***</b>
Attacked...close	.06219	<b>.00000***</b>
Attacked...not close	<b>.00000***</b>	<b>.00002***</b>
Sex abuse...close	<b>.00000***</b>	<b>.00031***</b>
Sex abuse...not close	<b>.00000***</b>	<b>.00001***</b>
Emotionally mistreated	<b>.00001***</b>	<b>.00000***</b>
Death of own child	n too small	.01454
Other traumatic event	.87752	.04473

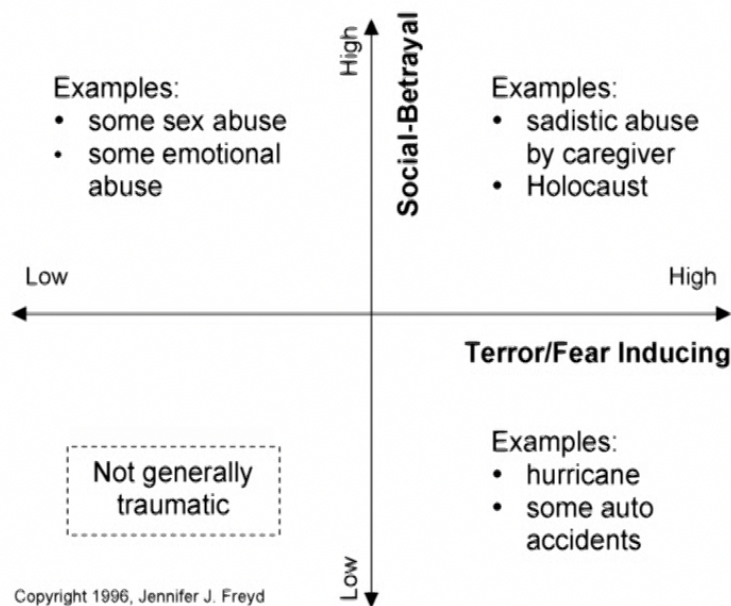
## Observed Gender Differences Categorized by Degree of Betrayal (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006)

	<b>High Betrayal Items (6 items)</b>	<b>Medium Betrayal Items (12 items)</b>	<b>Low Betrayal Items (6 items)</b>
<b>Women Report More of This Trauma (p&lt;.001)</b>	Emotional Abuse Adult*** Emotional Abuse Adult*** Close Sex Abuse Child*** Emotional Abuse Child*** Close Sex Abuse Adult***	Not-close Sex Abuse Child*** Not-close Sex Abuse Adult*** Witness someone close attack family member Adult ***	
<b>Men Report More of This Trauma (p&lt;.001)</b>		Not-close Attack Child*** Not-close Attack Adult***	Witnessed Not-close Death Adult*** Accident Adult*** Witness Not-close Attack Child***

# Exposure to high versus low betrayal trauma (Goldberg & Freyd, 2006)



# Summary of 20+ Years of Research: *Betrayal Trauma is Toxic & Gendered*



- High Betrayal is associated with forgetting and unawareness and not telling: betrayal blindness
- High Betrayal is also associated with increases in symptoms of

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Dissociation
- Shame
- PTSD
- Physical illness
- BPD features
- Hallucinations
- Self harm
- Problematic substance use
- Revictimization

- *Perpetrators most often men*
- *Women/girls most often targets*

## 2. Institutional Betrayal

# What about Institutional Betrayal?

- Can betrayal trauma (*and blindness*) occur in response to institutional behaviors?
  - First empirical focus: educational institutions



# Defining Institutional Betrayal

- Institutions harming those dependent on the institution
- Includes the failure to prevent or respond supportively to wrongdoings within the institution when there is a reasonable expectation of protection.





# Could we measure institutional betrayal? (Smith & Freyd, JTS, 2013)

- College student sample
- Measured
  - Sexual Assault Experiences
  - Trauma Symptoms
  - Institutional Betrayal



Carly Smith  
(now Assistant Professor  
at Penn State)

# Institutional Betrayal Questionnaire (IBQ, Smith & Freyd)

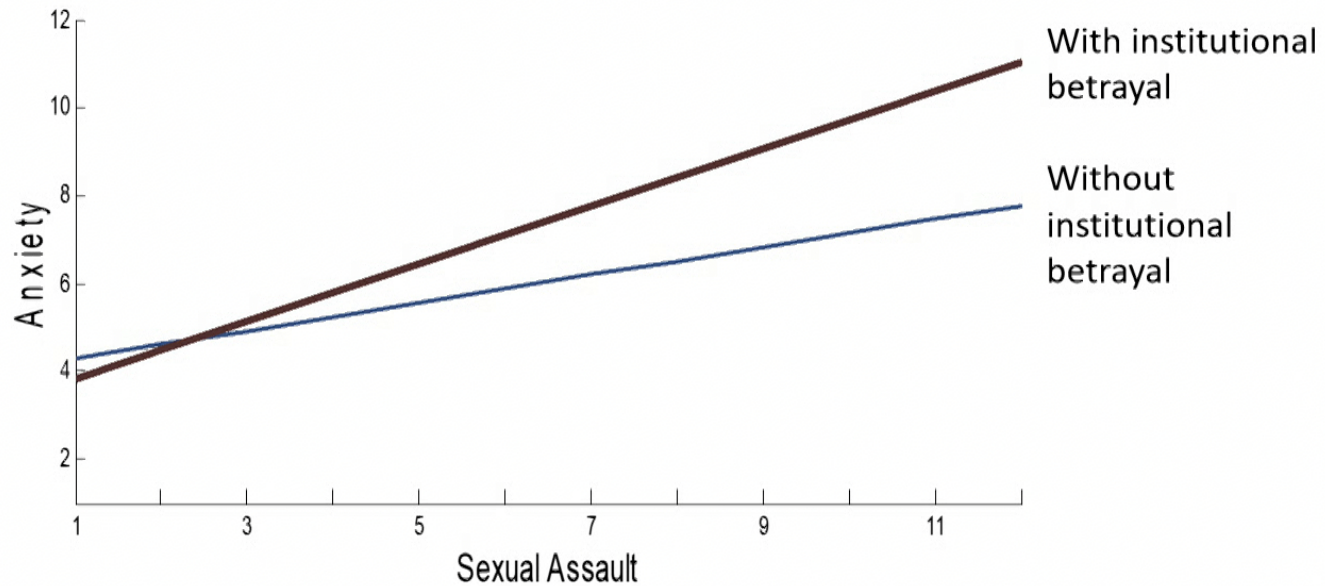
1. Not taking proactive steps to prevent this type of experience?
2. Creating an environment in which this type of experience/s seemed common or like no big deal?
3. Creating an environment in which this experience seemed more likely to occur?
4. Making it difficult to report the experience/s?
5. Responding inadequately to the experience/s, if reported?
6. Covering up the experience/s?
7. Punishing you in some way for this experience (e.g., loss of privileges or status)?

## What did we find? (Smith & Freyd, 2013)

- High rates of lifetime sexual assault in college sample
  - Trauma symptoms related to sexual assault
- 40% of those reporting sexual assault did also indicate institutional betrayal.
  - Trauma symptoms were related to institutional betrayal
- And....

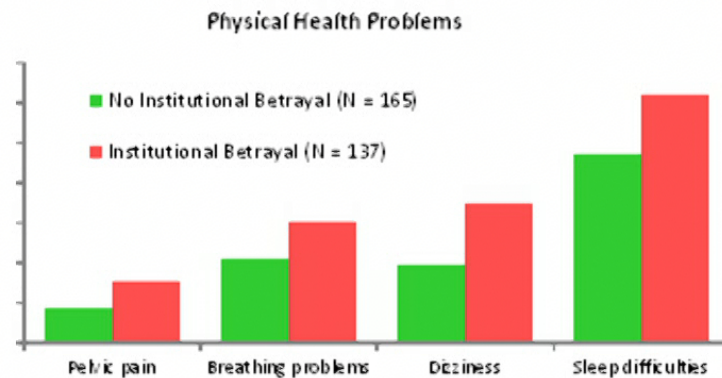
## Institutional Betrayal Exacerbates Trauma Symptoms (Smith & Freyd, 2013)

- Exacerbates **Anxiety**, Dissociation, Sexual Problems, and Sexual-abuse related symptoms



# Physical Health Costs of Institutional Betrayal (Smith & Freyd, 2017)

- Institutional betrayal is also associated with physical health problems, even when controlling for betrayal trauma



# Betrayal blindness? (Smith & Freyd, 2017)

- Institutional betrayal exposure and then staying in the institution is also associated with dissociative symptoms (unawareness, forgetting) even when controlling for betrayal trauma exposure

# Perceptions of Institutional Betrayal Predict Suicidal Self-Directed Violence Among Veterans Exposed to Military Sexual Trauma

Lindsey L. Monteith,<sup>1,2</sup> Nazanin H. Bahraini,<sup>1,2</sup> Bridget B. Matarazzo,<sup>1,2</sup>  
Kelly A. Soberay,<sup>1</sup> and Carly Parnitzke Smith<sup>3</sup>

JOURNAL OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. 0(0), 1–13 (2016) © 2016 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.  
Published online in Wiley Online Library (wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/jclp). DOI: 10.1002/jclp.22292

## Findings with US Veterans (Monteith et al 2016)

- MST survivors experiences of institutional betrayal associated with:
  - PTSD symptoms
  - Depression
  - **Higher odds of attempting suicide**

# Reinforcing Inequality?

- Our research indicates those with less status appear most likely to experience institutional betrayal
  - Higher rates of victimization, AND
  - After victimization, higher rates of institutional betrayal

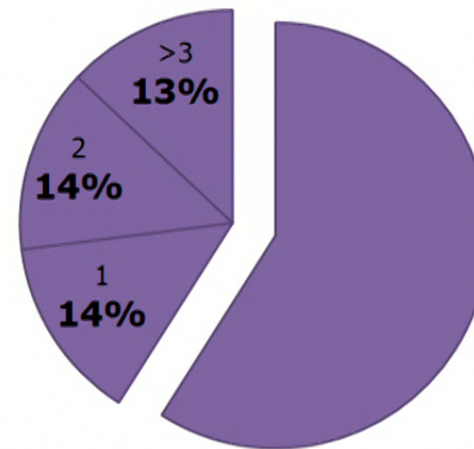


## Institutional betrayal also costly for institutions

- Disengagement from the system
- Illness, absenteeism, turn-over
- Loss of potential work-force, talent
- Internal rot, corruption, eventual collapse
  
- Reputational cost? (depending on societal context, whisper networks, PR disasters)

## Tip: Regularly Measure Institutional Betrayal in Anonymous Surveys

2014 Campus Survey Results:  
41% of students experienced  
**at least one** type of  
institutional betrayal related to  
a non-consensual sexual  
experience (Freyd, Smith,  
Rosenthal, 2014)



### **3. Lessons from Sexual Violence on Campus**

# Sexual Assault and Harassment on Campus

- Usually a betrayal trauma
- Victimization risk associated with gender and other aspects of social inequality
- Associated with numerous negative outcomes
- Compounded by institutional betrayal

# Growing Awareness for Campus Sexual Trauma

- From 2010 research to 2013 publication substantial change in national climate for campus situation
  - By early 2013 much press attention to the topic of campus sexual violence largely due to student grassroots effort
  - January 2014 White House Task Force



# Meanwhile, at the University of Oregon (UO)



- In May 2014 a gang rape allegation (involving athletes)
- and questions about how the university administration had responded -- threw the campus into crisis

# A Campus in Crisis: UO in May 2014



## In Summer 2014 at the UO

- Making institutional changes became a priority
- We needed to gather local data on campus victimization and institutional behavior
- This quickly led to our first campus sexual violence survey at the UO in August 2014



# Grist for the mill

- My lab has now completed two campus surveys (2014 and 2015)
- Being a researcher studying my own university has been a learning experience.



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# Our Framework for Researching Sexual Violence & Harassment

- Sexual violence is simultaneously a public health, criminal/justice, spiritual, civic, educational, workplace, civil rights, and human rights issue.
  - It is both an interpersonal and institutional issue

## Sexual Violence – Behaviors we Measure

- Sexual assault
- Stalking & Dating Violence (battering)
- Sexual harassment
  - Sexual coercion
  - Unwanted sexual attention (come ons)
  - Gender harassment (put downs)

Note: our measures use *behavioral* items

**SEXUAL COERCION**

promising professional rewards in return for sexual favors

threatening professional consequences unless sexual demands are met

**UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION**

sexual assault

rape

unwanted groping or stroking

**PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS**

**GENDER HARASSMENT**

relentless pressure for sex

unwanted sexual discussions

nude images posted at work

relentless pressure for dates

sexually humiliating acts

offensive sexual teasing

sexual insults  
e.g. "for a good time call...",  
calling someone a whore

sexist insults  
e.g. women don't belong  
in science

offensive remarks about bodies

obscene gestures

sabotage of women's equipment

vulgar name calling  
e.g. "slut," "bitch," "c\*\*t"

gender slurs  
e.g. "pu\*\*y"

insults to working mothers  
e.g. "you can't do this job with  
small kids at home"

Sexual Harassment of Women:  
Climate, Culture, and Consequences in  
Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine  
<https://www.nationalacademies.org/sexualharassment>

The National Academies of  
SCIENCES  
ENGINEERING  
MEDICINE

# Lessons from a campus survey in 2015

- Research team included UO doctoral students Carly Smith, Marina Rosenthal, Jennifer Gómez, and Alec Smidt



Survey instruments & findings at:

<http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/campus/>

## 2015 Rates of Victimization for Undergraduate Students While at UO

Victimization Type	Male Undergraduates	Female Undergraduates
Completed penetration without consent	1%	<b>13%***</b>
Any attempted or completed sexual contact without consent	6%	<b>27%***</b>
Stalking	19%	<b>26%*</b>
Dating violence (battering)	6%	<b>14%**</b>
Sexual or gender-based harassment-related event– by other student	46%	<b>68%***</b>
Sexual or gender-based Harassment-related event – by faculty/staff	21%	<b>28%*</b>

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001, higher rate for females compared to males

## 2015 Rates of Victimization for Graduate Students While At UO

Victimization Type	Male Graduate Students	Female Graduate Students
Completed penetration without consent	<1%	4%*
Any attempted or completed sexual contact without consent	4%	10%*
Stalking	12%	25%***
Dating violence (battering)	6%	11%
Sexual or gender-based harassment-related event– by other student	39%	58%***
Sexual or gender-based Harassment-related event – by faculty/staff	23%	38%***

\*p<.05, \*\*\*p<.001, higher rate for females compared to males

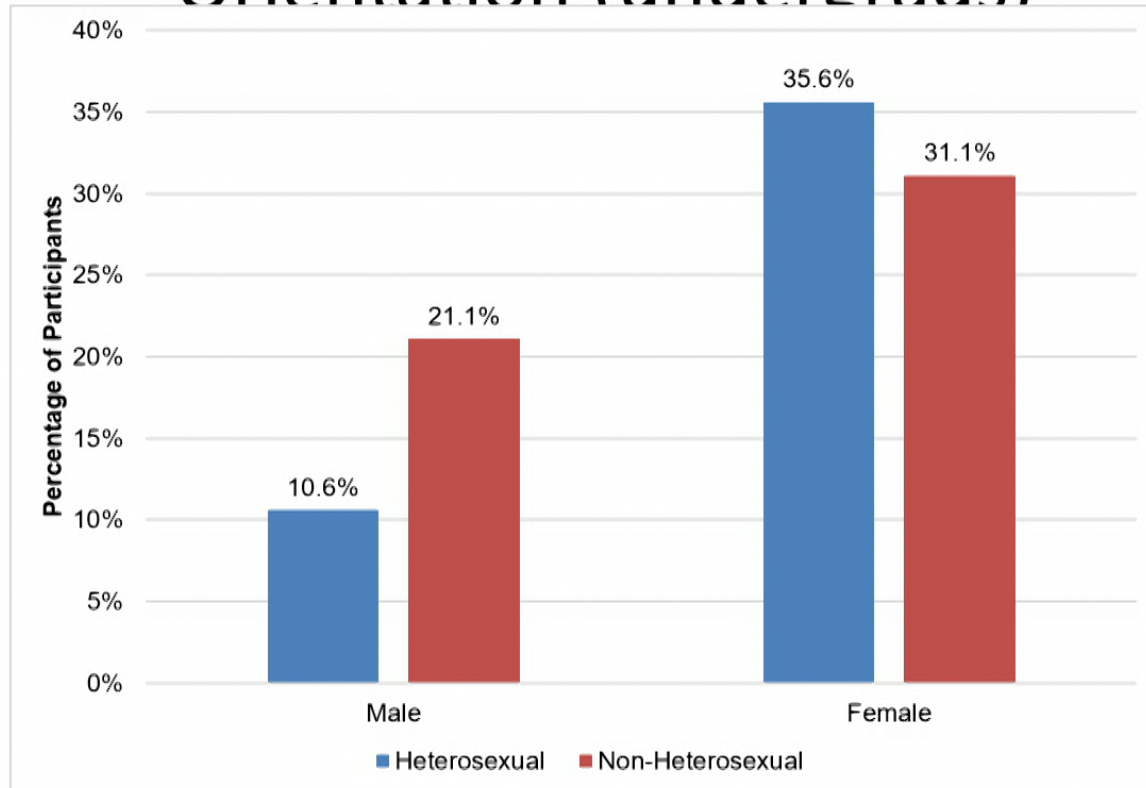
## Sexual harassment of graduate students by faculty/staff (Rosenthal, Smidt, & Freyd 2016)

- Controlling for other forms of victimization, harassment by faculty and staff is associated with
  - Feeling unsafe
  - Trauma symptoms
  - Experiences of additional institutional betrayal
- Sexual harassment by faculty and staff is itself a *kind* of overt institutional betrayal?

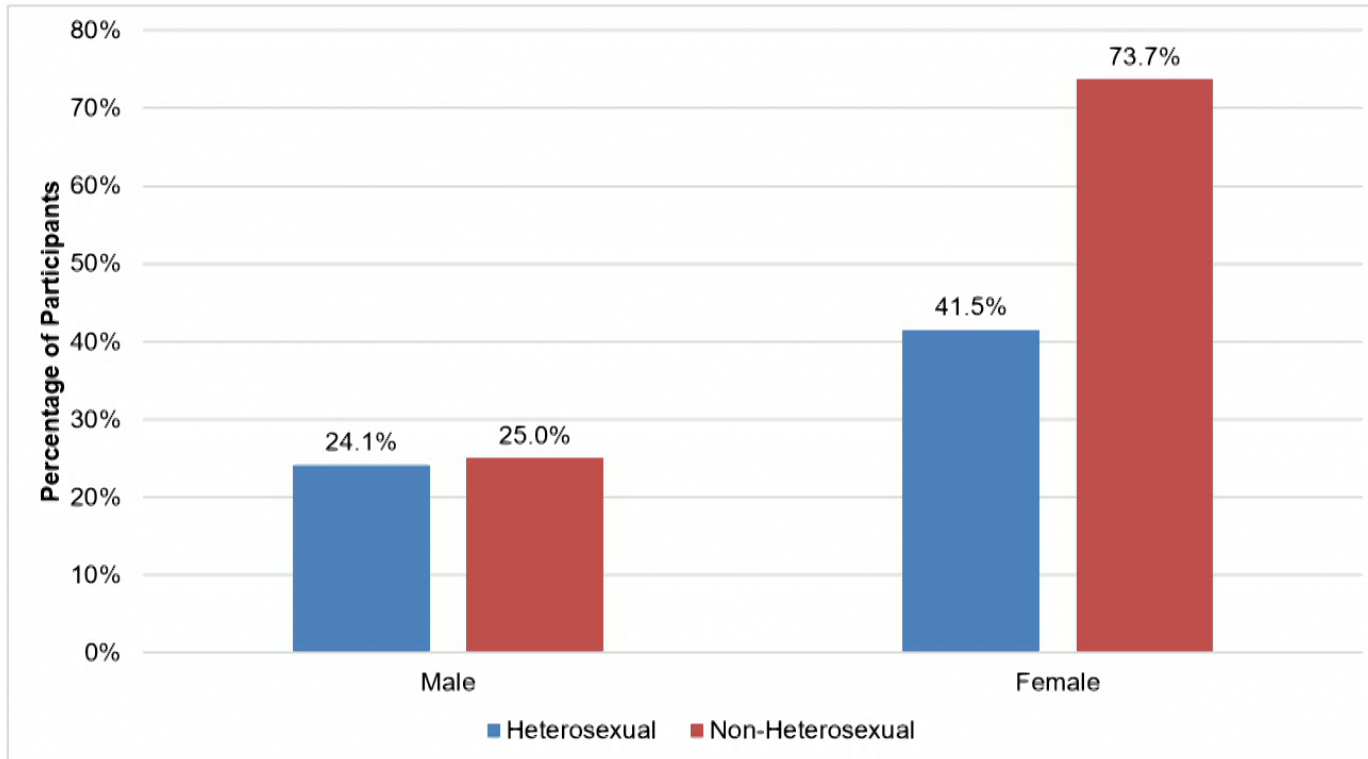


# A note about sexual violence and sexual orientation

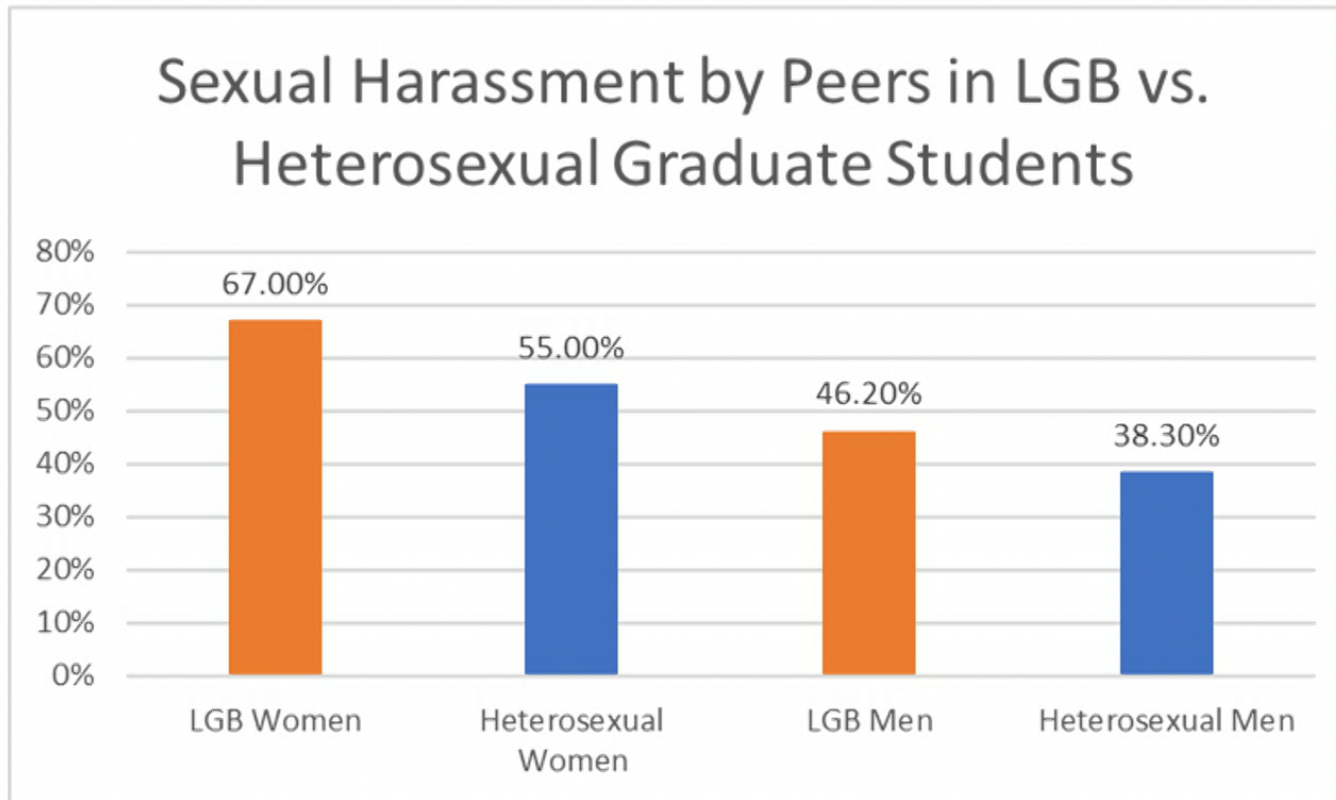
# From our UO campus survey: Sexual Assault by Gender and Sexual Orientation (undergrads)



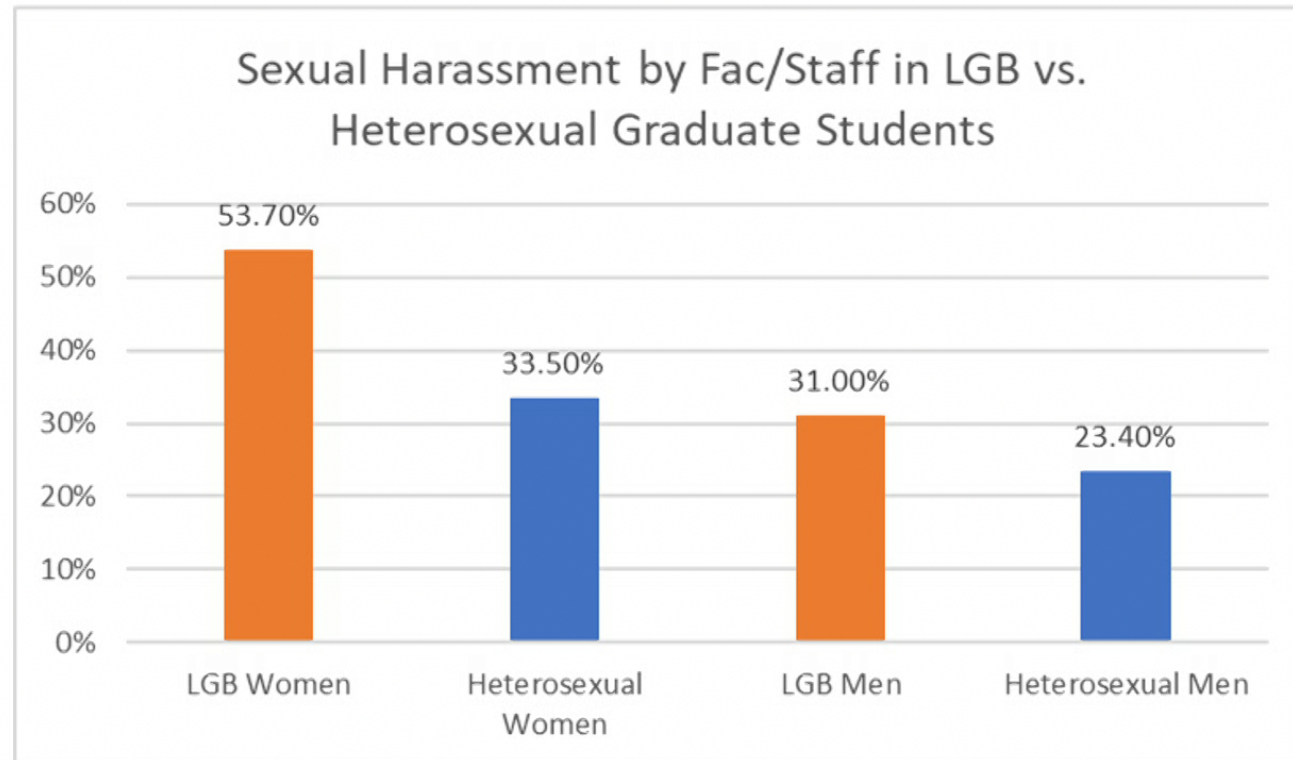
# Institutional Betrayal by Gender and Sexual Orientation (undergrads)



# Sexual Harassment of Grads by Peers (Rosenthal, Smidt, & Freyd, 2016)



# Sexual Harassment of Grads by Fac/Staff (Rosenthal, Smidt, & Freyd, 2016)



# Intersections of Dimensions of Inequality

- Interpersonal and institutional betrayal is not distributed equally
  - Gender, race & ethnicity, sexual orientation are risk factors
  - Religion, age, other dimensions of inequality?
- Double or triple or more jeopardy?
- More research is needed

## **4. Disclosure and DARVO**

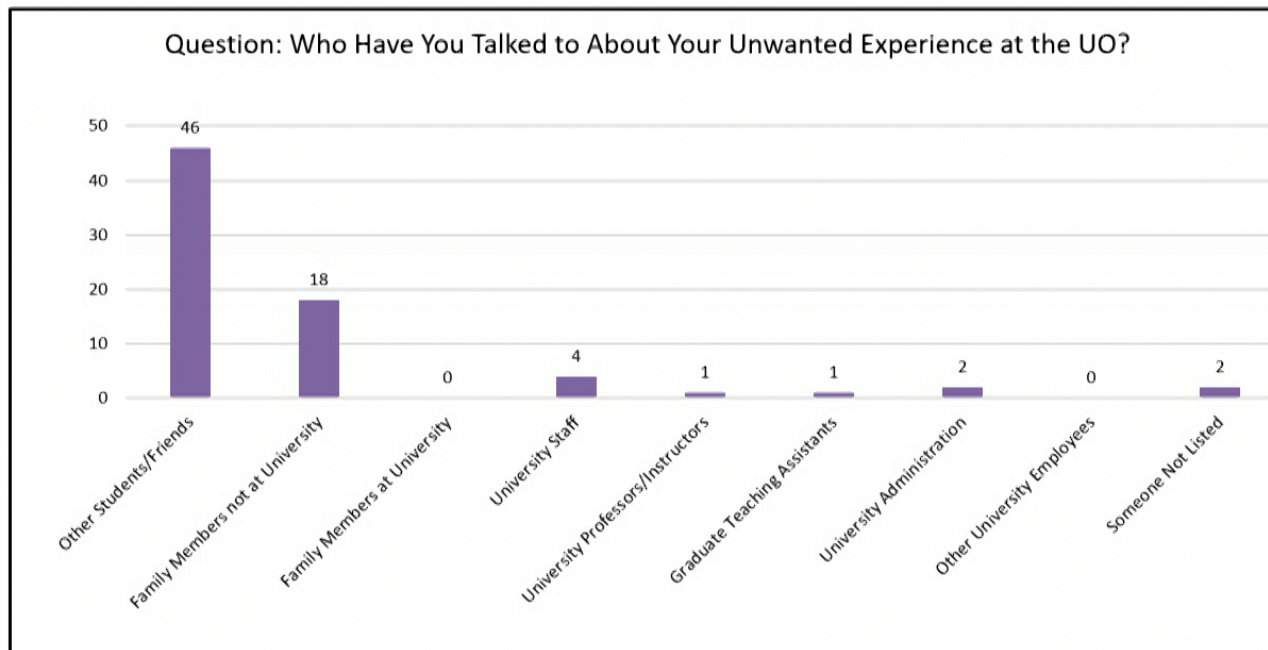
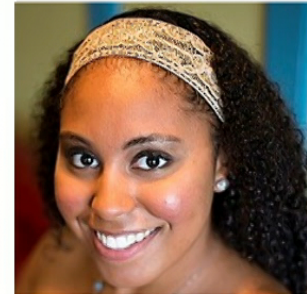
# The Problem of Reporting

- Without reporting difficult to stop sexual violence
- And yet reporting is rare.
- E.G. Only 6% of sexually harassed grad students reported the harassment to university sources (Rosenthal, Smidt, & Freyd 2016)



# Barnes & Freyd (2017) – 512 undergrads surveyed

- Of the 189 students who had experienced sexual victimization on campus only 50 had told anyone at all. And *who* had they told?



# Why don't victims report?

- While reporting can lead to a good outcome, *reporting is risky*
- A bad response makes things *worse* for the victim
- A bad response can be a *new betrayal trauma*
- A bad response from the institution is *institutional betrayal*

# Harmful Responses

- blaming
- invalidating
- punishing

## ALSO

- not acknowledging and changing topic
- minimizing reassurances
- turning the discussion to the self
- *taking away control* from survivor

# Well-Intentioned but Unschooled Listeners Can Learn

- People can learn to become better listeners through education (e.g. Foynes & Freyd, 2011)
- Tips and discussion guides at <http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/disclosure/goodlistener.html>

# A note about reporting policies

Mandatory reporting policies: *safe* or *effective*?

- Taking away control of disclosure information is harmful to victims
- Mandatory reporting *chills* reporting

- Resource on research & policy alternatives:

<http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/disclosure/requiredreporting.html>

# *A Particularly Pernicious Response:* DARVO (Freyd, 1997)

- The perpetrator (or others) may
  - Deny the behavior
    - “None of this ever took place”
  - Attack the individual doing the confronting
    - “You are a disgusting human being”
  - Reverse the roles of Victim and Offender
    - “I am a victim”

<http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/defineDARVO.html>

# DARVO Research Findings

- Harsey, Zurbriggen, & Freyd, 2017
  - DARVO by perpetration is associated with victim *self-blame*
- Harsey & Freyd, under review
  - For 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, DARVO results in *more doubt about the victim's credibility*
  - Education about DARVO reduces its power to discredit the victim's credibility
- *DARVO must be called out to defang it*

## **5. Institutional Courage**



# Can We Prevent Institutional Betrayal?



- Inevitable problem?
- Institutional courage: Create structural changes to provide an antidote and vaccine

# 10-Steps to Promote Institutional Courage

1. Comply with laws *and* go beyond mere compliance; beware risk management mindset
2. Educate institutional community (especially leadership)
3. Respond well to victim disclosures (& create a trauma-informed reporting policy)
4. Bear witness, be accountable, apologize
5. Cherish the truth tellers
6. Conduct scientifically-sound anonymous surveys
7. Regularly engage in self-study
8. Be transparent about data and policy
9. Use the organization to address the societal problem
10. Commit on-going resources to 1-9

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# Commit On-going Resources

“Don't tell me what you value, show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value.”

– Joe Biden

# What Institutional Courage Looks Like: Brenda Tracy and Oregon State U\*

- 1998: Tracy reported to police that she had been gang raped at a party. Two of the accused assailants were OSU football players.
- Prosecutors led her to believe the case was weaker than it was; rape kits destroyed; the 2 football players had one game suspension and community service; no one from OSU talked to Tracy

\*[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/oregon-state-university-sexual-assault\\_us\\_56f426c3e4b02c402f66c3b9](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/oregon-state-university-sexual-assault_us_56f426c3e4b02c402f66c3b9)

## Flash forward to 2014

- In 2014 Tracy became curious what OSU had done and called OSU. At first OSU was evasive and then Tracy met and talked to John Canzano, a sports columnist at the *Oregonian*.
- Canzano wrote a column about the case in Portland city newspaper.
- President of OSU Ed Ray read the column and ordered an investigation
- Three weeks later he met with Tracy and shared the results of the investigation

# The University President Apologized for Past Institutional Betrayal

*Dear Brenda, Oregon State officials are very grateful that you took time to meet with us. We are so sorry for what you experienced in 1998 and have lived with since. What we have learned recently of your suffering is heart breaking, and your bravery inspires us.*



Office of the President  
Oregon State University, 600 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-2128  
Phone 541-737-4133 | Fax 541-737-3033

December 10, 2014

Dear Brenda,

Oregon State officials are very grateful that you took time to meet with us. We are so sorry for what you experienced in 1998 and have lived with since. What we have learned recently of your suffering is heart-breaking, and your bravery inspires us.

We are also grateful to you for raising the public dialogue about the consequences of sexual violence in our society and for raising a discussion of how society can better assist survivors of such violence. While we cannot undo this nightmare, we apologize to you for any failure on Oregon State University's part to better assist you in 1998.

## From the apology letter

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## From the apology letter

*As promised a few weeks ago, we conducted an exhaustive review of the facts of how OSU handled this matter 16 years ago. This review was completed this past Friday, and we want to share the results of that review with you.*

# Follow-up Courage

- After Ed Ray apologized to Brenda Tracy, he **hired her** to be a consultant to address improving institutional response.
- Many important innovations and changes since then.

# What Institutional Courage Looks Like

- Investigation & Transparency
- Apology
- Partnership with Brenda Tracy
- Support legislation
- Create Sexual Assault Resource Center
- Expand Title IX administrators and resources
- Increasing awareness on campus
- Continuing efforts



OSU President Ed Ray and Brenda Tracy

# We Can Nurture Institutional Courage

- Ending sexual harassment and assault is a challenge and will take time and effort
- But we can end institutional betrayal relatively quickly by nurturing institutional courage
  - Working with organizations
  - creating the Center for Institutional Courage
- Replacing institutional betrayal with institutional courage will be
  - Better for individuals
  - Better for institutions
  - And *that* is a crucial step in the right direction

*Thank you!*

*Full text of articles and additional resources <http://dynamic.uoregon.edu>  
<https://www.jjfreyd.com/>*