Behind closed doors: university employees as stakeholders in campus sexual violence

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine employees' experiences of institutional betrayal after a campus sexual assault.

Design/methodology/approach – University employees completed online measures evaluating various attitudes toward the university.

Findings – The majority of participants reported institutional betrayal in the university's response to the case. Employees who reported institutional betrayal indicated significantly lower attachment to the university than employees who reported no institutional betrayal. Institutional betrayal mediated the relationship between institutional attachment and institutional forgiveness.

Social implications – Universities' failure to respond effectively and promptly to sexual violence does not go unnoticed by employees. Institutional actions after sexual assault have the power to damage employees' attachment to the university – employees who experienced institutional betrayal were less attached, and ultimately less forgiving of the institution. Universities' poor prevention and response efforts impact their entire campus community and compromise community members' ongoing relationship with the school.

Originality/value – College students' active resistance to sexual violence on campus is featured prominently on the pages of major news outlets. Yet, less featured in research and media is the impact of campus sexual assault on university employees, particularly after sexual assault cases are mishandled. This study offers perspective on employees' experiences and reactions after a prominent sexual assault case.

Keywords Prevention, Colleges and universities, Sexual assault, College sexual violence, Institutional betrayal, Title IX

Paper type Research paper

The topic of sexual assault on college campuses has received increasing attention from media in recent years. This upsurge in public awareness corresponds with an influx of students alleging that their institutions mishandled reports of sexual assault (Pérez-Peña, 2013). Media and research teams alike have begun to describe these institutional failures as betrayals of students who trust and depend upon their universities to keep them safe (Smith and Freyd, 2013). Institutional betrayal has been conceptualized as a transgression wherein an institution fails to protect its members or fails to respond supportively after members are harmed (e.g. minimizing or denying sexual assaults on campus; Smith and Freyd, 2013). Reports of poor institutional responses to sexual violence have culminated in Title IX and Clery Act investigations at the US federal level and in internal reviews and policy changes at the university level (Pérez-Peña, 2013). While abundant research explores students' experiences of sexual violence on campus (Smith and Freyd, 2013; Walsh et al., 2010), previous literature offers little information about what university employees feel and believe in response to campus sexual violence. Previous research has not explored the question of whether employees themselves are impacted by student sexual assault victimization. However, many employees remain on campus for much longer than students; some spend decades observing and developing opinions about campus sexual violence and their university's response to such violence. Employees may be a valuable source of information about how sexual violence on campus affects community members beyond victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. The current study

seeks to fill this gap in the literature by examining the reactions of university employees to a widely publicized sexual assault case in which three student-athletes were found responsible for sexually assaulting a fellow student.

Sexual assault on campus

Title IX and Clery Act

Title IX is a USA statute that prohibits discrimination based on sex at educational programs which receive US federal assistance (1972; 20 U.S.C. §1681). It is one among several statutes enforced by the US Educational Amendments of 1972 (US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Title IX applies to all levels and types of educational programs receiving money from the US government. Although Title IX is often associated with sports (i.e. protecting girls' and women's right to access of athletics), it covers all elements of education (US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014). As such, under Title IX universities which receive US federal funding are responsible for preventing and responding to gender discrimination, which includes sexual violence (US Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2011).

Another piece of legislation relevant to campus violence, the Clery Act (Clery Act, 20 U.S.C. §1092f) requires that institutions of higher education submit statistics about certain types of crimes to the US Department of Education on a yearly basis. Under the Clery Act, all universities are required by US federal law to disclose annual crime statistics for events that occur on or adjacent to campus or at non-campus facilities for which the school is responsible (i.e. Greek Housing, off-campus classrooms; Clery Center, 2015). Crimes that fall under the Clery Act include sex offenses (forcible and non-forcible), aggravated assault, and hate crimes. In a perfect world, Clery Act statistics would offer an accurate estimate of the prevalence of sexual assault on different campuses. However, schools' annual reports of campus sexual assault are consistently drastically lower than those reflected in empirical research. For example, Gross et al. (2006) surveyed more than 900 female students at a large public university and found that 27.2 percent had experienced some form of unwanted sexual contact. This high rate of assault differs drastically from the numbers available via the US Department of Education Campus Safety and Security Data Analysis Cutting Tool, which provides aggregated Clery Data organized by institution type (Office of Postsecondary Education). For example, in 2012, Clery Data for all USA four-year public residential universities with student bodies larger than 1,000 indicated that a total of 3,447 forcible sex offenses were reported at 1265 different institutions. The combined student bodies across these schools totaled 19,786,103 – suggesting that less than one percent of college students report this type of violence (US Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, 2012). As such, students are either not reporting their experiences to their schools, and/or reports are not always documented in accordance with US federal law. Yung (2015) offers some evidence that the latter is the more accurate explanation; Yung (2015) found that schools' sexual assault data increased by 44 percent during audits, suggesting that without the pressure of an audit, schools may seriously underreport their annual crime statistics.

This discord between US federal estimates and research estimates of sexual violence prevalence on college campuses aligns with empirical findings on trauma and disclosure. Many victims choose not to disclose their assault to anyone, much less report their experiences of violence to school officials. A recent study of sexual violence across 27 American universities found that 28 percent or fewer students who had experienced sexual violence reported the incident to an official source (Cantor et al., 2015). Previous research found even lower rates: in one study only 14.7 percent of female survivors surveyed told a formal support provider (police, doctor, therapist, or clergy) what had happened to them (Ahrens et al., 2007). In another study of female college student participants who had experienced a sexual assault, only 4 percent reported the incident to campus authorities including campus law enforcement, resident advisors, deans, professors, and campus employers or supervisors (Fisher et al., 2003). More troubling still, other research indicates that 25 percent of female students who experienced unwanted intercourse told no one at all (Walsh et al., 2010).

While students may have a variety of reasons for choosing not to report an assault, the fear that their report may be minimized or mishandled is a potential factor deterring reporting (e.g. 29 percent of students surveyed by AAU said that they did not think anything would be done

about their report; AAU, 2015). These fears are not without precedent. Smith and Freyd's (2013) research found that 46 percent of female college students who had experienced unwanted sexual contact also reported at least one type of institutional betrayal; betrayals included the institution's failure to prevent assault, inadequate responses to assault, and retaliation against survivors of assault for reporting. Given the high prevalence of these types of betrayal, students may not perceive formally reporting sexual violence as a viable or desirable option. Smith and Freyd (2013) found that students described their campus environment as one where sexual assault seemed common and difficult to report. However, little research has examined whether campus employees perceive a similar culture. Given that employees like staff (i.e. administrators, receptionists, janitors, IT professionals, human resources, etc.), faculty, and graduate teaching assistants are stakeholders in their universities, they themselves have the potential to become further connected to or disconnected from their institution in response to university actions. Furthermore, campus employees are often in the position to receive reports of sexual assault, and their perceptions of campus culture may subtly encourage or discourage students from reporting (Pope, 2015).

While empirical research abounds exploring the outcomes of trauma and the predictors of perpetration, very little previous work focuses on employees' response to and attitudes about sexual violence on campus. One study that addresses some of these issues is an analysis of university women's center employees' perceptions of campus sexual assault (Strout et al., 2014). Strout et al.'s (2014) qualitative analyses identified the following themes: students are more likely to disclose sexual assault when they have someone they trust to tell, students who disclose must be treated with respect, students' wishes regarding confidentiality must be honored, trained professionals should be available to provide support, and the university should have a clear and comprehensive response plan. Amar et al. (2014) offer another example of research on university employees; they examined university administrators' perceptions of their own campus's protocols and response to sexual assault. This study asked administrators to describe what was being done on their individual campuses to address and respond to sexual assault. Administrators surveyed in this study provided information regarding how their specific institutions handled a variety of topics such as the sexual assault adjudication process, provision and coordination of different campus and community support services (i.e. women's centers, counseling, health services), and educating students about sexual assault (Amar et al., 2014). These studies offer examples of how employees of universities have previously been surveyed to better understand the context surrounding campus violence, a context which employees are well positioned to report on. These previous studies offer important perspective on how schools respond to reports and how response processes could be improved – essentially, they categorize employees as responders to violence. However, we argue that employees are not merely responders to sexual assault (though many employees do serve in this capacity) but also community members and stakeholders who may be affected as individuals and workers by sexual assault on campus.

Institutional trust and betrayal

Despite the dearth of previous research on employees as stakeholders in the issue of campus sexual assault, research on trust in institutions offers some insight. Assuming that employees are stakeholders in their institutions, it follows that they experience varying degrees of trust in and attachment to those institutions and that their trust is eroded by misdeeds committed by institutional representatives. For example, previous research indicates that the public is attuned to wrong-doing in public institutions such as government branches. Bowler and Karp (2004) found that mistrust in individual politicians after the 1992 House Bank Scandal (wherein members of Congress were found to be overdrawing their House bank accounts without consequences) was both warranted (mistrust was related to actual wrong-doing by politicians) and also generalized (mistrust in several politicians increased negative attitudes about politicians and politics more broadly). The public depends upon members of Congress to act ethically in their constituents' best interest rather than taking advantage of their positions for personal gain. Although the public is a different population than university employees and Congress is a different institution than a university, both include an element of trust and dependency, that, when betrayed, may generate suspicion and wariness. Another example comes from an assessment of the impact of a scandal

involving the resignation of Florida's Department of Corrections director in 2006 on the public's attitudes toward the Department of Corrections overall (Mancini and Mears, 2012). As with Bowler and Karp (2004), this study reveals that betrayal by one or some member/s of an institution can breed a generalized sense of mistrust of the institution as a whole. Similarly, Pate et al. (2012) examined a public-sector organization's senior management attempt to regain the trust of their employees after chronic problems regarding workplace bullying and harassment had been identified. While some elements of employees' trust toward their employer increased over the course of several years and a variety of interventions intended to rebuild trust, other elements of trust (including perceptions of integrity, competence, and consistency) were less tractable. Other relevant studies have explored public trust in government institutions (such as banks, major companies, Congress, etc.; Owens and Cook, 2013), reactions to local government agencies after a scandal (Pelletier and Bligh, 2008), and public confidence in government's ability to respond to bioterrorism attacks like anthrax (Blendon et al., 2003). The closest equivalent to the question of whether university employees are impacted by campus sexual violence is available in sexual harassment literature revealing that workplace sexual harassment impacts observers – not just victims. Raver and Gelfand (2005) found that ambient sexual harassment (the general amount of sexual harassment observed in a group setting) negatively predicted team cohesion and performance and positively predicted team conflict. An institutional betrayal like an environment where rampant sexual harassment goes unchecked can impact employees' ability to trust and work with their colleagues and employers. It is possible that a similar pattern might extend to university employees who hear about campus sexual assault and their university's handling of sexual assault.

Institutional attachment

Inherent in institutional betrayal theory (Smith and Freyd, 2013) is the concept that individuals rely on, trust, and essentially have a psychological contract with the institution they are situated within. In this sense, when an individual experiences institutional betrayal from their school or place of work, the betrayal occurs not just because the individual has been harmed in some way, but also because they expected their institution to behave differently, to protect them from such harm. The institution betrayed their trust in the fundamental nature of the relationship or contract between institution and individual (Robinson, 1996). In this way, individuals' relationships with the institutions they trust and depend upon can be characterized as a form of attachment and identification with the institution where an intact psychological contract is associated with a strong attachment and a violated contract or unsafe relationship is associated with weaker attachment. Although attachment is typically conceptualized as dyadic (i.e. a child's attachment to his or her parent or one partner's attachment to the other), previous research also has examined individuals' attachments to a variety of groups and institutions, ranging from small clubs or organizations to large companies or universities. For example, Smith et al. (1999) found that for college students who were members of fraternities or sororities, group attachment anxiety (i.e. being uncertain of the strength of a relationship to the group) was negatively associated with group identity, social support within the group, and satisfaction with group social support, and positively associated with negative affect in the context of the group. Research on group attachment has also extended to assess college students' attachment to their university (e.g. France et al., 2010; Karasawa, 1991), and found to be associated with student enrollment status (i.e. traditional, transfer, or online), cohesion with other students, and achievement. If an institution's members experience varying levels of attachment to their institution, and also are sensitive to betrayals by their institution, it is possible that members' attachment will vary depending on the extent to which they feel betrayed by their institution. However, no previous research explores whether members in an institution experience lessened attachment to their institution in the face of institutional betrayal.

Case overview

This study was conducted at a large, public university with a prominent athletics program that ranked in the top ten USA universities in terms of sports-related earnings with total athletics revenue in 2013 reaching more than $115,000,000 (Berkowitz et al., 2014). Sexual assault, as

demonstrated in the above review of the literature, is a widespread problem across USA universities in general and this university is no exception.

This study explores university employees' reactions to an incident of sexual assault committed by three university athletes against another student. Press coverage investigating this assault focused substantially on a possible institutional cover-up of athlete misconduct. Media investigations initially revealed two main potential issues with the university's handling of the sexual assault. First, one of the athletes had been previously accused of sexual assault while playing at a different college, resulting in suspension from the team, and was soon after recruited to play at this university (Kingkade, 2014a). Next, the three accused players were allowed to compete in US National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) tournament games after the university had knowledge of the assault (Kingkade, 2014a). The three players were not suspended from the team until nearly two months later (Goodman and Katz, 2014). They were subsequently found responsible for sexual misconduct and removed from the campus community for up to 12 years (Kingkade, 2014b). More details regarding this timeline are available in Table I.

Throughout May and June of 2014, the case was regularly covered by local media and also by media outlets such as *The Huffington Post* (Kingkade, 2014a, b), *The New York Times* (Hunt, 2014), *Reuters* (Sebens, 2014), and *New York Daily News* (Walsh, 2014). Given the institutionally unique but broadly salient nature of these events, we took the opportunity to assess employee attitudes toward the university's handling of this highly publicized sexual assault case. As such, this study provides a snap shot of a campus community's response during a tumultuous period. Importantly, although our study of this case ended in June 2014, the outcomes of the sexual assault and institutional response continued to garner media attention and community conversation for some time after. Additional events since we concluded data collection have included: the sudden resignation of the university's president (Kelderman, 2014), a Title IX suit filed by the victim against the university (Greif, 2015), a breach of confidentiality wherein the victim's therapy records were released to the university's General Council Office without permission or notification (Read, 2015a, b, c), the passing of a state-wide bill to ensure the confidentiality of sexual assault victims' conversations with their advocates (Read, 2015b), the settlement of the victim's Title IX suit for $800,000 (Read, 2015a), all three athletes filing suits against the university (O'Neil, 2016; Alger, 2015), and two members of the university's counseling center suing the university for violation of their state whistleblower, Title IX, and first amendment rights (Read, 2015b).

The current study

Research on trust and betrayal within organizations (e.g. Morrison and Robinson, 1998; Smith and Freyd, 2013) suggests that employees might perceive the university's actions after the sexual assault as a failure to maintain their psychological contract with the community by upholding standards of safety for students. In line with this expectation, we first hypothesized that:

H1. Employees would identify institutional failures, or betrayals, in the university's actions after the sexual assault case came to light.

Table I	Timeline of research and institutional actions related to assault
Month	Events related to sexual assault case:
January-2014	News stations announce that an athlete has committed to transfer to the university after an investigation regarding sexual assault another college
March-2014	University (but not the public) receives report of sexual assault involving three university athletes and a female student
April-2014	University receives police report detailing the reported sexual assault
May-2014	Local newspapers report on sexual assault case involving three university athletes and a female student
	University president holds press conference to address sexual assault case, announces that athletes will not rejoin the team
	Students and faculty rally outside president's office to protest the administration's response to sexual violence on campus
	University Senate hosts a campus forum to discuss plans for sexual assault prevention on campus
June-2014	Data collection completed over two weeks

Our second hypothesis was that:

H2. Institutional betrayal would be associated with decreased attachment to the university.

Finally, we completed exploratory analyses to identify associations between institutional attachment, institutional betrayal, and institutional forgiveness.

Method

Participants

472 university employees consented to participate in this study. Not all participants completed all measures; for the purposes of this report, we have excluded participants ($n = 139$) who left all items in the event-specific institutional betrayal questionnaire (IBQ) blank (which they were instructed to do if they did not remember or had no opinion about the events). After excluding these participants, we were left with a final sample of 333 employees. Of these, 30.9 percent identified as male, 67 percent identified as female, and 1.8 percent declined to indicate a gender. The majority of participants identified as white (89.2 percent). Participants were 33.6 percent faculty, 52.9 percent staff (i.e. administrators, human resources, janitorial workers, receptionists, etc.), and 13.5 percent graduate teaching assistants. The university's population of employees are 32 percent faculty, 45 percent staff, and 23 percent graduate teaching assistants, indicating that staff were somewhat overrepresented and graduate students somewhat underrepresented in this sample compared to the overall university. Racial and gender information about the university's overall population of employees was not available, and as such we could not compare our sample to university employees overall in terms of race or gender.

Procedure

The university's institutional review board approved all study procedures. All university employees (at the time 2,257 faculty, 2,937 staff, and 2,960 graduate teaching assistants) were recruited to participate via e-mail. The recruitment e-mail briefly explained the purpose of this research and offered employees the opportunity to participate. Participants were not compensated for their time in any way. Employees interested in participating clicked a link within the recruitment e-mail and were directed to the online survey via Qualtrics survey software. After indicating their consent to participate, participants responded to the survey items. Most participants completed the survey in 10-20 minutes. All participants were thanked for their time and provided with contact information for the research team and the campus Office of Research Compliance.

Measures

Participants in this study completed a variety of measures assessing their knowledge of Title IX, their experiences with campus training programs to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, their attitudes about the sexual assault case, and their attachment to and trust in the university. Given the focus of this paper (i.e. attachment, trust, and betrayal in response to institutional actions), we have included only those measures relevant in this report.

Event-specific institutional betrayal. The IBQ (Smith and Freyd, 2013) was modified in order to assess institutional betrayal in response to a recent and highly publicized sexual assault on campus. A timeline of seven major events (see Table I) relevant to the university's response to this particular assault was presented to participants (e.g. one event was: University receives police report of reported sexual assault). For each event, participants were presented with the items of the IBQ and asked to respond based on institutional behavior related to the event. Response options were presented as a Likert scale, with zero being an excellent institutional response (e.g. Responding well to reports (of sexual violence)) and four being a poor institutional response (e.g. Responding inadequately to reports (of sexual violence)). Prior to responding to the IBQ for each event, participants were given the following instructions: "If you don't recall this event or are unsure of your reaction to it, leave the items on this page blank." Participants who left all items blank were excluded from analyses altogether; participants who responded to the IBQ items for

some but not all events were included in analyses. The timeline of events related to the sexual assault case are detailed in Table I; the IBQ items and response options are detailed in Table AI. Scale reliability was very good for the IBQ (compiling all seven events; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.98$). We obtained the mean for institutional betrayal across all seven events. The resulting variable ranged both from 0 to 4 (on a scale where 0 represents an excellent institutional response and 4 represents a poor institutional response); the mean for this variable was 2.12 ($SD = 1.03$) across the seven events. The data for this variable were not normally distributed (Shapiro-Wilk test statistic $= 0.97$, $p < 0.001$).

Attachment to university. A modified 15-item version of the intimacy subscale of Sternberg's (1997) Triangular Love Scale was used to assess participant attachment to the university. Example items include: "I am able to count on the university in times of need" and "I value the university greatly in my life." Response options were "not at all" (coded as 1), "moderately" (coded as 2), and "extremely" (coded as 3) such that higher scores indicated stronger attachment to the university. Scale reliability was very good ($\alpha = 0.90$). We averaged participants' responses to the 15 items to create a mean attachment variable which ranged from one to three ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 0.41$). The data for this variable were not normally distributed (Shapiro-Wilk test statistic $= 0.99$, $p < 0.01$).

State forgiveness. A modified 15-item version of the Transgressions-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-18 (TRIM-18) (McCullough et al., 1998) was used to assess participant feelings of forgiveness toward the university. The inventory includes items such as "I'll make the university pay" and "I want the university to get what it deserves." Responses ranged from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) on a Likert scale (see Table AII). Scale reliability was good ($\alpha = 0.85$). Although initially designed to assess forgiveness following interpersonal transgressions, the TRIM-18 has also been used to study workplace transgressions, which was the model for the current study (Rainey, 2008). We created a mean state forgiveness variable which ranged from one to five (with higher scores indicating more forgiveness) by averaging participants' responses across the fifteen items ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.49$). The data for this variable were not normally distributed (Shapiro-Wilk test statistic $= 0.90$, $p < 0.001$).

Results

To test *H1* we obtained descriptive statistics regarding institutional betrayal about each event (see Figure 1). At least 50 percent of participants rated at least one of the IBQ items at a 3 or 4 for

Figure 1. Percent of participants who reported institutional betrayal across sexual assault events
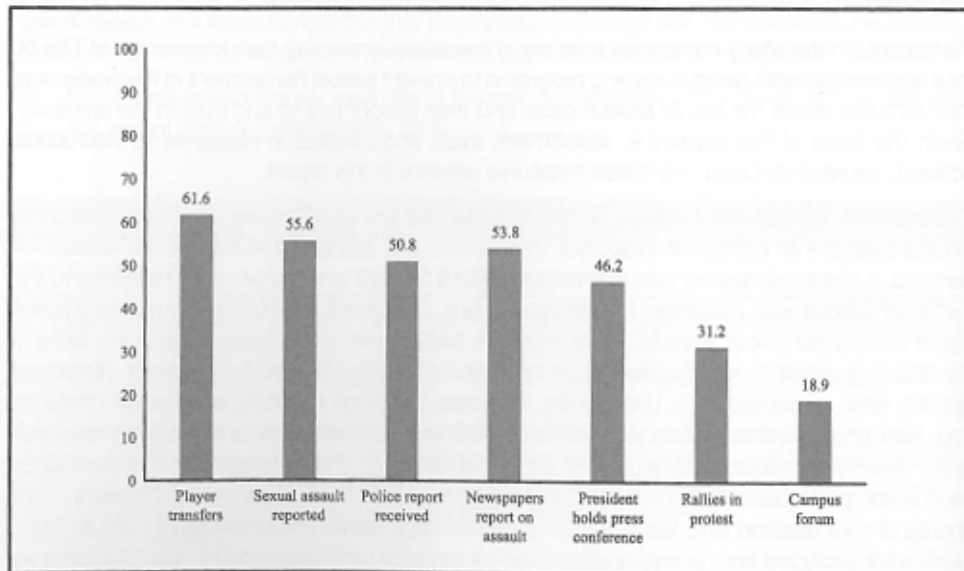
the first four events – in short, the majority of employees identified institutional betrayals in the university's actions. The final three events (the press conference, rallies, and campus forum) elicited lower rates of institutional betrayal; fewer than 50 percent of participants identified institutional betrayals in the final three events. Only 16.8 percent of respondents indicated no institutional betrayal for any of the events. This descriptive information provides support for H1 – most participants reported institutional betrayal in response to at least one of the events.

To test H2 we conducted a Spearman correlation to examine the relationship between mean institutional betrayal and attachment. Institutional betrayal across the seven events was significantly correlated with institutional attachment ($r = -0.32$, $p < 0.001$) such that higher institutional betrayal scores were associated with lower attachment to the university. As such, H2 was supported.

We also completed exploratory analyses to identify relationships between institutional attachment, institutional betrayal, and institutional forgiveness. We evaluated a mediator model (see Figure 2) through ordinary least squares path analysis using the PROCESS macro in SPSS software (Hayes, 2013 offers a detailed description of bootstrapping analyses). In this model, the effect of institutional attachment on institutional forgiveness was partially mediated through ratings of institutional betrayal in response to the events outlined in Table I. Institutional attachment significantly predicted institutional betrayal ($a_1 = -0.81$, $p < 0.001$). Institutional betrayal significantly and negatively related to institutional forgiveness ($b_1 = -0.07$, $p < 0.01$). A bias-corrected confidence interval based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples indicated that institutional attachment significantly predicted institutional forgiveness through institutional betrayal ($a_1 b_1 = 0.06$, $CI = 0.017, 0.114$). The direct path between institutional attachment and institutional forgiveness remained significant ($c_1 = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$), such that institutional betrayal partially mediated the relationship between institutional attachment and institutional forgiveness.

Discussion

H1 was supported – 83.2 percent of participants identified at least one type of institutional betrayal. H2 was also supported. Participants' experiences of institutional betrayal were correlated with decreased attachment to the university. In addition to providing support for our two hypotheses, we also conducted exploratory analyses to examine the role of institutional betrayal in mediating the relation between institutional attachment and institutional forgiveness. Institutional betrayal partially mediated the association between institutional attachment and institutional forgiveness. Essentially, employees with a strong connection to the university were

Figure 2 A statistical diagram of the mediator model for the presumed effect of institutional attachment on institutional forgiveness through institutional betrayal
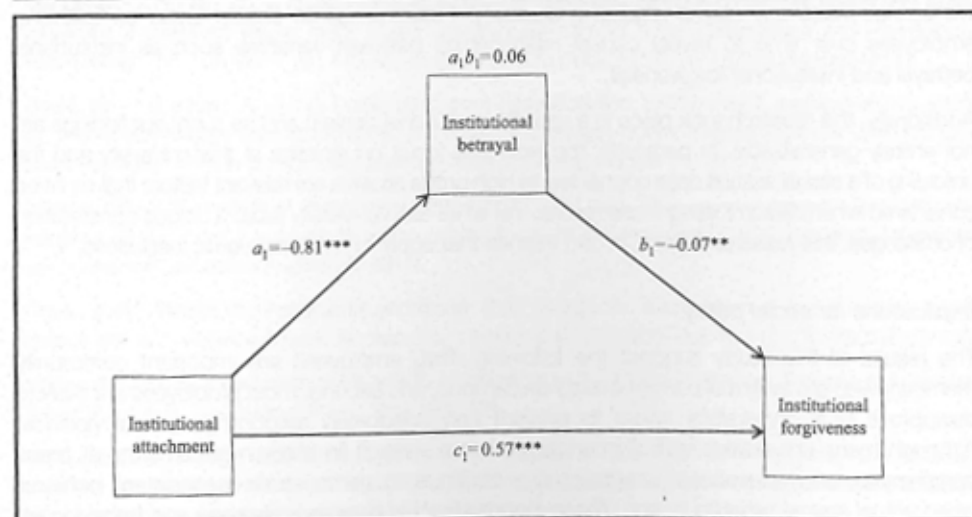
overall better able to forgive the university's actions. However, this association was mediated by betrayal such that less attached employees reported more betrayals and diminished forgiveness of the institution. For employees whose bond with the university was already tenuous, the institution's failures to prevent and respond to violence were experienced as particularly disheartening and forgiveness was particularly unlikely.

This study provides insight into employees' response to a case of campus sexual violence and institutional betrayal, an area previously unexplored. Our findings suggest that employees are aware of and impacted by high profile sexual assault cases; universities should be cognizant that they communicate their institutional values and priorities when they respond to sexual assaults. Furthermore, not only did employees report betrayal in reaction to some of the university's actions, their experience of betrayal was also correlated with decreased attachment to the university. Consistent with previous research on public reactions to improper behavior by public figures (i.e. Bowler and Karp, 2004), employees in our study experienced generalized mistrust; although the case involved only a small number of people (i.e. the victim, perpetrators, administrators, coach, etc.), participants reported decreased attachment to the entire university. The relationship between institutional betrayal and attachment is an important and concerning one. Employees with lessened attachment after a betrayal may be less committed or less loyal. This finding emphasizes that employees are indeed stakeholders in their campus communities – they notice bad behavior on the part of their university, and their observations of such behavior may influence their overall feelings toward the university as an employer and institution. Future research should examine this effect in more detail, with particular attention to how diminished attachment predicts relevant outcomes like employee retention and engagement.

Finally, we found that for employees with strong attachment to the university, forgiveness was also strong. However, for employees with less hardy relationships to the university, betrayal was heightened, and through this path, forgiveness was less likely. This suggests that for employees already dubious about the university, forgiveness is not easily won. These findings underscore the fact that instances of violence serve as an opportunity for universities to respond quickly and effectively, communicating competence, trustworthiness, and safety to employees and students alike.

Limitations

This study has several important limitations. Our sample is undoubtedly influenced by self-selection; employees who chose to participate in this research may differ from employees on average. Given that our participants were not compensated in any way for their time, this self-selection potential is particularly relevant. Moreover, many employees began participating in this research and stopped prior to completing the study in its entirety. While we used partial data when possible, we are not able to ascertain why employees discontinued their participation and whether certain types of employees were more or less likely to do so. Moreover, given the nature of this research, pre-testing was not possible. As we surveyed participants at one time point only, we cannot make any claims regarding causality. Future research should focus on following employees over time to reveal causal relationships between variables such as institutional betrayal and institutional forgiveness.

Additionally, this research took place in a specific institutional context and as such, our findings are not entirely generalizable. In particular, the extensive focus on athletics at this university and the unfolding of a sexual assault case connected to high profile athletes are relevant factors that must be considered when disseminating these results. Yet while each university faces a unique constellation of challenges, this research reflects broad themes that apply to many academic institutions.

Implications for social policy

The results of this study suggest the following: first, employees are important community members who are aware of current events on campus, and second, most employees are likely to disapprove of a university's failure to prevent and adequately respond to sexual violence. Although many universities verbally condemn sexual assault (in mission statements, at press conferences, and educational events), many continue to demonstrate inconsistent behavior when actual sexual assaults occur. These inconsistencies between message and behavior are

not unnoticed by university employees. The disadvantages of slow or inadequate responses to campus sexual assault go beyond leaving students vulnerable or violating Title IX. Universities that fail to prevent and respond to sexual assaults risk alienating their employees – community stakeholders who often remain on campus for much longer than four years. Schools should respond promptly and effectively to sexual assault – no matter how athletically valuable the perpetrators – because failure to so not only hurts students, but also ruptures the university's relationship with the teachers, graduate students, technicians, coordinators, and specialists whose work and allegiance allow the school to function. By the time unflattering headlines hit the newsstands, trust and attachment are already damaged; schools must act sooner in order to maintain positive relationships with those they employ.

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Appendix 1

Table AI	IBQ items and response options				

1. Taking proactive steps to prevent sexual violence?

0 – Not taking these steps at all	1	2	3	4 – Taking proactive steps

2. Creating an environment in which sexual violence seemed common or like no big deal?

0 – Working to reduce this type of environment	1	2	3	4 – Actively creating this environment

3. Creating an environment in which sexual violence seemed more likely to occur?

0 – Working to reduce this type of environment	1	2	3	4 – Actively creating this environment

4. Making it difficult to report sexual violence?

0 – Actively trying to expose/ investigate violence	1	2	3	4 – Actively covering up violence

5. Responding inadequately to reported sexual violence?

0 – Responding well to reports	1	2	3	4 – Responding very inadequately

6. Covering up sexual violence?

0 – Actively trying to expose/ investigate violence	1	2	3	4 – Actively covering up violence

7. Punishing individuals in some way for reporting sexual violence?

0 – Acting supportively/taking claims seriously	1	2	3	4 – Punishing individuals

Appendix 2

Table AII Institutional attachment	Not at all	Moderately	Extremely
I am actively supportive of this university's well-being			
I have a warm relationship with this university			
I am able to count on this university in times of need			
This university is able to count on me in times of need			
I am willing to donate to this university			
	Not at all	Moderately	Extremely
I receive considerable emotional support from this university			
I give considerable emotional support to this university			
I communicate well with this university			
I value this university greatly in my life			
I feel close to this university			
	Not at all	Moderately	Extremely
I have a comfortable relationship with this university			
I feel that I really understand this university			
I feel that this university really understands me			
I feel that I can really trust this university			
I am open about my personal information with this university			

Table AIII Institutional forgiveness

For the following questions, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about this university using the following scale:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I'll make this university pay					
I keep as much distance between us as possible					
I wish that something bad would happen to this university					
I live as if this university doesn't exist, isn't around					
I don't trust this university					

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I want this university to get what it deserves					
I find it difficult to act warmly toward this university					
I avoid this university					
I'm going to get even					
I cut off the relationship with this university					

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I want to see this university hurt and miserable					
I am withdrawn from this university					
I want this university to do the right thing					
I'm hopeful that this university can change its ways					
I want to see this university recover and thrive					

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