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Professor gives lecture with focus on sexual assault

By Sarah Scott On September 16, 2014 [g+1](#) [Tweet](#) [Like](#)

On Friday, Prof. Raymond Knight (PSYC) hosted a special lecture for students by Jennifer J. Freyd, a professor of psychology at the University of Oregon, titled "Institutional Betrayal: The Case of Campus Sexual Assault" on her research and findings about institutional betrayal, particularly on college campuses, and its effects on students.

Freyd explained that she researches the betrayal trauma theory, which she defines as, "A theory that predicts that the degree to which a negative event represents a betrayal by a trusted, needed other will influence the way in which that event is processed and remembered." Freyd added that when individuals make a deal with someone they run the risk of being betrayed.

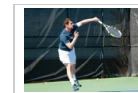
Freyd has conducted 20 years of research on institutional betrayal. She said she was surprised that she found very little research conducted on this topic, especially in regard to sexual assault. One of the studies Freyd conducted was on the betrayal of college students by their institution, which she defines as, "Wrongdoings perpetrated by an institution upon individual's dependence on that institution." She expected students to withdraw from the school, but did not expect the high levels of anxiety reported by the students. She also noted that in her research women reported much higher levels of betrayal and experienced more sexual abuse.

Freyd said that for her research she wanted to find out if institutions, particularly colleges, would betray their students. When she began her research she did not believe that institutions would do so, but as she conducted the research, she said that she became aware of just how often colleges would betray their students, which include colleges having difficulty reporting sexual assault and punishing the victim. Freyd also found that many students were facing unwanted sexual experiences.

Responses on the problem have ranged from President Barack Obama establishing a task force on protecting students from sexual assault to student protests. Freyd said she conducted another study on how emails from universities alerting students of sexual assault affect students' perception on sexual assault. She found that most students who receive the email alerts have a higher tendency to believe common myths about rape and sexual assault, such as blaming the victim based on their dress, their alcohol intake or their location.

Regarding employees, Freyd said she found that of the 16 percent of college employees who have heard a disclosure of sexual assault most wanted to help, but 30 percent of these employees did not report the disclosure, even though they are required to by law. Freyd felt that colleges are brushing sexual assault under the carpet, covering it up in fear of loss of

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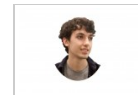
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reputation and lawsuits. She went on to tell her audience that there should be an incentive for colleges to acknowledge that sexual assault is an issue on campus. "I believe strongly that we really should encourage and cherish those who raise problems, and tell us what's going on instead of shaming them," she said.

When Knight was asked what students should understand about sexual assault in an interview with the Justice at the event, he replied that most students do not fully understand what sexual assault is, and that many of the voices of sexual assault victims have not been heard. "Brandeis is an institution that should be a leader, we shouldn't be a follower," he said. "We should be out on the forefront saying we're going to make a campus, and we're going to make a community that should be a shining star to all other communities."

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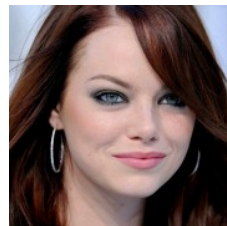
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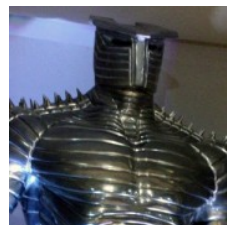
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