

Does Art Reduce Bias Among Healthcare Providers?



Katherine Cambareri, who earned an MPH from Jefferson in 2019, works as a clinical research coordinator at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. She is also a serious photographer and deeply interested in exploring the synergies between public health and art.

In 2016, Cambareri created a photographic exhibition by documenting the clothes worn by survivors of sexual violence when they were assaulted. The exhibit's photographs—individually straightforward, collectively powerful—were created with the intention of increasing understanding of sexual assault and challenging false assumptions of those who blame the victim. The exhibition titled "Well, What Were You Wearing?" has been presented across the country and featured by numerous media outlets, including *Huffington Post*, *Self* and *Time*.

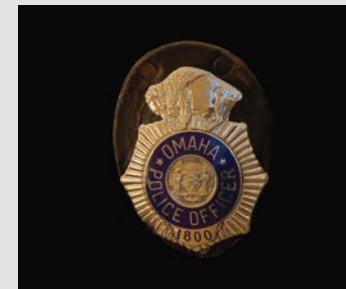


"I wanted people to think about victim blaming and to recognize that asking, 'What were you wearing?' is not a valid question," Cambareri says. "Beyond the fact that a person's choice of clothing does not justify assault, sexual violence does not only happen to people who dress a certain way, in a certain style or wear a certain size. The stereotype that victims are always wearing revealing clothing when they are assaulted is false."

Today, she and **Rosie Frasso, PhD**, professor of population health, are collaborating with MPH students **Jules LaRosa**, **Amanda Guth** and **Veronique Hooper** on a multifaceted study exploring the exhibit's potential impact on the perceptions that future healthcare providers have of survivors of sexual violence. Results from a pilot study, which indicate a positive response to the approach, were presented at the American Public Health Association meeting in October 2020. The team will expand the project and engage medical, nursing and physician assistant students from several Philadelphia area institutions.

"We know that a traditional lecture can help future healthcare providers better understand bias and stigma regarding sexual assault," Dr. Frasso says. "But we want to understand if exposure to the exhibit's visual content can have a fuller, lasting impact—if a visit to this exhibit is 'stickier' and could help reduce bias when those providers engage with victims years from now."

Cambareri says, "It has been extremely rewarding knowing that the exhibit has been able to give a voice to sexual assault survivors. Now, it is exciting to see my public health work and art collide to increase the opportunity for that voice to be heard by future nurses and doctors." ■



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