

Moving from Institutional Betrayal to Institutional Courage

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For “Trust, Love and Betrayal”, the 3rd Biennial
Childhood Trauma Conference, Australian Childhood
Foundation, Melbourne , 29 July to 3 August 2018.

Plans for today

- Betrayal Trauma Theory (brief review)
- Institutional Betrayal
- Disclosure and DARVO
- Institutional Courage

Betrayal Trauma Theory Review

- Please frequently remain unaware of or even forget traumas and abuse they experience
- *Why?*

Why be unaware of abuse?

Consider our Sensitivity to Betrayal

- Some ability to evaluate trustworthiness is highly important to any social species
- When empowered, we have exquisite sensitivity to cheating and betrayal
- Response: withdrawal or confrontation

Betrayal Trauma Theory: Consider Human Dependence

- Humans, particularly children, are profoundly dependent on others
- Attachment system protects dependent person/child
- Baby has “job” to engage (love and be lovable)
 - Approach and positive engagement*

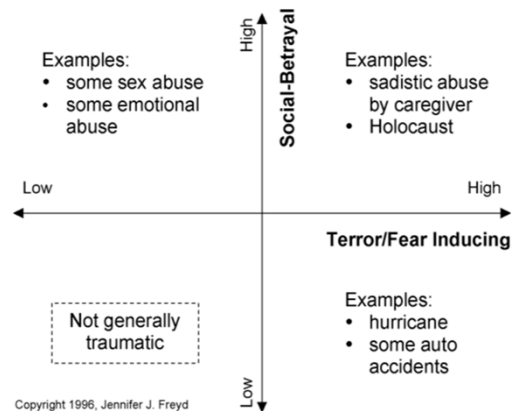


Betrayal Trauma Theory: Betrayal Blindness as a Survival Mechanism

- What does a child do when caregiver betrays?
 - a child abused by a caregiver would risk further mistreatment if awareness caused withdrawal or confrontation
 - conflict between sensitivity to betrayal and needs of attachment (approach & engage)
- Betrayal blindness occurs when awareness would threaten necessary (or apparently necessary) relationships
- Thus unawareness and forgetting are sometimes an adaptive response to betrayal



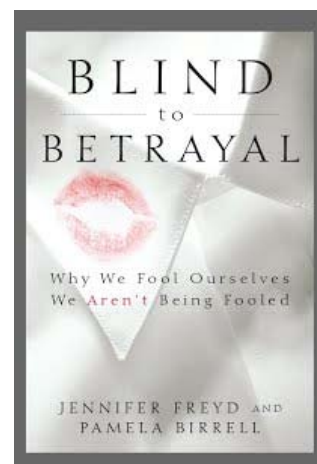
Betrayal Trauma Theory Suggests Two Primary Dimensions of Traumatic Events



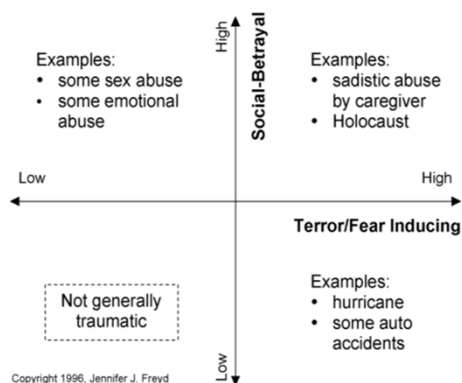
- Physically threatening and terrorizing (fear inducing)
- Social-betrayal (betrayal trauma)
- Would rates of forgetting and symptoms of distress depend on these dimensions?

Research Indicates Betrayal Blindness is Pervasive

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



Summary of 20+ Years of Research: Betrayal is also Toxic & *Gender Effect*



•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

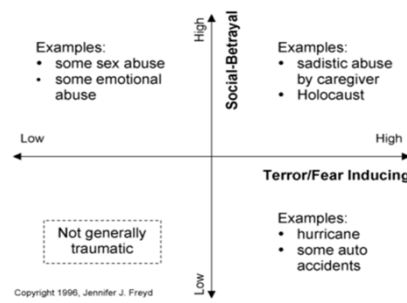
•Women/girls at higher risk than men/boys of high betrayal exposure

Institutional & Societal Betrayal Trauma

- Can betrayal trauma (*and blindness*) occur on an institutional level?
 - Betrayals by schools, churches, government, etc.?
 - Genocide
 - Separation of children from parents at border



Institutions as Betrayers?

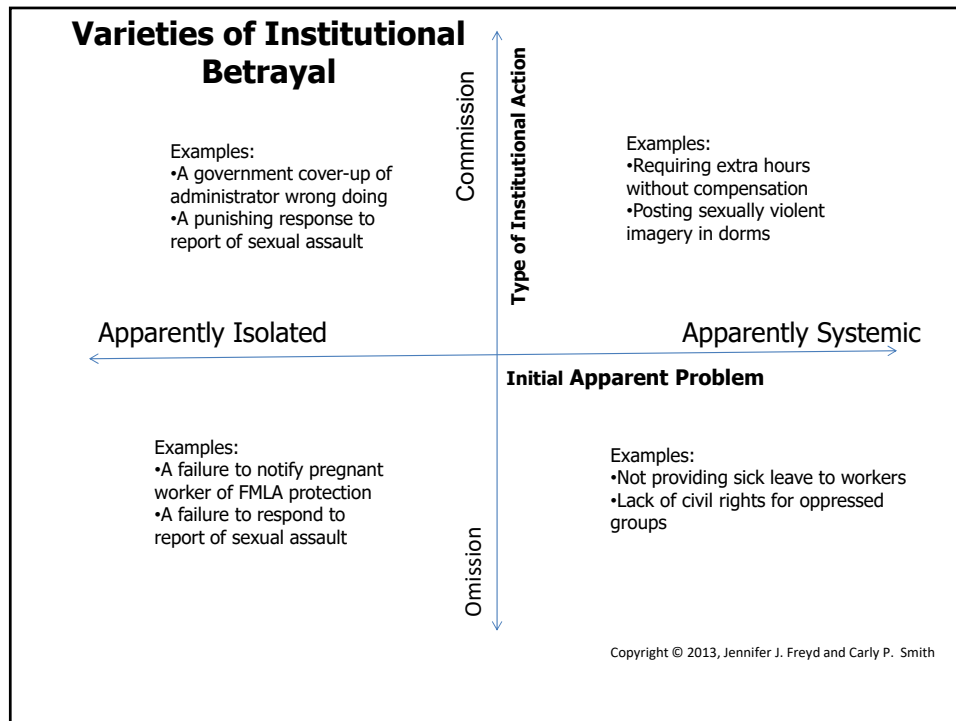


- Institutions may be trusted and depended-upon
 - “School community” or “Military family”
 - For instance, what happens when experiencing or reporting sexual assault within an institution?

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.





The Educational Context?

- Does betrayal trauma (*and blindness*) occur at institutional level?
 - First empirical focus: educational institutions
 - Failure to prevent, protect, respond well?



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)

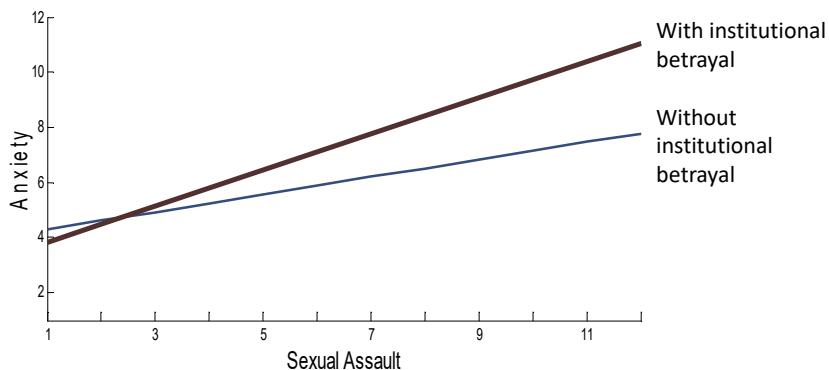
1. Not taking proactive steps to prevent this type of experience?
2. Creating an environment in which this type of experience/s seemed common or like no big deal?
3. Creating an environment in which this experience seemed more likely to occur?
4. Making it difficult to report the experience/s?
5. Responding 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....

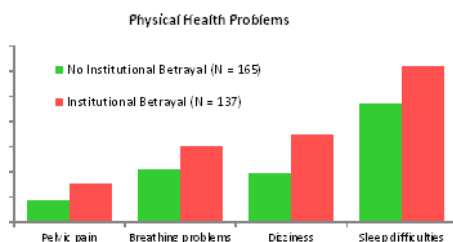
Institutional Betrayal Exacerbates Trauma Symptoms (Smith & Freyd, 2013)

- 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



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

Lindsey L. Monteith,^{1,2} Nazanin H. Bahraini,^{1,2} Bridget B. Matarazzo,^{1,2}
Kelly A. Soberay,¹ and Carly Parnitzke Smith³

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Findings with US Veterans (Monteith et al 2016)

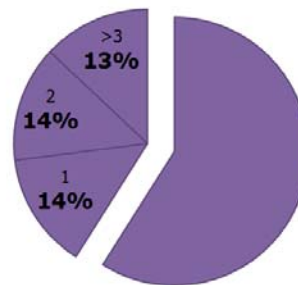
- MST survivors experiences of institutional betrayal associated with:
 - PTSD symptoms
 - Depression
 - **Higher odds of attempting suicide**

Institutional betrayal also not good for institutions

- Illness, absenteeism, departures
- Disengagement from the system
- Reputational cost

Tip: Regularly Measure Institutional Betrayal in Anonymous Surveys

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)



#MeToo Workplace Sexual Harassment

- Usually a form of betrayal trauma
- Frequently compounded by institutional betrayal
- Associated with numerous negative outcomes

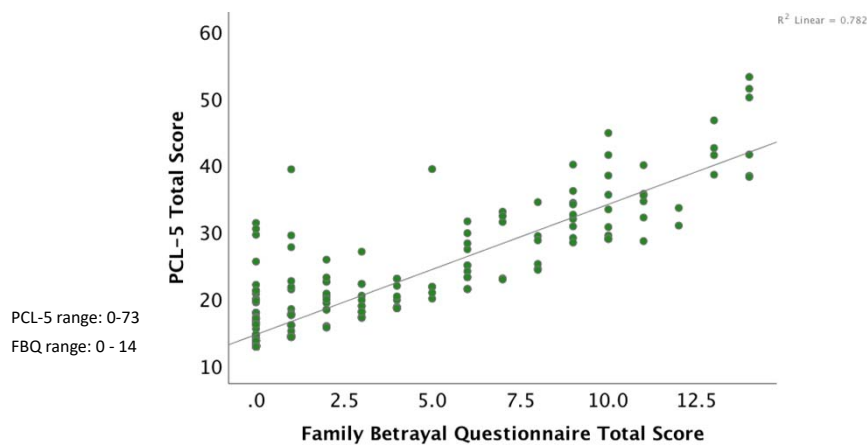
Sexual Harassment of Graduate Students (Rosenthal, Smidt, & Freyd 2016)

- Controlling for other forms of victimization, harassment by superiors associated with
 - increased trauma symptoms
 - decreased perceptions of safety
 - increased experiences of institutional betrayal
 - *It is about betrayal*

Family Betrayal (Delker, Smith, Rosenthal, Bernstein, & Freyd, 2017)

- Family betrayal like institutional betrayal?
- We measured exposure to family betrayal in a sample of young adults and controlling for gender and trauma exposure, found it predicted:
 - Trauma disclosure delay
 - dissociation
 - posttraumatic stress symptoms

Family betrayal history and posttraumatic stress symptoms in young adulthood (Delker et al 2017)



Workplace Betrayal?

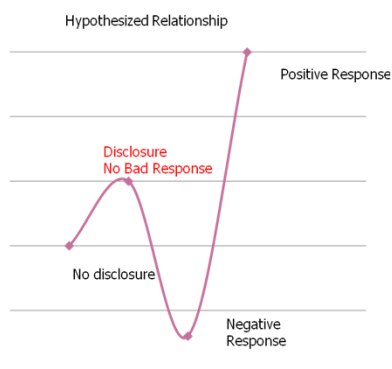
- What institutions do you operate in?
- Dependence relationships?
- Like “family”?



Responding to Disclosures of Betrayal

Helpful or more betrayal?

Response to disclosure has powerful impact



- Without disclosure prevention is hampered
- Nonetheless, non-disclosure of betrayal trauma is common
- Disclosure can lead to positive or negative outcomes relative to non-disclosure, depending on social response

The Problem of Reporting

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

Why don't victims report?

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 can be institutional betrayal

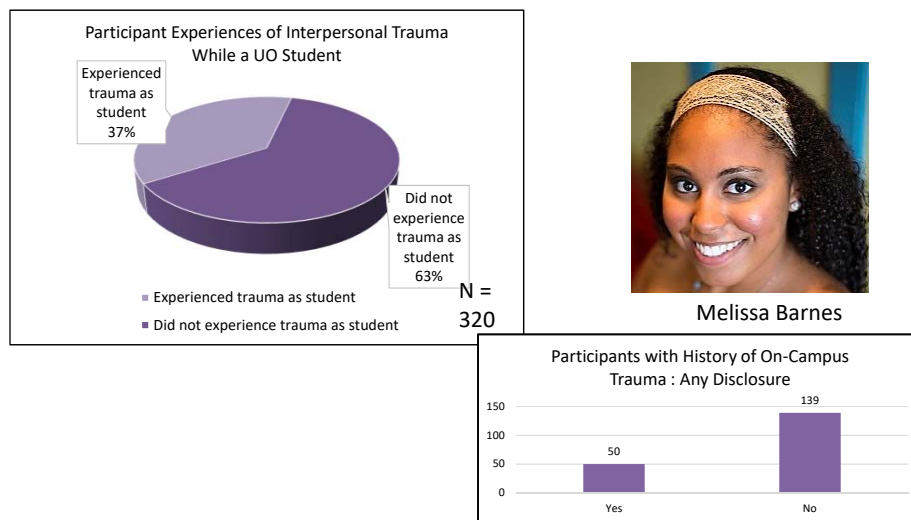
Harmful Responses

- not acknowledging
- minimizing reassurances (“that was so long ago”)
- distracting survivor
- turning the discussion to the self
- taking away control from survivor
- blaming
- invalidating
- punishing
- DARVO

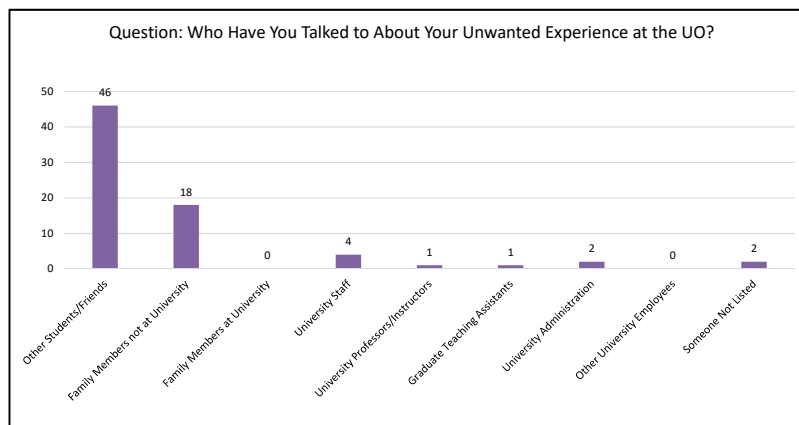
Survivors know that Individual and Institutions are not always the best listeners

- Only 6% of sexually harassed grad students reported the harassment to university sources (Rosenthal, Smidt, & Freyd 2016)

Barnes & Freyd (2017) – 512 undergrads surveyed



Who do students tell? (Barnes & Freyd, 2017)



What to do about well-intentioned but unskilled listening?

- When people mean well but due to lack of skills, lack of knowledge of what makes for a good response, and/or managing their own anxiety they may inadvertently:
 - Invalidate, take away control from survivor, turn the discussion to the self, distract, and/or fail to acknowledge

Foynes & Freyd (2011): Disclosure Education Experiment

- Can we teach people how to be better listeners?
- Each participant arrived with a friend and were randomized into conditions
- Disclosures before and after brief education:
 - Empathic listening training versus control (healthy living habits)
 - One page tip sheet with quiz
- The education helped improve disclosures from both victim and (blind) raters perspectives

Listening Skills Tip Sheet

One page of tips with three sections:

1. Attentive body language
2. Verbal skills to encourage disclosure
3. Words that convey support

Tip Sheet at:

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

A Particularly Pernicious Response: DARVO (Freyd, 1997)

- Possible response to accusation of wrong-doing:
 - Deny
 - Attack
 - Reverse Victim and Offender
- The perpetrator (or others on his or her behalf) may Deny the behavior, Attack the individual doing the confronting, and Reverse the roles of Victim and Offender.

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

DARVO

“None of this ever took place” (Deny)

“You are a disgusting human being” (Attack)

“I am a victim” (Reverse Victim and Offender)

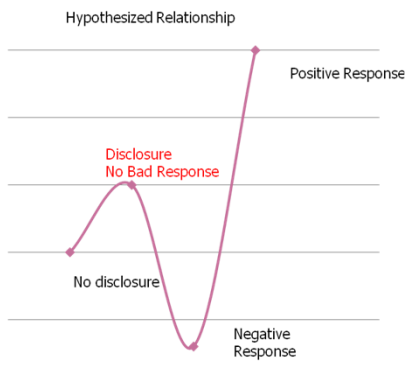
DARVO Studies

- Harsey, Zurbriggen, & Freyd, 2017
 - DARVO hangs together empirically
 - DARVO is associated with victim self-blame
- Harsey & Freyd, under review
 - Vignette study 1: DARVO results in more doubt by observers about the victim's credibility
 - Vignette study 2: Education about DARVO reduces its negative impact on observers

More research needed but in the meantime...

- Call out DARVO when you see it
- Educate others about DARVO

The Good News: We can become better responders



So, What Can We Do To Prevent Institutional Betrayal?



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We Prevent Institutional Betrayal by Encouraging Institutional Courage

1. Comply with laws *and* go beyond mere compliance
2. Respond sensitively to victim disclosures
3. Bear witness, be accountable, apologize
4. Cherish the whistle blower
5. Engage in self-study
6. Conduct anonymous surveys
7. Make sure community (especially leadership) is educated about sexual violence and related trauma
8. Be transparent about data and policy
9. Use the power of your institution to address the societal problem
10. Commit resources to 1-9

1. Comply with laws *and* go beyond mere compliance

- At a minimum comply with all laws intended to prevent sexual violence and intended to promote educational equity and safety from violence and harassment
- Compliance is good first step; but not a good last step
 - Aspire to meet the *spirit* (rather than merely the letter) of the laws and regulations
 - Do not turn institutional response into a mere *checkbox*
 - Aspire to keep improving and innovating

2. Respond sensitively to victim disclosures

- Avoid individual and institutional DARVO; call it out when you see it
- Respect the survivor's autonomy
 - Create survivor-directed reporting policies
- Use skills that encourage positive disclosure experiences:
<http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/disclosure/goodlistener.html>

3. Bear witness, be accountable, apologize

- Bear witness and be accountable
- Apologize as appropriate
 - Sincere apologies go far in repairing and preventing institutional betrayal

4. Cherish the whistle blower

- Whistle blower can protect the institution if heeded early on
- Avoid institutional DARVO

5. Engage in Self-Study

- Create a self-study group responsible for asking on a regular basis
 - Are you making it easy or difficult for people to report the experience?
 - Are you respecting individual's autonomy?
 - Etc.
- Include representation from all the stake holders
- Also ask: are your incentive structures aligned with goal to reduce sexual victimization and encourage institutional betrayal?



From
Freyd & Birrell (2013),
Pages 171-173 based on
Smith & Freyd (2013)

6. Conduct anonymous surveys

- Survey all stake holders
 - Include students, employees, alumni, those who dropped out, community members
 - Essential to analyze by gender and other types of inequality – these are civil rights issues
- Share results and establish policy based on data

7. Make sure community (especially leadership) is educated about sexual violence and related trauma

- Educate about concepts, victim psychology, perpetrator dynamics, institutional betrayal, etc.
- Substantial research base to draw on
 - For instance: respect the need for victim autonomy

8. Be Transparent

- Sexual violence, betrayal, and corruption thrive in secrecy
- While privacy for individuals must be respected, policy decisions and processes should be open to public input and scrutiny

9. Use the power of your institution to address the societal problem

- At a research university this means
 - Use the power of knowledge production and education to investigate the roots of sexual violence (and how to end it)
 - Disseminate: raise awareness of the issue with individuals, institution, and the public
 - Knowledge & awareness are the antidotes to betrayal blindness

10. Commit resources to 1-9

- Good intentions are a good starting place, but staff, money, and time need to be dedicated to making these things happen.
- **“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

Flash forward to 2014

- In 2014 Tracy became curious what OSU had done and called OSU. At first OSU was evasive and Tracy called the press: 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.



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

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

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 All Can Encourage Institutional Courage

- Ending sexual violence and harassment is a challenge and will take time and effort
- But we can end institutional betrayal
 - And that is a crucial step in the right direction

