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by

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**An Evaluation of the Effects of Mandatory Reporting on Students'  
Likelihood of Disclosing Sexual Violence**

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## **Abstract**

### **An Evaluation of the Effects of Mandatory Reporting on Students’ Likelihood of Disclosing Sexual Violence**

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In the United States, employees of federally funded universities are mandated to report knowledge of any nonconsensual sexual experiences (NSEs) to their universities under Title IX. Few studies have assessed students’ opinions or likelihood of disclosing sexual violence to someone at their university under these policies and they returned mixed results. The NSE literature indicates that people with NSE histories are less likely to disclose sexual violence with mandatory reporting (MR) policies in place. Additionally, there are discrepancies in likelihood to disclose even without the presence of MR policy; people who do not identify their NSEs with sexual violence labels (e.g. rape) are less likely to disclose their experience than people who do use those labels. The current study aims to (1) evaluate students’ likelihood of reporting to someone at the university by introducing a manipulation of the presence of MR policies while (2) evaluating how NSE identification rather than NSE history impacts that likelihood. 184 undergraduate students at UT were randomized into two groups, one given language indicating the presence of MR policies and the other given language about confidential reporting. Each student was shown four

gender-neutral vignettes, two describing penetrative assault and two non-penetrative assault with alternating professor and student perpetrators. After each vignette, the students were asked how likely they would be to tell a professor at the university about the event if they were the student in the vignette. Students also completed the Non-Consensual Sexual Experiences Inventory to assess NSE identification (NSEI; Kilimnik et al., 2018). Results from a mixed factor repeated-measures ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences in likelihood to disclose between the vignettes ( $p < 0.01$ ), but not between conditions or NSE identification groups ( $p = 0.44$ ;  $p = 0.71$ ). Though there is concern in the field about the impact of MR policies based on previous NSE literature, these results indicate that MR policies do not decrease disclosure likelihood. Future research should further evaluate this relationship to determine replicability of these results.

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## **Introduction**

Sexual violence is a widespread occurrence across college campuses in the United States. Nationally, approximately 20% of female and up to 5% of male undergraduates experience a nonconsensual sexual experience while in college (CLASE, 2017; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). On UT Austin's campus specifically, the Campus Climate Survey (CLASE, 2017) found that 15% of undergraduate females reported being raped since they enrolled at UT Austin. Despite the fact that rape and sexual violence are so common on college campuses, few students choose to disclose their nonconsensual sexual experiences (NSE) to another person. Only 32% of students at UT Austin with a history of NSE(s) reported sharing their experience with another person, and only 6% of those students reported it to a formal resource (e.g., counselor, a university employee, campus services, the police) at UT (CLASE, 2017). In a national study, disclosure rates were higher (80%) for informal supports (e.g., family), but were approximately the same for formal supports at institutions (Demers et. al, 2018). Only 7% of people who reported unwanted sexual contact disclosed the experience to a formal source.

To address the low rates of disclosure and high rates of sexual violence on college campuses, the Department of Education took action under Title IX of the Education Amendments Act. Title IX is a federal policy which protects students from any gender-based discrimination, sexual violence, or harassment to ensure equal opportunity to education for all students. In compliance with this policy, infrastructure to support survivors, provide resources, and address allegations of sexual violence exists in universities across the country. Under Title IX, the Department of Education also

implemented mandatory reporting (MR) policies to help increase disclosures to university sources.

Mandatory reporting policies aim to increase the number of disclosures of sexual violence to the university so that students can be given resources, support, and accommodations, while also enabling the university to enact disciplinary measures and prevent sexual violence in the future. Under these policies, employees of federally funded universities are required to report any and all information they receive about sexual violence to their university's Title IX office. This policy stands whether or not the students involved in the incident want to report it. Though the policy is seemingly well-intentioned, little to no research on mandatory reporting was conducted in university settings before this policy was implemented across the country. Even now, only a handful of studies have tried to assess the efficacy and effects of mandatory reporting under Title IX.

The lack of research in this area provides minimal understanding of the efficacy of mandatory reporting or the impact it has on university students. Furthermore, the little research that does exist raises important questions about MR policies' impact and shows conflicting results among students. Demers and colleagues (2018) questioned whether or not mandatory reporting is ethical in the case of consenting adults based on their results. Their study found that the two most common reasons individuals decide not to report their NSE(s) were because they thought the event was "not serious" or "not a big deal" (12-27%) or that it was a "private matter" (16-20%). In light of findings like this, some researchers criticize mandatory reporting policies; they argue that it is within an adult's

rights to decide whether or not to share their experience and they express concern that contradicting an individual's belief that the NSE was not serious or taking away the individual's right to keep it private may actually do more harm than good (Holland & Freyd, 2018; NAESV, 2015; Smith & Winkour, 2004; Malecha et al., 2000).

Attempting to clarify people's thoughts on mandatory reporting policies, a study by Mancini and colleagues (2016) found overall perception of MR policies to be positive in the general public, but university students also identified potentially harmful effects. Students expressed concerns that mandatory reporting would negatively impact students' trust in university employees and that this policy might re-traumatize students with NSE histories (Holland & Freyd, 2018; Mancini et al., 2016). In the study, 57% of students thought mandatory reporting policies would reduce help-seeking behaviors in survivors, 65% thought it might re-traumatize survivors, and 76% thought it would reduce survivor autonomy like Demers and colleagues (Mancini et al., 2016; Demers et al., 2018). Although 56% of students said they thought they would be more likely to report their own NSEs with mandatory reporting policies in place, 62% also believed it would decrease reporting among their peers and 15% said they would be less likely to report their own experiences under mandatory reporting policy (Mancini et al., 2016). These results indicate that students are divided and uncertain in their views of mandatory reporting policies. With lingering questions about how these policies affect survivors' autonomy and well-being, and very little consensus on students' likelihood of reporting under these policies, it is still unclear how MR might impact students in the real-world when they do face sexual violence.

Despite the conflicting results and questions raised in previous research, in almost all of the studies there were several individual and situational factors that consistently influenced disclosure likelihood. Across the board, different types of sexual violence were related to student's opinions on mandatory reporting policy. Students viewed the policies more positively in instances of rape than in instances of sexual assault or harassment (i.e., fondling, groping, but no penetration) (Holland & Freyd, 2018; Newins & White, 2018). The perpetrator involved in the sexual violence also affected disclosure likelihood. Newins, White, and colleagues (2018) found that students reported being more likely to disclose instances of sexual violence when professors were the perpetrators of the violence than when students were the perpetrators. These studies also found that personal history with NSEs consistently impacted disclosure likelihood. Students with NSE histories were less supportive of mandatory reporting overall and predicted that they would be less likely to disclose their experiences with MR policies in place (Holland, 2019; Newins & White, 2018). Conversely, students without a history of NSEs were generally supportive of mandatory reporting and indicated an increased likelihood of disclosing sexual violence in the presence of these policies (Mancini et al., 2016; Newins & White, 2018). An additional study showed that the overwhelming majority (88%) of people with previous NSEs were less likely to disclose experiences of sexual violence with the mandatory reporting policies in place (NAESV, 2016).

This research highlights how contextual and personal factors, like perpetrator type, violence type, and personal NSE history, each play a role in the relationship between mandatory reporting and students' predictions of their likelihood to disclose

sexual violence. As such, it is crucial to take contextual factors like these into account in future research in order to fully understand students' disclosure likelihood. Previously identified contextual factors that need further exploration are an individual's NSE history as well as the language used to describe sexual violence in the research itself. The extant research found a consistent relationship between NSE history and disclosure likelihood; however, there are limitations in the existing studies that should be addressed in order to fully explore this relationship. Additionally, these previous studies asked about disclosure likelihood in cases of "sexual violence," "sexual victimization" and "rape" (Newins & White, 2018; Newins et al., 2018; Mancini et al., 2016); however, when studying NSEs and sexual violence, it is critically important to explicitly state what these terms mean, which previous studies evaluating MR have not done.

Being explicit with sexual violence definitions is important when studying NSEs because terms like "nonconsensual sexual experience" and "sexual violence" are umbrella terms used to encompass many different sexually violent behaviors and experiences (e.g., rape, abuse, assault, fondling, etc.) (Fedina, Holmes, & Backes, 2016; Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Furthermore, there are also varying definitions for each specific type of sexually violent behavior (Kilimnik et al., 2018; Littleton, Rhatigan, & Axsom, 2007). For example, some studies have used limited definitions of rape such as "sexual intercourse with a man when you didn't want to because he used some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.)," while other studies have used broader definitions like "sex obtained through incapacitation of the victim" or "sex obtained through coercion (i.e., having sex with someone who threatened to spread

rumors about you or to hurt someone you loved)” (Littleton, Rhatigan, & Axsom, 2007; Kahn et al., 1994, 2003; Bondurant, 2001; Koss & Oros, 1982). Not only is this inconsistent terminology difficult for understanding and studying NSEs, it also impacts the individuals who experience them.

In fact, among survivors of rape, defined broadly here as penetration without consent, only between 42% to 73% use the term “rape” to describe their experience (Littleton, Rhatigan, & Axsom, 2007). The lack of consistency in the definition of sexual violence terms is a limitation and an obstacle in the study of sexual violence. Using behavioral descriptors of sexual violence (e.g., penetration without consent), rather than terms like “rape” or “assault,” is arguably a more effective way to study NSEs as it ensures all participants are responding to the same kind of experience (Kilimnik et al., 2018; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 201; Littleton, Rhatigan, & Axsom, 2007).

In addition to emphasizing the importance of using descriptive language rather than sexual violence terms, the existing research on NSEs indicates people who do not use sexual violence terms (i.e., rape, assault, etc.) to identify their NSEs (“Non-Identifiers”), are less likely to disclose their experiences and are more uncomfortable talking about them than people who do use sexual violence labels (“Identifiers”) (Orchowski, Untied, & Gidycz, 2013; Marx & Soler-Baillo, 2005). In light of these findings, it is critical to consider differences between Identifiers and Non-Identifiers, not just between people with a presence or absence of a NSE history, when studying disclosure rates and mandatory reporting policies. None of the existing studies on MR policy have evaluated NSE identification beyond just NSE history, nor have they used



behavioral descriptors of sexual violence rather than violence terms (Holland, 2019; Mancini et al., 2016; Newins & White, 2018); as such, these are limitations of previous research and should be addressed in future work.

Previous studies on mandatory reporting and on nonconsensual sexual experiences in general have made great strides to predict students' disclosure likelihood. Through this work, researchers have illuminated several important contextual factors to consider while studying disclosure rates and mandatory reporting (i.e., perpetrator type, violence type, NSE history and identification). Though these situational and individual factors provide some insight into disclosure likelihood for students under mandatory reporting policies, it is still unclear from the extant research how mandatory reporting policies themselves impact likelihood for students to disclose sexual violence. The current study hopes to build on previous research in this area and further explore the effects of mandatory reporting on students' likelihood of disclosing sexual violence to their university while considering the relevant contextual and individual factors identified in previous work.

## **THE CURRENT STUDY**

The current study builds upon previous research and aims to fill gaps in the literature in a few ways. First, in contrast to previous studies on mandatory reporting that relied solely on self-report data about predicted likelihood to disclose under MR policies, the current study employed an experimental design to evaluate how the presence or absence of mandatory reporting impacts disclosure likelihood. The experimental design will allow researchers to draw more definitive conclusions about whether or not

the presence of mandatory reporting policies actually increases likelihood of disclosure from students as the policy intends. By creating conditions with instructional manipulations, this study allowed for an exploration of any significant differences between the MR and conditional reporting groups. This manipulation gives greater power to assess causation rather than correlation between MR policy and disclosure likelihood among students. Additionally, the current study did not use sexual violence labels as was done in previous work in this area. Due to the ambiguous nature of sexual violence terms, the current study used behavioral descriptions of sexual violence, rather than labels like “rape” or “assault,” in order to ensure all participants were responding to the same acts of violence. Lastly, rather than evaluating NSE history only, the current study assessed NSE identification to account for differences in likelihood to disclose between people with no NSE history, Identifiers, and Non-Identifiers.

Based on previous findings, we predicted the presence of mandatory reporting would lead to increases in disclosure likelihood in people without a history of NSE(s) and decreases in likelihood for Identifiers and Non-Identifiers respectively. We also hypothesized that reporting likelihood would be moderated by perpetrator and violence type, with all participants being more likely to report when the perpetrator was a professor rather than a student and when the experience was penetrative versus non-penetrative.

## **Methods**

### **PARTICIPANTS**

Undergraduate students at the University of Texas at Austin were recruited to participate in the current study. Students were recruited from the SONA participant pool online. The posting advertised a study on university policy and sexual experiences.

Undergraduate students at UT Austin over the age of 18 who could read and write in English were eligible to participate. Students who received extensive training in Title IX and mandatory reporting, such as Resident Assistants or other undergraduate Responsible Employees, were excluded from the current study. Responsible Employee students receive training in mandatory reporting that goes above and beyond the information given to typical undergraduate students; therefore, these students may respond to policies on disclosure in ways that are not representative of the general student body.

### **PROCEDURE**

Participants completed the study via Qualtrics survey link. After consenting and completing demographic questionnaires, participants were randomized into two groups and presented with an instructional manipulation. One group received a statement indicating the presence of mandatory reporting at their university for the purposes of the study, while the other group received a statement indicating the presence of confidential reporting policies at their university (Appendix A). Every participant was shown four vignettes describing sexual violence (Appendix B). The vignettes were kept as consistent as possible, only alternating the perpetrator and violence type described. To make the vignettes applicable to all participants, they/them pronouns and names historically used

for both male and female identifying persons were used in the stories. After reading each vignette, participants reported how likely they would be to disclose the event in the vignette to a professor at their university if they were the student in the vignette. Additionally, they were asked if they thought the event described in each vignette was a nonconsensual sexual experience. Participants then completed the Nonconsensual Sexual Experiences Inventory (Kilimnik et al., 2018) to determine if they had a history of NSEs, and, if so, whether they were an “Identifier” or a “Non-Identifier” (Appendix C). After the students completed the survey set, they were compensated with course credit and were given a list of sexual health and mental health resources on campus and in the Austin area.

## **MEASURES**

### **Demographics**

Demographic questions included: age, year in university, major, race/ethnicity, previous consensual sexual experiences, current relationship status, and length of current relationship if applicable. Students were also asked if they were a Responsible Employee at the university, and if so, they were excluded from the study.

### **Mandatory Reporting Instructions**

After completing the demographics questionnaire, participants were randomized into two groups. One group received a statement asking them to imagine that their university was one in which mandatory reporting of sexual violence is required and that professors and TAs are not confidential sources (Appendix A). The other group was asked to imagine that their university did not have mandatory reporting policies and that

professors and TAs were confidential sources. Statements were kept as similar as possible, only changing the language describing the presence or absence of mandatory reporting and confidentiality.

**Vignettes.**

		Perpetrator Type	
		Student	Professor
Violence Type	Non-Penetrative	Student, Non-Penetrative	Professor, Non-Penetrative
	Penetrative	Student, Penetrative	Professor, Penetrative

Figure 1: Vignette Diagram

After randomizing the participants into the two groups and presenting them with their university’s hypothetical mandatory reporting policies, each participant read four vignettes in random order. The vignettes described an instance of sexual violence with alternating perpetrator and violence types (Figure 1). Two vignettes included a professor

perpetrator, two included a student perpetrator, two described a non-penetrative assault, and two described a penetrative assault. To clarify, one vignette described a professor perpetrating a non-penetrative assault, one described a student perpetrating a non-penetrative assault, another described a professor perpetrating a penetrative assault, and the fourth described a student perpetrating a penetrative assault (Appendix B). After each vignette, students indicated how likely they would be to report the experience in the vignette to a professor at their university if they were the student in the vignette using a five-point Likert scale (1= Definitely would not report, 5= Definitely would report).

### **Nonconsensual Sexual Experiences Inventory (NSEI).**

Participants completed the NSEI after responding to all four vignettes (Appendix C). The NSEI includes five questions detailing specific behaviors of sexual violence and asks whether the participant has ever experienced them (e.g., “Has anyone ever... against your will?”) (Kilimnik et al., 2018). The questions cover experiences of vaginal, oral, and anal penetration, and fondling or unwanted touching of genitals or breasts. If the participant endorsed “yes” to any of the behavioral questions, they were then asked what they feel most comfortable calling the experience. Participants were given a list of terms to choose from including known sexual violence terms (e.g., sexual assault, sexual abuse, and rape) as well as several other terms used to label NSEs (e.g., “a mistake,” “a misunderstanding,” an “unwanted sexual experience,” or a “nonconsensual sexual experience”) (Demers, 2018; Kilimnik & Meston, 2017; Cleere & Lynn, 2013; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2011). Participants who used one of the sexual violence terms to describe their experience were classified as “Identifiers” and those who used the other

terms were classified as “Non-Identifiers.” Participants who endorsed “no” to all five behavioral questions were classified as “No NSE” participants to indicate their lack of NSE history.

Participants with NSEs were also asked about the age at which each NSE occurred (e.g., childhood ages 0-11, adolescence between ages 12-17, and/or adulthood ages 18 and older), who the perpetrator was (e.g., family member, authority figure, dating partner, etc.), how much violence and physical harm was involved, and how much they were impacted psychologically by the experience. Participants were asked to indicate the amount physical violence and the psychological harm using a five-point Likert scale. Participants were additionally asked if they told anyone about the experience, and if “yes,” they were given a free-response option to indicate who they told and how the person responded. These follow up questions, while still included in the survey, were not used in the analysis of the current study.

## Results

### PARTICIPANTS

There were 184 participants in the study, ranging from 18 to 24 years of age (M(SD)= 19.14 (1.3)). The large majority of the sample identified as heterosexual (75.5%) and female (92.9%). Of the 184 total participants, 52 were classified as Identifiers, 48 were classified as Non-Identifiers, and 84 did not report any NSEs.

	N= 184	%
Age, Mean(SD)	19.14(1.3)	
Gender Identity		
• Female	171	92.9%
• Male	11	0.06%
• Gender Queer	1	<1%
• Non-binary	1	<1%
Ethnicity		
• White	68	36.9%
• Black	15	<1%
• Hispanic	42	22.8%
• Asian	50	27.2%
• Middle Eastern	4	<1%
• Multiple	5	<1%
• Other	1	<1%
Sexual Orientation		
• Homosexual	4	<1%
• Bisexual	25	13.5%
• Heterosexual	139	75.5%
• Pansexual	3	<1%
• Queer	2	<1%
• Prefer not to label	8	<1%
• Other	3	<1%
NSE Identification		
• No NSE history	84	45.6%
• Non-Identifiers	48	26.1%
• Identifiers	52	28.3%

Table 1: Demographics



## **DATA ANALYSES**

The current study used a mixed factor repeated-measures ANOVA to analyze the data. Mandatory reporting policy group, perpetrator of sexual violence, and violence type in the vignettes were independent variables in the model. Policy group was a between groups variable and both perpetrator and violence type were within groups variables. Identification of NSE history (e.g. No NSE history, Identifier, or Non-Identifier) was conceptualized as a between groups covariate. The outcome variable evaluated in the current study was students' likelihood to disclose events of sexual violence to someone at the university.

An a priori power analysis using G\*Power indicated that, in order to achieve a power of 0.8 with a medium effect size of 0.25, the study required 25-50 participants (Faul et al., 2009). The exact number of participants depends on the correlation between the repeated measures, meaning the two vignettes shown to each participant. Assuming a modest correlation of 0.3 between the responses to the two vignettes, the current study would need 48 participants to achieve 0.8 power. For a correlation of 0.7, only 24 participants would be required. As the current study included 184 participants, it was determined the study had sufficient power.

### **Differences in disclosure likelihood by condition and NSE identification**

The results of the repeated measures ANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences in students' likelihood to disclose sexual violence between conditions or between different NSE categories. Students were equally likely to disclose sexual violence with or without mandatory reporting policies present in this study

( $F(3,531)= 0.906, p= 0.438$ ). There were also no significant differences found in likelihood to report between Identifiers, Non-Identifiers, or people with no NSE histories ( $F(6,531)= 0.622, p=0.712$ ). Lastly, there were no significant interaction effects discovered between condition and NSE identification ( $F(6,531)= 0.910, p= 0.487$ ). Though there were no significant differences based on condition or NSE identification, there were significant differences discovered between vignettes.

**Differences in disclosure likelihood by perpetrator and violence type**

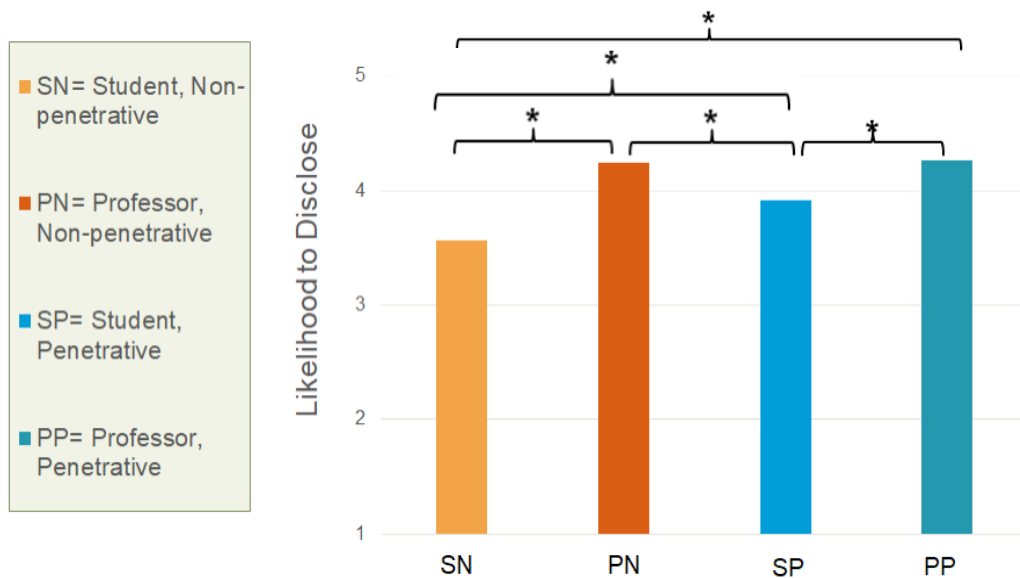


Figure 2: Differences in likelihood to disclose between vignettes

The mixed factor repeated measure ANOVA indicated significant differences in likelihood to disclose between vignettes ( $F(3, 531)= 25.156, p<0.001$ ). Post hoc analyses revealed that there were differences in disclosure likelihood by both perpetrator type and

violence type (Figure 2). Participants were significantly more likely to say they would report the experience in the vignette when a professor was the perpetrator rather than a student ( $p_s \leq 0.005$ ). Additionally, students were more likely to disclose when there was penetrative violence perpetrated by a student than when there was non-penetrative violence perpetrated by a student ( $p= 0.002$ ). There were no significant differences found in likelihood to disclose between the professor perpetrator vignettes ( $p= 0.963$ ). Therefore, violence type (i.e., penetrative v. non-penetrative) moderated students' likelihood of disclosing when the perpetrator was a student, but not when the perpetrator was a professor.

## **Discussion**

The present study addressed important gaps in the current literature on mandatory reporting on college campuses. Currently, research on mandatory reporting has used self-report surveys assessing students' predictions for whether they would disclose an experience of sexual violence under mandatory reporting policies without any experimental manipulations. This design has not allowed researchers to determine if mandatory reporting effectively increases disclosures of NSEs as the policy intends, or if it actually decreases disclosure rates among people with NSE histories, as previous findings suggest it might. Additionally, these studies used terms like "rape," harassment," or "sexual victimization." Research on NSEs indicate that labels can be perceived differently unless specifically defined for participants (Kilimnik et al., 2018; Littleton, Rhatigan, & Axsom, 2007); as such, behaviorally descriptive items were used in the current study. The extant research also only considered the presence or absence of previous NSEs for students. To our knowledge, there had not been any studies on mandatory reporting that considered NSE identification when evaluating likelihood to disclose under mandatory reporting policies. Since previous research on NSE identification indicated that Identifiers and Non-Identifiers disclose their NSEs at different rates, it was necessary to evaluate the effects of mandatory reporting on these two groups in addition to NSE history in the current study (Littleton, Rhatigan, & Axsom, 2007; Marx & Soler-Baillo, 2005).

## CONCLUSIONS

Contrary to what was anticipated, there were no significant differences in students' likelihood to disclose between the mandatory reporting and confidential reporting conditions or between NSE identification history classifications. There were significant differences in likelihood to disclose between vignettes. This indicated that students were differentially likely to report based on some combination of situational factors pertinent to each vignette. Further investigation revealed that these differences were due to both perpetrator and violence type in the vignettes.

As was found in previous research, students were significantly more likely to say they would report professor perpetrators than student perpetrators. In the current study, students were more likely to report a penetrative experience than a non-penetrative experience when the perpetrator was a student. Students were also more likely to report a non-penetrative assault perpetrated by a professor, than a penetrative one perpetrated by a student. It seems that the introduction of a power differential between professors and students is very influential when students consider disclosing sexual violence. As such, the current study replicated previous findings and underscores the importance of considering both perpetrator and violence type (i.e., penetrative or non-penetrative) when assessing students' likelihood to disclose.

Contrary to previous research on NSE identification, the current study did not find significant differences in likelihood to disclose sexual violence based on NSE identification or NSE history (Orchowski, Untied, & Gidycz, 2013; Littleton, Rhatigan, & Axsom, 2007; Marx & Soler-Baillo, 2005). It is unclear why this finding was not

replicated. It is possible that in this study, with behavioral descriptors and violence only within the context of a university, identification with previous NSEs did not impact for likelihood to disclose in this context. According to previous research by Peterson and Mulenhard, people are differentially inclined to disclose sexual violence based on two primary factors: the match and their motivation; match referring to the match of one's own experience with the definition one holds for sexual violence, rape, abuse, etc., and motivation referring to their motivation for disclosing or not disclosing (Peterson & Mulenhard, 2011).

Motivation can depend on reasons for or against labeling the perpetrator as someone who would commit violence (i.e., not wanting to label one's friend or boyfriend as a rapist), or simply reasons for or against disclosing violence at all as reports can have heavy consequences like stigma, shame, dismissal, or even retribution (Khan et al., 2018). It is possible that when the only two perpetrator options were a fellow student or a professor, the motivations against labeling the perpetrator as such were not strong enough or relevant enough to prevent disclosure for a lack of motivation based on a desire to avoid the perpetrator label. Federal policies like Title IX and university policies on sexual violence also heavily encourage students to report sexual violence, so the motivation against disclosing for fear of negative consequences may also have been minimized when using vignettes only pertinent to a university setting. Additionally, 99% of participants in the current study labeled all of the vignettes as "nonconsensual sexual experiences." As there was such a consensus that the experiences described in the vignettes were nonconsensual, there may not have been a match discrepancy between the vignettes and

the participants' definitions of sexual violence. If the vignettes coincided with the students' definitions of the type of sexual violence their university would want them to report, there would not be a deterrent to disclose based on match discrepancy.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

There were several limitations to the current study that should be acknowledged and considered in future research. First, generalizability of the results from the current study may be limited. The sample was primarily female and heterosexual; future studies should assess likelihood to disclose with a sample that is more representative of different gender identities and sexual orientations. The current study was also conducted using only data from undergraduates at the University of Texas at Austin. Exposure and training in Title IX policies may vary at different universities throughout the country, leading to different likelihoods of disclosure in different student bodies. Trust in one's university has also been found to impact likelihood to disclose under mandatory reporting in previous research; this may also lead to different results across different universities (Holland & Freyd, 2018). The large majority of undergraduates at UT reported having a very high level of trust in the university to resolve issues of sexual violence, and this may not be the case at every university (CLASE, 2017).

Additionally, employees that are mandatory reporters, or Responsible Employees, also vary from university to university and, while it is highly likely that Professors would be considered Responsible Employees at any university, it is not guaranteed. That being said, a study conducted by Holland and Freyd (2018) found that the majority of universities across the US designated all employees as Responsible Employees. Since the

vignettes used in the current study describe a student disclosing to a professor, the response to mandatory reporting here could only be generalized to universities in the US where professors are Responsible Employees.

As the current study did not replicate previous findings indicating that NSE Identification differentially influences likelihood to disclose, future studies may want to include this in their analyses to gain clarity on this relationship. It may be that the specific situations described in the vignettes in the current study, which all address university related violence, did not tap into the NSE contexts in which Identifiers and Non-Identifiers are more or less likely to report. Future research in this area should consider referring to Peterson and Mulenhard's work on the Match and Motivation Model. Evaluating whether participants identify each vignette with a sexual violence term, rather than just as "sexual violence" or a "nonconsensual sexual experience," may provide better insight into whether there is a mismatch in students' definitions of violence and the violence in the vignettes. Perhaps further identification of the vignettes, not just participant's own histories of NSEs and identification, would shed further light on this. It is also possible that with violence in a university setting specifically, the motivations for or against reporting are not sufficiently activated in ways that would cause Identifiers, Non-Identifiers, or students with no NSE history to differ. With only professor or fellow student perpetrators, there may not be motivation to avoid the "perpetrator" label like there would be with a friend or lover. Additionally, as universities advertise their desire for students to report so effectively, it is possible that motivations against disclosure for fear of negative consequences are lower for students with prior NSEs than they would be



outside of a university setting. Future research may want to consider further expansion on labeling violence type as well as expanding the options for perpetrator types (e.g., making the fellow student a friend or romantic partner) to assess whether or not likelihood to disclose is affected.

## **SUMMARY**

The primary aim of the current study was to evaluate how the presence of mandatory reporting policies affected students' likelihood of disclosing sexual violence. Surveyed students in previous research were divided on how they believed they would report instances of sexual violence under MR policies (Holland & Freyd, 2018; Mancini et al., 2016). Moreover, students raised several concerns around mandatory reporting; some of the most concerning being that it may re-traumatize victims of sexual violence, reduce survivor autonomy, and decrease student disclosures to their universities (Mancini et al., 2016). Though there are many mixed opinions of MR policy and concern posed from experts in the field of nonconsensual sexual experience research, the current study did not find any significant differences in likelihood to disclose sexual violence between mandatory reporting and confidential reporting groups. Based on these results, it does not appear that MR policies increase or decrease reporting. Contextual factors like perpetrator type and violence type were significant predictors of students' likelihood to disclose. Future research should consider contextual factors when studying university sexual violence and mandatory reporting and should further investigate both opinions of these policies and especially the impact they have on survivors of such violence.

Additional research in this area is a critical next step in the evaluation of sexual violence on college campuses.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Mandatory Reporting Instructional Information

Presence of Mandatory Reporting Group: Imagine that you are at a university where all employees, including professors, are required to report sexual violence to the university Title IX Office, even if the student(s) involved ask them not to. At your university, TAs and Professors are **not** confidential reporting resources. The University will respond to all reports made under this policy and may conduct an investigation.

Absence of Mandatory Reporting Group: Imagine that you are at a university where all employees, including professors, are not required to report sexual violence to the university Title IX Office, but can file reports when the student(s) involved ask them to. At your university, TAs and Professors **are** confidential reporting resources. The University will respond to all reports made, and may conduct an investigation.

## Appendix B: Vignettes

### Vignette 1\_Student\_Non-Penetrative

[INSERT MANDATORY REPORTING INFORMATION APPROPRIATE FOR THE CONDITION IN THE STUDY: Presence or Absence of Mandatory Reporting]

Mandatory Reporting Policies, as they relate to this study, are described above. *Please read this information BEFORE reading the following story and answering the questions.*

Please read this hypothetical story and then answer the following questions.

Last weekend, Alex went to a fellow classmate's apartment to study. After studying, the classmate moved closer to Alex, and began rubbing the inside of Alex's legs. Alex gently pushed the classmate's hand away. However, a few minutes later, the classmate began rubbing Alex's legs again, this time inserting their hand into Alex's pants. Alex repeatedly moved the classmate's hand away, but in response, the classmate moved closer and kissed Alex. The classmate continued to kiss Alex and began running their hands over the rest of Alex's body despite Alex being uninterested. Alex felt uncomfortable, pushed the classmate away, and left the apartment. Alex has not yet told anyone about this, but is considering telling a trusted professor, Dr. Doe, to get advice.

1. Do you think this hypothetical story is an example of a non-consensual sexual experience?  
Yes    or    No

2. If you were in this scenario instead of Alex, how likely is it that you would tell "Dr. Doe" or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

3. If you were in a scenario instead of Alex, and had been casually drinking with the classmate while studying, how likely is it that you would tell "Dr. Doe" or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

4. If you were in this scenario instead of Alex, and you had been flirting with this classmate prior to this night, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

5. If you were in this scenario instead of Alex, and you had verbally asked the classmate to stop at the beginning, rather than pushing the classmate’s hand away, and the classmate still proceeded, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

### **Vignette 2\_Professor\_Non-Penetrative**

[INSERT MANDATORY REPORTING INFORMATION APPROPRIATE FOR THE CONDITION IN THE STUDY: Presence or Absence of Mandatory Reporting]

Please read the following hypothetical story and then answer the two questions.

Last week, Taylor went to Dr. Smith’s office for a meeting. After their meeting, Dr. Smith moved closer to Taylor, and began rubbing the inside of Taylor’s legs. Taylor gently pushed Dr. Smith’s hand away. However, a few minutes later, Dr. Smith began rubbing Taylor’s legs again, this time inserting their hand into Taylor’s pants. Taylor repeatedly moved Dr. Smith’s hand away, but in response, Dr. Smith moved closer and kissed Taylor. Dr. Smith continued to kiss Taylor and began running their hands over the rest of Taylor’s body despite Taylor being uninterested. Taylor felt uncomfortable, pushed Dr. Smith away, and left the office. Taylor has not yet told anyone about this, but is considering telling a trusted professor, Dr. Doe, to get advice.

1. Do you think this hypothetical story is an example of a non-consensual sexual experience?  
Yes or No
2. If you were in this scenario instead of Taylor, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

3. If you were in a scenario instead of Taylor, and had been casually drinking with Dr. Smith after they offered you a drink, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

4. If you were in this scenario instead of Taylor, and you had been flirting with Dr. Smith prior to this night, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

5. If you were in this scenario instead of Taylor, and you had verbally asked Dr. Smith to stop at the beginning, rather than pushing the professor’s hand away, and Dr. Smith still proceeded, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would

### Vignette 3\_Student\_Penetrative

[INSERT MANDATORY REPORTING INFORMATION APPROPRIATE FOR THE CONDITION IN THE STUDY: Presence or Absence of Mandatory Reporting]

Mandatory Reporting Policies, as they relate to this study, are described above. **Please read this information BEFORE reading the following story and answering the questions.**

Please read this hypothetical story and then answer the following questions.

Last weekend, Riley went to a fellow classmate's apartment to study. After studying, the classmate moved closer to Riley, and began rubbing the inside of Riley's legs. Riley gently pushed the classmate's hand away. However, a few minutes later, the classmate began rubbing Riley's legs again, this time inserting their hand into Riley's pants. Riley repeatedly moved the classmate's hand away, but in response, the classmate moved closer and kissed Riley. The classmate continued to kiss Riley and began running their hands over the rest of Riley's body. The classmate penetrated Riley with their fingers and despite Riley being uninterested, they proceeded to have sex. Riley felt uncomfortable, pushed the classmate away, and left the apartment. Riley has not yet told anyone about this, but is considering telling a trusted professor, Dr. Doe to get advice.

1. Do you think this hypothetical story is an example of a non-consensual sexual experience?

Yes or No

2. If you were in this scenario instead of Riley, how likely is it that you would tell "Dr. Doe" or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

3. If you were in a scenario instead of Riley, and had been casually drinking with the classmate while studying, how likely is it that you would tell "Dr. Doe" or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

4. If you were in this scenario instead of Riley, and you had been flirting with this classmate prior to this night, how likely is it that you would tell "Dr. Doe" or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

5. If you were in this scenario instead of Riley, and you had verbally asked the classmate to stop at the beginning, rather than pushing the classmate’s hand away, and the classmate still proceeded, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

### Vignette 4\_Professor\_Penetrative

[INSERT MANDATORY REPORTING INFORMATION APPROPRIATE FOR THE CONDITION IN THE STUDY: Presence or Absence of Mandatory Reporting]

Please read the following hypothetical story and then answer the two questions.

Last week, Chandler went to Dr. Jones’ office for a meeting. After their meeting, Dr. Jones moved closer to Chandler, and began rubbing the inside of Chandler’s legs. Chandler gently pushed Dr. Jones’ hand away. However, a few minutes later, Dr. Jones began rubbing Chandler’s legs again, this time inserting their hand into Chandler’s pants. Chandler repeatedly moved Dr. Jones’ hand away, but in response, Dr. Jones moved closer and kissed Chandler. Dr. Jones continued to kiss Chandler and began running their hands over the rest of Chandler’s body. Dr. Jones penetrated Chandler with their fingers and despite Chandler being uninterested, they proceeded to have sex. Chandler felt uncomfortable, pushed Dr. Jones away, and left the office. Chandler has not yet told anyone about this, but is considering telling a trusted professor, Dr. Doe to get advice.

1. Do you think this hypothetical story is an example of a non-consensual sexual experience?  

Yes    or    No
  
2. If you were in this scenario instead of Chandler, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report



3. If you were in a scenario instead of Chandler, and had been casually drinking with Dr. Jones after they offered you a drink, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

4. If you were in this scenario instead of Chandler, and you had been flirting with Dr. Jones prior to this night, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would Report

5. If you were in this scenario instead of Chandler, and you had verbally asked Dr. Jones to stop at the beginning, rather than pushing the professor’s hand away, and Dr. Jones still proceeded, how likely is it that you would tell “Dr. Doe” or any employee of the university about this experience?

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Would NOT Report		Unsure		Definitely Would

## Appendix C: Nonconsensual Sexual Experience Inventory

Below are questions about sexual experiences that may have occurred against your will. We recognize that this is a sensitive topic, remember that your answers are completely anonymous and confidential. Please answer as honestly as possible.

1. FEMALES ONLY: Has anyone ever inserted fingers, objects, or their penis into your vagina against your will?      No      Yes
  - a. Please select the **age group(s)** you were in when this happened. Please select **all that apply**:
    - i. This happened in my childhood (ages 0-11)
    - ii. This happened in my adolescence (ages 12-17)
    - iii. This happened in my adulthood (ages 18 and over)

*Note: the following items are repeated for the different age groups they reported this event has happened in (in question 1a) up to three times for all three age groups.*

- b. For the experience(s) that happened in your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11), how old were you the first time this happened? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. For the experience(s) that happened in your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11), what was your relationship to this person?
  - i. Father / Mother / Guardian
  - ii. Sibling
  - iii. Family friend
  - iv. Uncle or Aunt
  - v. Teacher
  - vi. Neighbor
  - vii. Romantic / Dating Partner
  - viii. Acquaintance
  - ix. Stranger
  - x. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. How often did this experience take place or was repeated with this person during your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11)?
  - i. Once
  - ii. Two to three times
  - iii. Multiple times
  - iv. Too many times to count

- e. Was violence, physical force, or physical injuries involved during this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience?    No    Yes
- f. To what extent do you feel this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience was traumatic?

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all traumatic</i>				<i>Extremely traumatic</i>

- g. How do you feel this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience impacted your overall life?

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
<i>Extremely positive impact</i>			<i>Neutral</i>			<i>Extremely negative impact</i>

- h. Do you consider this experience to be: (Please select all that apply)

- a) Sexual Abuse
- b) Sexual Assault
- c) Rape
- d) A Nonconsensual Sexual Experience
- e) An Unwanted Sexual Experience
- f) None of the above

- i. Did you tell anyone about this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience? If yes, who did you tell and what was their reaction or response?

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2. Has anyone ever inserted fingers, objects, or their penis into your anus/butt against your will?    No    Yes

- a. Please select the **age group(s)** you were in when this happened. Please select **all that apply**:

- i. This happened in my childhood (ages 0-11)
- ii. This happened in my adolescence (ages 12-17)

iii. This happened in my adulthood (ages 18 and over)

*Note: the following items are repeated for the different age groups they reported this event has happened in (in question 1a) up to three times for all three age groups.*

- b. For the experience(s) that happened in your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11), how old were you the first time this happened? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. For the experience(s) that happened in your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11), what was your relationship to this person?
- xi. Father / Mother / Guardian
  - xii. Sibling
  - xiii. Family friend
  - xiv. Uncle or Aunt
  - xv. Teacher
  - xvi. Neighbor
  - xvii. Romantic / Dating Partner
  - xviii. Acquaintance
  - xix. Stranger
  - xx. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. How often did this experience take place or was repeated with this person during your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11)?
- v. Once
  - vi. Two to three times
  - vii. Multiple times
  - viii. Too many times to count
- e. Was violence, physical force, or physical injuries involved during this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience?    No    Yes
- f. To what extent do you feel this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience was traumatic?
- |                                 |   |   |   |                                |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------|
| 1                               | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5                              |
| <i>Not at all<br/>traumatic</i> |   |   |   | <i>Extremely<br/>traumatic</i> |
- g. How do you feel this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience impacted your overall life?

-3      -2      -1      0      1      2      3

*Extremely  
positive  
impact*

*Neutral*

*Extremely  
negative  
impact*

- h. Do you consider this experience to be: (Please select all that apply)
- a) Sexual Abuse
  - b) Sexual Assault
  - c) Rape
  - d) A Nonconsensual Sexual Experience
  - e) An Unwanted Sexual Experience

- i. Did you tell anyone about this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience? If yes, who did you tell and what was their reaction or response?

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3. Has anyone ever made you have oral sex against your will (either giving or receiving)?      No      Yes
- a. Please select the **age group(s)** you were in when this happened. Please select **all that apply**:
- i. This happened in my childhood (ages 0-11)
  - ii. This happened in my adolescence (ages 12-17)
  - iii. This happened in my adulthood (ages 18 and over)

*Note: the following items are repeated for the different age groups they reported this event has happened in (in question 1a) up to three times for all three age groups.*

- b. For the experience(s) that happened in your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11), how old were you the first time this happened? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. For the experience(s) that happened in your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11), what was your relationship to this person?
- xxi. Father / Mother / Guardian
  - xxii. Sibling
  - xxiii. Family friend
  - xxiv. Uncle or Aunt
  - xxv. Teacher

- xxvi. Neighbor
- xxvii. Romantic / Dating Partner
- xxviii. Acquaintance
- xxix. Stranger
- xxx. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

d. How often did this experience take place or was repeated with this person during your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11)?

- ix. Once
- x. Two to three times
- xi. Multiple times
- xii. Too many times to count

e. Was violence, physical force, or physical injuries involved during this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience?    No    Yes

f. To what extent do you feel this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience was traumatic?

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not at all traumatic</i>				<i>Extremely traumatic</i>

g. How do you feel this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience impacted your overall life?

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
<i>Extremely positive impact</i>			<i>Neutral</i>			<i>Extremely negative impact</i>

h. Do you consider this experience to be: (Please select all that apply)

- a) Sexual Abuse
- b) Sexual Assault
- c) Rape
- d) A Nonconsensual Sexual Experience
- e) An Unwanted Sexual Experience

i. Did you tell anyone about this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience? If yes, who did you tell and what was their reaction or response?

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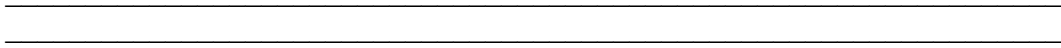
4. Has anyone ever fondled your breasts or genitals against your will or made you fondle their breasts or genitals against your will?    No    Yes
- a. Please select the **age group(s)** you were in when this happened. Please select **all that apply**:
- i. This happened in my childhood (ages 0-11)
  - ii. This happened in my adolescence (ages 12-17)
  - iii. This happened in my adulthood (ages 18 and over)

*Note: the following items are repeated for the different age groups they reported this event has happened in (in question 1a) up to three times for all three age groups.*

- b. For the experience(s) that happened in your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11), how old were you the first time this happened? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. For the experience(s) that happened in your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11), what was your relationship to this person?
- xxxi. Father / Mother / Guardian
  - xxxii. Sibling
  - xxxiii. Family friend
  - xxxiv. Uncle or Aunt
  - xxxv. Teacher
  - xxxvi. Neighbor
  - xxxvii. Romantic / Dating Partner
  - xxxviii. Acquaintance
  - xxxix. Stranger
  - xl. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. How often did this experience take place or was repeated with this person during your CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11)?
- xiii. Once
  - xiv. Two to three times
  - xv. Multiple times
  - xvi. Too many times to count
- e. Was violence, physical force, or physical injuries involved during this CHILDHOOD (ages 0-11) experience?    No    Yes







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