Latina Women's Reasons for and Experience of Sexual Assault Disclosure: A Qualitative Investigation

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LATINA WOMEN’S REASONS FOR AND EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL ASSAULT DISCLOSURE: A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION

by

Melissa Villarreal

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Submitted to the
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Advisor: Doris J. Ravotas, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University
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LATINA WOMEN’S REASONS FOR AND EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL ASSAULT DISCLOSURE: A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION

Melissa Villarreal, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University, 2011

This study describes Latina women’s experiences of sexual assault disclosure. The research questions are: (1) What reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of their experiences of sexual assault? (2) Can patterns be detected regarding to whom Latinas disclose and under what circumstances? (3) What feelings and consequences do Latinas remember experiencing during their initial disclosure? (4) In retrospect, how do Latinas interpret their self-disclosure decisions? Participants for this study agreed to be interviewed about their sexual assault experiences. Seven interviews were gathered in 2005 and six in 2011. A constant comparison approach was used with the transcribed interviews to discern recurrent significant themes. Similar to earlier research, all 13 participants had been sexually assaulted as children; most were assaulted by known perpetrators; and those who delayed disclosure cited reasons such as fear, family shame, avoidance, and self-blame. Furthermore, as in earlier research, taboos on talking about sex limited the awareness Latinas had with regard to sexual assault. In this study, some Latinas identified ignorance as a reason for not disclosing or delaying disclosure. Many of the women in this study identified complicated mother and daughter relationship dynamics that prevented disclosures. Similar to earlier research, participants more frequently disclosed
to family members or friends for emotional support rather than to professionals. Some
Latinas disclosed for protection of self and others. Some reported feeling spoiled for
marriage, silenced, and disbelieved. This study adds information to the literature about
feelings experienced during the initial disclosure—regret, shame, and negative judgment
of self. Many of the women in this study demonstrated that they had transcended the
trauma of their sexual assault. This provides direct evidence confirming assumptions
from prior research in which psychotherapists were the interviewees. This study
contributes Latinas’ voices to the literature on sexual assault disclosure. It points to the
need for further research on social services interventions to empower Latina sexual
assault survivors.
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Melissa Villarreal
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The problem addressed by the current study is the need to understand the perspectives and experiences of Latina women who have been sexually assaulted. It is crucial to understand Latina sexual assault victims/survivors’ help-seeking behaviors in order to determine what support systems and policies need to be in place to assist them. Furthermore, there is disconnection between treatment and the Latina sexual assault survivors’ experience of disclosure.

The rationale for this study emanated from my desire to increase culturally sensitive knowledge regarding the experience of sexual assault among Latina victims. In working with Latina women, it is important to understand and gain awareness about the potential commonalities they may have with other women in their communities, while being open to each individual’s unique narrative and life story (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994). Ahrens, Isas, and Viveros (2011) recommended that more qualitative and participatory methods of collecting data and conducting research with Latinas would reduce isolation and empower Latina survivors of sexual assault than quantitative methods. This study fills the need identified by Ahrens and colleagues.

This study has many implications for practice. By furthering knowledge about how Latina sexual assault survivors experience sexual assault and decide to disclose their assaults, psychotherapists may better serve their clients who are the victims of sexual
assault. In addition, this study may lead to creating better social services and policy recommendations geared for Latina sexual assault survivors, which then would improve utilization of and satisfaction with treatment services. It is also essential for psychotherapists to gain a better awareness of ethnic and cultural issues that may prevent Latina victims from seeking and receiving clinical services because Latina women may cope differently than women from other ethnicities.

Research on sexual assault within Latino communities continues to be limited. Although my literature review (described in Chapter II) identified some research in the area of sexual assault with Latinas (e.g., Ahrens, 2006; Morrissey, 1998; Ramos-Lira, Koss, & Russo, 1999; Romero, Wyatt, Loeb, Carmona, & Solís, 1999; Sorenson, 1996), existing research was limited primarily to the identification of cultural themes in sexual assault disclosures of Latina women and often did not reflect the women’s reasons and significance of the disclosure process. My review indicated further that such studies have been limited in relation to scope of data collection and method of analysis. For instance, Morrissey (1998) identified several cultural themes with regard to what Latinas may experience or believe due to a sexual assault, but her data were not collected directly from survivors of sexual assault. Rather, Morrissey conducted a qualitative study with psychotherapists and collected her data on Latinas from three Latina psychotherapists who have worked with Latina sexual assault survivors.

It is in recognition of such limitations that my research was designed to engage, analyze, and critique the reasons for sexual assault disclosure and the significance of the disclosure experience among Latinas. In addition, this study was designed to investigate patterns of disclosure regarding the individuals to whom Latinas disclose, what feelings
and consequences are experienced during initial disclosures, and how Latinas interpret their self-disclosure experiences. In this way, my study makes extends previous studies, for it is focused not only on cultural themes that emerged during the disclosure process, but also on patterns of disclosure, feelings experienced during and after the disclosure, and the consequences of the experience as perceived by the survivors.

This chapter begins with an examination of the empirical problem guiding the study, a discussion of its significance for current times, and a description of the approach adopted for its investigation and analysis. It also contains a synopsis of the background and context that frame the study. Subsequently, it highlights the statement of purpose and research questions. The chapter concludes with a theoretical canvas within which research approach, proposed rationale, and the significance of research are deployed and analyzed. Definitions of key terms used in the study are also presented at the end of this chapter.

Problem Statement

The Latino population is expected to increase to over 30% of the United States population by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Latinas are a diverse population with a variety of levels of acculturation, different immigration histories, and different family systems, socioeconomic levels, and attained educational levels (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994). Latino culture is complex and creates the context for differing responses to victimization among Latina sexual assault survivors.

“Rape is a crime that is devastating in its effects and difficult to discuss even with the most sympathetic of audiences” (Sudderth, 1998, p. 572). Regardless of cultural or
ethnic background, the impact of sexual assault is profound on the victim. However, when I reviewed the empirical literature in the area of sexual assault disclosure, it became apparent that the experience of Latinas who have been assaulted is rarely studied, resulting in a gap in the literature. The Latino population has also been largely ignored in sexual violence research conducted on incidence and prevalence of the problem and on its psychosocial impact (Golding, Siegel, Sorenson, Burnam, & Stein, 1989). In searching the published literature about interpersonal victimization, Cuevas and Sabina (2010) found that only approximately 1% focused on Latinos. Much of the literature available on Latina sexual assault disclosure focuses on partner violence, sexual violence, reasons for non-disclosure, and recipients of disclosures. However, very little research has examined Latinas’ interpretations of their sexual assault self-disclosure or the feelings and consequences experienced during the initial disclosure.

I planned to address the problem of inadequate research on sexual assault disclosure experiences by Latinas by investigating patterns, methods, and manner of disclosure. Specifically, in this study, I sought to understand the gap between occurrence of the assault and time of disclosure. In addition, I was interested in the psychological thought processes of the victims/survivors and their perspectives on their feelings, both at the time of initial disclosure and at the time of the research interviews.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

This dissertation reports the results of a phenomenological study of Latina women’s self-described reasons for sexual assault disclosure and the significance to them of the experience of that disclosure. The purpose is to add to the understanding of Latina
women’s beliefs, needs, and experiences related to their sexual assault disclosure. Strengths, stressors, and challenges through the eyes of Latinas who had been sexually assaulted were closely investigated.

In conducting the study, I analyzed interview data from 13 Latina sexual assault survivors. The research questions that guided the study were: (1) What reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of their experiences of sexual assault? (2) Can patterns be detected regarding to whom Latinas disclose and under what circumstances? (3) What feelings and consequences do Latinas remember experiencing during their initial disclosure? (4) In retrospect, how do Latinas interpret their self-disclosure decisions?

**Research Approach**

In order to seek answers to these research questions, I gathered data in two waves. I had gathered an earlier data set of seven interviews in 2005 with Latinas at a women’s center for domestic and sexual violence and a center for psychotherapy services. This initial round of interviews was conducted under a research protocol approved by Hope College’s Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) and reapproved for analysis under the HSRS of Hope College and the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) of Western Michigan University.

During 2010-2011, another six Latinas who had been sexually assaulted were recruited to participate in the current study. This phase of the process followed the new research protocol approved by the HSIRB of Western Michigan University and HSRB of Hope College. Recruiting the new set of participants allowed me to add more questions to
the interview to further clarify interpretations of decisions to disclose. In the second wave, the participants were clients of a center that provides services to women who had already disclosed domestic and/or sexual assault and were receiving support and clinical treatment. Two participants for the second wave were recruited through snowball sampling via referrals by former research participants.

Summary of Methods

Semistructured in-depth interview data were collected for 13 Latinas in the study. The interview schedule used in 2005 was extended in 2010 to focus on feelings and consequences associated with the process of disclosure, at the time of disclosure and in retrospect. The goal was to learn about the participants’ perspectives of what led to, or delayed, their decisions to disclose their experience of sexual assault, what pattern of disclosing they showed, what their experience was of disclosing, and how they interpreted their self-disclosure decision.

All the interviews from both waves of the study were tape-recorded and transcribed, so that verbatim, written documents could be analyzed. Prior to analyzing the data, the transcriptions were compared to the original tapes and edited for accuracy and readability. A phenomenological method was employed in analyzing the participants’ transcripts, primarily by using a constant comparison approach to discern recurrent significant themes that emerged throughout the interviews. These emergent themes were then combined or divided to create the most relevant thematic categories. The process of categorizing served to highlight similarities and differences between the transcripts.
Researcher’s Assumptions

The background assumptions underlying this study included my belief that women are the primary victims of sexual assault and men are generally the perpetrators of these experiences. This assumption is based on the statistical evidence that men account for only a small percentage of sexual assault victims (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008).

Based on my experience and background as a Latina, faculty member and field director in a college department of social work, and as a part-time psychotherapist, I made seven additional assumptions—three background research assumptions and four assumptions (biases) specific to research questions—regarding this study.

**Background Research Assumptions**

First, I assume that sexual assaults are traumatic and can happen to any woman regardless of her ethnicity or culture. This assumption includes the expectation that sexual assault may not necessarily be defined in the same way by women from every ethnicity.

Second, I assume, based on prior research (Fisher, 1987; Lefley, Scott, Llabre, & Hicks, 1993; Ramos-Lira et al., 1999; Romero et al., 1999), that a majority of Latina sexual assaults are not reported to anyone. It is the reasons for lack of disclosure that are unclear. Findings by Ramos-Lira and colleagues (1999) filled an important gap in the literature on Latinas’ awareness of rape and sexual assault, but the researchers’ focus was on the meanings of what rape and sexual assault meant to the participants but not on their personal stories. At the same time, Ramos-Lira and colleagues’ findings provided this
researcher with justification to examine the reasons and experiences surrounding Latina sexual assault disclosures. The general lack of understanding about Latinas’ response to sexual assault provided me with a strong desire to investigate what keeps Latinas silent from disclosing sexual assaults.

Third, it is my assumption that sexual assault trauma leads to profound negative mental and physical health status for the victim. This assumption is based on research (McAuslan, 1998) that indicates that sexual assault transpires at an alarming rate in American society, and sexual assault victims’ emotional and physical well-being are impacted negatively at overwhelming levels due to the trauma experienced.

Assumptions (Biases) Specific to Research Questions

First, I assumed that disclosure of sexual assault is positive. I was careful to control for this individual bias by returning to the professional literature sources and to the transcripts in order to look for interpretive exceptions. I looked for outliers and negative examples, as well as to exceptions to the patterns, that could disprove this and other biases.

Second, I assumed that Latina sexual assault survivors might not be encouraged to seek services from psychotherapists to help them cope with what they experienced at the hands of perpetrators and, therefore, they might delay or choose not to disclose their assaults, at least partially due to cultural reasons. Support for this assumption came from Sorenson and Siegel (1992), who, similar to Morrissey (1998), found that Latinos, regardless of their gender, were less likely to speak to a psychotherapist about their incident than non-Latinos.
Third, I assumed that Latina sexual assault survivors might be more likely to disclose their assaults first to a family member or friend than to a professional such as a police officer. This assumption was based on past research that has showed that disclosures to friends and family members are more common than disclosures to professionals such as law enforcement officials or medical personnel (Filipas & Ullman, 2001; Starzynski, Ullman, Townsend, Long, & Long, 2007). Research has shown that a majority of sexual assault survivors are more likely to disclose to informal support sources than formal ones such as the police (Ahrens, Cabral, & Abeling, 2009; Bachman, 1998; Filipas & Ullman, 2001; Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003; Golding et al., 1989; Smith, Letourneau, Saunders, Kilpatrick, Resnick, & Best, 2000; Starzynski, Ullman, Filipas, & Townsend, 2005; Ullman, 1996a; Ullman & Filipas, 2001).

Fourth, I assumed that Latina women might be more likely, as are women in all ethnic groups, to be sexually assaulted by family members or someone they know than by strangers. This assumption is based on the premise that “the majority of sexual assaults were committed by someone the woman knew, and women of all races were equally vulnerable to violence” (McAuslan, 1998, p. 3). In addition, a majority of women do not report or label their incidents as rape because they knew the perpetrator (Fisher et al., 2003; Jones, Alexander, Wynn, Rossman, & Dunnuck, 2007; Kahn, Jackson, Kully, Badger, & Halvorsen, 2003; McAuslan, 1998; Millar, Stermac, & Addison, 2002; Romero et al., 1999; Starzynski et al., 2005; Ullman & Filipas, 2001; Williams, 1984).
Definition of Key Terminology

The term *Latino* describes a diverse ethnic cultural group, not a homogeneous racial or religious group. People will be identified in this study as Latinos if their ancestors came from the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America or are people of Spanish and Indian (Mestizo) descent whose ancestors have always lived in Mexico or areas of the Southwest United States that were once part of Mexico (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The term *curandero* translates to traditional “folk healer” in the English language from the Spanish language. *Curanderos* in the Latino culture are devoted to curing physical, mental, and spiritual illnesses. Psychotherapists who work with the Latino population are accustomed to incorporate *curanderos* into treatment if such intervention is desired by the Latino clients.

The term *sexual assault* may be interpreted differently by different individuals. Rue’s (1989) interpretation of women being sexually assaulted is a broad one, including instances when a female feels fear, humiliation, disgust, or shock about doing something sexual with her body. In the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, violent crime is only composed of four offenses (murder, assault, robbery, and forcible rape). Of all the possible categories of sexual assault, the UCR gathers data on just forcible rape only, which is defined as “the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will. Assaults and attempts to commit rape by force or threat of force are also included; however, statutory rape (without force) and other sex offenses are excluded” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2007, p. 1).
Belknap’s (2001) interpretation of sexual assault or victimization incorporated any forced or coerced sexual intimacy, which includes penile-vaginal penetration, penetration of orifices with foreign objects, anal and oral rape, molestation, sexual harassment, and attempted rape. Karmen (2004) defined sexual assault in several different ways, drawing on the feminist argument that rape is more than just a personal tragedy, but an act of terrorism that intimidates and serves to keep women in their proper place. He identified the key factor that distinguishes a sexual assault from an unpleasant sexual experience; the key element of assault is the lack of consent. For the purposes of this dissertation, Michigan’s Penal Codes on Sexual Conduct are used to explain the severity level of sexual assault. Below, the four criminal sexual conduct offenses are described in detail.

The most severe sexual assault is a CSC I. It is criminal sexual conduct in the first degree, which constitutes a felony. As such, it involves both force and penetration of any type (vagina, anus, or mouth) with a penis, finger, or other object such as a pencil (Legislative Council, Act 328 of 1931, 750.520b).

The second most severe type of sexual assault is a CSC III, which is a criminal sexual conduct in third degree and also a felony. This form of criminal sexual conduct includes a person engaging in sexual penetration with another person who may have given consent, but who did not have the legal right to do so. For example, the victim may be a minor under the age of 16 and the perpetrator may be 17 or older; this type of sexual assault is also known as a statutory rape (Legislative Council, Act 328 of 1931, 750.520d).
The third most severe type of sexual assault is a CSC II. This level of conduct refers to a criminal sexual conduct in the second degree, also a felony. This form of criminal conduct includes a person engaging in sexual contact with another person. This type of sexual assault includes molestation, pornography, and children’s exploitation (Legislative Council, Act 328 of 1931, 750.520c).

Finally, the least severe category of sexual assault, also known as a CSC IV, is criminal sexual conduct in the fourth degree. This form of criminal behavior is classified as a misdemeanor. It includes a person engaging in sexual contact with another person through a direct or indirect sexual assault such as indecent exposure (Legislative Council, Act 328 of 1931, 750.520e).

Chapter II provides a review of the literature on sexual assault as it relates to Latina victims. As noted above, the review will introduce the cultural and personal themes that will be developed further in the current research.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins with a description of the literature review process. The research studies reviewed are discussed in two parts, as outlined below, from the most relevant to the least relevant. The studies are then compared, contrasted, and summarized.

The literature review incorporated within this dissertation was conducted using sources identified through the psychology, nursing, sociology and social work, and women’s studies academic discipline library databases at Hope College, and through universal search engines (e.g., ProQuest, Scopus, and Google Scholar). Keywords and phrases used in the search for this study included: Latinas’ experience of sexual assault, experience of sexual assault disclosure, experience of sexual assault, Latinas’ experience of sexual assault disclosure, importance of sexual assault disclosure, reasons for disclosure, barriers for not disclosing sexual assaults, social support and sexual assault, experience with the legal and medical systems and sexual assault, experience with counseling and sexual assault, and societal reactions to disclosures of sexual assault. Hard copies of all articles and documents that were potentially relevant to the current research were collated. Once collated, the references for all articles and documents were reviewed to identify further literature to review. Preliminary review of the selected articles involved qualitative examination of themes.
This study was grounded in current evidence, and the review of the existing literature led to grouping of the sources two thematic categories, which are reviewed in the two parts below. Part One presents a review of research on the precursors of sexual assault disclosure. Part Two presents a review of research on the consequences of sexual assault disclosure. Within each of these parts, studies are reviewed and presented in order of the most relevant to the least relevant for this study. A final section summarizes the relevant findings from these two parts.

Part One: Precursors of Sexual Assault Disclosure

Part One of Chapter II reviews studies addressing precursors of sexual assault disclosure. It is divided into three subparts: (a) studies addressing precursors of sexual assault disclosure by Latinas (in some of the studies reviewed, Latinas may not have been the main population of focus, but Latinas were included among other populations, so these additional studies are included); (b) studies addressing precursors of sexual assault disclosures by non-Latinas; and (c) implications for current research with regard to the precursors of sexual assault disclosure by comparing, contrasting, and summarizing the two sets of studies above.

Studies Addressing Precursors of Sexual Assault Disclosure by Latinas

The first subpart of Part One provides a review of studies that address the precursors of sexual assault disclosure by Latina survivors. In an Arizona study, Ramos-Lira et al. (1999) found that keeping silent was a consistent theme among Latinas sexually assaulted. The data were collected from four focus groups containing 4 to 5
participants each. This resulted in a total of 17 participants (13 Mexican—born in Mexico but raised in the United States; 3 Latin American—born and predominantly raised in Mexico; and 1 Mexican American—born in the United States but raised in Mexico for a year or more) who were asked to explain their responses to rape and other types of sexual abuse. The main motives given by the participants for silence were fear, family shame, and self-blame. The authors found that Latinas who are sexually assaulted by an acquaintance or intimate partner such as a current boyfriend often keep silent because they could never be sure how their family would react.

In addition, possible consequences such as family shame and the potential desire for revenge on the part of family males close to the victim may prevent disclosure. Moreover, these women may blame themselves for the sexual assaults, especially if a high value is placed on virginity. Furthermore, the authors suggested that underreporting may be a major problem in assessing rape prevalence among Latinas because their voices are typically left out of national surveys. The authors explained that many of the Latinas in this study communicated mainly or exclusively in Spanish, although they had lived in the United States for many years; that is, they were not yet acculturated, suggesting that their inability to communicate in English might be leading to the major difficulty in measuring rape/sexual abuse frequency among Latinas accurately.

Ahrens, Rios-Mandel, Isas, and del Carmen Lopez (2010) conducted 10 focus groups with 65 Spanish-speaking Latinas from different educational, immigration, and enculturation backgrounds. The purpose of the study was to add to the accessible literature on the low rates of sexual assault disclosure for Latinas by collecting data on specific cultural beliefs that would lead to barriers for Latinas to disclose a sexual assault
or a domestic violence incident. These participants were recruited from a variety of locations, including a local university, local rape and domestic violence agencies, and similar locales. The participants were asked to describe their current community, to compare the United States and their home countries, and to compare their own cultural beliefs with many others. Among the cultural beliefs and influences asked about were a range of available community resources, fear of violence, marriage status, and taboos about talking about sex, rape, and abuse. The results of the study indicated that there is a lack of resources for Latina survivors of sexual assault, in both the United States and Latin American countries, but they are more limited in countries other than the United States. With regard to family bonds, participants expressed that family orientation was stronger in Latin American countries, especially in small towns where a family’s reputation could be ruined through gossip. Fear of violence may silence many Latina survivors of sexual assault either in the United States or in Latin American countries. In addition, participants identified how shame and embarrassment can accompany efforts to address topics about sex, rape, and abuse both in the United States and abroad. However, here too, the participants reported that the taboos were stronger abroad and for less acculturated Latinos in the United States.

In a study of psychotherapists’ perspectives on the disclosure of rape, Morrissey (1998) interviewed “licensed clinical social workers, master’s level social workers, clinical psychology doctoral students with masters in Psychology, and doctorates of psychology” (p. 46) who had worked with rape survivors. In all, 10 clinicians in the greater Los Angeles area were interviewed. Most shared ethnic/racial commonalities with their clients. Four of them (Latina Americans) had worked with Latinas, 4 (3 African
American and an Arab American) had worked with African Americans, and 2 (Vietnamese Americans) had worked with Vietnamese. A qualitative exploratory study was conducted using the perceptions of psychotherapists to investigate cultural variations in women’s experience of rape, beliefs about rape, and knowledge about availability of formal and informal supports. In addition, Morrissey explored variations in treatment approaches provided to the sexual assault victims/survivors of each of these three populations to determine what strategies they used to cope with the rape experience. In other words, the author investigated what treatment approaches allow psychotherapists to build trust and rapport with their clients, allowing the clients to disclose personal information about what assisted them in surviving the ugliness of a sexual assault. A weakness in this study for my purposes is that the perceptions on cultural variations in women’s experience of sexual assault were collected from psychotherapists and not directly from sexual assault survivors. Morrissey found that the psychotherapists that had worked with Latina rape survivors observed that the Latino population was quite heterogeneous and that this variety likely affected disclosure patterns. For instance, the acculturation level appeared to influence the views and beliefs held about rape among Latinos.

Other studies have supported similar conclusions about levels of acculturation and language proficiency and their relationships to disclosure behaviors. In a phenomenological study with 12 focus groups, Sorenson (1996) similarly found that rape and sexual abuse have different meanings across different Latino cultures, with acts that may be punished in some cultures, but ignored in others. According to West, Kantor, and Jasinski’s (1998) quantitative data collected as a part of a national survey on alcohol-
family violence, level of acculturation may hinder Latinas from disclosing and seeking assistance from formal support sources, with those who are less acculturated disclosing less frequently and less fully. The lack of proficiency in English may place Latinas in more vulnerable and possibly abusive situations.

The questions in Morrissey’s (1998) interview protocol were based on variables identified in the literature specific to particular cultures about how they experience rape. For example, Morrissey noted that her literature review informed her of how religion and spirituality is an important coping strategy for some African Americans, but there was no research at that time examining the reliance on faith as a coping mechanism for Latinas. For that reason, Morrissey examined various coping strategies, which included reliance on faith, religion, and spirituality.

Several cultural themes were found by Morrissey (1998) through interviewing the four Latina clinicians regarding their perceptions of Latina survivors’/victims’ experiences. The following are eight cultural themes identified by Morrissey that also are relevant for this current study: (a) Latinas who lose their virginity to a sexual assault may feel ruined for marriage because they believe they are viewed as damaged goods; (b) an accompanying stigma of shame and loss of status may exist for the family (e.g., the family of a Latina rape survivor may lose status in the Latino community); (c) marital rape is not generally seen as rape in traditional Latino families; (d) Latina survivors are not known to press charges; (e) there is a coping mechanism among Latinos, known as sobrebarnace, which means “to overcome,” implying that Latinas should accept their fate and not think about the ugliness of the incident, thus transcending the sexual assault; (f) seeking counseling is not common among Latina survivors; (g) substance abuse is not
socially accepted for Latina women (e.g., traditional Latinas are not known to drink alcohol or to become drunk); and (h) fear of retaliation by a male relative against the perpetrator is a barrier for Latina survivors to report and disclose a sexual assault incident.

Further qualitative results reported by Morrissey (1998) suggested that both African American and Latina survivors felt they would not be believed by the police and did not trust the legal system. Suspicion of the police also was found with regard to undocumented immigrants. This suspicion was confirmed by Sorenson’s qualitative study. According to Sorenson (1996), undocumented sexual assault survivors revealed the fear that they or their entire family might be deported if they disclosed problems in their home. They fear that the police would contact la migra (immigration) and identify them for deportation.

Morrissey (1998) also found that for all three ethnicities (Latina, African American, and Vietnamese), spiritual trust was a common coping strategy for rape survivors. With regard to the Latino population, Morrissey found that Latinas often believed in working with a curandero, which is a traditional folk healer in the Latino culture devoted to curing physical, mental, and spiritual illnesses. Curanderos are known to use Roman Catholic elements (e.g., holy water, prayers, offerings, candles, and oils) to bring about a cure. According to Zea, Mason, and Murguia (2000), “many illnesses treated by curanderos include those that are not recognized by Western medicine and seem to possess strong psychosomatic and anxious qualities” (p. 406). I have known individuals from the Latino population that sought a limpia, a cleaning of the spirit from a curandero. They could seek this cleansing without disclosing the reason for seeking
assistance whether it is a mental, emotional, and/or physical illness. According to Zea et al., *curanderos* combine clinical skills, knowledge of traditional remedies, and spiritual considerations to cure individuals. Torres (1991) also found in a study comparing wife abuse between two cultures that Latinas sought assistance from traditional healing arts such as *curanderos* first, prior to seeking help from social service or legal systems.

Romero et al. (1999) examined reported and unreported incidents of sexual assault among Latinas compared to two other populations. These researchers used stratified probability sampling. They recruited 305 African American women, 300 Latinas of Mexican origin, and 300 non-Latina White participants. The participants were interviewed face-to-face in either English or Spanish at a location of their choice. The researchers used the Wyatt Sex History Questionnaire to collect data on women’s consensual and abusive sexual experiences, the effects on intimate relationships, and the effects on psychological and sexual functioning.

Romero et al. (1999) reported that one in three Latina women reported incidents of sexual abuse. These results suggested a higher prevalence rate of childhood sexual abuse than in other studies of Latinas. In addition, more than one third of the self-described victims experienced revictimization, with a majority of the incidents occurring in private locations by known assailants. The results indicated that there was a higher rate of nondisclosure of sexual abuse for the Latina participants than for the African American or non-Latina White participants. Arellano, Kuhn, and Chávez (1997) supported similar results. In their study, Latina adolescent females were less likely to report incidents of sexual assault than non-Latina White adolescent females.
More than one-third of Latina participants in the study by Romero et al. (1999) indicated that they feared a negative response to disclosing. Furthermore, they expressed the opinion that discussing incidents of sexual acts was a taboo within their communities; therefore, they may have remained silent about their own sexual assault. The inhibiting effect of traditional values is fully in keeping with other studies of Latinas. In a quantitative study using a random stratified sample, Williams (1985) found that Mexican Americans embrace more traditional viewpoints about male-female sex roles than do non-Latino White Americans. Fisher (1987) found that bilingual and bicultural Latino college students held more traditional attitudes toward women and the cause of date rape incidents than did their non-Latino White counterparts. These Latino students were less likely to blame the male perpetrators than non-Latino students. According to Adames and Campbell (2005), another concern with regard to disclosing sexual assaults is that Latinas may view sexual aggression as a private matter, leading them to be more reluctant to discuss an assault openly.

Shame and embarrassment are not limited to Latina victims of sexual assault. Scott’s (1994) study was based on a set of selected variables used on a secondary analysis of the Los Angeles Epidemiologic Catchment Area (LA-ECA) research project from January 1983 until August 1985. Data from over 3,000 respondents were collected in three waves of interviews, but only data gathered during the first two waves of in-person interviews were used. The questions that operationalized the eight dimensions specific to sexual assault were asked during Wave 1 and Wave 2 interviews. Approximately equal numbers of Latino and non-Latino White male and female participants were represented. With regard to the study population, it is important to point out that 14.7% \( (n = 389) \) of
Wave 1 and 10.7% ($n = 284$) of Wave 2 responded yes to experiencing a sexual assault. Scott concluded that many sexual assault survivors suffer an intense shame about their experience that prevents or restrains them from disclosing the assault to others. In addition, Scott found that victims’ reasoning for why they feel they must hide their experience of sexual assault is often overlooked. Furthermore, Scott examined the extent to which individuals are consistent in their reports of sexual assaults over time and found that non-Latino Whites were more likely than Latinos to report assaults consistently, to retract a previous disclosed sexual assault report, and to reveal a previously undisclosed sexual assault.

Kalof (2000) examined the link between ethnicity and four measures (college sexual victimization, sexual contact, childhood sexual victimization, and alcohol use) in a sample of 383 undergraduate women from a large, diverse urban university. A questionnaire survey was used to collect the data. One third (33%) of the women experienced a sexual assault of some degree during college. Of these, more than half of the sexual assaults were rapes. In regard to ethnic differences, Latinas (26%) disclosed experiencing more attempted rapes than Asian women (9%), non-Latina White women (7%), and Black women (6%). In addition, Latinas reported having had the highest occurrence of incest (26%), followed by the Black women (23%), the Asian women (21%), and the White women (16%).

Kalof’s (2000) study is one of a very few studies that have examined ethnic differences in female sexual victimization among Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian women. Kalof indicated that there was an unusually high incidence of attempted rape for Latinas; however, this study did not have an equal distribution among the populations
studied. Rather the proportions were as follows: White or Caucasian ($n = 237, 65\%$); Black or African American ($n = 37, 10\%$); Asian Pacific Islander or Filipino ($n = 51, 14\%$); Hispanic, Chicano, or Spanish-speaking American ($n = 20, 5\%$); and other ethnicities such as American Indian, Indian, and Bicultural ($n = 21, 6\%$). For this reason, the results should be interpreted with caution. As of today, research comparing sexual assaults/disclosures of Latino’s to sexual assault/disclosures of other populations is limited.

In summary, the literature on studies addressing precursors of sexual assault disclosure by Latinas is not extensive; however, several themes were found with regard to what leads Latinas to keep silent about a sexual assault incident they have experienced. Some are: (a) fear of family shame and loss of status within their community; (b) fear of violence or retaliation by a male relative; (c) fear of the police and/or fear of deportation; (d) fear of being ruined for marriage due to the loss of their virginity; (e) acculturation level and the inability to communicate in English; (f) preference to seek spiritual services such as from a curandero rather than disclose; (g) lack of acknowledgment of marital rape; and (h) acceptance of their fate. In the research studies reviewed, most results indicated a higher rate of nondisclosure for Latina sexual assault survivors than for other ethnicities such as African Americans and non-Latina White Americans. The next subpart reviews studies addressing precursors of sexual assault disclosure by non-Latinas.

Studies Addressing Precursors of Sexual Assault Disclosure by Non-Latinas

The second subpart of Part One provides a review of studies that address the precursors of sexual assault disclosure by non-Latina survivors. Jones et al. (2007), who
are medical professionals in Grand Rapids, Michigan (contingent to the region from which the current study participants were recruited), explored the primary reasons given by sexual assault victims for refusing to disclose a sexual assault to law enforcement. A cross-sectional survey was used to collect the data during an 18-month study period. Associations between demographics, assault characteristics, and injury patterns for women who do and do not report were examined. This study surveyed 36% (152/424) of the eligible population, which consisted of female sexual assault victims presenting to an urban clinic, the YWCA building or to the Emergency Department. Patient demographics, assault characteristics, and injury patterns were recorded for all 424 victims, but only 152 victims agreed to complete the questionnaire at the end of the forensic examination. Of the 424 patients, 318 (75%) reported their assault to the police and 106 (25%) did not. The authors also found that women’s reasons for not disclosing were associated with environmental factors such as the prior relationship with the assailant, instead of internal obstacles such as feelings of shame, anxiety, or fear. It is not clear if any of the participants were Latinas, but it was made clear that non-English speaking patients were excluded from participation.

Kahn et al. (2003) studied women’s varied responses to the experience of rape. Using written questionnaires, Kahn and his colleagues ascertained why some women defined the experience as rape while others did not. Kahn et al. hypothesized that women who label their sexual assault incident as rape would have a less personal or significant relationship with their assailant. They found that almost three-quarters (72%) of the women who identified the sexual assault as rape reported that their perpetrator was a non-intimate partner. On the other hand, slightly over one-half (55%) of those who did not use
the label of rape reported that their perpetrator was an intimate partner (i.e., the perpetrator was a boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, husband, or fiancé). McAuslan’s (1998) study showed that those who disclosed their sexual assault experience were more likely to have had no prior sexual relationship with their perpetrator; conversely, women who had a significant relationship with their perpetrator were less likely to disclose their sexual assault incidents.

Kahn et al. (2003) also found that women who did not label their incident as rape were likely to be severely impaired by alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident. For others who did not label their sexual encounter as rape, the incident involved cunnilingus/fellatio (i.e., oral stimulation of the genitals) or stimulation with a digit (e.g., a finger or toe) during the sexual incident. In other words, they may have been confused after the experience and did not have the awareness to label the incident as a rape. They were more likely to label the incident as something other than rape because penile/vaginal intercourse was not involved. Furthermore, when describing their incident in writing, the women who identified their sexual assault incident as rape were more likely to blame their perpetrator than the women who did not identify their sexual assault incident as rape.

The methods used by Kahn et al. (2003) are similar to those used in the present study because researchers invited the participants to share their personal description of what they experienced. A difference is that Kahn et al. used questionnaires to collect their participants’ stories, whereas, the current study involved collection data from face-to-face, qualitative interviews. Another difference is that Kahn et al. reported almost exclusively the responses of predominantly non-Latina Whites. It remains to be seen if
these results can be generalized to this present study’s population, which is focused on Latina White women.

In their study, Fisher et al. (2003) attempted to build on existing literature in the following ways:

1. They analyzed 1,318 incidents of sexual victimization experienced by 691 respondents from a national-level study on sexual victimization disclosure. This was part of a larger project, the National College Women Sexual Victimization study, of a random sample of 4,446 female college students.

2. They measured all types of sexual assault acts including attempted, threatened, and completed acts.

3. They not only investigated patterns of incident reporting incidents to police, but, in addition, investigated patterns of incident reporting to campus officials and to third parties.

4. They explored the various determinants of reporting a sexual assault either to the police, campus authorities, or other people known to victims, such friends and family members.

Fisher et al. (2003) found that victims of sexual assault are more likely to report to the police when the perpetrators are strangers or the incidents were severe (e.g., presence of a weapon or an actual injury) than when the perpetrators are relatives, significant others, acquaintances or the incident was less serious in its threat. Williams (1984) found similar results in their quantitative study. That is, women assaulted by strangers, threatened with a gun, knife, or other weapon, and seriously injured reported more often than did those who were raped by someone they knew, who were not seriously injured, or
who were not threatened with a weapon. In all, Fisher et al. found that fewer than 5% of the victims reported their incident to the police and even fewer to campus authorities. Furthermore, victims who did not want their families (18%) or other individuals (21%) to know about their sexual assault incident or who were afraid of reprisals by their assailants used these reasons for not reporting to the police.

In a study addressing formal and informal support providers, Ullman and Filipas (2001) found that women sexually assaulted by strangers disclosed their sexual assault to formal support sources at a higher rate (75%) than did those who were assaulted by perpetrators they knew (58%). In addition, physically injured women disclosed to formal support sources (73%) more frequently than did non-injured women (56%). Moreover, the participants reported more negative social reactions from disclosing to formal support sources than to only informal sources. Furthermore, it was revealed that ethnic minority women were more than twice as likely to disclose their sexual assault to both formal and informal support sources instead of telling only their friends and family members. Ethnic minority women reported receiving more emotional support from formal supports, whereas, non-Latina White women reported receiving more emotional support from friends and family members. The reason for this finding was unclear. A possible explanation for it may be a difference in what constitutes “emotional support.” With regard to ethnicity, about half of the participants were non-Latina White, one fourth were African American, and the remaining women were of a different ethnicity including Latina (6.0%), Asian (5.7%), and other (10%).

In a quantitative study examining factors relating to whether sexual assault would be reported to the police, Bachman (1998) found similar results: the more severe the
sexual assault, the more likely the rape victimization was reported to the police. In other words, along with the rape, if victims sustained physical injuries then they were more likely to report. Other themes reported by Bachman were that victims did not report because they were afraid of retaliation from the perpetrator or were afraid that their incident would not be kept confidential. They did not want their story to be shared with everyone through the media such as newspapers. In Feldman-Summers and Norris’ (1984) quantitative study, the social pressure from family members or friends to disclose was the strongest predictor of a sexual assault disclosure to the police. Smith et al. (2000) found in a national women’s survey that childhood survivors of sexual assault often made their initial disclosure to friends, followed by mothers and other family members, then to the police or mental health professionals. In addition, a relationship with the perpetrator was related to longer delays in disclosure. Nearly half of the study’s participants did not disclose within 5 years of their sexual assault.

In another study, Starzynski et al. (2005) found that most sexual assault survivors (80%) knew their perpetrator, whereas only 20% of their sexual assault participants did not know their perpetrator. In addition, they found that sexual assault survivors, who displayed behavioral self-blame (survivors blaming themselves for their assault due to the behavior they were demonstrating at the time of the assault), were less likely to disclose to either informal or formal support sources than those who did not blame themselves. Furthermore, their participants were more likely to disclose their sexual assault incident to informal support sources (e.g., friends and family members) than formal support sources (e.g., mental health professionals and the police). With regard to obtaining treatment, women who knew their perpetrator were least likely to obtain medical
treatment than those sexually assaulted by strangers (Millar et al., 2002). In addition, these participants were more likely to seek medical treatment if they sustained a serious injury from the sexual assault. In other words, if a knife or sharp object was used in the sexual assault incident, then the victims were more likely to seek medical assistance. Starzynski et al. (2005) focused on mental health treatment instead of medical treatment and their results indicated that assault variables such as unknown perpetrator, weapon use, or injury were not significant predictors for mental health treatment.

Implications for Current Research

The literature review in Part One addressed my first two research questions:

1. What reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosures of their experience of sexual assault?
2. Can patterns be detected regarding to whom Latinas disclose and under what circumstances?

A number of studies provided data on cultural themes about sexual assault among Latinos that were relevant to the current study (Ahrens et al., 2010; Morrissey, 1998; Romero et al., 1999). Among others, these cultural themes included the importance of shame, fear of deportation, acculturation level and the inability to communicate in English, the use of spiritual services, and notions about the importance of virginity at the time of marriage.

Researchers identified reasons that might lead Latinas not to disclose or to delay disclosures of their experience of sexual assault. For example, Morrissey (1998) found that U.S.-born Latina sexual assault survivors rarely press charges, report sexual assault, or seek counseling. Sorenson and Siegel (1992), similar to Morrissey, found that Latinos, regardless of their gender, were less likely than non-Latinos to speak to a psychotherapist
about their incident than non-Latinos. Ramos-Lira et al. (1999) reported that keeping silent was a consistent theme among Latina sexual assault survivors. Ahrens et al. (2010) addressed how topics about sex, rape, and abuse are often accompanied by shame and embarrassment. Adames and Campbell (2005) suggested that sexual aggression is a private matter among Latinas. And, Romero et al. (1999) suggested that their Latina participants felt that discussing sexual acts was a taboo within their communities and may have remained silent about their own sexual assault(s). At stated by Williams (1985), more traditional attitudes are held by Mexican Americans than by their non-Latino White Americans counterparts. Fisher’s (1987) results indicate a similar theme, in that Latino college students held more traditional attitudes towards date rape incidents than did non-Latino White college students.

In addition, Morrissey (1998) found that a Latina’s acculturation level may influence her views and beliefs about rape. Among more traditional Latinos, there seems to be a special stigma attached to being a Latina rape survivor. She is viewed as damaged goods and her reputation is ruined. This belief stems from one of the cultural themes found by Morrissey, who stated that the accompanying stigma of shame and loss of status may exist for a victim’s family. The family loses status in the Latino community. Ahrens et al. (2010) also reported how shame and embarrassment accompanied efforts to discuss topics such as rape among the Latino participants in their study. Similar to findings by Morrissey and Ahrens et al., Scott (1994) concluded that many sexual assault survivors suffer an intense shame about their experience that prevents them from disclosing their sexual assaults.
Two researchers, Morrissey (1998) and Torres (1991), called attention to how spiritual trust was a common coping strategy for all situations that might cause physical, psychological, or emotional illness. As discussed above, some Latinos work with curanderos, a traditional folk healer in the Latino culture. Torres found that Latinas may seek services first from curanderos, then from social service or legal systems. Even though Morrison’s study used the cultural perceptions of ten clinicians instead of going directly to the sexual assault survivors, it was still useful for the current study because it identified several important themes with regard to Latina sexual assault responses.

Romero et al. (1999) called attention to how the prevalence rate of childhood sexual abuse among Latinas is actually higher than reported. Their study found it to be higher than in other studies of Latinas. They also found that they had a higher rate of nondisclosure among Latina than non-Latina participants. In addition, more than one third of these Latina participants feared a negative response to disclosing. Ahrens et al. (2010) added to the literature on prevalence of sexual assault for Latinas by collecting data on specific cultural beliefs preventing Latinas from disclosing a sexual assault. Ahrens and colleagues found that there is a lack of resources for Latina survivors of sexual assault in the United States and that fear of violence will often silence Latinas from disclosing.

Findings by Ramos-Lira and colleagues (1999) filled an important gap in the literature on Latinas’ awareness of rape and sexual assault. The researchers did not focus on the participants’ personal histories of sexual assault, but instead their focus was on the meanings of rape and sexual assault to them. At the same time, these findings provided this researcher with justification to examine the reasons and experiences surrounding Latinas’ disclosure of sexual assault in hopes to better understand the phenomenon of
disclosure by Latina women. In other words, Ramos-Lira and colleagues have provided me with the desire to investigate what keeps Latinas silent from disclosing sexual assaults. Furthermore, the three most relevant studies analyzed in Part One were all qualitative studies, which provides the rationale for this current study to also be a qualitative study and to collect data directly from Latina sexual assault survivors through interviews.

The study by Jones et al. (2007) is certainly significant for this dissertation because, not only is it a local study in Western Michigan, but because the researchers gathered data on the primary reasons for refusal to disclose sexual assaults to law enforcement. I asked the participants in my current study if they had reported their sexual assault incident to law enforcement and what led to their decision to report or to not report. With regard to ethnicity, a weakness in the study by Jones et al. was that they only identified how many of the patients were White and how many were non-White: no other ethnic information was disclosed (although non-English speaking patients were excluded). They reported that there were no significant differences in their findings with respect to race for those who completed the questionnaire.

In addition to the study by Jones et al. (2007), other studies addressing non-Latinas examined why some incidents were or were not reported or identified as rape. The literature search showed that incidents involving strangers or perpetrators with less personal or significant relationship with their victims and incidents which resulted in severe degrees of injury were more likely to be reported to the police and to be identified as rape (Bachman, 1998; Fisher et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2007; Kahn et al., 2003; Williams, 1984). Furthermore, sexual assault survivors may not disclose victimizations
when they believe that they are going to receive a negative reaction or consequence such as the ruin of a family’s reputation, when they fear reprisals by their assailant, when there is potential for retaliation by male family members against the perpetrator, when there is a chance that one would be ruined for marriage, and when the likelihood exists that one might be deported (Ahrens et al., 2009; Fisher et al., 2003; Morrissey, 1998; Ramos-Lira et al., 1999; Romero et al., 1999; Scott, 1994; Sorenson, 1996).

In summary, the implications that are beneficial for my research include the cultural themes found among Latina sexual assault survivors such as the fear of deportation, the use of spiritual services, and acculturation level and the inability to communicate in English. Such themes will be pursued in the interviews for the current research. In addition, notions about the importance of virginity at the time of marriage and the stigma attached to being a Latina rape survivor may influence whether a Latina victim will disclose a sexual assault or not. These themes will be explored as well in the current research. Next, Part Two reviews the consequences of sexual assault disclosure.

Part Two: Consequences of Sexual Assault Disclosure

Part Two provides a review of studies that address the consequences experienced by survivors of sexual assault disclosure. Part Two is divided into three subparts: (a) studies addressing consequences of sexual assault disclosure by Latinas (Latinas may have not been the main focus in some of the studies reviewed, but they were part of the broader analysis of consequences experienced by women who disclosed sexual assault); (b) studies addressing consequences of sexual assault disclosure by Non-Latinas; (c)
implications for current research with regard to the consequences of sexual assault disclosure by comparing, contrasting, and summarizing the two sets of studies above.

*Studies Addressing Consequences of Sexual Assault Disclosure by Latinas*

The first subpart of Part Two provides a review of studies that address the consequences experienced by Latina survivors of sexual assault disclosure. Lefley et al. (1993) examined cultural beliefs about rape among three female ethnic groups (African-American, Latinas, and non-Latina Whites). One hundred and one rape victims and 98 non-victims completed a 10-item questionnaire that included nine rape scenarios. The non-victims were used as a comparison group and the groups were matched for ethnicity, age, marital status, and socioeconomic status. Lefley et al. investigated the differences between the rape victims and the non-victims regarding their definitions of rape, their perceptions of public attitudes about rape, and whether or not there was a relationship between victims’ perceptions of public attitudes and their psychological response to rape.

Latinas were found to have higher scores in both perceived community victim-blaming and in victims’ psychological distress than the other two ethnicities. It was also found that Latina victims were significantly more likely than the women from the other ethnicities to use avoidance as a defense mechanism to anxiety-producing situations, such as trauma produced from a sexual assault incident. Regardless of ethnicity, both female victim participants and female non-victim participants thought that men were more victim-blaming than women. It is important to note, however, that there were no male participants in this study, so there is no way to fully evaluate the accuracy of the respondents’ judgment. Relevant to the current study, this study indicated that there are
some significant ethnic differences between Latinas, African American women, and non-Latina White women in terms of their perceptions of public response to rape and in terms of their experience of psychological distress (Lefley et al., 1993).

Campbell (2006) examined whether sexual assault survivors who had the assistance of rape victim advocates had more positive experiences with the medical and legal systems than those survivors who did not receive assistance from advocates. A quasi-experimental design was used to make this comparison with 81 female survivors. With regard to ethnicity, 52% were African American, 37% were non-Latina White, 8% were Latina, and 3% were identified as multiracial. The author did not separate the results based by ethnicity. Instead, the results were separated by two groups—rape survivors who worked with a rape victim advocate and rape survivors who did not. Campbell found that sexual assault survivors who received assistance from rape victim advocates were more likely to receive positive treatment from police officers. In addition, these women reported less grief from their interactions with police officers and medical professionals.

In another study, Campbell, Wasco, Ahrens, Self, and Barnes (2001) examined how the psychological well-being of sexual assault survivors was affected by their interactions with a variety of community service agencies. In addition to legal and medical services, Campbell et al. examined mental health, rape crisis, and religious services provided to 102 participants. With regard to ethnicity, 51% were African American, 37% were non-Latina White, 6% were Latina, 5% were multiracial, and 1% identified as Asian American. The results revealed that a greater part of the participants who reported their sexual assault to either the legal or medical system did not receive the services needed. At least half of the survivors in the study felt that their experience with
the legal system was negative. With regard to ethnicity, only 9% of ethnic minority women sought assistance from rape crisis centers in comparison to 91% of non-Latina White women. Furthermore, only 31% of ethnic minority women sought assistance from a mental health agency in comparison to 69% of non-Latina White women.

Ahrens, Campbell, Ternier-Thames, Wasco, and Seifl (2007) focused on gaining a more in-depth understanding about how and why sexual assault survivors chose to disclose their assaults. In addition to examining the sexual assault disclosures, Ahrens et al. examined what preceded and what outcomes followed the disclosures. The researchers interviewed 102 female rape survivors regarding their first disclosure in a quantitative and qualitative study. The majority of the participants were African American (51%), followed by non-Latina Whites (37%), Latina Whites (6%), multiracial (5%), and Asian American (1%). Qualitative analysis revealed that over half of the participants experienced positive social reactions and less than a third felt the disclosure had a damaging impact on their recovery. Furthermore, those who disclosed their sexual assault to a formal support provider, such as the police, were more likely to receive a negative social reaction than a positive one. And, those who disclosed to an informal support provider, such as a friend, were more likely to receive a positive social reaction than a negative one.

Sorenson and Siegel (1992) analyzed sexual assault data from the Los Angeles Epidemiologic Catchment Area (LA-ECA) Prevalence Study. Almost half (46%) of the 3,000 participants (18 years and older) identified as Latinos, and of these, 95% were of Mexican ancestry, with 57% having been born in Mexico. The authors found that U.S.-born Mexican women were more likely than Mexico-born Mexican women to have
experienced a sexual assault. With regard to gender, 47% of the participants were males and 53% were females. The authors found that Latinos, regardless of their gender, were less likely to speak to a psychotherapist about their incident than the non-Latino participants. Regardless of ethnicity or gender, 59% of the participants experienced anger as their most common emotional reaction. Depression (43%), anxiety (40%), fear (35%), guilt (32%), and feelings of being dishonored or spoiled (29%) were the other emotional reactions experienced by the participants. In all, the authors suggested that diminishing Latino culture combined with high rates of poverty may leave Latinas vulnerable to many problems, including sexual assault.

Golding et al. (1989) investigated seven potential social support sources following sexual assaults to assess the usage level and whether these sources were helpful. They used data from 447 respondents of 3,132 randomly selected adults from two Los Angeles mental health catchment areas. Of these 447 participants, 290 were female victims and 147 were male victims and 10 gender identities were not identified. With regard to ethnicity, 280 were non-Latino White, 117 were Latino, and 50 of another ethnicity not identified. Multiple logistic regression models were used to analyze the data.

Golding et al. (1989) found that about two thirds of the 447 participants had told someone about the sexual assault. Over half (59%) disclosed their assault to a friend or relative. In findings which sharply contrast with other studies with Latina women (Bachman, 1998; Fisher et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2007; Kahn et al., 2003; Sudderth, 1998; Ullman & Filipas, 2001; Williams, 1984), Golding et al. found that those assaulted by a stranger were more likely to tell friends or relatives of their assault rather than the police, mental health professionals, or rape crisis centers. Fewer participants (11%)
consulted the police, mental health professionals (16%), physicians (9%), and rape crisis centers (2%). The agencies most frequently described as helpful were rape crisis centers (94%) and legal professionals (83%), followed by mental health professionals (70%) and friends and relatives (67%). The least helpful was the police (38%).

In summary, the literature on studies addressing consequences experienced by Latina survivors of sexual assault disclosure is not extensive; however, a few themes revealed feelings and consequences recalled by Latina participants after their initial sexual assault disclosure. It is important to point out that most of the studies reviewed had less than 10% Latino participants. With regard to feelings experienced, anger was the most common emotional reaction identified in prior research. Depression, anxiety, fear, guilt, and feeling of being dishonored or spoiled were the other emotional reactions experienced by the sexual assault survivors. In the research studies reviewed, Latinas were found to experience higher levels of psychological distress than other ethnicities studied, but were less likely to speak to a psychotherapist about their incident than the non-Latino participants. Regardless of ethnicity, those who disclosed their sexual assault to a formal support provider, such as the police, were more likely to receive a negative social reaction than a positive one. Conversely, those who disclosed to an informal support provider, such as a friend, were more likely to receive a positive social reaction than a negative one. Next, the second subpart reviewed studies addressing consequences of sexual assault disclosure by non-Latinas.
Studies Addressing Consequences of Sexual Assault Disclosure by Non-Latinas

The second subpart of Part Two provides a review of studies that address the consequences experienced by non-Latina survivors of sexual assault disclosure. Ahrens (2006) conducted a qualitative analysis of narratives given by eight rape survivors (five were African American and the other three were White). All eight participants initially disclosed their sexual assault, but then became silent for a significant period of time because of negative reactions they received during their initial disclosure. Three themes merged from Ahrens’ study in regards to what led to these participants’ silence: (a) after receiving negative reactions from professionals, survivors questioned whether future disclosure would be beneficial; (b) the survivors’ feelings of self-blame were reinforced through negative reactions from family members and friends; and (c) negative responses from either a formal or informal source led the survivors to question if their experience qualified as rape, causing their level of uncertainty to increase. After in-depth analysis, Ahrens found that the participants experienced four similar types of negative reactions. These were: “(1) being blamed; (2) receiving insensitive reactions; (3) experiencing ineffective disclosures; and (4) receiving inappropriate support” (p. 269).

Ahrens, Cabral, and Abeling (2009) conducted a study with 103 female sexual assault survivors. They all participated in one-on-one interviews about their interpretations of social reactions received from support providers while disclosing their assault. The researchers’ focus was to determine which social reactions sexual assault survivors were likely to receive from a variety of social supports. Ahrens et al. found that the most common recipient of these participants’ sexual assault disclosures were friends,
counselors, and family members. The least frequent were romantic partners, legal personnel, and medical personnel. Romantic partners were the most likely to blame the victim and attempt to control the situation, while providing the least tangible aid and providing only moderate emotional support. However, friends and counselors were more likely to provide the most emotional support and tangible aid with not as many negative reactions. Although, the participants in Ahrens et al.’s study were mostly African American (37%), Asian (7%), or non-Latina White (38%), the results of this study are beneficial for this current study because they were the closest to mine. The principal difference is that the authors focused on different ethnicities.

McAuslan (1998) used mixed quantitative and qualitative methods to study sexual victimization. A modified 12-item version of the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) was used to collect the data. McAuslan tested eight hypotheses about sexual victimization by administering the survey to 320 undergraduate participants from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. In addition, two open-ended questions were asked of the participants to attain reasons for disclosing or not disclosing a sexual assault to anyone. The first hypothesis, regarding relationships between sexual assault and health, was tested with the entire study population. The other seven hypotheses involved only the women (72%; n = 229) who had experienced a sexual assault. With regard to ethnicity, 46% (n = 107) of the participants who experienced a sexual assault were African American, 39% (n = 95) were non-Latina White, and 15% (n = 13) were identified as “other.” The last hypothesis compared the African American and non-Latina White participants’ experiences through analyses of all the first seven hypotheses.
McAuslan (1998) identified several findings, but only those that relate closely to the consequences of disclosure and to the present study are reviewed here. First, McAuslan found that participants who received more negative social reactions when they disclosed experienced higher levels of somatic and psychological symptomatology. Second, the study showed that greater expression of emotions during a disclosure was associated with increased experience of anxiety and depression by the sexual assault survivor. Third, with regard to circumstances surrounding a sexual assault, non-Latina White women reported significantly higher levels of intoxication for themselves and their perpetrator(s) during the sexual assault incident. Fourth, regardless of ethnicity, most participants knew their perpetrators fairly well.

McAuslan’s (1998) qualitative results indicated that 35% (n = 81 participants) reported that they had not disclosed their sexual assault experience to anyone. The top three reasons identified for not disclosing were: (1) 25% (n = 20) felt too ashamed/embarrassed; (2) 24% (n = 19) felt no need to report; and (3) 18% (n = 15) felt the incident was too personal to divulge to others. The remaining 65% of the total sample (148 participants) reported that they disclosed their sexual assault experience to at least one individual. The top three reasons identified for disclosing were: (1) 31% (n = 46) needed to talk to someone; (2) 24% (n = 36) disclosed to their personal friend; and (3) 11% (n = 16) reported to someone they trusted.

Filipas and Ullman (2001) examined a variety of positive and negative social reactions received by victims upon disclosure of their sexual assault to informal and formal support providers. Three hundred twenty-three sexual assault victims participated in the study. A 48-item instrument, the Social Reactions Questionnaire (SRQ), was used
to collect the quantitative data. The results indicated that the victims were more likely to discuss their assault with friends or relatives (94%), followed by mental health professionals (52%), the police (26%), rape crisis centers (14%), and then clergy (8%). A little more than half (57%) of the participants that disclosed their sexual assault incident to the police found them to be helpful. At the same time, the authors did not report why the others (43%) who reported to the police did not find them to be helpful.

Two positive reaction subscales emerged from the factor analysis of the SRQ in the study. They were: (a) emotional support/belief, and (b) tangible aid/information. Over 90% of participants received emotional support, validation, tangible aid and/or information during the course of their disclosure. The most beneficial of these was emotional support, for example, “being told they were loved or were a good person” (Filipas & Ullman, 2001, p. 682). With regard to negative reactions, five subscales emerged from the factor analysis: (a) victim’s decisions were controlled; (b) the victim was blamed; (c) the victim was treated differently; (d) the victim was provided with distraction (e.g., telling the victim to move on with her life); and (e) the victim experienced egocentric reactions (e.g., responses in which the providers focused on their own needs instead of the victim’s). Victims were more likely to receive negative reactions from formal support sources than from informal ones.

An exploratory analysis was conducted by Filipas and Ullman (2001) on the qualitative data collected from four open-ended questions that asked about further social reactions experienced by the victims that were not assessed by the SRQ. The results from this analysis revealed other negative reactions such as rape myths and revictimization. Burt (1980) first defined rape myths as false, stereotypical beliefs about rape, sexual
assault victims and their perpetrators. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1984) defined rape myths as false beliefs and attitudes held, which may be used to justify and rationalize sexual violence against others. Revictimization is the phenomenon referring to the greater risk held by victims of child sexual abuse for further sexual assault victimization as an adolescent or adult (Muehlenhard, Highby, Lee, Bryan, & Dodrill, 1998). Myths were more likely to be cited by family members than friends or professionals. A common myth held by family members was to question if it was possible to be raped by a significant other such as a boyfriend or husband. Another myth was to wonder whether the victim should have been alone with the perpetrator at either her place or his home (Filipas & Ullman, 2001).

In a second study conducted by Ullman and Filipas (2001), the authors examined sexual assault victims’ demographic backgrounds, assault circumstances, and post assault experiences in relation to seeking services from formal supports providers (e.g., mental health professionals, physicians, police, rape crisis centers or clergy) and informal ones (e.g., friends and family members). The data collected in the previous study from a media-recruited sample of 323 adult sexual assault victims were used in this study also. The women participants who responded were asked to complete a brief mail survey and were provided with a $10 incentive for doing so. Results for this study were identified in Part One because they are about reasons female sexual assault victims disclose to formal or informal support providers, but the same results are relevant here.

Ullman and Filipas (2001) found that women sexually assaulted by strangers disclosed their sexual assault to formal support sources at a higher rate (75%) than did those who were assaulted by perpetrators they knew (58%). In addition, physically injured
women disclosed to formal support sources (73%) more frequently than did non-injured women (56%). Moreover, the participants reported more negative social reactions from disclosing to formal support sources than to only informal sources. Furthermore, it was revealed that ethnic minority women were more than twice as likely to disclose their sexual assault to both formal and informal support sources instead of telling only their friends and family members. Ethnic minority women reported receiving more emotional support from formal supports, whereas, non-Latina White women reported receiving more emotional support from friends and family members. As you will recall, the reason for this finding was unclear. Remember that only 6% of the participants were Latina.

Dunn, Vail-Smith, and Knight (1999) surveyed 828 college students to explore their perspectives on female date/acquaintance rape disclosures made to them by victims. The students were asked to complete a mixed method instrument with 19 quantitative items and two open-ended questions. One third (34%; n = 282) of the respondents reported that one or more of the women disclosed a date or acquaintance rape incident to them. It was found that a little more than half (52%; n = 205) of the participants responded in a positive way upon hearing about the rape. They indicated that they responded to their friend’s disclosure with listening, offering support, expressing empathy for the victim, and recognizing that the individuals disclosing their rape needed others to believe them. Furthermore, it was found that there is a need to acknowledge that recipients of disclosure may be potentially as traumatized as the rape victims themselves. Many respondents reported feeling shocked by the revelations. Others said that the victims’ disclosures triggered memories of their own previous personal rape experiences.
Routbort (1998) used a retrospective questionnaire design to investigate how disclosure experiences relate to recovery. The author conducted this quantitative study with 87 female participants who received a rape kit examination following a sexual assault in one of two hospital emergency rooms in southeastern Michigan. This study was part of a larger project, the Michigan Multidisciplinary Rape Project (MMRP). Disclosures took place within hours after the rape for 67 of the participants, whereas 17 participants waited days before disclosing, and only 1 reported waiting for years. (As stated earlier, there were a total of 87 participants, but only 85 were mentioned in this finding. The article did not make clear what timing pattern took place for the other two participants.) Findings suggested that women who engaged in self-blame behavior were less likely to believe that they could control their own recovery than those who did not. Eighty-four percent \( (n = 73) \) of the women participants reported at least one other victimization experience since they received the rape examination for their reported sexual assault.

Eadie (2000) collected qualitative data from five interviews with women survivors of sexual assault to explore how the role of self-blame and societal reactions to disclosures influenced the women’s recovery. A major finding was that self-blame did have a significant negative effect on recovery (i.e., it was a barrier and obstruction to recovery). This was also true when significant others placed blame on the victims, leading to even more of a delayed recovery as a result. Furthermore, Eadie found that recovery was encouraged through discussions of self-blame in positive therapeutic relationships. Apparently, although self-blame could jeopardize reporting and self-disclosure, once self-
disclosure had occurred, therapy was enhanced when the victim was able to reflect on the reasons for the self-blame.

In another study exploring the recovery process, Sudderth (1998) conducted a qualitative analysis of 30 survivors’ reflections on how reactions from others affected their willingness to discuss the rape. They found that 30% ($n = 9$) of the participants reported to the police and of these, 78% ($n = 7$) were assaulted by a stranger. In all, a majority of the participants (70%; $n = 21$) were assaulted by someone they knew. A mixture of reactions experienced by most of the participants to some degree was distributed into four categories: supportive, inconsistently supportive, silence or avoidance, and hostility. The support received by these participants was often more short than long term, leading to inconsistent support. Friends were most likely to be supportive by letting the assaulted person know that were believed. General discomfort about the sexual assault manifested in the form of silence, which led to avoidance; “avoiding discussion of the rape reinforces the idea that not talking about the rape is normative, effectively isolating survivors in the recovery process” (p. 585). Almost all of the participants recalled at least one hostile reaction from their sexual assault disclosure. The two most important forms that hostile reaction took were to blame the victim/survivor and to believe that the incident was consensual. Campbell, Ahrens, Sefl, Wasco, and Barnes (2001) suggested that negative reactions may impede survivors’ recoveries more than positive reactions. It may be much more beneficial for survivors not to receive any support than to receive negative reactions from others that can lead to hurtful effects on psychological and physical health outcomes.
Ullman (1996a) found that negative reactions were more common among women who disclosed their sexual assault to medical personnel or the police than to those who did not. Ullman’s sample was mostly Caucasian, unmarried, childless college graduates; fewer than 20% of her participants were of ethnicities other than non-Latina White women. In another study with the same participants, Ullman (1996b) found that 63% of them reported being blamed and 62% reported that they were discouraged to talk about their sexual assault. The discouragement came most often from their physicians or the police. With regard to positive reactions, the most beneficial responses were being validated and/or believed and receiving emotional support. When the emotional support was given by friends it correlated with a higher level of recovery than when it was given by other support sources.

With regard to psychotherapeutic needs, Draucker (1999) interviewed 33 women about their therapeutic experiences. The women in the sample were non-Latina White \((n = 24)\), African American \((n = 7)\), Asian American \((n = 1)\), and 1 unknown ethnicity. Draucker found that these sexual assault survivors were more concerned about support, empowerment, and being respected for their individuality than about their therapists using effective clinical techniques. In other words, the survivors first simply want to be supported, empowered, and respected. With regard to the criminal justice system, Patterson and Campbell (2010) interviewed 20 sexual assault survivors who disclosed their victimization to the police. The authors found that most of the participants \((80\%)\) were assaulted by someone they knew. More than half of them hesitated to report for fear that they would not be believed. Three themes were identified as the factors that
influenced disclosure to the police: preventing additional rapes, being encouraged by others to report, and having others make the choice for them.

In summary, the literature that addresses consequences experienced by non-Latina survivors of sexual assault disclosure is not broad; however, a few themes were found regarding feelings and consequences non-Latinas recollected during their initial sexual assault disclosure. With regard to feelings faced, participants who received negative social reactions rather than positive ones experienced higher levels of somatic and psychological symptomatology. With regard to negative reactions experienced, non-Latina survivors perceived themselves as being blamed, receiving insensitive reactions and inappropriate support. Next, the third subpart compares, contrasts, and summarizes the two sets of studies in the first two subparts.

Implications for Current Research

The literature review in Part Two addressed my remaining two research questions: (3) What feelings and consequences do Latinas remember experiencing during their initial disclosure? and (4) In retrospect, how do Latinas interpret their self-disclosure decisions? There has been a limited amount of research conducted on feelings and consequences experienced specifically by Latinas during a sexual assault disclosure. And the studies that do exist are based on comparisons with other ethnic groups, such as African Americans and non-Latinos White Americans. In all the studies reviewed, only 6% to less than 50% were Latino participants.

Campbell, Wasco, Ahrens, Sefl, and Barnes (2001) revealed in their results that rape crisis centers are underutilized by ethnic minority sexual assault victims. The authors
explained this by suggesting that ethnic minority women may not have an awareness of what services are available to them if they are sexually assaulted. Both Lefley et al. (1993) and Sorenson and Siegel (1992) reported that Latinos use avoidance as a defense mechanism to cope with trauma such as psychological distress from a sexual assault and are less likely than their non-Latino White counterparts to speak to a psychotherapist.

McAuslan’s (1998) study of the experience of sexual assault disclosure is beneficial for this study even though there were too few participants from other ethnicities (Asian, Latinas, and Arabic) to replicate the analyses conducted in comparing African American and non-Latina women participants. McAuslan is one of the few researchers who addressed ethnicity and sexual assault disclosures directly. Her study focused on disclosure of sexual assault and the reactions received from others when they disclosed the sexual assault. One of her findings was that those who receive negative social reactions from a disclosure experienced higher levels of somatic and psychological symptomatology. Other studies found that negative social reactions had damaging impact on sexual assault survivors’ recovery (Ahrens, 2002, 2006; Ahrens et al., 2007; Campbell et al., 2001; Eadie, 2000; Lefley et al., 1993; Routbort, 1998).

“Speaking out about the assault may therefore have detrimental consequences for rape survivors as they are subjected to further trauma at the hands of the very people they turn to for help. Negative reactions such as being blamed, being denied help or being told to stop talking about the assault may effectively quash rape survivors’ voices, rendering them silent and powerless” (Ahrens, 2006, p. 264).

Ahrens (2006), along with other researchers such as Ullman and Campbell, has substantially added to the literature on sexual assault disclosure and reactions received by
the survivors. Even though Ahrens’ study is based on African American participants, it provided this reader with rich, well described vignettes of eight sexual assault survivors’ experiences during their initial disclosure and detailed information about how long they had been silent. As researchers, Ahrens suggests that we need to create interview environments that facilitate disclosure for previously silenced populations.

With regard to the benefits or consequences experienced from sexual assault disclosures, the following were found in the current literature. Between a third and a half of all sexual assault survivors received negative social reactions from a professional and/or the police (Ahrens, 2002, 2006; Ahrens et al., 2007; Campbell et al., 2001; Filipas & Ullman, 2001; Ullman, 1996a, 1996b; Ullman & Filipas, 2001). Campbell (2005) reported that sexual assault victims who received assistance from a rape victim advocate during a forensic examination were more likely to receive positive treatment from police officers. Furthermore, sexual assault survivors are more likely to receive positive social support from informal sources such as friends and family members (Ahrens et al., 2009; Ahrens et al., 2007; Filipas & Ullman, 2001; Sudderth, 1998; Ullman, 1996b).

In summary, the implications from the literature reviewed in this part that are beneficial for my research include the following findings:

1. Anger is the most common emotional reaction to a sexual assault. In addition, depression, anxiety, fear, guilt, and feeling of being dishonored or spoiled were the other emotional reactions experienced by the participants.

2. Over half of the conglomerate participants experienced positive social reactions.

3. Those who disclosed their sexual assault to a formal support provider, such as the police, rather than to an informal support provider, such as a friend, were more likely
to receive a negative social reaction than a positive one. Additionally, those who disclosed to an informal support provider (a friend or family member) rather than to a formal support provider were more likely to receive a positive social reaction than a negative one.

4. Latina sexual assault survivors are less likely than non-Latina White sexual assault survivors to seek services from a psychotherapist.

With regard to the fourth research question, “In retrospect, how do Latinas interpret their self-disclosure decisions?” there was little to no research addressing Latinas’ interpretation of their sexual assault self-disclosure decisions in the literature reviewed. By my implication, Latina sexual assault survivors are unlikely to process and discuss their feelings and experiences of their disclosures. Next, the integrative summary compares, contrasts, and summarizes the research studies reviewed in the first two parts.

**Integrative Summary**

This integrative section compares, contrasts, and summarizes the research studies reviewed in the first two parts. Up to this point, research on sexual assault within the Latino population continues to be limited. I have learned that very few research studies have collected information from Latinas about the important cultural themes that may encourage or prevent them from disclosing a sexual assault. Morrissey (1998) identified several cultural themes with regard to what Latinas may experience or believe due to a sexual assault, but her data were not collected directly from sexual assault survivors. Instead, Morrissey conducted a qualitative study with clinicians and collected her data on
Latinas indirectly from three Latina psychotherapists who had worked with Latina sexual assault survivors.

With regard to what cultural themes will be beneficial to this current study, a review of current literature on Latinas and sexual assault revealed themes such as the high value placed on virginity (Morrissey, 1998; Ramos-Lira et al., 1999); the likely desire for revenge on the part of a male family member (Bachman, 1998; Fisher, 2003; Morrissey, 1998; Ramos-Lira et al., 1999); the fear of family shame (Ahrens et al., 2010; Morrissey, 1998; Ramos-Lira et al., 1999); self-blame (Lefley et al., 1993; Ramos-Lira et al., 1999); the reluctance among Latinos to seek counseling (Morrissey, 1998; Sorenson & Siegel, 1992); the social stigma attached to substance abuse by Latinas (Morrissey, 1998); the distrust Latinos have for the legal system (Morrissey, 1998; Sorenson, 1996); and the use of *curanderos* to respond to all forms of personal injury (Morrissey, 1998; Torres, 1991). With regard to coping strategies, Lefley et al. (1993) found that Latina victims were significantly more likely than women from the other ethnic groups to use avoidance as a defense mechanism in the face of anxiety-producing situations such as trauma produced from a sexual assault incident. Morrissey also reported a coping mechanism theme, but in her study it was referred to as *sobrevinac* and *r* , which means “to overcome.” It implies that Latinos should accept their fate and not think about the ugliness experienced from trauma. They, Latinas, should transcend their sexual assault.

Other themes include the lack of resources for Latina survivors (Ahrens et al., 2010); the shame and embarrassment that accompanies the taboo of discussing topics of sexual relations (Adames & Campbell, 2005; Ahrens et al., 2010; Romero et al., 1999); acculturation level that may hinder Latinas from disclosing (Morrissey, 1998; Ramos-Lira
et al., 1999; West, Kantor, & Jasinski, 1998); and traditional values preventing Latinas from acknowledging assaults (Fisher, 1987; Morrissey, 1998; Williams, 1985). In other words, some women may believe that what they are experiencing in a relationship is acceptable and may not perceive themselves as victims, thereby preventing them from seeking assistance when they have been assaulted (Torres, 1991; West et al., 1998). The results of this current research will fill a gap in the literature by confirming, disconfirming, or identifying alternative cultural themes through understanding the direct experience of Latina sexual assault survivors.

In response to these inhibitors identified above, Latinas have shown higher rates of nondisclosure than other women from other ethnicities (Arellano et al., 1997; Romero et al., 1999). Other research indicated that sex, rape, and abuse are rarely discussed among Latinas (Adames & Campbell, 2005; Ahrens et al., 2010). Furthermore, traditional beliefs about marriage contribute to this reluctance of Latinas to report their sexual assault abuse. On a positive note, results found in the study by Ahrens et al. (2010) discussing gender roles, traditional beliefs about marriage, and familismo (i.e., Latinas’ willingness to identify and disclose acts of abuse even if it influences how their family is viewed by others) are consistent with previous research (Lefley et al., 1993; Ramos-Lira et al., 1999; Torres, 1991).

The research on sexual assault disclosure of non-Latinas may also be relevant to this study. Several studies show that negative social reactions were more likely received by sexual assault survivors disclosing to formal support sources than informal ones (Ahrens, 2006; Campbell et al., 2001; Filipas & Ullman, 2001; Starzynski et al., 2005; Ullman, 1996a, 1996b; Ullman & Filipas, 2001). A majority of sexual assault survivors
are more likely to disclose to informal support sources than formal ones such as the police (Ahrens et al., 2009; Bachman, 1998; Filipas & Ullman, 2001; Fisher et al., 2003; Golding et al., 1989; Smith et al., 2000; Starzynski et al., 2005; Ullman, 1996a; Ullman & Filipas, 2001). This reflects the reality that they receive more emotional support from friends and family members than from formal support sources (Ahrens et al., 2009; Ahrens et al., 2007; Sudderth, 1998; Ullman, 1996b).

Several studies identified that between two thirds and four fifths of sexual assault survivors disclose the assault to at least one person (Ahrens et al., 2007; Fisher et al., 2003; Golding et al., 1989; Starzynski et al., 2005; Ullman, 1996b; Ullman & Filipas, 2001). In some situations, sexual assault survivors never disclose to anyone until they become participants in a sexual assault study (Filipas & Ullman, 2001). About one third fear negative responses (Bachman, 1998; Fisher et al., 2003; McAuslan, 1998; Patterson & Campbell, 2010; Romero et al., 1999; Sudderth, 1998). Some do not report because they were impaired by alcohol and/or drugs during the actual incident (Jones et al., 2007; Kahn et al., 2003; McAuslan, 1998). Between 25 and 75% of survivors receive negative social reactions from at least one person in their support network (Ahrens, 2002, 2006; Ahrens et al., 2009; Campbell et al., 2001; Filipas & Ullman, 2001; Golding et al., 1989; McAuslan, 1998; Sudderth, 1998). In addition, a majority of women do not report or label their incident as rape because they knew the perpetrator (Fisher et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2007; Kahn et al., 2003; McAuslan, 1998; Millar et al., 2002; Romero et al., 1999; Starzynski et al., 2005; Ullman & Filipas, 2001; Williams, 1984). Those assaulted by strangers and/or were injured in the course of the assault were more likely to report to the police than not (Bachman, 1998; Fisher et al., 2003; Sudderth, 1998; Ullman & Filipas,
2001; Williams, 1984). Three of the research articles addressed how receiving negative reactions from others during a disclosure may lead to additional psychological trauma (Campbell et al., 2001; McAuslan, 1998; Ullman, 1996b). In addition, self-blame contributes to poor recoveries (Ahrens et al., 2007; Eadie, 2000; Campbell et al., 2001; Routbort, 1998).

The preceding review suggests that multiple themes prevent Latinas from disclosing a sexual assault. These include Latinas’ fear of family shame or deportation, their own belief of self-blame, and the inability to communicate in English. In addition to this, the taboo that exists on talking about sex, lack of resources, and the different meanings about rape and sexual abuse across all Latino cultures may influence whether a Latina victim will disclose a sexual assault or not. Although some of the literature identifies the barriers that prevent Latinas from disclosing or delaying a sexual assault disclosure, very little is known about Latinas’ interpretation of their experience and what leads some Latinas to disclose sexual assault. In addition, very little research examining the reliance on faith as a coping mechanism was found. My research questions have not highlighted this as the most important element associated with Latinas’ sexual assault disclosures, but it is intended to examine coping strategies that include reliance on faith, religion, and spirituality.

Although a number of fairly consistent themes, such as those summarized here, have emerged from prior research, we can only understand their relevance to the actual experience of sexual assault disclosure by asking Latina women to narrate their experiences of disclosure. Therefore, this study was designed to use qualitative, semistructured interviewing techniques to address the following four questions: (1) What
reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of their experience of sexual assault? (2) Can patterns be detected regarding to whom Latinas disclose and under what circumstances? (3) What feelings and consequences do Latinas remember experiencing during their initial disclosure? (4) In retrospect, how do Latinas interpret their self-disclosure decisions?
CHAPTER III

METHODS

A qualitative method using phenomenological interviews was used to answer the following four research questions: (1) What reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of their experience of sexual assault? (2) Can patterns be detected regarding to whom Latinas disclose and under what circumstances? (3) What feelings and consequences do Latinas remember experiencing during their initial disclosure? (4) In retrospect, how do Latinas interpret their self-disclosure decisions?

Participants

Participants for this study came from two sources. An existing data set of seven interviews was gathered in 2005 under a research protocol approved by Hope College’s Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) with Latinas at a women’s center for domestic and sexual violence and a center for psychotherapy services. Another six Latinas who had been sexually assaulted were recruited to participate in this study. Recruiting the new set of participants allowed me to add more questions to the interview to further clarify interpretations of decisions to disclose.

The second group of participants consisted of clients of a center that provides services to women who have already disclosed domestic and/or sexual assault and were
receiving support and clinical treatment due to their assault(s) or were participants collected from snowball sampling through referrals by another research participant. Participants in this study were self-selected for the research project and were excluded if they were my direct client. To avoid such circumstances, as of April 21, 2010 (the Western Michigan University’s Human Subjects Institutional Review Boards’ approval date), I stopped accepting new clients at the center until this research project was completed. This guaranteed exclusion of my personal clients from the study.

The participants for the research were female, 18 years and older (the actual participants ranged in age from 18 to 40), Hispanic/Latina (two were Mexican/Mexico-born citizens with United States residency, nine were Mexican American, two were Tejanas/Texas-born Mexican American), English or Spanish speaking, and women who have been sexually abused. Participants were recruited through poster announcements and informational flyers that were distributed through the Center’s staff counselors, case managers, and in a couple of cases by research participants of this study. As a token of appreciation, each participant received a $25 gift card for her participation in the research.

The following procedures were designed to prevent any sense of coercion and to protect the privacy and safety of the interviewees. As part of an informed consent, an explanation was given to the participants that the interviews were being gathered as part of a research study and the participants’ comments would be transcribed and possibly quoted in written reports, but that no identifying information would be part of any reports. In keeping with this assurance, there is no identifiable information on the written documents of any of the transcribed interviews (i.e., none of the transcribed interviews
can be linked to an individual’s name) and they have been kept in a locked file cabinet. The names used throughout this document and in any future publications are pseudonyms.

Procedures

As of April 21, 2010, approvals by the HSIRB of Western Michigan University (my PhD institution) and Hope College (my place of employment) were received to recruit the new participants and to continue to analyze the data gathered under the prior HSIRB-approved protocol (see Appendices I and J). The approval was renewed on April 20, 2011 (see Appendix I). The participants in this study were self-selected based on the informational flyers for the research project. When the interviewer received calls from the potential participants interested in learning more about this study, a short script (see Appendix D) was used.

Informed Consent Process

Once participants expressed an interest and it was clear that they met qualifications for the study, an interview was scheduled. Sessions were made available on different days and times throughout the week to provide participants with suitable options. The women who attended the interviews had the research explained to them again by the interviewer and were asked if they were willing to sign a consent form (see Appendices A and B). Prior to signing, the potential participants read the consent form either in English or Spanish or had it read to them in English or Spanish. The consent form indicated that they were not required to participate; if they did participate, they were
told they would be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Furthermore, they were informed orally and in the consent form that their interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed into verbatim documents to be analyzed by the researcher.

I gave the participants the choice to complete the interview in English, in Spanish, or in both, alternating back and forth between, English and Spanish. I am fluent in Spanish and I am of Mexican descent as are most Latinas in the Holland, Michigan area. All participants were fluent in either Spanish or English, and none of them was ineligible for the study.

Consent was obtained from the original seven participants in 2005 when they participated in their interviews under a protocol approved by the HSRB at Hope College. Records identifying them were not available to me. The audio tapes, which I had transcribed, had been destroyed after three years in storage. The current analyses were based on the written transcriptions of the earlier interviews. The participants from the second pool of interviews were told that their identity would be protected and that the only exception would be if they disclosed that a vulnerable older adult (65 years or older), a child under the age of 18, and/or a developmentally delayed individual of any age currently was in a dangerous situation; in such cases, I, as a licensed social worker, would be obligated to report it to authorities and identities would need to be revealed. None of the participants disclosed that anyone from these vulnerable populations had been or was in danger of being sexual assaulted by their perpetrator. Thus, I did not have to report any suspected sexual abuse incidents.
Methods of Data Collection

Data were collected from semistructured interviews with two cohorts of participants. The existing data set from the 2005 cohort was collected by and is controlled by me. This research protocol was approved by John Patnott, Ph.D., chair of the Hope College Human Subjects Review Board, for the research proposal, “A Qualitative Investigation of Hispanic Women’s Reasons for Disclosure of Sexual Assault.” The second cohort included Latinas recruited in 2011 from the same women’s center for domestic and sexual violence used to recruit for the first cohort of participants.

Interviews in either English or Spanish (see Appendix C for English questionnaire) were conducted to acquire new data from a second set of Latina participants who had been sexually assaulted. This was done to augment the existing data set. The second set of interviews took place at either the women’s center for domestic and sexual violence or in my office at Hope College at the preference of the participants. If needed, these locations were offered for follow-up interviews. This second set of semistructured interviews extended the original interview schedule with some questions focused on feelings and consequences associated with the process of disclosure, both at the time of disclosure and in retrospect. I added to the original questions to further clarify interpretations of decisions to disclose. The goal was to learn about the participants’ perspectives of what led to or delayed their decisions to disclose their experiences of sexual assault, what pattern of disclosing they showed, what their experiences were of disclosing, and how they interpreted their self-disclosure decisions. As stated earlier, all the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed into verbatim documents to be
analyzed by me, a middle-aged, Mexican American Latina who has lived in the Midwest for more than 30 years. In addition, field notes were kept to detail, as much as possible, what occurred during the interviews, including body language and other forms of nonverbal communication. The field notes also serve as an additional source of data regarding the women’s experience.

Ethical Considerations and Reliability

I was responsible for both informing and protecting the participants in this study. Voluntary participation was enlisted and, through the consent form, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the time commitment, the type of questions that were going to be asked of them, the risk and benefits associated with participation, and the amount of compensation they would receive. The names and telephone numbers of the principal investigator, student investigator, the chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, and the Vice President for Research were identified in the consent form in case questions or problems arose during the course of the study. Two consent forms were signed by all participants from the second data collection source. The participants were told that one copy was for their records and the other was for my records. In addition, the participants were asked to provide contact information in case a second interview needed to be scheduled. The contact sheets were matched up to the participants’ questionnaires through a pre-assigned identification numbers and stored in a locked file cabinet separate from the questionnaires.
With regard to the types of sexual assault analyzed, it is important to state here that the term *sexual assault* is interpreted differently by a variety of sources. For the purposes of this dissertation, Michigan’s Penal Codes on Sexual Conduct were used to explain the severity level of sexual assault. A CSC I is the most severe sexual assault. This category involves both force and penetration of any type (vagina, anus, or mouth) with a penis, finger, or object such as a pencil (Legislative Council, Act 328 of 1931, 750.520b). The second most severe type of sexual assault is known as a CSC III. This category includes a person engaging in sexual penetration with another person who may have given consent, but did not have the legal right to do so (Legislative Council, Act 328 of 1931, 750.520d). The third most severe type of sexual assault is known as a CSC II. This type of sexual assault includes molestation, pornography, and exploitation of children (Legislative Council, Act 328 of 1931, 750.520c). Finally, the least severe category of sexual assault is known as a CSC IV. It includes a person engaging in sexual contact with another person through a direct or indirect sexual assault such as through indecent exposure (Legislative Council, Act 328 of 1931, 750.520e). Detailed information about the four categories of sexual assault may be found in Chapter I.

I triangulated data sources as well as data-collection methods by gathering data from multiple sources (used existing data set, collected new data, and kept field notes on both data sources). In addition, I have recognized that I entered this work with the four assumptions based on my clinical work that were mentioned in Chapter I.

First, I assumed that disclosure of sexual assault is positive. Second, I assumed that Latina sexual assault survivors might not be encouraged to seek services from
psychotherapists to help them cope with what they experienced at the hands of perpetrators and, therefore, they might delay or choose not to disclose their assaults, at least partially due to cultural reasons. Third, I assumed that Latina sexual assault survivors might be more likely to disclose their assaults first to a family member or friend than to a professional such as police officer. Fourth, I assumed that Latina women might be more likely, as are women in all ethnic groups, to be sexually assaulted by family members or someone they know than by strangers. Therefore, I was careful to control for this bias and used the same semistructured interview protocol with all individuals in the second set of participants. In other words, the participants were asked the same questions during their interviews with minor charges if any. I was also careful to look for outliers to my assumptions when analyzing my data. Finally, the findings were reviewed and discussed with the dissertation committee members to ensure that the reality of the participants was adequately reflected in the findings.

Analysis

Demographic profile of respondents was created and audiotapes were transcribed in English with the exception of words spoken by interviewees in Spanish. Prior to analyzing the data, the transcripts were compared to the original tapes and edited for accuracy and readability. Phenomenological qualitative methods were employed to analyze the participants’ transcripts, primarily by using a constant comparison approach to discern recurrent significant themes that emerged throughout the interviews.
The formal process of data analysis began with documenting detailed field notes immediately following each of the interviews. These field notes provided accounts of the verbal exchanges between the researcher and participants, observations made by the researcher during each of the interviews, and connections made among and about participants’ behaviors. All of the points identified in the field notes were taken into consideration as data were reduced, displayed, and analytical themes began to emerge and define themselves more clearly and definitively.

In terms of identifying my themes, I began with a naïve reading. I went through the interview transcripts and read them from start to finish trying to ignore any presuppositions on my part. No written notes were made during this initial, naïve reading; I just took mental notes. I then re-read the transcripts and began ascertaining a number of themes that seemed to be important ones.

After obtaining initial themes, constant comparison between the data from all the interviews was used to confirm these themes and identify new ones. Constant comparison with the literature was also used to interrogate the data for possible themes identified by others. Once themes and patterns were established, they were tested through an active search of disconfirming data in the form of negative examples, rival explanations, and exceptions to the patterns. This testing was particularly important in the areas in which I identified my own biases to make sure that my biases did not skew my results I went back to the literature and made sure that there were not any themes that have been identified or suggested related to this type of work by someone else that I had not identified after the initial readings. In other words, constant comparing occurred back and forth between the
literature sources and interviews. The documented themes in the transcripts were color coded. After re-iterating everything, third and subsequence readings were done to flesh out what I had come to find as the main themes in the second reading. Saturation of the categories occurred through refining each category by seeking examples of it until no new information yielded additional meaning. Table 1 provides the transcription conventions used in this study.

Table 1

*Transcription Conventions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish Words and Phrases</th>
<th>Italicized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Translations</td>
<td>In Parentheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewees’ Pauses</td>
<td>Ellipses</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a detailed description of the research methodology used to complete the research and the analysis of the data. This phenomenological study has identified a number of themes based on the actual experiences of sexual assault disclosures gathered from 13 Latina survivors. I completed interviews with women from two different time periods and followed a process of several steps in thinking about the data. First, I collected the data through research field notes and transcripts of the interviews. Second, interview transcripts were reviewed and significant data reduction occurred through direct attention to focusing, simplifying, and
transforming the existing words or phrases in the text (the raw data) into themes, a more manageable form of data. And third, themes and patterns identified by the broader literature were compared and contrasted with the themes and patterns found in this current study. Credibility and dependability were accounted for through method triangulation. The qualitative findings from this content analysis are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to use qualitative, semistructured interviewing techniques to address the following four questions: (1) What reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of their experience of sexual assault? (2) Can patterns be detected regarding to whom Latinas disclose and under what circumstances? (3) What feelings and consequences do Latinas remember experiencing during their initial disclosure? (4) In retrospect, how do Latinas interpret their self-disclosure decisions?

The responses to the research questions were drawn from two sources of data. An initial data set of seven interviews of Latinas who had been sexually assaulted was collected in 2005. Another six Latinas who had been sexually assaulted were recruited to participate and they were interviewed in 2011. This chapter presents the findings of my interviews with both sets of participants.

Introduction to Participants

Before addressing the research questions, vignettes are used to introduce the respondents and summarize their sexual assault experiences in order to contextualize their personal stories and provide basic demographic information. Pseudonyms are used throughout the vignettes and personally identifying descriptors are avoided, although the
ethnicities of the participants are identified using their descriptions. For example, if a participant is identified as *Mexican*, this means that she described herself as Mexico-born. The term *Tejana* is used for any Latina who described herself as a Texas-born Mexican American. The term *Hispanic/Mexican American* is used for any Latina who indicated that she was born in America. Mixed ethnic roots (e.g., Mexican-Scottish American) are reported in similar fashion. Participants were all given the option to request to hear the interview questions and to reply to them in English, Spanish, or to alternate between both languages. Most of the participants chose to communicate in English, which might not have been the individuals’ native language. Only Adriana chose to alternate between both languages and Raquel used Spanish a few times to clarify her answers. The seven participants from the existing data obtained in 2005 are introduced first; then, the six new participants from the data in 2011 are introduced. A Participant Demographic Matrix for each source of data is also presented in Appendices G and H.

*Vignettes of Participants’ Sexual Assaults*

*Sandra*

Sandra was an 18-year-old, single Mexican American who was raped (CSC I) by her mother’s stepfather (step-grandfather) when she was 10 years old, while living in Texas with her mother. When Sandra was 14, her mother passed away, so Sandra moved to Michigan to live with her older brother and his wife. During a confrontation, Sandra’s brother asked Sandra what was leading her to date older men. Sandra was scared, crying, and yelled out that her Grandpa had raped her. It appears that she was only raped once.
No other specific details were given about the assault besides the fact that it was a CSC I. Cunnilingus and sodomy were performed on her. In other words, she was penetrated orally and anally. She was 14 years old at the time of the disclosure. Here is what she said about that disclosure:

Well I moved up here (from Texas) when I was 14, and my sister-in-law had me go out with older men, and, I umm . . . my brother found out and he asked me what was leading me to do this, and that’s when I told him . . . that night, that Grandpa had raped me.

Araceli

Araceli was a 32-year-old, married and college-educated Tejana. She was a mother of two, who was molested by her grandfather (CSC II) at the age of 7 and raped by two college male acquaintances that she did not know well (CSC I) when she was 18 years old. Araceli did not disclose the first incident until a psychotherapist was completing a psycho-social assessment with her when she was 32 years old. Not many specifics were provided about the first assaults. Araceli stated during her interview that her grandfather would sometimes go into her room and touch her, but she did not realize it was inappropriate. She felt it was a “hugging thing.” It felt like a dream to her, as if it was unreal. She expressed unclear memories about the exact circumstances that led to the disclosure. Here are her comments about her encounter with the psychotherapist who completed her psycho-social assessment:

I don’t know if she (psychotherapist) . . . I don’t know if she was the one who brought it up, or not. I don’t know how she brought it up . . . because of my husband, or something . . . then she started talking about what has happened during my past or whatever, and it came out.
The second incident was disclosed to a police officer soon after the assault, but then Araceli did not disclose that incident again until she met the psychotherapist mentioned above to have her assessment completed. With regard to this assault, Araceli was raped (CSC I) by two college male acquaintances. They trapped her in their apartment and forced themselves on her. A detective went to Araceli’s dorm room and asked her about what happened to her. He gave her the impression that everyone, including her parents, would find out about the assault if she pursued pressing any charges. She explained the reasons for her discomfort in the following way:

He (the detective) told me that that if I wanted to do that (press charges), that I can do that, but he said “if you tell, you’re dead” (it appeared that Araceli felt as if she would die if anyone, her parents, would find out about the rape); more like . . . “If you charge them, everyone’s gonna know, it’s gonna be in the paper, and it’s gonna be, this is,” he said “this is gonna be something that pretty much everyone will know. Your parents will find out.” Then, I just decided “no.”

As a result of this treatment, Araceli decided to not pursue the rape charges any further. Araceli stated a couple of times throughout her interview that she had no intention of disclosing her sexual assaults again because of how she was treated by the police officer. At the same time, she did disclose to her psychotherapist and to me as the researcher.

_Dominga_

Dominga was a 31-year-old, single, college-educated Tejana who was molested by her biological father (CSC II) at the age of 11 and raped by a male college acquaintance (CSC I) when she was 19 years old. The first incident was not disclosed until Dominga was 26 years old. She disclosed it to a psychotherapist in treatment, then to her mother and brother at a later time. No specific details were provided to the interviewer about the
assault or what exactly she disclosed to her psychotherapist, mother, or brother. The only thing she said that she disclosed to anyone was the following: “The incident with my dad, just that he did something, I’ve never told.”

It appears that Dominga has not provided any other explicit aspects of the assault to anyone. Here are her comments about why she has not disclosed any specific details about the assault she experienced at the hands of her biological father:

I haven’t really disclosed what my father has done. The reason is that I’m embarrassed. I’m embarrassed. I don’t want to believe that that could happen to somebody by their own father. So, yeah, embarrassment is keeping me from sharing the whole story.

The second incident was disclosed soon after the assault. She was 19 years old when a male college fraternity acquaintance raped her (CSC I) and took her virginity. Dominga and her perpetrator were both at a party celebrating his 21st birthday. After the party, several individuals, including Dominga and her perpetrator, went back to the perpetrator’s apartment. Dominga stated during her interview that her sorority sisters began eventually leaving the apartment. Before she realized what was going on, she was upstairs in his bedroom, which was where the rape occurred. Here is her description of what occurred in the perpetrator’s bedroom:

I was at a party, drunk, and it was his (the perpetrator’s) 21st birthday. We went back to his apartment, where he lived with three other fraternity brothers. Other sorority sisters of mine went with us. His biological brother was there, who was also a fraternity brother; and, he was dating a former sorority sister of mine. . . . And then, people started leaving slowly, and before I knew it, I was up in his bedroom, but his brother and the other sorority girl were in the room next to us. . . . All I remember is passing out, in and out, in and out, and just remembering people laughing, things happening, clothes coming off, and I kept saying: “stop, stop . . .” And then I’d pass out, wake up to something else, and I remember his other two roommates laughing, and crawling in and out of the room. I was yelling and crying and screaming and he wouldn’t stop. I don’t know how I got home. I
remember the next day, I told him; I called him. I called him and said: “Could I be pregnant? Am I pregnant?” And, he didn’t know what to say. And I remember him saying, “Were you a virgin?” and I said, “Yeah,” but I never told him that he raped me. I never said it was a rape. I was just worried about being pregnant.

_Feliciana_

Feliciana was an 18-year-old, single, Mexican American who was raped (CSC I) by a male acquaintance in her home when she was 13 years old. Feliciana reported only knowing the perpetrator for a couple of weeks. Disclosure occurred quickly to her parents and the perpetrator was prosecuted and incarcerated. Here is what she shared with her parents about the incident along with what she shared with this interviewer:

Feliciana: I was telling them (parents) that me and a guy and my sister were hanging out in my room, and my sister left and I came back in. My bed was in front of my door, and then he kept saying that he wanted to have sex and I then told him “no,” and then he just grabbed me by the arms and pulled me on my bed . . .

Interviewer: What type of assault was it? Did he force you to do things? Was there intercourse?

Feliciana: No, just regular sex, I guess. Forced sex!

Interviewer: So, he touched you?

Feliciana: Yeah

Interviewer: Touched your private parts? Breasts? Vagina?

Feliciana: Breasts

Interviewer: Did he insert anything at all?

Feliciana: His penis in my vagina.

Interviewer: He did. Okay, there was intercourse?

Feliciana: Yes.
Most of Feliciana’s answers to the interviewing questions were quite short. She did not provide great detail about the one and only sexual assault she experienced. She disclosed quickly because she did not want the perpetrator to assault anyone else and because she did not want to run into him anywhere. At the same time, she regretted disclosing because she did not want to experience the court procedures. In other words, Feliciana was uncomfortable sharing her experience in court.

Gabriela

Gabriela was an 18-year-old, single Mexican American who was raped (CSC I) more than once within a couple of months by a male relative when she was 10 years old. No other details were provided about this perpetrator or the sexual assaults that she experienced except that they were rapes. Gabriela recalled that the disclosure occurred within a few months after the assault, at a time when she felt emotionally supported by a female cousin. When describing her reason for disclosure, Gabriela indicated an awareness of the possible positive value of telling someone. She said:

After talking to my cousin (female cousin), and her being there with me, I had to make it, do it, and it was hard, but you have to deal with it sooner or later, or it’s going to eat at you for the rest of your life.

Adriana

Adriana was Mexican and a 34-year-old mother of three (2-year-old triplets), who was raped (CSC I) by an uncle when she was 10 years old. It took Adriana about 20 years to make her first disclosure, and she disclosed to her boyfriend because he wanted to have
a sexual relationship with Adriana. Below, is how she explained what led to her disclosure:

Porque (Because) my boyfriend been asking me when was I going to have sex with him. That’s when I told him what happened 20 years ago and after I told him that thing; he was more, mas malo (he was meaner).

After this disclosure to her boyfriend, she indicated that she was blamed and mistreated by him. Here is an excerpt of her description of her boyfriend’s reaction to the disclosure:

I told him what happened and after I told him he said, “I don’t want to do sex with you cause you’re gross; you have sex with your uncle, yuck.” I didn’t go into detail. He wanted to know if he penetrated me, but I didn’t want to talk to him about that. I just said that I couldn’t remember things. The more he wanted details, the more I got uncomfortable. In a way, I felt like he was blaming me. He kept asking, “Did he touch you? Did you make love to him?” I said, “No.” He was putting me in a situation where I was feeling like he thought that I wanted it. (Adriana was having some difficulties talking; she cleared her throat several times.) With my sister, I didn’t give her all the details either. . . . He (boyfriend) abused me psychologically.

Adriana did not provide any specific details about her relationship with the boyfriend mentioned above, but it appears that she left him based on what she said below:

It was easier for me to walk away from the relationship then to bring it out (disclose the sexual assault experience), I just kind of pretended it wasn’t there and it was easier for me to just leave.

The boyfriend mentioned above was not the father of Adriana’s triplets. At the same time, Adriana did not mention her children or their father during the whole interview. Below, she stated that she would keep this assault to herself and not share it again with a sexual partner:

Interviewer: Is there anything you would have done differently?

Adriana: I would keep it to myself. I wouldn’t share it with anyone else I was sexual with.
Teresa

Teresa was a 34-year-old, mother of two, Mexican and Scottish American who was molested (CSC II) by an older biological brother when she was 10 years old. It took her about 4 years to disclose. The disclosure occurred upon his return home from the Marines. Teresa felt that she had to tell a friend what he had done to her when she was 10 to protect herself. Below, she explained her brother’s home coming and what led to her first sexual assault disclosure:

My stepfather died all of a sudden and everybody was talking about how my brother was coming home. He was in the Marines. I had to prepare for him to stay at our house. And I . . . I didn’t want him there. I was so glad when he left. And I . . . it was hard . . . I had a friend of mine; he was kind of like a brother to me. He was older than I am. And, I confided in him, but he didn’t believe me. He went and told my mom about it. Of course, my mom didn’t believe me either. So, my mom called my brother in California. There, where he was stationed and asked him about it. Thankfully for him, he was going to church and stuff. He admitted to it. When he came home; he didn’t stay at the house.

Veronica

Veronica was a 21-year-old, single, college-educated Mexican American who witnessed an indecent exposure incident (CSC IV) by a stranger when she was about 10 or 11 years old and working as a school safety guard. Disclosure occurred within minutes and the perpetrator was prosecuted. She explained:

Veronica: It was right away. I was on my way walking to school. So, it was as soon as I got inside. I was a safety (patrol officer). And I told the lead safety and then we told the teacher and then we told the principal. It went on from there.

Interviewer: How do you think you would have felt about the assault today if you would not have told anyone?
Veronica: I would have felt ashamed. If I had never told anybody, the guy could have done it to other girls.

Interviewer: Was he ever found?

Veronica: He was found.

Interviewer: Was he ever prosecuted?

Veronica: He was.

With regard to the prosecution, Veronica’s answers were short and to the point. She did not provide specific details about what occurred in court and if she even testified. It appears that there was a trial because he was prosecuted, but there is no other information about the court procedures. Veronica answered the interviewing questions with direct, short responses.

Raquel

Raquel was a 20-year-old, single, college-educated Mexican American who had been raped several times by two former boyfriends. The first rape (CSC I) occurred when she was 12 years old. The first perpetrator was a family acquaintance, possibly a distant relative that resided with the family during migrant seasons (October–April). He was an illegal alien from Mexico who had pursued an intimate relationship with her prior to the rape. This first perpetrator was identified to a physician when she was 13 years old in the course of a routine examination. Raquel stated:

I’m not sure exactly when, but there was a time that I went to the doctor’s, like it was a physical. Like . . . you know . . . they asked lots of questions, like if you had intercourse or whatever and then . . . Um . . . I didn’t check (the box on the form) with the sex, if we had sex before or intercourse. Like, I didn’t check that, but then when the doctor came in. Um, I told her about, like . . . um that . . . that I
was, I actually had intercourse, but it was like a long time ago, and . . . and she asked me about . . . like I told her about that day.

Raquel then proceeded to inform the doctor of how the first perpetrator raped her. Prior to the rape, Raquel had a relationship with her first perpetrator, but did not realize that he was committing statutory rapes (CSC III). She did not consent to any of the sexual relations, but she also did not attempt to stop him from having a sexual relationship with her. As a result, the doctor reported the incident (the rape) to Children’s Protective Services, who then conducted an investigation. The first perpetrator disappeared soon after her first disclosure. He was never prosecuted or found. He may have returned to Mexico.

With regard to the second perpetrator, he assaulted Raquel several times when she was 18 years old during their relationship. Raquel reported feeling pressured every time they had sex, but she did not really know how to advocate for herself. In addition, the second perpetrator is the father of her child. Raquel has not disclosed these incidents to anyone besides this researcher. This is how she explained what she experienced at the hands of her son’s father:

Interviewer: What about the second abuser?

Raquel: My baby’s father?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Raquel: Um, well, I always thought that everything we . . . We . . . He started doing something. Like at the beginning, it was without my consent, but I mean, I was old enough. I knew what I was doing and I just thought that, I mean, I didn’t consider it like some kind of rape or some kind of abuse or anything. But, um, I don’t know. The way I see him, like he just wanted one thing. He would do anything in order to get it. Like, he always tried to seduce me. Um, the first time,
like I just wanted him to stop. If they keep going and they keep going, one ends up giving up. And, that’s what happened the first time, but it wasn’t anything like intercourse or anything. It was just, like he was kissing me. Um, like in my neck and then like he went down, but not far enough. So, um, like I just . . . I just . . . I told him, “Like what happened today, it’s not ever going to happen again.” Because, at that time, I told, um . . . I had . . . I had told myself that, um, something like, “I’m not going to do anything else. I don’t want to. It’s just wrong.” Like, I just thought of it to be wrong. And, um, so, the next time we hung out together, like he kept going, like again, like further, further and then we ended up having intercourse. . . . It’s like, I was telling him to stop. Then, I don’t know. I just gave in.

As stated earlier, Raquel felt pressured every time she had intercourse with her son’s father. She felt manipulated. Several times, she attempted to end their relationship, but he often threatened to harm himself. Raquel’s pregnancy is what provided her with the courage to end their relationship and walk away. Since the birth of her child, Raquel’s second perpetrator does not have contact with either her or their son. He was also an illegal alien from Mexico and has probably returned home. He disappeared after she filed for public assistance and child support benefits.

Magdalena

Magdalena was a 20-year-old, single, college-educated woman, who identified herself as Mexican. She reported being molested (CSC II) several times by an older male cousin when she was 6 or 7 years old. Magdalena has not disclosed these assaults to anyone except this researcher. It was important for her to know that this information would remain confidential. Here are her comments on confidentiality of the disclosure:

It’s just like I feel like . . . I, um, that I feel like I can talk to you and I can actually let you know and it’s going to stay just between us.
Magdalena chose not to disclose these sexual assault incidents to anyone for three main reasons. First, she feared that she would not be believed. Second, she feared retaliation by either her father or younger brother. The third and final reason that prevented her from disclosing what she experienced as a child is the fear that her family would find out. Magdalena described her parents as being very private and conservative. Here is what she said about not involving her parents:

Magdalena: Like, in a way, my parents are really conservative. They don’t like everyone. . . . They don’t like anyone talking about them and I felt like, even that was kind of something because if I would have said something, and then something like, you know, I didn’t want my parents to be like in the middle of it and have everyone asking them about it. Everyone like saying, “it’s such and such daughter” (as if one acquaintance was talking about Magdalena to someone else). Like, I didn’t want that for my parents.

Interviewer: What would it have meant, suppose it got out and people were talking about your parents’ daughter, what would that have meant for your parents? How would that have affected them?

Magdalena: I honestly don’t know because, I mean, I guess nothing like that has happened to my parents. I really don’t know how they would react or what they would have done.

Cynthia

Cynthia was a 22-year-old, single, college-educated Mexican American who was molested (CSC II) by an uncle by marriage when she was 13 or 14 years old. She has only disclosed these incidents to her fiancé, college roommate, and to this researcher. Cynthia recalled two sexual assault incidents that she experienced by her uncle. He uncle rubbed his hand down Cynthia’s body from her shoulder down to her knee, but never actually touched her breasts, buttocks, or vagina. At the same time, Cynthia stated that she felt
uncomfortable and possibly violated. Cynthia’s maternal aunt is no longer married to the perpetrator (Cynthia’s uncle by marriage). Below is how she described the two incidents:

Um, the first time, it happened when we were out at the beach. It was summer time. We were out at the beach and we were playing a game. Um, he pulled me closer to him. Like we were all under a big raft and he just pulled me close to him and that’s kind of when I started feeling uncomfortable, but didn’t really think anything of it. At the same time, um, and then, um, it happened again. Well, when they (Cynthia’s maternal aunt and her husband) found a house. They . . . I babysat for them and then, um, we all would sleep in the living room because it was cooler in there and so, it would be my uncle, my aunt, their baby and then me. (This is Cynthia’s description of how they slept alongside each other.) And then, somehow he would find a way to come towards me and then just kind of rub his hand from like my shoulder down towards my knee kind of thing.

Gloria

Gloria was a 36-year-old, married, mother of two, college-educated Mexican American who had experienced three different sexual assaults. Gloria decided to participate in the current interview to disclose an assault as a first step toward healing.

The first incident occurred when she was about 5 or 6 years old; an older Latino male in the neighborhood molested her (CSC II). This incident was not disclosed until the day she was interviewed for this study. She met with her godmother prior to the interview and practiced sharing her stories. Gloria informed her godmother about how an older Latino male neighbor molested her when she was about 5 or 6 years old. Gloria reported that her godmother was very supportive.

The second incident occurred when she was 6 years old; an African American male used vulgar language to verbally assault her (CSC IV). Gloria disclosed within minutes, but her biological mother ignored her. They were all at a neighbor’s house party. Here is her description of her disclosure of the second assault:
He kept staring and he made vulgar remarks and comments to me. And, I went and told my mom, “You know, this guy is saying this and this to me.” She kind of ignored me. Um, and so, I was stuck in that dangerous to me, dangerous situation. And, I wanted to go home, but I was scared to leave because one of the things he had said to me, “When you leave, I’m taking you out back.”

Gloria was ignored even after her disclosure. From this incident, Gloria was silenced for about 30 years.

She did not disclose the third set of assaults until a night of drinking with her older sister. As she revealed to the current researcher, the final set of incidents occurred when Gloria was between the ages of 10 and 14 years. Her mother’s boyfriend molested her over a period of several years. The disclosure occurred after her older sister shared with them (Gloria, younger sister, and their mother) that their stepfather (their mother’s former boyfriend) raped her (CSC I). Below is how Gloria described her disclosure:

Gloria: Well, one of my, what happened was my older sister, um, it was in a drunken night and my older sister started talking about the same guy, um, step-dad.

Interviewer: So, he did the same thing to your sisters?

Gloria: Yeah and we didn’t realize, just my oldest and nobody knew. So, it just came out. And then, that’s when I shared. And, my mom was there at the time too. And so, it was just one of those nights where we were kind of letting it all out.

Interviewer: What delayed your disclosure? What kept you from telling someone?

Gloria: Because I loved him . . . and I didn’t want to embarrass him more than anything . . . and not only that . . . even growing up when it first started happening, I didn’t want my mom’s happiness to end either. You know . . . because it was the first time she had been serious with somebody and I didn’t want to ruin that for her.

Interviewer: Do you think your mom would have believed you?
Gloria: Um, I didn’t really feel protected by her, so, no. To be honest with you, just because of the prior incidents . . . I think with the . . . yeah . . . I didn’t really feel safe. So, I’m not sure and from what I understand, she didn’t believe my older sister because I guess she had told my mom in the past and my mom didn’t believe her. . . . It (Gloria’s older sister’s disclosure) came back up that night. Um . . . between them two, a confrontation of “you didn’t believe me,” and then I’m like, “what are you guys talking about?” And then . . . so I then said, “yeah, Mom, because this is what happened.” So, I didn’t realize she had went through that, let alone my mom didn’t believe her.

In addition, Gloria stated that her older sister was very upset with her for not disclosing earlier. Here is how Gloria described her older sister’s reaction to her (Gloria’s) disclosure:

Interviewer: What was your sister’s reaction?

Gloria: She was angry because she felt like . . . if I would have said something before, my mom might have listened to her before and got us out of the situation. So, she blamed me for not speaking up.

Leticia

Leticia was a 40-year-old, divorced once, but currently married, mother of five. She is a Mexican American who was not only molested (CSC II) several times between the ages of 10 to 14 years but raped (CSC I) once when she was 14 years old by her first stepfather. The abuse was reported to the police when she was about 15 years old.

Leticia’s mother informed Leticia that she (Leticia) refused to follow through with testifying for the prosecution. Leticia did not recall the court proceedings, but her mother informed her about how she walked out of court after stating, “I wasn’t doing it.” It appeared that Leticia chose not to testify against her perpetrator (her first stepfather), but
has repressed that memory. Here is what she said when she refused to testify against her stepfather in court:

    I guess I went into the courtroom and I don’t know, I froze, she said and I walked out, said I wasn’t doing it.

Leticia has not experienced any other sexual assaults since her mother finally believed that her husband had raped her eldest daughter. At that point, Leticia’s mother ended their relationship and Leticia’s stepfather moved out. On a sad note, he moved in next door with another Latina who had three daughters. As of today, Leticia has no information on her stepfather’s whereabouts. He may be somewhere in the Midwest.

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Table 2 provides a short description of each of the participants for reader reference. It identifies their pseudonyms, ethnicity, age at the time of first assault, age during the interview, and year interview was conducted. A fuller Participant Demographic Matrix for each wave of surveys is in Appendices G and H.

The women’s ages at the time of the interview range from 18 to 40 ($M = 26.5$). Two of the women identified themselves as Mexican (Mexico-born), two as Tejanas (Texas-born Mexican Americans) and the other nine identified as either or both Hispanic and Mexican American.

Table 3 presents aggregate findings of the descriptive information for the 13 Latina participants in the current study. Most of the participants were single at the time that the interviews were conducted ($n = 8; 61\%$). In addition, Table 2 reveals that the majority of the participants’ first sexual assault incidents happened when they were young.
children between the ages of 6 and 11 years old (n = 10; 77%). Only three (23%) of the participants were sexually assaulted as adults. A very low percentage of the participants (n = 2; 15%) made their first disclosure of any of their assaults to professionals including enforcement officials. In 10 cases (77%), the participants/survivors made their first disclosure to either a friend, including significant other, or a family member. In addition, two participants (15%) had never disclosed a sexual assault incident until they agreed to participate in this study.

Table 2

*Description of Participants at Age at Time of First Assault and Time of Interview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age at the Time of First Assault</th>
<th>Age at the Time of the Interview</th>
<th>Year Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Araceli</td>
<td>Chicana / Tejana</td>
<td>7 years old</td>
<td>32 years old</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominga</td>
<td>Latina / Tejana</td>
<td>11 years old</td>
<td>31 years old</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feliciana</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>13 years old</td>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriela</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>34 years old</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>Mexican-Scottish American</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>34 years old</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verónica</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>10 or 11 years old</td>
<td>21 years old</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raquel</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>12 years old</td>
<td>20 years old</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>6 or 7 years old</td>
<td>20 years old</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>13 or 14 years old</td>
<td>22 years old</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>5 or 6 years old</td>
<td>36 years old</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leticia</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>40 years old</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

Demographics and Selected Characteristics of Participants and Sexual Assault Incidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Existing Data from 2005 (N = 7)</th>
<th>Data Collected in 2011 (N = 6)</th>
<th>Total (N = 13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status at the Time of Interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>4 (57)</td>
<td>4 (67)</td>
<td>8 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>4 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced or Separated</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at the Time of the First Assault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood (1–5 y/o)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood (6–12 y/o)</td>
<td>6 (86)</td>
<td>4 (66)</td>
<td>10 (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent (13–17 y/o)</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>2 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult (17+)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assaulted as an Adult after First Assault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>3 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 (71)</td>
<td>5 (83)</td>
<td>10 (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person to Whom First Disclosed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>2 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>3 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Member</td>
<td>3 (43)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>5 (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Other (Boyfriend)</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>2 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity of Most Severe Assault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild Severity (CSC IV–No Contact)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Severity (CSC II–Molestation)</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>3 (50)</td>
<td>4 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Severity (CSC III–Penetration)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Severe (CSC I–Penetration)</td>
<td>6 (86)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>8 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator of First Assault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date or Acquaintance</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>3 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Member</td>
<td>6 (86)</td>
<td>3 (50)</td>
<td>9 (69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Other (Boyfriend)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator of First Assault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stranger</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date or Acquaintance</td>
<td>3 (43)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Member</td>
<td>4 (57)</td>
<td>4 (66)</td>
<td>8 (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Other (Boyfriend)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of Disclosure for First Assault</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 24 hrs. after the Assault</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>3 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 day – &lt; 1 month</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 month – &lt; 1 year</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year – 5 years</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
<td>2 (33)</td>
<td>4 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years – 10 years</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>1 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10 years after the Assault</td>
<td>3 (43)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>4 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Assaults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Assault</td>
<td>4 (57)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>5 (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Assaults</td>
<td>2 (29)</td>
<td>1 (17)</td>
<td>3 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or More Assaults</td>
<td>1 (14)</td>
<td>4 (66)</td>
<td>5 (39)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regard to the severity of assault, Table 3 reveals that eight of the participants (61%) experienced the most severe form of sexual assault, criminal sexual offenses in the first degree (CSC I) involving forced penetration. On the other hand, only one participant (8%) experienced the least severe criminal sexual offense in the fourth degree (CSC IV) involving indecent exposure and no personal contact. In addition, the majority of the participants ($n = 12; 92\%$) knew their perpetrators. Furthermore, nine (69%) of the participants identified their first perpetrator as a family member. More than half ($n = 9; 69\%$) of the participants took over a year to disclose their first sexual assault incident, whereas two of the three participants disclosed within 24 hours. Two of these three had been sexually assaulted by strangers. Fewer than half of the participants ($n = 5; 39\%$) experienced only one sexual assault, but eight participants (61%) experienced two or more sexual assaults, some by different perpetrators at different points in time.

Data Collection, Identification of Themes, and Confirmation of Findings

As outlined in the methods section, there are two sources of data from which patterns and themes were identified: research field notes and transcripts of the interviews. The research questions were used as stimuli to identify themes and reduce the data from the two sources into salient patterns and constant comparison was used between the two sources and the various interviews. Constant comparison of the present study with the literature was also used to interrogate the data for possible themes identified by others. Once themes and patterns were established, they were tested through an active search of disconfirming data in the form of negative examples, rival explanations, and exceptions.
to the patterns. This testing was particularly important in the areas in which the researcher identified her own biases.

*Field Note Impressions*

The researcher’s detailed field notes were documented immediately following each of the interviews during which the data were collected. These field notes provided accounts of the verbal exchanges between the researcher and participants, observations made by the researcher during each of the interviews, and connections made among and about participants’ behaviors. With regard to verbal exchanges, it was noted that the youngest participants (the three that were 18 years old) verbalized shorter answers to each of the questions than the older participants. Their interviews were within one-half hour apiece. This may have been due to the maturity level of the participants or it may have been that the youngest interviewees have had less time and experience in processing how their sexual assaults and disclosures have affected them. The exception was Raquel, whose responses were elaborate. With regard to being an older participant during this study, these women (Araceli, Dominga, Adriana, Gloria, and Leticia) provided more detailed information in their responses. The older women’s responses may have been more elaborate than the younger women’s responses because they have had more time to process and overcome their experiences.

With regard to observations made by the researcher during each of the interviews, the field notes indicated that all the participants were uncomfortable with taking breaks throughout their interviews and only Raquel actually took an imposed break. This break
seemed imposed, because the researcher got up to hand her a tissue to dry her tears from answering one of the questions.

All the other participants chose not to take a break. It seemed that they feared that if they would have stopped then they may have not completed the whole interview. However, there were no direct verbalizations stating this. The participants simply chose not to take breaks. Here is an example of the exchange that happened when Araceli chose not to take a break:

Interviewer: Okay, I think that we are going to take a break now. Okay, because number five is going to be, it’s a big question. What did you tell? So let’s take a break and sort of see how you’re doing, okay?

Araceli: No, I’m okay.

An additional observation of Raquel led to identifying a theme in the data. She had shed tears when relating a private matter she had shared with her mother. She was pregnant, a freshmen in college, and often pressured to have intercourse with the father of her future child. I was struck by the intensity of the mother and daughter relationship and decided to look for this as a theme for any of the other women. Indeed, this resulted in identifying a salient theme.

The field notes also revealed that participants’ voices increased in volume when they verbally expressed anger about the sexual assault experienced. In addition, a couple of the participants straightened up in their seats. One interviewee, Adriana, had difficulty speaking, continuously clearing her throat as if she were about to cry. This occurred as she discussed her boyfriend’s badgering her for details of an earlier assault that she had disclosed to him. All of the points identified in the field notes were taken into
consideration as data were reduced, displayed, and analytical themes began to emerge and define themselves more clearly and definitively.

*Review of Interview Transcripts to Identify Themes*

The interview transcripts were reviewed and significant data reduction involved direct attention to focusing, simplifying, and transforming the existing words or phrases in the text (the raw data) into a more manageable form. The data were then reduced to significant statements or quotes; these significant statements were then combined into themes and meaningful patterns. Constant comparison allowed for a systematic search for similarities and differences across all the interviews and identified themes from earlier studies. I went back and made sure that I looked for themes identified by others, including the themes of using avoidance, feeling spoiled, engaging revelation, and feeling emotionally hurt.

In terms of identifying my themes, I began with a naïve reading. I went through the interview transcripts and read them from start to finish trying to ignore any presuppositions on my part. No written notes were made during this initial, naïve reading; I just took mental notes. I then re-read the transcripts and began ascertaining a number of themes that seemed to be important ones. After obtaining initial themes, I went back to the literature and made sure that there were not any themes that had been identified or suggested related to this type of work by someone else that I had not identified after the first two readings. In other words, I attempted to see if there were additional themes that I had not picked up during the initial readings. I took everything I know about this subject
and compared pieces of evidence with each other. Constant comparing occurred back and forth between the literature, sources, and interviews. The documented themes in the transcripts were color coded. After re-iterating everything, third and subsequent readings were done to flesh out what I had come to find as the main themes in the second reading. Saturation of the categories occurred through refining each category by seeking examples of it until no new information yielded additional meaning.

Although constant comparison helped to confirm findings in this qualitative study, it is important to mention that I also controlled for my individual biases. As a Latina psychotherapist who has worked with a number of women with sexual assault experiences, I have strong biases that could have affected my reading of the data. My professional role has led me to bring to the table my own personal perspective on sexual assault. My professional bias is that Latina sexual assault survivors eventually would interpret their self-disclosure decisions positively. In other words, my professional expertise has led me to the assumption that disclosure is positive for Latina victims of sexual assault. I included several steps to control this bias. As stated earlier, one procedure I took to make sure that my biases did not skew my results was to return to the professional literature, sources, and to the transcripts in order to look for interpretive exceptions. I looked for outliers and negative examples, as well as to exceptions to the patterns. In the third and subsequent readings, I did find some exceptions.

The establishment of the above criteria of selection provided for reliability of the identified themes across the data. Validity is supported by the constant comparison
analysis technique and through looking for negative examples, such as exceptions and outliers.

With regard to the interpretations, this also was an area of bias for me. I needed to remain aware that I have a bias that disclosure is a healthier thing to do than to not disclose. I have thoroughly reviewed the data to make sure that I am not missing and disconfirming evidence.

On a final note, I went back once again to make sure that the emerged themes and categories were clearly identified in the collected data. I compared the patterns I identified with themes identified by others. The literature suggested possible themes that I followed up on. Differences between themes in my study and others were then part of my analysis and discussion.

Phenomenological Analysis: Common Experiences and Central Themes

The previous vignettes provided short, contextualized descriptions of each participant’s sexual assault experiences. The common experiences and central themes of this study have been organized into four areas addressing each of the research questions guiding this study. They are presented below through tables and with selected quotes for illustration.

Research Question #1: What reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of their experience of sexual assault?

The results for this question were separated into two sections (reasons for not disclosing or for delaying sexual assault disclosure and reasons for sexual assault
disclosure). As can be seen in Tables 4 and 5, more themes were found for delaying or for not making a sexual assault disclosure than for choosing to disclose. Therefore, the reasons for not disclosing or for delaying sexual assault disclosure are discussed first.

Reasons for Not Disclosing or Delaying Sexual Assault Disclosure

In this first section, participants’ reasons for not disclosing or for delaying disclosure of sexual assault are discussed, including such themes as fear of consequences, fear of negative reactions from social supports, importance of mother-daughter relationships, avoidance, ignorance, fear of retaliation by a family member, self-blame, stigmatization, protection of others and love for the perpetrator.

The data reduction phase identified four main types of consequences feared by the sexual assault survivors in this study: survivors feared physical harm, family involvement or acknowledgement, school expulsion, and being accused of being a “home wrecker.” As can be seen in Table 4, 11 participants (85%) feared at least one consequence. A little more than half of the participants ($n = 7; 54\%$) identified the fear of physical harm as their reason for not wanting to disclose their sexual assault incident. For example, Teresa feared physical harm from her perpetrator. Based on past physical incidents, Teresa’s feelings were justified. During the interview, Teresa reported that her brother had attempted to kill her twice prior to sexually molesting her. For this reason, she believed him when he threatened to hurt her. Here is what she said about him and about her fear of physical harm from him:
### Table 4

**Reasons for Not Disclosing or Delaying Sexual Assault Disclosure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Existing Data from 2005 (N = 7)</th>
<th>Data Collected in 2011 (N = 6)</th>
<th>Total (N = 13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Consequences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Harm</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Involvement/Acknowledgment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Expulsion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Wrecker</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Negative Reactions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would Not Be Believed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaming Reactions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty about Receipt of Information</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignored</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disownment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother-Daughter Relationships</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Knowledge about Sexual Assault</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Knowledge about How to Respond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
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Yes, it was my brother that molested me. He told me that if I ever told anybody that he would kill me. And, he has actually tried to kill me twice. . . . Yes, he had already tried to harm me twice, kill me twice and I thought he would follow through with that.

In Leticia’s case, she feared that her stepfather, her perpetrator, would physically harm her or physically harm someone else. Leticia also had good reason for her fears as she frequently observed her stepfather beating Leticia’s biological mother. In addition, Leticia described him as having a scary demeanor due to his involvement in Operation Desert Storm in Iraq. He was a retired United States Marine. Below, she expressed her concern of physical harm:

A lot of abuse from him (stepfather), from him to her (Leticia’s biological mother); so, I don’t know if I was [pause] scared of him or scared that . . . or what he would do or what. But he, he was beating her (Leticia’s biological mother) pretty much on a regular basis, all the time.

In Adriana’s situation, her fear of physical harm was not from the perpetrator, but from her biological mother. When asked if there was someone she wanted to disclose to, but could not, Adriana stated that she wanted to disclose to her mother, but feared physical harm. Adriana was raped by a maternal uncle. She believed that her biological mother did not protect her. Below, she shared her fear of physical harm:

Interviewer: Who did you want to disclose to, but could not? ¿A quién le querías a decirle pero no podías?

Adriana:  

A mi mama (To my mother)

Interviewer: Your mother?

Adriana:  [Gestured in agreement.]

Interviewer: What were the reasons? ¿Por qué? (Why?)
Adriana: *Porque*, (Because), because she’s my mother and I think that she doesn’t take care of me. But, the bad thing now is that she died and she never knew.

Interviewer: So, you didn’t tell her because? ¿*Por qué no le digites?* (Why didn’t you tell her?)

Adriana: *Porque, tenía miedo, de que me iba a golpear, pero ahora que No le dije ya se murió.* (Because I was afraid that she was going to beat me, but now that I didn’t tell her, she has passed away.)

A consequence identified by five participants (39%) was the fear of family involvement or family acknowledgement as their reason for not wanting to disclose their sexual assault incident. Raquel’s reason for delaying her sexual assaults disclosures was the fear that her mother would find out. Here, she explained how she kept quiet during the assault because she did not wish to wake anyone up during the actual incident:

Raquel: I told him to just stop. I was trying to force him, but he was way stronger than me, so I couldn’t do anything. Like, I didn’t . . . don’t know. I didn’t want to, um, like, like say anything. I didn’t want anybody to be woken up or anything. I guess, right now, if I think about it. I didn’t want my mom to know . . . I just didn’t want my parents to know, um.

Interviewer: Why, why wouldn’t you want your parents to know?

Raquel: I wouldn’t know how they would react or how my mom would react. She was just always telling me, um, “you have to wait till you get married.” And, like right now, my sister, she tells her the same thing. And, I just tell her, “explain to her why she has to wait; don’t just tell her to wait.” They’re going to become curious because they don’t know what to wait for.

Through her demeanor, Raquel implied that her mother would have been disappointed about her not waiting to have sex until marriage. When she was asked if she experienced any consequences from the disclosure, Raquel stated:
Maybe, I don’t know. Like, I had just disappointed them. I wasn’t their little girl anymore.

This appeared to be Raquel’s way of explaining her mother’s reaction to finding out that Raquel was raped. On the way home from a center that completed Raquel’s sexual assault assessment, Raquel’s mother challenged her: “Why didn’t you wait? Why didn’t you tell anybody? Que yo te dije que te esperaras? (I told you to wait.)” Raquel’s response to this attack was to not address this issue with her mother again. She felt that there were certain private matters, such as sex, that a mother and daughter do not address.

Another example that involved the fear of family acknowledgement was identified by Magdalena. She did not want to cause problems within her family. Her perpetrator was a family member (male cousin) who had a close relationship with her father. Her father is the perpetrator’s uncle. In addition, her father had a close relationship to the perpetrator’s father, his own biological brother. For this reason, Magdalena has chosen not to disclose the several sexual assault incidents to her father because she knew it would cause family problems. Here is what she said about her perpetrator’s relationship with her father:

My dad really respects his dad (paternal uncle) and he (Magdalena’s father) always just respected him (paternal uncle).

Another reason for not disclosing or delaying a sexual assault disclosure was the fear of a negative reaction. Six main types of negative reactions were identified by the sexual assault survivors in this study. They feared that they would not be believed, that they would receive blaming reactions, that they would be greeted with uncertainty about the truth of the disclosed information, that they would receive a lack of support, that they would be ignored, or be that they would be disowned. As can be seen in Table 4, eight
participants (62%) feared at least one negative reaction. With regard to the individual types of negative reactions, the fear of not being believed \((n = 5; 39\%)\) and the fear of being blamed for the sexual assault \((n = 5; 39\%)\) had the highest occurrence. For example, Sandra described her fear as follows:

Interviewer: Prior to disclosing, prior to telling anyone, was there anything that kept you from telling anyone?

Sandra: I was just scared about what to do. When I talked to my mom, she told me that if anyone ever touched me, she would kill them, so that really had me scared about letting anyone know, and I was also scared that they wouldn’t believe me.

Interviewer: Did you have concerns about disclosing?

Sandra: Yes, I was worried. I didn’t think he (older brother) would believe me and he would probably think I was making it up.

Sandra was one of the youngest participants in this study. Her responses were short, but to the point. She did not elaborate on her experiences.

With regard to blaming reactions, Adriana made her first sexual assault disclosure to her boyfriend because she felt pressured to tell him. It was her way of explaining why she was not interested in having a sexual relationship with him. At the same time, she feared that he would blame her for the assault. This participants’ interview was conducted in both English and Spanish. The questions and answers alternated back and forth between both languages. For this reason, Adriana’s quote below will be both in English and Spanish. Here is what she said with regard to her fear about being blamed:

Interviewer: Did you have concerns about disclosing? Were you worried about telling him? ¿Tenías problemas o miedo a decirle? (Did you have problems or were you afraid to tell him?)

Adriana: ¿A él? (To him?) Yeah. (She nods in agreement.)
Interviewer: If so, what were they? ¿Por qué? (Why?)

Adriana: *Porque no quería que me descubriera que yo tuve la culpa a que yo lo provoque.* (Because I didn’t want him to tell me that it was my fault or that I provoked him.) So, *yo pensé que era mejor callado.* So, (I thought it was better to keep it quiet.)

Adriana’s fear became reality. Her boyfriend did blame her for the assault and ended their relationship. He was mean to her and psychologically abusive.

Before identifying the third most common reason for not disclosing or delaying disclosure of sexual assault, it is important to note that each of the participants (*n* = 13) reported one or both of the most identified reasons (fear of consequence and fear of a negative reaction) for not disclosing or delaying sexual assault disclosure. In other words, every single participant identified the fear of experiencing a physical assault, the fear of family involvement, the fear that they would not be believed or the fear that they would be blamed for the assault as a reason for not disclosing or for delaying of their sexual assault disclosure. Also, as noted above, many of these women had experiences that gave them good reason for their fears.

Another reason for not disclosing or delaying a sexual assault disclosure was the dynamics that existed in the relationship between a little more than half of the participants and their mothers. As shown in Table 4, seven participants (54%) chose not to disclose or to delay their sexual assault disclosure due to the relationship they had with their mother. In Raquel’s situation, she indicated that there was an unstated rule that she and her sisters did not have conversations with their mother about private matters such as drugs and sex.
It is taboo to talk about such things in great detail. The quote below will indicate how

Raquel understood this unstated rule between her mother and herself:

> Even though after . . . while I was pregnant. I really got close to my mom, but there’s this part between daughter and mother; there’s always this part that there’s just things that we don’t talk about at all. Like, we never have. Like, I have never seen my sisters and my mom talk about it. Like, my mom never talked to us about sex or drugs. She just told us not to do it. We found out about sex and drugs in school. . . . Once, you do not have those conversations, you don’t . . . you . . . like build that, that space between you . . . to not cross that. . . . Like, to not go into that box or anything. Like, you can’t just, say okay, “I’m going; we’re going to talk about this.”

For Raquel, as for others, the sensitive topics of drugs and sex were carefully circumscribed and not talked about because they are taboo, resulting in both curiosity and general ignorance about them. The result was that the victims turned to their peers (“in school”) to learn these basic facts of life.

In Magdalena’s situation, she indicated that she and her mother had never had a good relationship. Magdalena reported that she had not learned how to trust her mother. Her mother had not given her the opportunity to learn to trust her. This is what Magdalena said about why she does not talk to her mother about private matters:

> Um, just like, my mom and I have never had, like, a good relationship. It’s always just been like . . . She has always been like really strict. I feel like she hasn’t opened up to me and like allowed me to tell her . . . Like my things . . . It just like, things that a mother and daughter . . . Like I never felt like I could, in a sense, trust her. A few years ago, I would tell her something, she would tell my dad. I just felt like I couldn’t trust her with my stuff. Being something like that, she would definitely tell my dad. So, I just kept it to myself and not told anyone.

In these two examples, it becomes apparent that those who had close relationships with their mothers, as well as those who did not have close relationships, found it difficult to share information about their sexual experiences—whether assaultive or not. As stated
earlier, while documenting detailed field notes, I was struck by the intensity of the mother and daughter relationship and decided to look for this as a theme in the data collected from the in-depth interviews.

Another reason for not disclosing or delaying a sexual assault disclosure was avoidance. A little less than half of the participants \((n = 6; 46\%)\) chose not to acknowledge and think about their assault or they consciously forgot that they had been sexually assaulted. In Raquel’s situation, she did not want her parents or anyone to find out about the rape, so she simply chose to believe that nothing happened and went straight to bed after the assault. The following quote indicates how she responded to the assault and perpetrator:

I just went upstairs right away and I just went to bed and that’s it. . . . Nothing, I mean, I just, I just thought of it, like, as nothing had happened. Like, because, I didn’t want to make a big deal of it or, or um, or do anything. I just wanted to stay away from him.

Another reason for not disclosing or for delaying a sexual assault disclosure was ignorance. The participants either did not have the knowledge about how to respond procedurally to the sexual assault or they lacked the knowledge about what a sexual assault is. With regard to occurrence, five participants (39%) identified ignorance as their reason for delaying disclosure. In Cynthia’s case, she did not know how to respond so she simply did not. Below, she shared her uncertainty:

Interviewer: What delayed your disclosure?

Cynthia: The other reason was because I wasn’t really sure. I mean, I know it was wrong that he was doing that, but because nothing ever really sexually happened, like, I know it’s still a sexual thing, but because nothing really sexually happened in a sense.
Interviewer: So, it never really progressed?

Cynthia: Yeah, so, I didn’t really. I was just kind of like, I don’t know. I didn’t push it off to the side, but I kind of did at the same time. Like, I didn’t really think of it as that big of a deal. You know. You always heard worst, worst stories than what mine was, so I really was, well . . . They are going to be like, “now you are just thinking things, he could have just been passing by accidently kind of thing.” So, you know? Um, I never really thought of it as anything and then, so, I just kind of let it go.

Cynthia appeared confused about the assaults she experienced. She was not sure if they were actually assaults or not. She knew that she felt uncomfortable when her maternal uncle by marriage would rub himself up against her or when he rubbed his hand from her shoulder down to her knee. At the same time, none of their private body parts were involved. For this reason, she did not know what to do or if she could even identify the act.

In Magdalena’s situation, an older male cousin occasionally would molest her by lying on her and rubbing his penis on her vagina without penetrating her. She was ignorant about not knowing what her male cousin was actually doing to her. Here, her ignorance is shown in how she described what her male cousin had done to her:

Magdalena: I mean, I really didn’t know what was going on, just, um, watching TV and then, all of a sudden, just kind of like starting lying me down. Um, he kind of just started un-buttoning his pants and did mine and I didn’t really know what to do or he was telling me just to keep it quiet. He wasn’t being mean about it. It just the fact that I guess it was like, he didn’t want me, like to say anything. So, he wasn’t like hitting me. . . . I don’t know. He rubbed himself on me after he put my pants down and just kind of, yeah, he kind of just rubbed his penis over my parts. I mean, there was no actual penetration, but I mean . . . Now, that’s pretty much it.

Interviewer: So, it was dry humping?

Magdalena: Yeah, um
Interviewer: Did he “come” from that? Did he ejaculate?

Magdalena: Um, yeah, he did. . . . That’s when he just like after that, like, when he did, um . . . He just, and I remember, he, there was like a roll of toilet paper and he asked me to get it and I did. I just gave it to him. Um, just to clean himself up and he just told me like, oh, kind of like, “This is our little secret kind of thing.” And, um . . . (At this point, interviewee is struggling a little, you can hear it in her voice, and she’s tearful.)

Interviewer: So, he did that several times?

Magdalena: Yeah

Interviewer: Did he ever have you touch him?

Magdalena: No

Interviewer: Private parts, did he ever touch you?

Magdalena: He did, um . . .

Interviewer: Okay, did he ever insert his figure in you?

Magdalena: Nope

Interviewer: Okay

Magdalena: It was always pretty much the same thing. And, in one of the occasions, he did, kind of, gave me a rash and you know, I ended up telling my mom that it kind of itches and she took a look at me. She asked me what was wrong with me. Like, I didn’t tell her anything. I was scared to tell her. Um, I just ended up saying. I didn’t know what had happened. She just was, she didn’t even know what to think about the rash, me neither. And she, I don’t think she ever thought that that’s what had happened, but I never even told either. So, she just kind of left it as, if it continued, she was going to take me to the doctor’s, something. And, I mean, the rash went away. So, she ended up not doing anything about it, but just the fact that I didn’t tell her what had happened. I was too scared to what could happen after I told.
Another reason for not disclosing or delaying a sexual assault disclosure was the fear of retaliation from the Latina sexual assault survivors’ family members. Three types of family members were identified as potential individuals that could retaliate on behalf of the sexual assault survivors: father, mother, and brother. The father and brother were equally identified by two participants (15%) and the other one, mother, was identified by one of the participants (8%). As can be seen in Table 4, four participants (31%) feared that at least one family member would retaliate if they would have found out about the sexual assault. In Sandra’s situation, she was afraid that her mother would be arrested if she retaliated and killed the perpetrator. Here she clearly expressed that fear:

Because she (mother) first told me that if anyone ever touched me, she would kill them, and that scared me a lot because I did not want to see my mom go to jail.

In another situation, Dominga feared that her brother would attempt to kill her perpetrator if he found out. It appeared that Dominga’s brother was quite protective of her, his youngest sister. Below, Dominga shared her fear of retaliation from her brother:

My brother, I was afraid that he would do something. Go after him; kill him!

Another reason for not disclosing or delaying a sexual assault disclosure was self-blame. The participants expressed their feelings of self-blame through experiencing feelings of guilt, shame, and humiliation. Table 4 indicates that four participants (31%) reported blaming themselves for their assaults. Gabriela expressed a lot of guilt and shame and still questions her innocence and responsibility because she did what her perpetrator (male relative) asked her to do. Here, Gabriela explained how she did not want to disclose because her perpetrator was a family member:
Gabriela: Yeah, it being my own family member and knowing, you know, thinking it was my fault that that happened, I didn’t want to tell. You know, all that runs through your mind. At the same time, I didn’t want to say anything to nobody.

Interviewer: How far did it go?

Gabriela: It happened more than once. He would take off my clothes, make me touch him. He had sex with me.

Interviewer: You said it took a couple of months to tell.

Gabriela: Yeah.

Interviewer: So when you told, did it stop?

Gabriela: Yes. Um, actually, it took my mom to move me out of state. I was scared to be in the same state, to be in the same town.

Gabriela was not a willing participant, and was afraid to disclose because he was a family member. At the same time, she never disclosed what type of a family member. It is unknown if he was a brother, stepbrother or cousin, but she did state that he was 10 years old like herself.

Another reason for not disclosing or delaying a sexual assault disclosure was stigmatization. Three participants (23%) were worried that they would be judged, thought of as a “bad or dirty person” or identified as a “slut” or “whore.” For Dominga, she was worried that her sorority sisters were going to judge and label her. She had heard that the fraternity brothers who witnessed the rape were already telling others that she was a “slut” and a “whore” and that she chose to have sex with their frat brother. Below, she explained her fear about what others were going to think of her:

I was afraid. I didn’t . . . I was afraid of what people would think, what people were thinking, because my sorority sisters left me there. And I wanted them to hear my side of the story before they heard that I was a “slut” or “whore” or you
know . . . that I wanted it, because those were the things that I was hearing from the guys.

Dominga’s fear was based on what her perpetrator and his roommates were saying. Similar, to the women who feared physical harm by their abusers it is important to note that Dominga and the reactions and fears of others are often based in the reality of their situations. Dominga feared a negative reputation because rumors were already spreading around her college campus. This is similar to Teresa who feared that her brother, the perpetrator, would kill her because he had already tired to physically harm her in the past prior to the sexual assault.

The final two reasons identified for not disclosing or delaying a sexual assault disclosure was to protect another person or because the participant loved their perpetrator. There was one situation (8%) in which the sexual assault survivor delayed her disclosure because she wanted to protect her mother from losing her first significant relationship.

Before sharing what Gloria said, it is important to point out that Gloria’s perpetrator was actually her mother’s boyfriend, the significant other that Gloria was attempting to keep in her mother’s life. Here, Gloria explained her decision in the following way:

I didn’t want my mom’s happiness to end either. You know, because it was the first time she had been serious with somebody and I didn’t want to ruin that for her.

In addition, Gloria delayed her disclosure because she loved her perpetrator. He took on the father role that she and her sisters had not had. Eventually, Gloria did disclose the assaults to her sister, but it was an unintentional disclosure, which took place about 8 or 9 years later. Gloria had no interest in discussing what she experienced as a child, but during an evening of drinking alcohol with her older sister, it came out. Her older sister
made her own disclosure and they both realized that their mother’s former boyfriend had been molesting both of them. That night led to Gloria’s first public disclosure of this perpetrator. Here is her response for not disclosing at an earlier time:

Because I loved him.

The disclosure then led to an argument between the sisters. The older sister was angry with the younger, Gloria, because she did not disclose any sooner than she did. Gloria stated that her older sister thought it would have been beneficial if she would have disclosed earlier because their mother may have believed both of them instead of not believing her. Gloria also stated that their mother was there when the disclosure occurred. Out of anger, Gloria physically assaulted her mother. She slapped her for not protecting them as children. Within the family, the incident and disclosure have not been discussed since that night. In addition, Gloria has chosen not to drink alcohol anymore.

*Reasons for Sexual Assault Disclosure*

In this second section, reasons for disclosing a sexual assault will be discussed, including such themes as the roles of external support, of protection, and of situational disclosures. It was apparent that external support was a critical ingredient in the decision to disclose. The data reduction phase identified three main types of support the sexual assault survivors looked for prior to the disclosure: emotional support, intimate support, and preparation for interview. As can be seen in Table 5, seven participants (54%) disclosed because some level of support existed for them. With regard to the individual types of support, the category that had the highest occurrence was emotional support ($n =$
4; 30%). The next two categories were intimate support \((n = 2; 15\%)\) and preparation for this current study’s interview \((n = 1; 8\%)\). For example, here is why Araceli felt comfortable and disclosed her incidents of sexual assault:

I didn’t want to, but I felt that maybe I should, I don’t know, something about her (the psychotherapist) that kind of made me feel comfortable, like a mom, I don’t know.

Table 5

*Reasons for Sexual Assault Disclosure*

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In another supportive situation, Gabriela was encouraged to disclose her assaults because she received emotional support from a female cousin. This cousin was also 18 years old. Here is how she responded to two of the interview questions:
Interviewer: How did you know to disclose?

Gabriela: After talking to my cousin, and her being there with me, I had to make it, do it, and it was hard, but you have to deal with it sooner or later, or it’s going to eat at you for the rest of your life.

Interviewer: What led you to disclose?

Gabriela: Having my cousin there to help me, and for her to tell me that I had to say something, and that it wasn’t my fault.

With regard to receiving intimate support, a sexual assault survivor, Cynthia, had no intention of disclosing. However, when her boyfriend and current fiancé, who had experienced a lot of abuse from his own parents, began disclosing personal stories that dealt with abuse one night, she felt comfortable enough to disclose her sexual assault experience. Here is what she said about that disclosure:

We were having a conversation and it, it somehow dealt with abuse and then I mentioned it to him. And at first, he asked if I had said anything to anybody else and at that point, it was just like, “No” . . . Like, I didn’t because, I, I wasn’t sure if anybody would believe me.

As stated earlier, Cynthia’s boyfriend is her current fiancé. He was quite supportive, but angry that she experienced a sexual assault at the hands of a maternal uncle by marriage. In this way, Cynthia and her current fiancé have assisted each other to overcome incidents of assault.

Another reason for disclosing a sexual assault was protection. Earlier, protecting another was a reason identified for not disclosing or for delaying sexual assault disclosure. In this section, it was identified as a reason for disclosing a sexual assault. As a result, protection played a significant part in disclosure, non-disclosure, and delayed sexual assault disclosure. Two participants (15.4%) chose to disclose their incidents to
protect themselves from the perpetrator. For example, Teresa disclosed her former sexual assault because the perpetrator (her biological brother) was returning home for an unexpected visit. Their stepfather had passed away so her brother was returning home for his funeral. She was afraid that he would return home to molest her again. Here are her thoughts of why she needed to disclose:

Brother is heading home for stepfather’s funeral from the Marines. I was so afraid. I just didn’t want him there. That I, I had to do something to stop him so he wouldn’t be there. I didn’t want something to happen again. I didn’t want him to try to harm me again.

As indicated above, it was not until the older brother admitted his transgression that Teresa’s family believed her. Since her brother stayed away from the house the disclosure did serve to protect her in this incident.

Another prevention category was concern about pregnancy. With regard to pregnancy, two participants (15%) expressed concern of pregnancy from the assault, which led to quick disclosures within 24 hours. In Dominga’s situation, she feared that she would be thrown out of college if she was found to be pregnant from the rape. In addition, Dominga feared that her mother would disown her because she often experienced her mother’s threats of disownment if she ever dared to be pregnant. This is another powerful example of the influence of others on the disclosure decision. Here, Dominga explained her apprehension in the following way:

I was just so scared, so afraid that I was pregnant. I didn’t want to be pregnant, I knew that if I was pregnant I would be kicked out of school, and my mom wouldn’t support me, and she often told me that if I ever got pregnant she would disown me.
With regard to protecting others, Feliciana was afraid to disclose and actually was threatened by the perpetrator to not disclose. However, she felt she needed to come forward because she did not want him to sexually assault anyone else. The following quote is short, but to the point. Here is what she said:

I didn’t want him to do it [rape] to somebody else.

Feliciana was a participant that spoke very little about her sexual assault. She contacted this researcher directly, but was only 18 years old at the time of her interview. Besides disclosing her assault to both her mother and father soon after she was raped and testifying in court, Feliciana reported that she often did not share her story. Despite her reluctance, she felt that it was necessary to confront the perpetrator of the assault in order to protect others from a similar fate.

The final reason identified for disclosing a sexual assault was situational disclosure. As can be seen in Table 5, situational disclosure occurred for three participants (23%). A sexual assault survivor, Gloria, had no intention of disclosing, but another individual (Gloria’s older sister) began disclosing her own history of abuse while intoxicated. As a result, they both found out that they experienced sexual assaults from the same perpetrator, but were unaware of each others’ incidents. Their disclosures led to a big argument among the two sisters and their mother. The older sister became angry because her younger sister did not disclose while they were still living with their mother’s boyfriend. If she would have disclosed, then maybe their mother would have believed her former disclosure of her mother’s boyfriend sexually assaulting her. The younger sister
was angry with her mother for not protecting them. This situational disclosure by Gloria’s older sister led to Gloria’s sexual assault disclosure. Gloria stated:

Well, one of my, what happened was my older sister, um, it was in a drunken night and my older sister started talking about the same guy, um, step-dad (mother’s former boyfriend). We didn’t realize, just my oldest and nobody knew, so it just came out. And then, that’s when I shared. And, my mom was there at the time too. And so, it was just one of those nights where we were kind of letting it all out.

No specifics details were given about how long it took Gloria’s mother to leave her boyfriend. At the time of the interview, Gloria was avoiding any discussion about this disclosure with both her older sister and mother. Gloria stated that tension still existed among them all.

The above two sections identified reasons for disclosing, for not disclosing, and for delaying sexual assault disclosures. As can be seen in Tables 4 and 5, more reasons were identified for not disclosing or delaying a disclosure of sexual assault than for disclosing a sexual assault. These analyses suggest that Latina sexual assault survivors in the current study were more likely not to disclose or delay their disclosure than to disclose their incidents of sexual assault. Yet, they all did eventually disclose. Furthermore, external support was the only theme that had a direct influence on the participants’ emotional reaction to the assault, whereas the protection theme had more to do with an external obstacle, and the situational disclosure resulted from an accidental negative encounter. In other words, support was about coping with an internal obstacle such as depression, anxiety, or fear. Protection was about protecting oneself or others from an external obstacle, something that happens to the individual, such as becoming pregnant, contracting a sexually transmitted disease/infection or feeling the threat of physical harm.
to self or others. The next section will address the patterns detected regarding to whom Latina survivors disclosed their sexual assaults and under what circumstances they made their disclosures.

Research Question #2: Can patterns be detected regarding to whom Latinas disclose and under what circumstances?

Latina victims’ patterns regarding to whom they disclose their sexual assaults were investigated. The data reduction phase identified four main types of individuals to whom the participants in this study initially disclosed their sexual assaults: family members including a significant other, friends, professionals, and the interviewer. As can be seen in Table 6, a little more than half of the participants \((n = 7; 54\%)\) made their first disclosure to a family member. With regard to the other recipients of the sexual assault disclosures, friends \((n = 3; 23\%)\), professionals \((n = 2; 15\%)\), and the interviewer \((n = 1; 8\%)\) of this study followed. With regard to gender, the participants were more likely to make their first disclosure to a female \((n = 8; 61\%)\) than to a male \((n = 5; 39\%)\).

The pattern of disclosure based on time frame and on the identity of the first perpetrator can be seen in Table 7. Ten participants \((77\%)\) identified their first perpetrator as a family member. At the same time, these 10 participants delayed their sexual assault disclosure from a few months to up to 30 years. The overall range for disclosure was from right away to 30 years. Five participants \((39\%)\) delayed at least 14 years, and the mean wait time was 16.5 years.
Table 6

**Patterns of Recipient of First Disclosure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Existing Data from 2005 (N = 7)</th>
<th>Data Collected in 2011 (N = 6)</th>
<th>Total (N = 13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Members including Significant Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

**Patterns of Disclosure Based on Time Frame and First Perpetrator**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Family Member (including sign. other)</th>
<th>Acquaintance</th>
<th>Stranger</th>
<th>Total (N = 13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate (within 24 hours)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soon (1 day – 1 month)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later (1 month – several years)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 took into account all of the assaults (18 total assaults) that occurred among the 13 participants. Five participants (39%) were assaulted by either a stranger or an acquaintance. These 5 participants were the ones who made disclosures within 24
In other words, those assaulted by a stranger or an acquaintance disclosed sooner than those who were assaulted by a family member including a significant other.

Table 8

*Patterns of Disclosure Based on Time Frame and All Perpetrators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Family Member (including sign. other)</th>
<th>Acquaintance</th>
<th>Stranger</th>
<th>Total of Assault Experienced by 13 Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate (within 24 hours)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soon (1 day – 1 month)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later (1 month – several years)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* Percentage is based on a total of 18 assaults among the 13 participants.

In all, the results suggest that those sexually assaulted by either a stranger or an acquaintance may be more likely to disclose sooner that those who are sexually assaulted by a family member. In addition, Latina sexual assault survivors may be more likely to make their first disclosure to a family member rather than to a professional or friend.

With regard to gender, they may be more likely to disclose to a female than to a male.

*Research Question #3: What feelings and consequences do Latinas remember experiencing during their initial disclosure?*

In this section, feelings and consequences experienced by Latina sexual assault survivors during their initial sexual assault disclosure were identified. The data reduction phase identified nine types of feelings experienced by the participants in this study:
regret, shame/embarrassment, negative judgment of self, worry, fear, anger, relief, depression, and hatred. As can be seen in Table 9, regret was the most often felt feeling \((n = 7; \text{54\%})\).

Table 9

*Feelings Experienced During Initial Disclosure*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Existing Data from 2005 ((N = 7))</th>
<th>Data Collected in 2011 ((N = 6))</th>
<th>Total ((N = 13))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regret</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame/Embarrassment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Judgment of Self</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relief</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatred</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Araceli’s case, she regretted contacting the police soon after her rape for two reasons. First, she felt unsupported by the police officer that took her statement. It appeared that Araceli was convinced not to press charges because she was informed that her parents would find out, which scared her because she did not want her parents to judge her. Second, Araceli regretted that the police officer took her to an emergency room (ER) for a sexual assault examination. Araceli expressed that it was a very uncomfortable
examination to experience. Here are the two sections of her interview in which she described feeling regret:

Interviewer: What led you to disclose?

Araceli: I was scared. I didn’t know. I was thinking; I was thinking about, um, what if I was going to have a baby? Or, if I had gotten a disease? I was thinking that . . . That was a bad thing that they did. I didn’t think it was right. . . . So, I had to call them (the police). I didn’t know who else to call. I did feel like I needed to tell them. But then when I did call, and I did go through with it, I thought, maybe I shouldn’t have called someone. They wouldn’t have taken me to the emergency . . .

Interviewer: They took you to the emergency room? That’s where they did all the examination, collected all the evidence? That’s why they cut your clothing?

Araceli: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you regret anything about the disclosure?

Araceli: No and yes. I regret calling the police, but I don’t regret telling my psychotherapist. I’m glad I told her because somebody listened.

Interviewer: Feeling heard?

Araceli: Yeah. My mom probably wouldn’t understand like my psychotherapist does. She would think badly of me. My mother would probably . . . I don’t know. I think she would have thought or something. . . . She would have thought . . . You know? Like, I was dumb or something. I don’t know. I always thought, because I’m the only one who went to college. I should have known all that, right? My psychotherapist, because, I don’t think she’s gonna tell me anything and she hasn’t . . . Isn’t judging me or . . .

The next four most often felt feelings were shame/embarrassment \((n = 5; 39\%)\), negatively judging themselves \((n = 3; 23\%)\), worry \((n = 3; 23\%)\), and fear \((n = 3; 23\%)\).

The only positive feeling identified by two participants \((15\%)\) was relief. With regard to shame/embarrassment, Araceli was taken to the emergency room by a police officer soon
after she was raped by two college male acquaintances. She reported that the ER visit was an embarrassing experience for her and wished she would not have been taken there. Here, she clearly expressed her feelings of shame and embarrassment:

I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t have gone . . . Cause it was, embarrassing, I felt like, I don’t know, something to examine, I felt really gross, and I didn’t want people looking at me. They were all looking at me . . . And checking me, and I wouldn’t have gone if I knew that, but it was, I just kind of stood there and let them do what they did because it was embarrassing. And to know what they knew . . . Kind of makes you feel like, I don’t know.

With regard to negative judgment of self, both Araceli and Raquel negatively judged themselves. First, Araceli blamed herself for losing her virginity. Here is how she judged herself:

I thought it was my fault. I didn’t think . . . I didn’t want to lose my virginity. I didn’t know. I didn’t understand. But I get it now.

In Raquel’s situation, she was hard on herself because she felt that she disappointed her parents after they learned of her rape. Here is what she said:

Like, I had just disappointed them. I wasn’t their little girl anymore.

With regard to consequences, mistreatment was the most often experienced consequence \((n = 4; 31\%)\), a sense of feeling spoiled was the second most often experienced consequence \((n = 3; 23\%)\), and the lack of support was the third most often experienced consequence \((n = 2; 15\%)\). A sense of being ignored, feelings of negative self-worth, an increased sense of being self-guarded, a sense of being silenced, a feeling that one wasn’t believed, and a lack of confidentiality were also experienced. As can be seen in Table 10, the other seven consequences were each identified only once. In Gloria’s case, her older sister verbally assaulted Gloria for not disclosing her sexual
assault incidents by their mother’s boyfriend earlier. Gloria’s sister was angry because their mother did not believe that she was assaulted as an adolescent, but if Gloria would have also discussed her assault when Gloria’s older sister did, then maybe their mother would have believed them. This is how Gloria explained her older sister’s reaction to her disclosure:

She was angry because she felt like if I would have said something before, my mom might have listened to her before and got us out of the situation. So, she blamed me for not speaking up.

Table 10

Negative Consequences Experienced During Initial Disclosure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Existing Data from 2005 (N = 7)</th>
<th>Data Collected in 2011 (N = 6)</th>
<th>Total (N = 13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mistreatment</td>
<td>3 (43%)</td>
<td>1 (67%)</td>
<td>4 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoiled for Marriage</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>3 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Support</td>
<td>2 (29%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignored</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Self-Worth</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Guarded</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silenced</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasn’t Believed</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (17%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Confidentiality</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feeling spoiled for marriage or a significant relationship was the second most identified consequence experienced during an initial disclosure. In Dominga’s case, once
she lost her virginity, she reported feeling like damaged goods. Here is what she said about how no one may want to marry her:

Fear that I wouldn’t have been believed, that I would be blamed, that a man wouldn’t want to be with me, that I was no longer seen as a good girl because I lost my virginity to the rape. I’m Catholic. I feel like I’m damaged goods, I don’t know if anyone will ever marry me.

There was no elaboration on this topic. Dominga simply stated feeling spoiled for marriage. At the time of the interview, she was single and had had very little dating experience.

Feeling unsupported was the third most identified consequence experienced during an initial disclosure. In Dominga’s case, she regretted not pursuing legal action against her perpetrator. She first disclosed her acquaintance rape to her roommates, then several of her friends, sorority sisters, and a college employed psychotherapist. During her disclosure to the college psychotherapist, she was encouraged not to report the incident to the police or to anyone of authority. Dominga experienced a lack of support from the school’s psychotherapist and regrets her decision to accept the psychotherapist’s advice not to contact the police and report the incident. Here, Dominga explained how she was encouraged not to disclose her acquaintance rape:

Yeah; I was convinced not to press charges, I was convinced not to do more than I needed to. I told a counselor who worked with me, but it wasn’t real treatment, it was just stabilizing. They stabilized me. There were not meds, there was nothing. There were a couple appointments, and I cried about it, and you know, and then I had to walk around campus being called a “Spic.” Because it got around campus.
Research Question #4: In retrospect, how do Latinas interpret their self-disclosure decisions?

The final research question addressed how Latina sexual assault survivors interpreted their self-disclosure decisions. The data reduction phase identified eleven main types of interpretations made by the participants of this study: transcendence, acceptance of fate, closure, emotional relief, agency (gaining a voice), experiencing a safe environment, demonstrating strength, protecting another, revelation, emotionally hurt and regret. The first nine identified were positive interpretations. The last two interpretations had a negative connotation. I asked the participants how they felt today about their initial disclosure. My intention was to obtain descriptions of how they interpreted their self-disclosure decisions. Only one individual identified two negative interpretations.

As can be seen in Table 11, eight participants (61%) identified either transcendence or acceptance of fate as their interpretation of their self-disclosure decision. Both Raquel and Dominga have been able, to a large degree, to overcome what happened to them and leave their assault in the past. In Raquel’s case, she feared moving on without the assistance of her child’s father, but chose to end that relationship because he often pressured her into sexual relations without her consent. Here is how she felt about transcending her relationship and moving forward:

It’s in my past. It’s not here anymore. I mean, I’m happier right now. I have my son. I have the support. I’m in good conditions. Um, I’m following my dream.

In Dominga’s situation, once she obtained clinical psychotherapy she overcame the trauma of the abuse and brought closure to the two sexual assaults that she experienced. Here is her self-disclosure interpretation:
It meant that I was able to get the help that I needed. It meant that, it showed me that I was resilient, that I’m strong. And that I can move forward, and that I can overcome it.

With regard to acceptance of fate, Raquel accepted what happened to her and continued living life. She explained her behavior of acceptance the following way:

I just experienced it. I take it as being in the past. I don’t really think about it, just that, it happened. Um, I don’t take it to depress me or to make me sad. Um, it’s just that I went through it and that’s it.

Table 11

*Interpretations of Latinas’ Sexual Assault Self-Disclosures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Existing Data from 2005 (N = 7)</th>
<th>Data Collected in 2011 (N = 6)</th>
<th>Total (N = 13)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcendence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of Fate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Relief</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency (Gaining a Voice)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting Another</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Hurt</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regret</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the other interpretations, the two that had the highest occurrence were closure (n = 3; 23%) and emotional relief (n = 3; 23%). Dominga’s interpretation of her sexual assault self-disclosures was that it brought closure to the tragic incident. She
figured out what she needed to do in order to close two traumatic events that she experienced in the past. Below, she shared her solution of how she gained closure:

I didn’t talk about that until I was 26, but the rape brought back all those memories. And it took me until I was 26 to get therapy because I couldn’t have a good relationship, so I had to figure it out. And so, I went to treatment and brought closure to both of the assaults.

With regard to emotional relief, Adriana waited about 20 years before she made her first disclosure. She was then silenced until she worked with a case manager at a women’s center for domestic and sexual violence. She reported gratitude for the services she received at the center. She stated that she felt helped by me (as the interviewer), her case manager at the women’s center, and the counselor she met with from the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program. Here is how she felt about sharing her sexual assault story with others:

Adriana: The more I talk about it, the more I have been able to tell others, the better I feel, and the more comfortable I feel sharing the stories with others.

Interviewer: Is there anything the community could have done in order to provide you with the awareness that you needed to disclose? ¿Podíamos hacer algo más para ayudarte hablar de estas cosas? (Could we have done more to help you talk about these things?)

Adriana: You have done enough for me. I’ve been able to talk about it because you have been there for me and understand where I’m coming from. The counselor with that program also helped me.

Interviewer: The program; which program?

Adriana: The program that helps women who are raped; the nurse in the back room.

Interviewer: Yes, you are referring to the SANE program, which is in the back of the building, but the other entrance. Is that correct?
Adriana: *Sí, ese es el programa.* (Yes, that is the program.)

The next three interpretations of Latinas’ sexual assault self-disclosure that had the third highest occurrence were showing agency or gaining a voice ($n = 2; 15\%$), having a safe environment ($n = 2; 15\%$), and exercising strength ($n = 2; 15\%$). The final four interpretations were protecting another, revelation, emotional hurt, and regret. These last four interpretations each were identified by a single participant (8%).

With regard to agency, Raquel gained a voice from her second disclosure because she had not talked about her sexual assault rapes since she was evaluated by social workers and nurses at a children’s facility for a sexual assault examination. The examination occurred when she was referred to that center by Children’s Protective Services due to a report made by her family physician when she was 13 years old. Below, Raquel shared her self-disclosure interpretation:

> I just took it out and wanted to talk. Like with you, like actually out because I just wanted to talk to someone. I wasn’t really expecting to talk about it with someone, but it helped to talk about it.

Raquel stated feeling comfortable with this disclosure because it was by choice. She had no intentions of sharing her sexual assault experiences, but when she heard about this study, she chose to contact me by phone and scheduled an interview. She gained the ability to talk about these tragic incidents on her own without receiving any encouragement.

In Feliciana’s situation, she obtained a safe environment through making a quick rape disclosure. She was assaulted by an acquaintance that she only knew for a couple of weeks. Here is her interpretation of how she felt safe after her disclosure:
That I didn’t have to worry about seeing him again; it helped me not think about it every time I may see him coming and trying to approach me or whatever.

Feliciiana disclosed the rape she experienced quickly because she did not want the perpetrator to assault anyone else and to protect herself. She feared that she would run into him. In the process of her disclosure, she was able to testify. Her perpetrator was prosecuted and sentenced to prison, which provided her with a safe environment. She no longer had to worry about running into him.

With regard to gaining strength, Leticia has become a very strong person who often shares her story with others who may be at risk of an abusive situation. It is her hope to empower them. Here is what she said about how she wants others to see how strong she is:

Now, I’m honest with everybody about it, especially younger girls. I . . . I tell younger girls. . . . I got a neighbor, you know, she’s kind of going through domesticness and so I kind of share things with her. So, I don’t think . . . I don’t disclose anything for anybody. If they want to know, I’m going to tell you and hopefully something helps you out of my strength and I hope that you see me full of strength.

Gabriela’s interpretation of her sexual assault self-disclosure helped her feel like she was protecting others from this perpetrator. Below is what she said about how she feels regarding her disclosure today:

It helped me by knowing that . . . maybe by doing that . . . he wouldn’t do that to somebody else. I didn’t want him to do it to nobody else cause I didn’t want nobody else to feel what it felt like . . . what it was like to be in that position.

Gloria interprets her sexual assault disclosures as God’s way of communicating with her. It is an act of revealing what needs to be “healed and sealed.” She explained her revelation in the following way:
I just believe God is still revealing things to heal. . . . That’s really been my thing this year. God reveals it so we heal it and it can be sealed. Reveal, heal, and seal! And, I think this is just part of it, you know . . . Cause, my niece mentioned it and I haven’t thought about it, but I really believe that this is part of God revealing some things to me. Um, things that I need to take to him and get healed and then just be done. Just be done with it!

The final two interpretations were feeling emotionally hurt and experiencing regret. They were each identified by the same participant within the same quote. These were the only two interpretations that had a negative connotation. Magdalena was the only participant that had not disclosed any of her sexual assault incidents to anyone else prior to this current study. She reported feeling emotionally hurt and regretted that she had not disclosed earlier. It emotionally hurts her to know that her perpetrator treats her like nothing ever happened between them. She often has to see him at family gatherings.

This is what she said about how her perpetrator treats her:

I wish I could have done something. Like, to not let it get so far. Um, now, I feel like . . . I guess . . . I feel like, he just moved on, like . . . it’s like maybe thinking I didn’t remember or . . . but I guess it’s hurting me and I feel like for him it just like . . . besides he’s invited to everything, all the cookouts, everything my family does and just seeing him, like with his wife, which is, um, my cousin on my mom’s side. I feel like just sometimes that he just thinks that I don’t remember that it’s something that happened and that I forgot. I don’t know. It’s not like that. I do remember.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the participants’ demographic characteristics and a theme-based analysis of the results of their interviews. This phenomenological study has identified a number of themes based on the actual stories of sexual assault disclosures collected from 13 Latina survivors. In addition, this chapter
organized the identified common experiences and central themes into four areas
addressing each of the research questions guiding this study

The results for the first research question were separated into two sections
(reasons for not disclosing or for delaying sexual assault disclosure and reasons for sexual
assault disclosure). The reasons for not disclosing or for delaying sexual assault
disclosure were fear of consequences, fear of negative reactions, the importance of
mother-daughter relationships, avoidance, ignorance, fear of retaliation by a family
member, self-blame, stigmatization, protection of others and love for the perpetrator. The
reasons for disclosing a sexual assault were support, protection, and situational
disclosures.

With regard to the second research question, the results suggested that those
sexually assaulted by either a stranger or an acquaintance were more likely to disclose
sooner than those who were sexually assaulted by a family member. In addition, a little
more than half of the participants made their first disclosure to a family member than to a
friend or professional. With regard to gender, the participants were more likely to make
their first disclosure to a female than to a male.

The third research question addressed feelings and consequences experienced by
the participants during their initial disclosure. Nine types of feelings were identified as
having been experienced by the participants: regret, shame/embarrassment, negative
judgment of self, worry, fear, anger, relief, depression, and hatred. With regard to
consequences, feeling mistreatment, having a sense of feeling spoiled for marriage, and
sensing a lack of support were the first three most often experienced consequences; these
were followed by fear of lack of confidentiality, a sense of being ignored, feelings of negative self-worth, an increased sense of being self-guarded, a sense of being silenced, and a feeling that one was not believed.

The last research question analyzed Latinas’ interpretation of their self-disclosure decisions. Eleven main types of interpretations were identified by the participants: transcendence, closure through an acceptance of fate, emotional relief, agency (gaining a voice), safe environment, strength, protecting another, revelation, emotional hurt and regret. The first nine identified were positive interpretations, but the last two had a negative connotation.

In the next chapter, the findings related to my four research questions will be discussed, summarized, and interpreted in more detail. In addition, the limitations of the current study will be identified and suggestions for future research will be provided.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I discuss the findings related to my four research questions, interpret them in more detail, describe some of the limitations of the current study, and provide suggestions for future research. The chapter begins with an overview of the study’s purpose and methods.

Overview

This dissertation is a phenomenological study describing and analyzing Latina women’s (thereafter called Latinas) self-described reasons for sexual assault disclosure and the essence of the experience of that disclosure. The focal point for this study was to add to the scholarly understanding of Latinas’ beliefs, needs, and experiences related to their sexual assault disclosure. The strengths, stressors, and challenges seen through the eyes of Latinas who have been sexually assaulted were closely investigated using qualitative methods. The research questions were: (1) What reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of their experiences of sexual assault? (2) Can patterns be detected regarding to whom Latinas disclose and under what circumstances? (3) What feelings and consequences do Latinas remember experiencing during their initial disclosure? (4) In retrospect, how do they interpret their self-disclosure decisions?
The current study involved analysis of semi-structured, in-depth interview data for 13 Latinas who had been sexually assaulted. At the time of the interviews, the respondents ranged in ages from 18 to 40 years. They all met criteria as being Hispanic/Latina, English or Spanish speaking women who had been sexually abused.

The goal of this study was to learn about the participants’ perspectives of what led to, or delayed their decisions to disclose their experience of sexual assault, what pattern of disclosing they showed, what their experience was of disclosing, and how they interpreted their self-disclosure decision. Detailed field notes were documented immediately following each of the interviews after the data were collected. The phenomenological method I employed in analyzing the participants’ transcripts involved use of a constant comparison approach in order to discern recurrent, significant themes that emerged throughout the interviews. In the following section, the circumstances of the assault situations and first disclosure are summarized. Then, the findings are summarized for each of the four research questions.

Summary of Main Findings

The majority of the participants experienced their first sexual assault as children between the ages of 6 to 11 years old. Only three of the participants (Raquel, Araceli, and Dominga) were sexually assaulted as adults, but even these assaults occurred after they had previously experienced sexual assaults as children or young adolescents. Only two of the participants (Raquel and Araceli) made their first disclosure to a professional or a law official. In 10 cases, the participants made their first disclosure to a family member,
friend, or significant other. Two participants (Raquel and Magdalena) had never disclosed a sexual assault incident until they agreed to participate in this study and disclosed to the interviewer.

The results for the first research question, which asked about the reasons for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay sexual assault disclosure, were separated into two sections. I initially considered the reasons the respondents gave for not disclosing or for delaying their sexual assault disclosure, and then I considered the reasons presented for sexual assault disclosure. The reasons expressed by the participants for not disclosing or for delaying sexual assault disclosure were interpreted to be fear of consequences, fear of negative reactions, concern about mother-daughter relationships, avoidance of a painful narrative in their lives, ignorance of the facts of sexual assault or about what should be done in the face of assault, fear of retaliation by a family member, self-blame for being a victim, fear of being stigmatized, protection of significant others, and love for the perpetrator.

Eleven of the participants gave one or two reasons for disclosing a sexual assault. These were either the perceived availability of support and protection, or the immediate, situational circumstances which led a participant to disclose the assault in a manner that had not been planned. There were three examples when a situational disclosure occurred. First, Leticia’s biological mother confronted Leticia about her negative behavior. This confrontation led Leticia to disclose to her mother the sexual assault of her stepfather’s rape. In the second example, Sandra’s older brother confronted her about why Sandra was dating older men. During the confrontation, Sandra disclosed to her brother that their
step-grandfather had raped her. In the third example, Gloria made her sexual assault disclosure after her eldest sister disclosed that she had been raped by the same perpetrator, their biological mother’s former boyfriend.

With regard to the second research question, the results suggested that those sexually assaulted by either a stranger or by an acquaintance were more likely to disclose sooner than those who were sexually assaulted by a family member. In addition, a little more than half of the participants made their first disclosure to a family member rather than to a friend or professional. With regard to gender, the participants were more likely to make their first disclosure to a female than a male. Indeed only five of the participants made their first disclosures to a male. Only one of these women received a positive response. The other four received what they perceived as negative responses.

The third research question addressed feelings and consequences experienced by the participants during their initial disclosure. Nine types of feelings were identified as experienced by the participants at the time of the initial disclosure: regret for having made her assault public, shame or embarrassment for having been victimized, a negative judgment of self, worry that she would not be believed or would have to talk about the assault, fear of disclosure, anger towards someone for not protecting her, relief about being able to disclose, depression, and hatred. The most commonly experienced feeling was regret and the least common feelings were depression and hate. A sense that one had been mistreated, a fear that one had been spoiled for marriage, and a sense of not receiving sufficient support were the three most often experienced consequences participants reported in the wake of their initial disclosures. These were followed by
being ignored, developing negative self-worth, becoming self-guarded, being silenced, feeling that one was not believed, or fearing that the disclosure would not be kept confidential.

The last research question analyzed Latinas’ interpretation of their self-disclosure decisions. I identified 11 types of interpretations from the comments made by the participants: transcendence, acceptance of fate, closure, emotional relief, agency (gaining a voice), safe environment (feeling safe from the perpetrator), strength, protecting another, revelation, emotionally hurt, and regret. I classified the first 9 interpretations as positive ones, but the last 2 were seen to have negative connotations.

Interpretation of Results

Nature of Assault and Circumstances of First Disclosure

The qualitative data yielded several themes that both support and expand on previous findings regarding the nature of assaults and disclosure. First, most of the women were sexually assaulted for the first time before the age of 13 years (77%). The median age at the time of the first sexual assault for Latina victims was about 10 years. These results are consistent with findings reported by Romero et al. (1999) suggesting that childhood rape and childhood sexual abuse may actually be higher than reported in other studies of Latinas.

Culturally, men may find it easy to dupe younger Latinas because Latinas may not even realize that a sexual act is occurring. Ignorance of what is and isn’t sexual assault was mentioned in several of the interviews. This ignorance may occur because Latinas are
discouraged to discuss private matters such as sex and drugs (Adames & Campbell, 2005; Ahrens et al., 2010; Romero et al., 1999), which would lead to a level of ignorance and vulnerability regarding sexual assault. For example, a young Latina may not have the knowledge to understand that it is inappropriate to touch an older male cousin’s penis, especially if she learns at an early age that she must obey her elders—especially older males.

In the current study, 12 of the participants were sexually assaulted in their homes or in the perpetrators’ homes. In the latter cases, the perpetrators were often family members such as grandfathers, fathers, brothers, uncles, or male cousins. Romero et al. (2001) also found that the majority of the sexual assault incidents in their study occurred in private locations by known assailants. Only two participants, Veronica and Gloria, were assaulted by strangers. In Veronica’s case, she witnessed an indecent exposure (CSC IV), whereas Gloria was sexually assaulted verbally (CSC IV).

Of the 13 participants in the current study, 9 (69%) took at least a year to disclose their sexual assault after its occurrence. In addition, 5 (39%) took 6 or more years to make their first disclosure. These findings support Dunn and colleagues’ study (1999) indicating the strong reluctance Latinas have to disclose.

In the current study, 7 (54%) participants disclosed their sexual assault for the first time to a family member or a significant other (current boyfriend) and only 2 of the 13 informants had first disclosed their sexual assault to a professional. This may mean that they also are unlikely to seek counseling and assistance from a mental health professional. Indeed only 5 of the women (Dominga, Feliciana, Adriana, Teresa, and Leticia) had
sought psychotherapy following their disclosure. This number may actually be high as the recruitment of participants occurred through a counseling center this number might be artificially high. One other interesting occurrence in this study was that 2 of the participants chose to use the research interview as an opportunity to disclose for the first time. The research interview was perhaps perceived as a safe place and/or a reason to disclose the information.

The current study found that Latina rape survivors were unlikely to report the incident to enforcement officials. Only 3 of the 13 participants (23%) disclosed their sexual assault incident to the police. Fisher et al. (2003) found that assaults were more likely to be reported to police when they are committed by strangers. The assailant of only one of these women was a stranger.

In this study, 2 of the 13 participants (15%) were victimized as college women by male college acquaintances. Only 1 participant, Araceli, disclosed the incident to the police. Araceli was raped by two college male acquaintances. She reported feeling ignored about the situation. She knew something wrong happened to her, but she did not know what to do. She lacked awareness of proper procedure. She ran to a nearby gas station once she was able to leave the young men’s apartment. She did not know who to contact or tell, so she contacted the police department. A police officer met her at her dorm room. Araceli then proceeded to make her disclosure. During the disclosure, she admitted that she lacked the knowledge about what had actually occurred and that she feared pregnancy. The police officer scared her into not pursuing legal charges by informing her that everyone would find out about the assault, including her parents.
Araceli was afraid of how her parents would react. She thought they would negatively judge her. In retrospect, Araceli regretted her disclosure in part because the police officer transported her to an ER for a sexual assault examination. This experience led Araceli to feel embarrassed. She also regretted her decision to disclose because she felt mistreated by the police officer. Fisher et al. (2003) reported that only a very low percentage of sexually victimized college women in their study reported their incidents to the police and that these victimizations were later disclosed to others. As stated earlier, 2 participants were victimized as college women, but only 1 participant disclosed her rape to a police officer.

With regard to perpetrator, another study found that a vast majority (82%) of date/acquaintance rape victims did not disclose to the police (Dunn et al., 1999). This was not so true for the current study: three participants (23%) were assaulted by acquaintances and two (15%) disclosed their incident to the police. The first, Araceli, was mentioned above and the second, Feliciana, was raped (CSC I) in her home by a male acquaintance that she had known for a couple of weeks. Feliciana chose to quickly disclose her sexual assault because she wanted to prevent the perpetrator from sexually assaulting anyone else. She also feared that she would encounter him in other places. This was her way of protecting other females and herself. After she disclosed the incident to her parents, they contacted the police. Feliciana’s perpetrator was prosecuted.

The majority of Latina rape survivors (n = 8; 61%) in the current study experienced the most severe level of sexual assault (penetration) identified by the Michigan’s Penal Codes on Sexual Conduct (CSC I). This is a new finding as I was
unable to locate many studies addressing the level of sexual assault experienced by Latina sexual assault victims. Kalof’s (2000) study indicated that there was an unusually high incidence of attempted rape for Latinas; however, this finding must be viewed with caution as the study had a very unequal distribution among the four populations studied (Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian women). In other words, there was not an equal distribution among the ethnic groups. In the current study, all eight of the participants reported that the rape was their first sexual assault. Given the small sample of Latina participants and the fact that recruitment occurred with a clinical setting, these findings should also be interpreted with caution. Latina rape survivors may have been more likely to contact me for an interview than Latina survivors of a less severe sexual assault. However, the severe nature of these first assaults should be investigated further in later research.

The following interpretation of results is based on each of the original research questions: (1) What reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of their experience of sexual assault? (2) Can patterns be detected regarding to whom Latinas disclose and under what circumstances? (3) What feelings and consequences do Latinas remember experiencing during their initial disclosure? (4) In retrospect, how do Latinas interpret their self-disclosure decisions?

Reasons for Choosing to Disclose, Not to Disclose, or to Delay Sexual Assault Disclosure

The interpretation of the results found for this question is separated into two sections. First, reasons given by the participants for not disclosing or for delaying sexual
assault disclosure are considered. Then reasons for disclosing sexual assault are discussed. As can be seen in Tables 4 and 5 of Chapter IV, more themes were found for delaying or for not making a sexual assault disclosure than for choosing to disclose. On that note, the reasons for not disclosing or for delaying sexual assault disclosure are discussed first.

**Reasons for Not Disclosing or Delaying Sexual Assault Disclosure**

As shown in the results, the current study supports some of what has already been found with regard to reasons for not disclosing or for delaying a sexual assault disclosure. The main motives given by the participants in prior research for silence were fear, family shame, and self-blame. Ramos-Lira et al. (1999), for example, found that Latinas who are sexually assaulted by an acquaintance or intimate partner—such as a current boyfriend—often keep silent because they can never be sure how their family will react. In addition, possible consequences—such as family shame and the potential desire for revenge on the part of family males close to the victim—may prevent disclosure. Moreover, these women may blame themselves for the sexual assaults, especially if a high value is placed on virginity.

All of these patterns were identified by the participants in the current study. First, five participants (39%) did not disclose or delayed their sexual assault disclosure because they did not want their families to find out about their assault. They either did not know how their families would react or they did not want to cause any family problems. For example, Raquel chose not to disclose her first rape to her mother because the perpetrator
lived in their home as a migrant worker. In addition, he was her first serious boyfriend even though she was 12 years old and he was 18 years old. Raquel may have felt that her mother would have harshly judged her because Raquel said that she hardly ever shared anything personal with her mother.

Romero et al. (2010) found that more than one third of Latina participants in their study indicated that they feared a negative response to disclosing. Similarly, in the current study, more than half of the participants \( (n = 8; 61\%) \) hesitated to report for fear of experiencing a negative reaction. In addition, the data reduction phase identified six main types of negative reactions feared by the participants (fear that they would not be believed, that they would receive blaming reactions, that they would be greeted with uncertainly about the truth of the disclosed information, that they would receive a lack of support, that they would be ignored, or be that they would be disowned). Patterson and Campbell (2010) also found that more than half of their participants hesitated to report for fear that they would not be believed.

Fear of not being believed was the highest response type for the second theme (fear of negative reactions) found in the current study among the various reasons respondents gave for not disclosing or for delaying sexual assault disclosure. This may be a result of Latina sexual assault survivors feeling that they might be ostracized from a very tight-knit community. For example, Magdalena explained that her parents were quite private and conservative. They were not likely to share any of their personal problems with anyone else, so they certainly would not want others to know about their daughter’s sexual experiences. Magdalena did not want her parents to attract any attention for having
a daughter (Magdalena) that had been sexually assaulted by a male cousin. For this reason, Magdalena indicated that she kept her incident private from her family. This confirms earlier findings (Ahrens et al., 2010; Morrissey, 1998; Ramos-Lira et al., 1999) that Latinos have strong family orientation and believe and fear that gossip would ruin their reputation as a family. Furthermore, she was afraid of how her father and brother would react to the news of her assault, and she suspected that they might retaliate. Most importantly, she blamed the incident on herself. She reasoned in this way: if she would not have listened to her cousin, then he (male cousin) would not have abused her.

Moreover, culturally, Magdalena was in a further bind. She had been taught to obey her elders. Since her male cousin was 10 to 15 years older than she was, she felt obliged to obey him—even in the midst of his sexual assault.

Several of the Latina participants in the current study expressed concerns about not being able to disclose the sexual assault to their mothers because there was a lack of communication. This reluctance may reflect an underlying understanding that certain things are not talked about within the Latino community or that there is a lack of trust between them (mothers and daughters). Ahrens et al. (2010) addressed how topics about sex, rape, and abuse are often accompanied by shame and embarrassment, while Adames and Campbell (2005) suggested that sexual aggression is a private matter among Latinas. And Romero et al. (1999) also suggested that their Latina participants felt that discussing sexual acts was a taboo within their communities. Raquel, a participant in the current study, recognized the problem with this avoidance and talked about the need to educate
Latina mothers about what they should teach their daughters about certain taboo topics such as sex or drugs.

In the prior literature, it was found that women’s reasons for not disclosing were associated with environmental factors, such as their prior relationships with the assailants, instead of internal obstacles such as feelings of shame, anxiety, or fear (Jones et al., 2007). The current study partially supports this finding, in that the participants were more likely to disclose if their perpetrator was a stranger or simply an acquaintance than if the perpetrator was a family member or significant other.

With regard to internal obstacles to disclosure, however, this study supports Scott (1994) in concluding that many Latina sexual assault survivors suffer an intense shame about their experience that prevents or restrains them from disclosing the assault to others. Starzynski et al. (2005) found that sexual assault survivors who displayed behavioral self-blame (i.e., survivors who blame themselves for their assault due to the behavior they were demonstrating at the time of the assault), were less likely to disclose to either informal or formal support sources than those who did not blame themselves. Other studies have also supported the notion that self-blame could delay sexual assault disclosure. For example, Eadie’s (2000) major finding was that self-blame could jeopardize reporting and self-disclosure, but that self-blame also had a significant negative effect on recovery (i.e., it was a barrier and obstruction to recovery). This was also true when significant others placed blame on the victims, leading to even more of a delayed recovery as a result. This point is particularly important therapeutically, because Eadie found that recovery was encouraged through discussions of self-blame in positive,
therapeutic relationships. Routbort’s (1998) findings suggested that women who engaged in self-blame behavior were less likely to believe that they could control their own recovery than those who did not.

In addition to the internal concerns related to self-blame, the participants of the current study often did not disclose due to fear of consequences such as physical harm or retaliation. With regard to fearing physical harm, Leticia described her stepfather (the perpetrator) as being physically abusive. He often physically assaulted her biological mother. For this reason, she feared him. She did not know if he, the stepfather, would physically assault her or if he would assault her mother for confronting his behavior. Similarly, Morrissey (1998) found that fear of retaliation by a male relative against the perpetrator is a barrier for Latina survivors to report and disclose a sexual assault incident. In Dominga’s case, she chose not to disclose her acquaintance rape to her brother because she was afraid he would retaliate by harming her perpetrator as a way to defend her honor. Dominga, like many of the participants, felt that her family members were very protective of her. It is cultural to protect the females and children in Latino families. Boys at a young age learn to protect their sisters, female cousins, girlfriends, wives, and female relatives from dangerous situations. In Magdalena’s situation, even though her brother is younger than Magdalena, she fears that if he and her father found out about what their older male cousin has done to her, they would both feel that they would have to take care of matters by confronting the male cousin who assaulted her 14 years ago. Based on their own data, Ahrens et al. (2010) stated that fear of violence may silence many Latina survivors of sexual assault.
Another reason for not disclosing or delaying sexual assault disclosure was ignorance about sexual assaults. It appeared that a few of the participants lacked the awareness to know if they were actually sexually assaulted. It is to be remembered that the average age at the time of first sexual assault was 10 years; some had been assaulted as early as 6 years old. However, it also appears that some of the women and/or their mothers still struggled with what is or is not sexual assault even in adulthood. Furthermore, a few of the participants did not know how to respond to their sexual assault. Taboos on talking about sex created a lack of knowledge about how to react to sexual assault and how to define if they actually were sexually assaulted. This form of ignorance prevented a few of the participants from disclosing their incidents sooner. In the current study, ignorance of what constituted sexual assault was clearly identified by at least 5 of the 13 participants (39%). In my opinion, these participants felt that they lacked the information needed to disclose what they had experienced at the hands of someone they knew. One of the participants (Araceli) reported “getting it” only after she reported her rape to the police.

Ahrens et al. (2010) found that taboos on talking about sex, rape, and abuse limit the type and amount of knowledge Latinas have with regard to sexual assault. This in turn leaves them feeling uncertain about what constitutes sexual assault. These women may believe that only “rape” (what they would equate with penetration of the vagina with a penis) would be seen as a sexual assault, but that none of the other behaviors (such as molestation, pornography, child’s exploitation, indecent exposure or penetration of the anus or mouth with a penis, finger, or object such as a pencil) would be seen as a sexual
assault. With regard to statutory rape, Latina women younger than 18 may not realize that they are unable to consent legally to sexual activity, especially if the male is older than 17 years old. This was highlighted in this study with Raquel, who dated a man much older than herself when she was only 12 years old. This lack of knowledge can make it difficult for Latina sexual assault victims to seek assistance or to provide support to Latina sexual assault survivors (Ahrens et al., 2010). The cultural code of silence in turn maintains the ignorance regarding sexual assault.

A combination of the taboos and the ignorance may also lead to ignorance about services. Campbell et al. (2001) revealed in their results that rape crisis centers are underutilized by ethnic minority sexual assault victims. The authors explained this by suggesting that ethnic minority women may not have an awareness of what services are available to them if they are sexually assaulted.

Another reason for not disclosing or delaying sexual assault disclosure was avoidance. A little less than half of the participants \((n = 6; 46\%)\) expressed the desire to avoid talking about what they had experienced. They had been so traumatized by the incident that they just did not want to relive it. Lefley et al. (1993) found that Latina victims were significantly more likely than the women from the other ethnicities to use avoidance as a defense mechanism in the face of anxiety-producing situations, such as the trauma produced from a sexual assault incident.

With regard to my observations during each of the interviews, my field notes indicated that all the participants were uncomfortable with taking breaks throughout their interviews and only one participant actually took an imposed break. All the other participants
chose not to take a break, possibly in an effort to keep going because if they would have stopped then they may have not completed the whole interview. But, there were no direct verbalizations stating this. The participants simply chose not to take breaks. The fear of further avoidance may have led to this behavior. In other words, this behavior of refusing to take a break may have been displayed as a way not to allow themselves to “chicken out” and avoid addressing the tough stuff.

In all, Latina sexual assault survivors may not disclose victimizations when they believe that they are going to receive a negative reaction or consequence such as the ruin of a family’s reputation, the fear of reprisals by their assailant, the belief that there is potential for retaliation by male family members against the perpetrator, or the contemplation of the chance that one would be ruined for marriage. In addition, Latina survivors may not disclose due to a lack of knowledge of not knowing how to react, respond, and/or report, which then may lead to avoidance. This summary of my findings shows that they are consistent with the findings of many other studies and they extend these findings by suggesting that ignorance and mother-daughter relationships are significant themes that demand more attention in later research.

*Reasons for Sexual Assault Disclosure*

As shown in Chapter IV, the current study supports and expands on what has already been found with regard to reasons for sexual assault disclosure. Filipas and Ullman (2001) found that the availability of emotional support was the most helpful reason likely to lead to a sexual assault disclosure. The victims “being told they were
loved or were a good person” (p. 682) would provide this level of support. Sexual assault survivors are more likely to receive positive social support from informal sources such as friends and family members than from formal sources, like the police or psychotherapists (Ahrens et al., 2009; Ahrens et al., 2007; Filipas & Ullman, 2001; Sudderth, 1998; Ullman, 1996b). As can be seen on Table 5 in Chapter IV, seven participants (54%) disclosed because some level of support existed for them. With regard to the individual types of support, the category that had the highest occurrence was emotional support ($n = 4; 30\%$).

Two participants (15%) reported that they disclosed their assault because they were afraid of pregnancy or of contracting sexually transmitted diseases or infections. These fears may be related to an associated fear of being ruined for marriage. In addition to worrying about an unwanted pregnancy, if someone becomes pregnant from sexual assault, she would be less able to hide the incident from others than someone who does not get pregnant. Similarly, the physical evidence of a sexually transmitted disease might provide public evidence of sexual activity and further diminish one’s value as a marriage partner beyond being undesirable in its own right. Disclosure in both cases may come because a woman seeks private preventive treatment due to fearing that there will be public exposure, either through pregnancy or through manifestations of STDs.

*Patterns and Circumstances of Recipient of First Sexual Assault Disclosure*

As shown in Table 6 in Chapter IV, the Latina sexual assault victims of this study were more likely to disclose to their family members and significant others than to
professionals such as law enforcement officials. In 10 out of 13 cases (77%), the participants/survivors made their first disclosure to a family member, a significant other, or a friend. This seems to reflect the fact that Latino family members are quite interdependent. In particular, as noted in Chapter IV, the mother-daughter bond is an extremely important one, and confiding in one’s mother is a natural result of this bond. Interestingly, when the mother-daughter relationship was not a strong one, that fact was also pointed out by the respondents; they were very conscious of the uniqueness of this negative relationship. Latina participants of this study \((n = 7; 54\%)\) were more likely to disclose their sexual assault when they felt comfortable and supported by the recipient of the disclosure than when they did not feel supported. This underscores the importance of the cultural value of interdependence within families.

These findings are consistent with much of the literature on social reactions that has found high rates of sexual assault disclosure to informal support providers such as family members (Fisher et al., 2003; Golding et al., 1989; Starzynski et al., 2005; Ullman, 1996b; Ullman & Filipas, 2001). A very low percentage of the participants in this study \((n = 2; 15\%)\) made their first disclosure of any of their assaults to professionals such as psychotherapists or enforcement officials. In addition, 2 out of the 13 participants (Raquel and Magdalena) disclosed incidents of sexual assault for the first time to me during the interview.

In contrast to this strong evidence of first revelation to family members among Latinas, Smith et al. (2000) found in a national women’s survey that childhood survivors of sexual assault most frequently made their initial disclosure to friends. Mothers and
other family members were less frequently disclosed to, and then police or mental health professionals were least frequently consulted first.

Golding et al. (1989) found that those assaulted by a stranger were more likely to tell friends or relatives of their assault rather than to disclose to the police, mental health professionals, or rape crisis centers. In this study, there were only two cases of participants assaulted by strangers \( (n = 2; 15\%) \), and only Gloria disclosed her incident to a relative (her mother). The other participant, Veronica, disclosed the incident to another schoolmate. This disclosure occurred because Veronica was working as a school safety patrol officer when she witnessed an indecent exposure by a male stranger and had to return to school soon after the incident. She was scared and may have needed assurance that she was safe.

In addition, two participants (15%) had never disclosed a sexual assault incident until they agreed to participate in this study. This may have occurred because these two participants met with me prior to their interviews and were allowed to ask questions about this project. It is unclear whether these women felt an affinity to me as a researcher, a clinician, a fellow Latina, or for other reasons. But, for some reason they saw this as an opportunity to disclose. One of the women did “practice” a disclosure with a close relative immediately before coming to the interview. The interviews may have given her a reason for that disclosure.

In the current study, it was found that Latina victims’ first sexual assault disclosure was made sooner when the perpetrator was a stranger or an acquaintance than when the perpetrator was a family member or their significant other. Similar to previous
research, the majority of the women in this study \((n = 12; 92\%)\) knew their first perpetrators. In only two incidents of sexual assault did the participants identify their perpetrators as strangers. In one of those incidents, that told by Gloria, the stranger was her second perpetrator. She was first sexually assaulted by a family member. As shown in Table 7 of Chapter IV, in 10 cases (77\%), the perpetrators were identified as family members or as significant others. Earlier research identifies similar trends (Fisher et al., 2003; Ramos-Lira et al., 1999).

Notably, another finding of this study was that the number of incest cases was high. As shown in Table 3, nine participants (69\%) were sexually assaulted for the first time by a family member. This result supports Kalof’s (2000) study, in that the prevalence of incest was highest among Latinas (26\%), then Black women (23\%), Asian women (21\%), and White women (16\%).

As shown in Table 8 of Chapter IV, 12 participants (92\%) knew their perpetrators. Only 5 (39\%) disclosed their first sexual assault within 24 hours and 2 of these (Veronica and Gloria) were sexually assaulted by strangers. The other 3 (Araceli, Dominga, and Feliciana) were assaulted by acquaintances they did not know well. The findings of my research indicate that the lack of a significant relationship with the perpetrators led to these quick disclosures. On the other hand, survivors were much more reluctant to reveal their assaults when the perpetrator was a family member or significant other such as a boyfriend. Jones et al. (2007) found women who do not report sexual assault were more likely to know their perpetrator. Smith et al. (2000) found that a relationship with the perpetrator was related to longer delays in disclosure. In addition, Starzynski et al. (2005)
found that most sexual assault survivors (80%) knew their perpetrators. In the current study, the participants who knew their perpetrators were so embarrassed or fearful of a negative consequence or reaction that they delayed their disclosures. They did not want to be judged, criticized, or blamed for their sexual assault. They feared several negative consequences or reactions such as not being believed, being physically assaulted by the perpetrator or a parent for participating in the sexual act, being expelled from school, and being ignored or disowned.

There were two participants (Raquel and Magdalena) who disclosed incidents of sexual assault during their interviews that were not disclosed at any other time. As stated above, Magdalena was the only one who had not disclosed any of her sexual assault incidents to anyone prior to the current study when she disclosed to me. She reported feeling emotionally hurt and regretting that she had not disclosed earlier. It hurt her emotionally when she saw the perpetrator at family gatherings to know that her perpetrator treated her as if nothing ever happened between them. She appeared to think that it is too late to do anything now.

*Feelings and Consequences Experienced During Initial Disclosure*

As shown in the literature, Sorenson and Siegel (1992) reported that 59% of their participants experienced anger as their most common emotional reaction to a sexual assault. Depression (43%), anxiety (40%), fear (35%), guilt (32%), and feeling of being dishonored or spoiled (29%) were the other emotional reactions experienced by the participants. McAuslan (1998) found that greater expression of emotions during a
disclosure was associated with increased experience of anxiety and depression by the sexual assault survivor.

In contrast to these other articles, the current study found that regret was the most common emotion experienced during the initial disclosure. Regret was experienced by more than half of the participants \((n = 6; 46\%)\). Negative judgment of self \((n = 3; 23\%)\), shame/embarrassment \((n = 5; 39\%)\), feeling spoiled for marriage \((n = 3; 23\%)\), worry \((n = 3; 23\%)\), fear \((n = 3; 23\%)\), anger \((n = 2; 15\%)\), relief \((n = 2; 15\%)\), depression \((n = 1; 8\%)\), and hate \((n = 1; 8\%)\) were the other emotions experienced by the participants. I was not surprised by the feelings that were identified by the participants, but I was surprised that there were not more than three respondents who experienced some type of fear during their initial disclosure. As shown in Table 4 of Chapter IV, all 13 participants had not previously disclosed or had delayed their sexual assault disclosure because they either feared a negative consequence or a negative reaction, or both. This led me to wonder why they did not experience any fear during their initial disclosure.

The differences that exist between the current study and the published literature with regard to what feelings are experienced following sexual assault disclosure may be due to when the respondents are asked about their emotional reactions. I specifically looked at the feelings felt during the initial disclosure, whereas Sorenson and Siegel (1992) may have referred to how their respondents felt soon after the assault instead of after the disclosure. In all, there are some similarities, but this study expanded the range of feelings described by Latina sexual assault survivors.
As shown in Table 7 of Chapter IV, 11 of the 13 participants (85%) took at least a month to make their first disclosure. A month may have been long enough for the Latina sexual assault survivors to overcome their anger. In my opinion, emotional reactions to a sexual assault may be very different from the emotional reactions to the disclosure of it. Some individuals would rather deal with their initial feelings of anger, shock, or confusion from an assault first by keeping to themselves instead of showing their true feelings to others. In other words, these individuals disappear into their own “caves” and cope with their initial feelings, then, once they have gained the strength and courage to disclose, they do. Feelings felt during the disclosure would then be different than the initial feelings experienced.

With regard to consequences experienced during initial disclosure in this study, mistreatment had the highest occurrence. Four participants (31%) experienced some type of mistreatment. Adriana was rebuked by her boyfriend; Araceli was treated harshly by the police; Dominga was treated unfairly by her sorority sisters; and Gloria was ignored by her mother. Ahrens et al. (2007) found that those who disclosed their sexual assault to a formal support, such as the police, were more likely to receive a negative social reaction than a positive one. Conversely, those who disclosed to an informal support, such as a friend, were more likely to receive a positive social reaction than a negative one. In this study, of the three who reported to the police, only Araceli received a negative social reaction or felt mistreatment. The other two did not report any mistreatment. The reason the two participants, Feliciana and Veronica, received positive social support from the police may have been because they were children during their disclosure, while Araceli
was a young adult and was more harshly treated by the authorities. The authorities may have blamed Araceli for the rape she experienced.

Campbell et al. (2001) recommended in their study of adult sexual assault survivors that families, friends, and significant others of sexual assault survivors should be taught how to avoid negative reactions when attempting to provide support. They felt that it was better to provide no support than to react negatively. Ullman (1996b) found that 63% of her participants reported being blamed and 62% reported that they were discouraged from talking about their sexual assault. The discouragement came most often from their physicians or the police. In the current study, two individuals (Araceli and Dominga) were discouraged from talking about their assaults, but only one (Araceli) was discouraged by a police officer. The other was discouraged by a psychotherapist employed by the college she attended.

**Interpretations of Latinas’ Sexual Assault Self-Disclosures**

Eleven positive types of interpretations were made by the participants, nine of which were positive and two were negative in implications. Based on this analysis, it would appear that the respondents were able to get beyond their sexual assault by overcoming the memory, accepting their fate, gaining a voice by disclosing, becoming empowered through revelation, and obtaining closure of their sexual assault experiences. In Dominga’s situation, her disclosure showed her that she was resilient and strong. She was able to move forward and overcome the assaults. In addition, Dominga gained a voice; she was no longer afraid to share her story with anyone. Veronica was able to put
the incident behind her. In Raquel’s situation, she reported feeling happier and supported by her parents. She stated, “I’m in good condition. Um, I’m following my dream.” Even though Raquel had a child as a result of her second set of rape experiences, she did not stop pursuing her dream to obtain a college degree, and she continued to attend school while parenting her child as a single mother. Leticia interpreted her current circumstances as meaning that God is revealing things to her for “healing and sealing.”

The findings in the current research are consistent with the results of Morrissey’s (1998) study. Morrissey found that there is a coping mechanism among Latinos, known as sobrebarnace, which means to overcome. This mechanism seems to imply that Latina victims should accept their fate and not think about the ugliness of the incident, thus transcending the sexual assault. In the current study, it was evident that transcendence was about the thought processes of the victim and what she did with her memories after the assault. She could have chosen to repress her thoughts or to disclose them. In disclosure, there was an acknowledgment of the occurrence of the incident, which indicated a desire or intention to move beyond it. It was almost as if the survivor was implying that: “In telling my story, I move from denial to disclosure and can re-invent myself, get past the abuse, and move on.” In sum, even though disclosure may bring back painful memories of the assault, on the positive side, it also brought a variety of advantages. Some of the advantages that women identified were: support (professional and otherwise), emotional relief, change of perception (closure), growth (empowerment and agency), formation of a new identity (from victim to survivor), self-realization and
liberation (brought survivor closer to God), restoration of values (confidence and trust) and eventually healing (obtaining a safe environment).

There were also two types of interpretations of post-disclosure experiences identified in this study that had negative connotations: feeling emotionally hurt and experiencing regret. It was one individual, Magdalena that felt emotionally hurt over her perpetrator getting away with what he did to her. She also expressed anger and regret over not telling anyone about what her cousin did to her over a period of several years. As stated earlier, Magdalena was the only participant who had not disclosed her sexual assaults until the day of the interview.

**Limitations of the Current Study**

Despite significant findings that contribute to the literature, several limitations to the current study need to be stated. As a qualitative analysis these results may point to some possible important issues for Latinas but they should not be used to generalize to the broader population of Latinas in the U.S. without further confirmation. In addition to this basic issue, the small sample size ($N = 13$) and the recruitment process show additional limitations. The percentages included while reporting the qualitative analysis were reported on a very small set of participants and should not be viewed as quantitative findings. The study was conducted in a particular area of Michigan and, therefore, results should be applied cautiously to other places. Participants were referred from only two agencies that provided psychotherapeutic treatment programs to Latina women who self-selected. Although the group of women who participated in the current study had
relatively wide diversity in terms of education, age at the time of interview, marital status, and types of assaults experienced, it is only a small representation of Latina rape survivors, which further curbs the generalizability of the findings. In other words, the women who chose to participate in this study may differ from the general population of Latina rape survivors. The youngest participants, the three 18-year-olds, gave restrained responses during their interviews. It may be beneficial to conduct more qualitative research with this population to get a fuller understanding of their experience.

Second, the sensitivity of the topic may have been a limitation to who would be willing to be respondents. Some potential participants may have chosen not to participate in this study due to their emotional state of mind and fear of retraumatization. Those who did participate may have experienced a degree of retraumatization as part of talking about their experiences, and as a result they may have chosen not to verbalize all that they intended to share during their interviews. This may be especially true of the younger participants, who tended to give brief responses to my questions. Those in the early stages of transcending their trauma (or not experiencing transcendence after the assault) may have felt unable to share their personal experience during an intensely intimate event such as an interview. At the same time, those in later stages of transcending their trauma may have felt more comfortable sharing their personal experience and chose to participate in this study, which may account for the high proportion of participants who discussed some type of transcendence.

Third, only qualitative interview data were analyzed, which may have led to meanings that were specific to this participant group or to implications about the broader
population that are unfounded with interpretation of the data collected from the interviews. Other types of data might have produced different results. Thus, although participation was voluntary, the validity of the study may be limited by the bias inherent in the interview items as well as the recruitment and data collection methods used.

Another area of concern had to do with the socio-economic status of the participants in this study. The 13 participants may have been more socio-politically motivated to participate than Latinas with other cultural and geopolitical roots. On the positive side, these demographic characteristics mean that these women may have been more prepared to be insightful about concerns shared by the women within their community. As a result, they were in an ideal position to serve as key informants who were able to provide an insider’s point of view to outsiders who are trying to understand the issues that exist for Latina sexual assault victims (Adames & Campbell, 2005).

Another important area of concern is that I do not have similar evidence from ethnically different comparison groups. This leads to not knowing which experiences are limited to Latinas and which may be more common to all female sexual assault victims. As stated earlier, there is limited research on Latinas and their experience of sexual assault, so this community is an appropriate target of study. More comparative research in this area would help to clarify which experiences are limited to Latinas.

As a Latina psychotherapist myself, who has worked with a significant number of sexually assaulted women, I have personal and professional biases. My professional bias is the hope that Latina sexual assault survivors will interpret their self-disclosure decisions positively. I tried to remain aware of this bias in order to be open to learning something else,
such as the possibility that self-disclosure was harmful to some of the respondents. As stated earlier, one procedure I took to make sure that my biases did not skew my results was to return to literature sources and to my transcripts to look for exceptions in terms of the interpretation. I searched for outliers and negative examples and exceptions to the patterns. In the third and subsequent readings, I did find some exceptions and they have been incorporated in the foregoing narrative.

Directions for Future Research

This study has begun to fill the gap that exists in the literature on Latina victims of sexual assault. It also provides ample justification for future qualitative, quantitative or mixed studies. The topic of sexual assault and culture among female victims has relevant implications for the psychotherapy, human services, and medical fields. Violence against women should be treated as a significant social, mental, and physical problem, and sexual assaults should be viewed as a transgression against children as well as adults (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Medical personnel and psychotherapists need to be aware of all the services that are required to provide crisis and clinical services to sexually assaulted women in order to minimize further trauma and re-victimization. Culturally sensitive training in the best treatment of sexual assault victims needs to continue, and it is essential to provide women of different ethnicities with adequate services.

The results of the current study also have implications for research on other factors that may lead to sexual assault disclosure or non-disclosure or delayed disclosure for Latinas. Even though the literature on sexual assault disclosure for Latinas has been
limited, what has been found is that keeping silent has been a consistent theme among Latinas who are sexually assaulted (Ramos-Lira et al., 1999). These authors also found that many Latinas blame themselves for the sexual assaults, especially if they place a high value on their virginity. I have known Latinas who, believing that their virginity would be seen as a proof of love, “saved themselves” for their husbands. Sexual assault experiences throw these ideals into confusion.

Questions recommended for future research include: What is it that needs to be in place to allow a Latina to feel safe about disclosing a sexual assault? Who needs to be available to help Latina victims? Why are Latinas less likely to disclose or more likely to delay their disclosure than they are to disclose a sexual assault? What can be said about support systems among Latina sexual assault victims? What are the differences that exist among comparison groups of sexual assault female victims? This last question may lead to a clearer understanding of the degree to which my findings are culture specific.

The results from the current study also have raised new direction for future research on the disclosure of sexual assault for Latinas. The relationships between Latina mothers and daughters need to be examined for patterns that exist with regard to personal experiences. It may be beneficial to conduct a qualitative study examining the mother-daughter relationship as a barrier (or supporter) that exists in preventing (or enhancing) disclosures of sexual assault. As stated earlier in the chapter, several of the Latina participants in the current study expressed concerns about not being able to disclose the sexual assault to their mothers because there was a lack of communication between them. There was an underlining understanding that certain things are not talked about within the
Latino community, or there is a lack of trust between mother and daughter. The situation indicates that private matters were not to be discussed between a mother and daughter. Outreach efforts are therefore essential to increase cultural awareness of what leads Latina mothers to educate their daughters about sexual behavior. My research recommendation is to seek to understand why there are certain topics not discussed among Latina mothers and daughters.

Future research using other types of data may produce fuller results. In addition to in-depth interviews with participants, focus groups or observation studies may encourage Latinas to share more of their stories. This would allow researchers to elicit a wider range of insights, to gain a more complete understanding of the issues discussed, and to augment the data already obtained. In all, triangulation (the employment of various procedures) would reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation of qualitative data. Furthermore, snowball recruitment techniques were used in the current study to obtain only two of the participants. It may have been beneficial to recruit more participants through implementing this snowball recruitment method because it would have allowed me to obtain respondents that may not have been socio-politically motivated to participate in this study.

Clinical Implications

With regard to psychotherapy, faith and religion were important coping strategies for a couple of the participants in the current study. This suggests that psychotherapists should incorporate clients’ religious beliefs into treatment, especially among Latina
sexual assault victims. Psychotherapists should also explore how the clients they serve utilize faith and religion. To what extent does the client turn to traditional, Latino spiritual sources for healing, such as seeking assistance from a *curandero* or another spiritual healer in a time of crisis? Although *curanderos* were not mentioned in the current interviews, other spiritual elements were. To make full use of this spiritual dimension, the client’s level of involvement in religion should be ascertained. Furthermore, psychotherapists need to have the skill and knowledge to develop a treatment plan that can empower Latina sexual assault victims to achieve their goals and overcome the level of trauma experienced through culturally sensitive coping mechanisms.

Finally, an understanding of the process of transcendence for Latina sexual assault survivors may assist psychotherapists to build group therapy interventions that emphasize the level of interdependence that exists among members of Latino communities. Psychological interventions that focus on individual treatment approaches are less effective with Latino populations than those that give emphasis to collectivist approaches. It is believed that individuals’ well-being often depends on the well-being of their family members (Zea et al., 2000). On that note, psychotherapists need to be aware of the level of interdependence that exists among members of Latino families, and not interpret level of closeness as being extremely enmeshed and pathological. As Zea et al. (2000) have concluded, “For Latinos and Latinas, the opposite is considered to be pathological. Not to care for a family member in need, not to support a relative, is pathological” (p. 413).
Chapter Summary

The problem addressed by the current study was the need to understand the perspectives and experiences of Latina women who have been sexually assaulted. By furthering our knowledge through research about how Latina sexual assault survivors experience sexual assault and decide to disclose their assaults, psychotherapists will better serve the victims. In addition, this study was designed to investigate patterns of disclosure regarding the individuals to whom Latinas disclose, what feelings and consequences are experienced during initial disclosures, and how Latinas interpret their self-disclosure experiences. In this way, my study makes an advance on previous studies, for it focused not only on cultural themes that emerged during the disclosure process, but it also investigated patterns of disclosure, feelings experienced during and after the disclosure, and the consequences of the experience as perceived by the survivors.

Similar to earlier research, all 13 participants had been sexually assaulted as children; most were assaulted by known perpetrators; and those who delayed disclosure cited reasons such as fear, family shame, avoidance, and self-blame. Furthermore, as in earlier research, taboos on talking about sex limited the awareness Latinas had with regard to sexual assault. In this study, some Latinas identified ignorance as a reason for not disclosing or delaying disclosure. They either lacked the knowledge of how sexual assaults are defined or how to respond to their experiences of sexual assault. Many of the women in this study identified complicated mother and daughter relationship dynamics that prevented or delayed disclosures. Those Latinas were taught at a young age that there were certain topics not discussed between a mother and daughter.
Similar to earlier research, participants more frequently disclosed to family members or friends for emotional support rather than to professionals such as police officers. In addition, participants from this study were unlikely to seek social and medical services from a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) program. Some Latinas in this study disclosed for protection of self and others. Some reported feelings of being spoiled for marriage, silenced, mistreated, and disbelieved. This study adds information to the literature about feelings experienced during the initial disclosure—regret, shame, and negative judgment of self. Many of the women in this study demonstrated that they had transcended the trauma of their sexual assaults and accepted their fate to put their past behind them and move forward in establishing new life goals. This provides direct evidence confirming assumptions from prior research in which psychotherapists were the interviewees. More importantly, this study contributes Latinas’ voices to the literature on sexual assault disclosure.


Draucker, C. B. (1999). The psychotherapeutic needs of women who have been sexually assaulted. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care, 35*(1), 18-27.


Appendix A

Consent Form in English
DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN INTERDISCIPLINARY HEALTH SCIENCES

INFORMED CONSENT FOR AN INTERVIEW

Principal Investigator: Nickola W. Nelson, Ph.D. (Faculty Advisor)
Student Investigator: Melissa Villarreal, LMSW, Ph.D. Candidate
Title of Study: Latina Women's Reasons for Disclosure of Sexual Assault: A Qualitative Investigation

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "Latina Women’s Reasons for Disclosure of Sexual Assault: A Qualitative Investigation." This project will serve as Melissa Villarreal’s dissertation research for the requirements of the Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Health Sciences. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. We can read this form out loud if you like. Please ask questions at any time during this process if you need clarification.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to add to the understanding of Latina women’s beliefs, needs and experiences related to their disclosure of sexual assault (that is, telling someone else about it).

Who may participate in this study?

- Latina/Hispanic women who have disclosed a sexual assault (told someone about it)
- English or Spanish speaking
- Must be 18 years old

Who is unable to participate in this study?

- Males
- 17 years and younger females
- Women of other ethnicity or race other than Latina/Hispanic
- This interviewer’s current clients at the Center for Women in Transition
Where will this study take place?

This study will take place either in the interviewer’s office at Hope College or at the Center for Women in Transition.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

You are being asked to participate in a single interview that may last up to 2 hours. If it appears that the interview cannot be completed in the time available, a second meeting may be scheduled at the end of the first one. You will have the option to decide not to schedule a second meeting. You are not obligated to participate in a second interview. The second interview may last up to 2 hours.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?

You will be asked a series of questions. You do not have to answer any that make you uncomfortable. The goal of this study is for you to discuss and share your reasons for disclosing information (that is telling someone about a sexual assault). This involves asking you several personal questions in regards to what led you to disclose the sexual assault(s). Please note that your interview(s) will be audio-recorded. Your name will not be identified on the audio-recording(s) and only the interviewer will listen and transcribe the audio recording.

What information is being gathered during the study?

This study will ask about: (1) your reasons for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of sexual assault; (2) patterns in regards to whom you chose to tell about the assault and under what circumstances; (3) the feelings and consequences that you recall experiencing during the process of telling someone about your sexual assault and after it, and (4) your interpretation of your self-disclosure decisions.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?

There is a risk that you may relive in your mind the trauma you experienced during the sexual assault. You may ask any questions about why you are being asked something. If there is anything that you do not want to answer, then you can say so. In case you are experiencing too much anxiety or stress, the interviewer can decide to stop your participation in this study without your consent. The interviewer is a trained mental health professional and will help you find appropriate services (e.g., crisis counseling) should you become significantly upset. All participants will receive a referral list of sexual assault counselors, and if needed, the interviewer will facilitate a referral for mental health services.
What are the benefits of participating in this study?

There will be no direct benefits to you. It may help you to know that your sharing of your experience may eventually prove useful in providing clinical services to Latina victims/survivors of sexual assault.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?

You will need to obtain transportation to either the Center for Women in Transition or to the interviewer’s office at Hope College for the interview(s). This may lead to a gasoline cost. The time it takes to participate may lead to a cost, but the interviewer will make herself available during her non-working hours if that would allow you to avoid your cost of requesting time off from your employer for your interview(s).

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?

You will receive a $25 gift card to thank you for participating in this interview and to help with any transportation costs.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

The audio-tape with your recorded interview will be transcribed by the interviewer and the written documentation will be read by the interviewer, the principal investigator and the dissertation committee to ensure that the interview process and analysis of the interview is unbiased. The interviewer will maintain transcriptions as opposed to the actual audio-recordings. The tapes will be destroyed after transcription. All of the information collected from you is confidential. No personally identifying information will be included in any reports of the research. The forms will all be coded, and the interviewer will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. All other forms and transcripts will be retained for at least three years in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigator’s office in Room 2584 of the College of Health and Human Services at Western Michigan University.

You should know that if you disclose that a vulnerable older adult (65 years or older), a child under the age of 18, and/or a developmentally delayed individual of any age currently is in a dangerous situation, the interviewer, who is a licensed social worker is obligated to report it to authorities. In such cases, identities would need to be revealed to the proper authorities.
What if you want to stop participating in this study?

At any time during the interview, you may request to take a break. In addition, you may reconsider your participation and withdraw from the study without penalty. In all, participation is voluntary and you are not obligated to answer or continue answering questions.

The researcher/student investigator, Melissa Villarreal, LMSW, will answer any questions that you may have concerning this procedure. You may contact her at (616) 395-7364. In addition, you may contact the principal investigator as follows: Nickola W. Nelson, Ph.D., CCC-SLP at (269) 387-7990. Furthermore, you may contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at (269) 387-8293, or the Vice President for Research at (269) 387-8298 if questions or problems arise during the course of the study. You will receive a copy of this consent form. It has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document or it has been read to me. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

Subject's Signature                               Date
Appendix B

Consent Form in Spanish
DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN INTERDISCIPLINARY HEALTH SCIENCES

CONSENSUIMO INFORMADO PARA UNA ENTREVISTA

Principal Investigador: Nickola W. Nelson, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Estudiante Investigador: Melissa Villarreal, LMSW, Estudiante Doctorado
Título de Estudio: La Razones de Mujeres Latinas de Revelación de Asalto Sexual: Una Investigación Cualitativa

Estas invitada a participar en un estudio que se llama, “La Razones de Mujeres Latinas de Revelación de Asalto Sexual: Una Investigación Cualitativa.” Este proyecto va servir como la investigación doctorado de Melissa Villarreal para los requisitos del programa doctorado de Interdisciplinar de Ciencia Saludes. Este documento consentimiento va explicar el objeto de este estudio y examinar todo el tiempo necesario para complicar la entrevista, explicarle los procedimientos que va a usar en este estudio, y explicarle los peligros y los beneficios de participando en este proyecto. Podemos leer este documento juntas, si quieres. Por favor pregúntale lo que quieres al cualquiera tiempo si necesitas que te explique algo más claro.

¿Qué es el objeto de este estudio?

El objeto de este estudio es para añadir un acuerdo de las creencias, necesitados, y experiencias de mujeres Latinas emparentadas a revelaciones de ataques sexuales.

¿Quién puede participar en este estudio?

- Mujer Latina/Hispánica que le ha dicho a alguien que tuvo una experiencia de un ataque sexual
- En inglés o español
- Necesita tener 18 años o más

¿Quién no puedo participar en este estudio?

- Hombres
- Mujeres que tenga diecisiete años o menos
- Mujeres de otras razas, mujeres que no son Latinas/Hispánica
- Los clientes de esta entrevistadora en el Centro de Mujeres en Transición (CWIT)
¿Dónde van tomar este estudio?

Este estudio se van tomar en la oficina de la entrevistadora en la universidad de Hope o en CWIT.

¿Cuándo tiempo se va tomar para participar en este estudio?

Puedo esperar participar por hasta dos horas. Si se mira que no hay bastante tiempo para terminar la entrevista o esta interrumpirá, la entrevistadora da una segunda entrevista al último de la primera entrevista. No tienes obligación para participar en una segunda entrevista. La segunda entrevista también se puede tomar hasta dos horas.

¿Qué te voy a preguntar si participarás en este estudio?

La entrevistadora te va preguntar varias preguntas y no necesitas contestar ninguna que te hace sentir incomodo. El objetivo de este estudio es para que discutieras tus razones de revelaciones abuso sexual. Consisten varias preguntas personales en respeto a que te condición a revelar el asalto sexual. Por favor notes que la entrevista será grabada de audio. Tu nombre no estará grabado y no más la entrevistadora va escuchar y traducir la cinta de audio.

¿Cuál información se va reunir durante este estudio?

Este estudio va preguntar de: (1) las razones de revelar, de no revelar, o el retraso de la revelación; (2) las pautas en quien le dijiste de el ataque sexual y en qué circunstancias; (3) los sentimientos y consecuencias que recuerdas experimentando durante diciéndole a alguien de el ataque sexual and después; y (4) tu interpretación de tu revelación decisiones.

¿Qué son los peligros en participar en este estudio y como van a minimizar esos peligros?

Hay un peligro que podes vivir el trauma que experimentado durante el asalto sexual. Además, puedes preguntar en cualquier momento que estés preguntando algo. Si hay algo que no deseas contestar, tienes la decisión de no contestarlo. Entiendo que si mi participación en este estudio me está causando trauma, la entrevistadora puede terminar la entrevista sin consentimiento. La entrevistadora es una terapeuta clínica y te va ayudar encontrar servicios apropiados (como apoio crisis) si te sientes disgustado. Todas las participantes van a recibir una lista de consejos clínicos y que su especialización es en asalto sexual, y si se necesita, la entrevistadora va facilitar un paso de servicios mental.
¿Qué son los beneficios de participar en este estudio?

No habrá ningún beneficio directamente para ti. Te puede ayudar saber que tu experimentado puede ser importante para los que servir las mujeres Latinas que revelan sus experiencias de un asalto sexual.

¿Hay costos asociarse para participar en este estudio?

Necesitas medio de transporte para cualquiera de los dos (la oficina de la entrevistadora o CWIT) para la entrevista. Puedes tener la costa de gasolina. El tiempo que se toma para participar de puede costar, pero la entrevistadora se van hacer disponible durante sus horas de no trabajar si eso te ayudará no tener la costa de preguntar tiempo libre de tu trabajo para la entrevista.

¿Hay compensación para tu participación en este estudio?

Te voy a dar una tarjeta de regalo en la cantidad de $50.00 por participando de este estudio y para ayudarte con la costa transporte.

¿Quién va tener derecho a la información colectada en este estudio?

La cinta del audio que obtiene tu entrevista será transcrita por la entrevistadora y la documentación escrita será leída por la entrevistadora, el principal investigador y el consejero del estudio para asegurarse de que el proceso de la entrevista y el análisis de la entrevista son imparciales. La entrevistadora es va quedar con los traducírlos y no las cintas de audio. La entrevistadora va destruir las cintas de audio después de las traducirlos. Toda la información colectada de ti esta secreto. Nada identificara personalmente estará en ningún reporte. Los documentos estarán marcados y la entrevistadora va tener una lista separada con los nombres de los participantes y los números de los marcados. Después que todo está colectado y analizado, la lista será destruiría. Todos los otros papeles serán guardarlo por tres años en la oficina del investigador principal en la oficina 2594 de Universidad de Salud y Servicios Humano en Western Michigan University.

Necesitas saber que si diece que alguno esta vulnerable como una persona que tenga más que 65 años o un niño que tenga 17 años y menos, la entrevistadora que es una trabajadora social con licencia está obligada a reportar lo que puede pasar. En estos casos, las identidades necesitaran estar reportarlas a las autoridades.
¿Qué pasa si no quieres participar en este estudio?

A cualquier momento durante la entrevista puedo tomar una pausa. También puedes reconsiderar tu participación y de dejar el estudio sin penaliz. En todo, tu participación es voluntaria y no estás obligado a contestar o continuar contestando respuestas.

La entrevistadora/el entrevistador, Melissa Villarreal, LMSW, contestará cualquier pregunta que tienes. Le puedes llamar al número (616) 395-7364. También, le puedes llamar al investigador principal, Nickola W. Nelson, Ph.D. a número (269) 387-7990 o al la silla de HSRB a número (269) 387-8293. O el vicepresidente de investigación a número (269) 387-8298 si preguntas o problemas existen durante el tiempo de estudio. Tú vas a recibir una copia de esta forma de consentimiento.

Este consentimiento informado está aprobado por un año por el Consejo de Institucional de investigación para Sujetos Humanos (HSIRB) como esta franqueado con el día y firma de la silla arriba en la esquina derecha. No participes en este estudio si el franqueado con el día es más viejo que un año.

Este consentimiento está leído. Los peligros y beneficios están explicados. Estoy acuerdo para ser parte de este estudio.

Por Favor Escribe Tu Nombre

Firma

Fecha
Appendix C

Interviewing Protocol Questions in English
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN INTERDISCIPLINARY HEALTH SCIENCES
MELISSA VILLARREAL, LMSW, PH.D. CANDIDATE

INTERVIEW

Project Title: Latina Women’s Experiences and Reasons for Disclosure of Sexual Assault: A Qualitative Investigation

Current Age: ______ Interviewee No.: ________

Identification: ____________________________________________________________________________
(How do you identify in regards to race and ethnic background?)

How many sexual assaults have you disclosed? ______

Interviewing questions:

1. First, thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I want you to feel as comfortable as you can in talking about a difficult subject. Again, if talking about any of this makes you feel distressed, just let me know, and we can take a break or move to a different question. When we are talking about specific people, it would be better if you describe them as a friend, a brother, a college guy, and etc. rather than calling them by name. Are you ready to begin?

If not, I will then ask: What else needs to be in place to assist you to be ready to begin answering the questions?

When the participant indicates readiness, I will move forward to ask the following questions.

2. If the participant is only discussing one sexual assault, then I would ask: What can you tell me about the sexual assault itself?

If the participant identified more than one sexual assault above, then I would ask: What can you tell me about the sexual assault(s) themselves? Feel free to begin with the most significant one. Clarifying: Which one impacted you the most?

3. After the assault, how long did it take you to tell someone about it?

4. How did you decide to disclose? Clarifying: What led you to tell someone?
5. If there was a delay in the disclosure, then I would ask: What delayed your disclosure? Clarifying: What kept you from telling someone?

6. When you disclosed, who was the first person you told? What was their relationship with you? Please do not disclose anyone’s personal name.

7. What was their reaction to you telling them about what happened to you? If any, what is their relationship to the person that assaulted you? If there was a relationship between them, what were your concerns in telling this person?

8. What information exactly did you share with them?

Check in: How are you doing? I will assess reaction to questions. Would you like to continue?

9. If the perpetrator, type of assault, or the age of the subject at the time of the assault is not identified, then the following questions will be asked:

   a. Please tell me about the person who assaulted you without using the person’s name. What was or is your relationship to this person? Clarifying: Who assaulted you?

   b. What type of sexual assault was it? Clarifying: Did the individual(s) touch you? Were you made to touch someone? Was there intercourse? What type? Oral? Vaginal? Anal? Did you observe something sexual?

   c. How old were you when this happened (the assault)?

10. Was there a person or event that led you to tell someone? If so, who or what event? Please do not provide the person’s name.

11. What concerns did you have about disclosing (e.g., about telling someone)?

12. Was there anyone that you wanted to disclose to, but didn’t feel that you could? What were the reasons?

13. Is there anyone significant that you have chosen not to disclose to? If yes, what was or is your relationship to them? And, what are the reasons for not telling them?

14. What were the feelings you felt during the disclosure? Clarifying: What feelings did you feel as you were telling someone about the sexual assault?
15. What consequences do you remember experiencing because of the disclosure? Clarifying: Were there any problems or negative experiences you encountered because of telling someone?

Check in: How are you doing? Would you like to take a break or simply continue?

16. Who, in the community, have you told about the sexual assault? What is their profession? Clarifying: Was it a police officer, counselor, therapist, crisis worker, nurse, doctor or were they several you have talked to?

17. Were there any things that you tried to help you cope with the assault? Clarifying: Did you seek any spiritual or religious healing?

18. Is there anything the community could have done in order to provide you with the awareness that you needed to disclose?

19. How do you feel now after you disclosed? Has that feeling changed? If you had it to do over, would you tell someone sooner or later than you did?

20. Do you regret anything about the disclosure?

21. Is there anything you would have done differently?

22. In this research, I am trying to understand what it is like to be sexually assaulted as a Latina? Do you see anything about your experience that is related to being Latina? Do you see anything being connected to your family background? Your cultural background? Your religious background?

23. What are your thoughts about how others react to a Latina being sexually assaulted?

24. Who do you feel was the most supportive during your disclosure? What was or is your relationship with this person or individuals? Please do not provide any personal names.

Check-in: How are you doing? The hardest questions are over and there are only a couple of more questions. Would you like to continue?

25. This is a yes or no question; is there anything you have not disclosed? If yes, what are the reasons?

The interview is over. Is there anything else you would like to add that might be helpful for me to know?
Thank you!

Do you know anyone else who might be interested in participating in this study?

Please feel free to call me anytime if you think of any additional questions about the study, or if you have any concerns that the study raised.

Again, thank you for your time.
Appendix D

Short Script Used in Response to All Inquires
The following short script was used in response to all inquires:

- Hello, this is Melissa Villarreal, the interviewer. Would you like me to speak to you in English or Spanish?
- Would you like to learn more about this study?
- Before I begin explaining my study, I would like to review with you who may participate in this study. A potential participant must identify as a Latina or Hispanic women who has told someone about a sexual assault and she must be at least 18 years old. Do these apply to you? Do you identify as a Latina or Hispanic women? Are you at least 18 years old? And, have you disclosed or have you told someone about a sexual assault that you experienced?
- If the preceding three questions are answered yes, then I would proceed to ask if they want to learn more about my study during this conversation or schedule a different time that would be more convenient for them. For the purpose of this script, we will assume that they want to continue learning more about this study during this conversation.
- Okay then, please feel free to ask any questions you may have during this explanation.
- The purpose of this study is to add to the understanding of Latina women’s beliefs, needs, and experiences related to their sexual assault disclosure.
- The data for this study will be collected through interviews with the participants who choose to be interviewed by me. If you choose to participate, your interview will take place either at the Center for Women in Transition or in my office at Hope College.
- During an interview, you may be asked to participate for up to 2 hours. In addition, you may be invited to participate in a 2nd interview if we are unable to complete the 1st interview, but you will not be obligated to do so. If so, the 2nd interview may also take up to 2 hours.
- The following will be explained:
  - What will be asked of them during this study;
  - What information will be measured during this study;
  - What the risks and benefits are of this study and how the risks will be minimized;
  - What the potential costs may be to them for participating in this study;
  - Who will have access to the information collected from them;
  - And, what happens if they choose to discontinue their participation during the beginning, middle, or almost before completing the study. (The elaboration of each of these is found on the consent form.)
- Finally, you will receive a $25 gift card to thank you for your participation even if you do not complete the interview.
- Now, that I am done explaining this study to you, do you have any questions?
Would you like to participate in this study?
Where would you like to have your interview? CWIT or in my office at Hope College?
What day would work best for you? (The interviewer will make herself available during her non-working hours to avoid participants’ cost of requesting time off from their employers for their interview(s).)
At what time?
Okay, it sounds like Monday, June 14\textsuperscript{th} at 1pm in my office works best for you. Is that correct?
Excellent, see you then, but if you need to reschedule, then please feel free to call me.
Appendix E

Recruitment Flyer in English
Sexual Assault Research Study
(Have you told someone?)

Who may participate?

✓ Latina/Hispanic Women who have disclosed a sexual assault (told someone about it)
✓ English or Spanish speaking
✓ Must be 18 years or older

What is the purpose?

The purpose is to add to the understanding of Latina women’s beliefs, needs and experiences related to their sexual assault disclosure.

What is the process?

✓ First, schedule an appointment to learn about the study.
✓ If you decide to participate, schedule time for a 1 – 2 hours interview (a second interview may be scheduled if needed).
✓ Those who participate in an interview will receive a $25 gift card.

All interviews are confidential

If you are interested, please contact Melissa Villarreal at:
(616) 395-7364
Appendix F

Recruitment Flyer in Spanish
Estudio de Ataque Sexual
(¿Le has dicho a alguien?)

¿Quién puede participar?

✓ Mujer Latina/Hispánica que le ha dicho a alguien que tuvo una experiencia de un ataque sexual
✓ En inglés o español
✓ Necesita tener 18 años o más

¿Cuál es el objeto de este estudio?

El objeto es para añadir un acuerdo de las creencias, necesitados, y experiencias de mujeres Latinas emparentadas a revelaciones de ataques sexuales.

¿Qué es el proceso?

✓ Primero, tener una cita para aprender de este estudio.
✓ Si desea a participar, después necesitas tener una cita para la entrevista por 1 – 2 horas. (si es necesario, puedes tener una segunda entrevista).
✓ Los que participan en la entrevista van a recibir cardas de regalo por $25.

_Todas las entrevistas van hacer confidencial secretos._

Si esta interesada, por favor llámale a Melissa Villarreal:
(616) 395-7364
Appendix G

Participant Demographics Matrix for 2005
### PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS MATRIX (2005)

What reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of their experience of sexual assault?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3a</th>
<th>#3b</th>
<th>#4</th>
<th>#5</th>
<th>#6</th>
<th>#7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Age</strong></td>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>32 years old</td>
<td>31 years old</td>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>34 years old</td>
<td>34 years old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Chicana/Tejana</td>
<td>Latina/Tejana</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>Mexican/Scottish and other ethnicities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong># of Assaults</strong></td>
<td>1 (CSC 1 – raped)</td>
<td>2 (CSC II – Molestation @ the age of 7; CSC 1 – raped while in college)</td>
<td>2 (CSC II – Molestation; CSC 1 – raped while in college)</td>
<td>1 (CSC 1 – raped)</td>
<td>1 (CSC 1 – raped)</td>
<td>1 (CSC 1 – raped)</td>
<td>1 (CSC II – Molestation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (Assault)</strong></td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>7 years old</td>
<td>11 years old</td>
<td>19 years old</td>
<td>13 years old</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (Disclosure)</strong></td>
<td>14 years old</td>
<td>32 years old</td>
<td>26 years old</td>
<td>19 years old</td>
<td>13 years old</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>30 years old</td>
<td>14 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description of Assault</strong></td>
<td>“Grandpa had raped me.”</td>
<td>Grandfather molested her; two college guys raped her in their apartment</td>
<td>Molested by father</td>
<td>Raped by an acquaintance of a couple of weeks in her home</td>
<td>Raped more than once within a couple of months period</td>
<td>Abused by her uncle.</td>
<td>Molested by biological older brother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of time for Disclosure</strong></td>
<td>About 4 years</td>
<td>#1–about 25 years; #2–right away</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>The next day</td>
<td>“Right after he left”</td>
<td>A few months</td>
<td>About 20 years</td>
<td>About 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What led to Disclosure?</strong></td>
<td>Confrontation with older brother about her behavior of going out with older men</td>
<td>Counseling assessment – “something about her that kind of made me feel comfortable, like a mom, I don’t know”</td>
<td>Dealing with the 2nd incident in therapy, also “because I couldn’t have a good relationship, so I had to figure it out”</td>
<td>“I was just so scared, so afraid that I was pregnant, I didn’t want to be pregnant; I needed support.”</td>
<td>“I didn’t want him to do it to somebody else.”</td>
<td>“after talking to my cousin, and her being there with me; for her to tell me that I had to say something, and that it wasn’t my fault”</td>
<td>Interviewee had a boyfriend who wanted to get sexually involved and he didn’t understand why she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>Older brother coming home from the Marines for step-father’s funeral; she didn’t want him to come home; afraid that he would try to molest her again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What delayed Disclosure?</td>
<td>Scared about letting anyone know &amp; that she wouldn’t be believed</td>
<td>“I didn’t think anybody should know”</td>
<td>“I was afraid that people wouldn’t believe me; afraid that I would be blamed, that they would be right; afraid of being told of what I shouldn’t have been doing (drinking).”</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>“Yeah, it being my own family member, and knowing, you know, thinking it was my fault that it happened.”</td>
<td>“I was scared that my mother won’t believe me; afraid that she was going to beat me.”</td>
<td>After that her brother would kill her</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator(s)</td>
<td>Stepmother’s grandfather</td>
<td>#1 - grandfather at the age of 7; #2 - two college men while in college</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>College fraternity male student</td>
<td>Male acquaintance</td>
<td>Male relative</td>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>Older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Sexual Assault</td>
<td>“It was anal rape and oral rape.”</td>
<td>#1 - Touching; #2 - rape</td>
<td>Molestation – no details provided</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>More than one rape</td>
<td>Raped</td>
<td>Molestation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient(s) of Disclosure</td>
<td>Brother &amp; sister-in-law</td>
<td>#1 - counselor; #2 - detective guy</td>
<td>Counselor, friends, mother</td>
<td>Counselor, friends, mother, college staff</td>
<td>Mother and father</td>
<td>Female cousin &amp; mother</td>
<td>Ex-boyfriend, CWIT’s case manager, and psychotherapists</td>
<td>Male role-model; someone like a brother; psychiatrist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS MATRIX (2005)
# PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS MATRIX (2005)

Can patterns be detected regarding to whom Latinas disclose and under what circumstances?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st Disclosure</th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3a</th>
<th>#3b</th>
<th>#4</th>
<th>#5</th>
<th>#6</th>
<th>#7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>#1-Counselor; #2-detective guy</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>A college friend</td>
<td>Mother and father</td>
<td>Female cousin</td>
<td>Male role model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Disclosure Reaction</td>
<td>“he called my grandma and my uncle in Texas...I don’t know what he could have done with us being over here and them over there”</td>
<td>#1-supportive; #2-convincing her not to; unsupportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Extremely unsupportive - “I don’t want to do sex with you cause you’re gross</td>
<td>“He just had this look on his face like he didn’t believe me; it kind of crashed me that he told my mom about it.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person or Event leading to Disclosure</td>
<td>“brother pushing me and asking me why I was going out with older men”</td>
<td>“I was scared; I was thinking about, um, what if I was going to have a baby? Or if I had gotten a disease?”</td>
<td>Clinical treatment at the age of 26</td>
<td>Fear of being pregnant and needing support</td>
<td>Female cousin convincing her that she needed to disclose</td>
<td>Boyfriend wanting a sexual relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Supportive</td>
<td>“my brother”</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>“My dad was there for me a lot” &amp; cousin</td>
<td>Female cousin and mom</td>
<td>Case manager</td>
<td>Next door neighbors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosure Concerns</td>
<td>#1</td>
<td>#2</td>
<td>#3a</td>
<td>#3b</td>
<td>#4</td>
<td>#5</td>
<td>#6</td>
<td>#7</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I was worried; I didn't think he would believe me and he would probably think I was making it up...&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;and I thought it was my fault; I didn't want people to judge me; you know, 'How could you be so stupid to be where you were at?'&quot;</td>
<td>Rape brought back the memory of being assaulted by her father and how she blamed herself.</td>
<td>&quot;I didn't want to tell nobody, because when he left, he said if I told he was gonna hurt me.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Yes, um, him telling me that if I told, he would kill me.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I didn't want him to tell me that it was my fault or that I provoked him.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences during Disclosure</td>
<td>Feeling blamed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boyfriend blamed her. &quot;You're gross and smell like your uncle's sperm.&quot; He abused her psychologically.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>#2</td>
<td>#3a</td>
<td>#3b</td>
<td>#4</td>
<td>#5</td>
<td>#6</td>
<td>#7</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings Now</strong></td>
<td>“I can go off thinking, that, that I’m not the only one.”</td>
<td>“Embarassment is keeping me from sharing the whole story.”</td>
<td>This is about the incident with her father.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regrets</strong></td>
<td>“No, really don’t, I’m kinda glad that I did finally tell somebody what had happened to me.”</td>
<td>“no and yes, I don’t regret telling Jennifer (her counselor); I’m glad I told her; I regret calling the police”</td>
<td>“at the time, when I was a college student, I was convinced not to press charges”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Interviewee regrets saying anything to her ex-boyfriend.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do Differently?</strong></td>
<td>“I think I would have just asked if I could talk to him”</td>
<td>“I would have never gone to college.”</td>
<td>“With regards to my dad, not a thing, not a thing, I would have kept it to myself as long as I did.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did it mean to disclose?</strong></td>
<td>“It meant that I was able to get the help that I needed. It meant that, it showed me that I was resilient, that I’m strong. And that I can move forward, and that I can overcome it.”</td>
<td>“That I didn’t have to worry about seeing him again; it helped me not think about it every time I may see him coming and trying to approach me or whatever.”</td>
<td>“It helped me by knowing that, maybe by doing that, he wouldn’t do that to somebody else.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, I wish I would have done it earlier.”</td>
<td>”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS MATRIX (2005)**

How do Latinas interpret their self-disclosure decisions?
Appendix H

Participant Demographics Matrix for 2011
# PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS MATRIX 2011

What reasons do Latinas give for choosing to disclose, not to disclose, or to delay disclosure of their experience of sexual assault?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2a</th>
<th>#2b</th>
<th>#3</th>
<th>#4</th>
<th>#5a</th>
<th>#5b</th>
<th>#5c</th>
<th>#6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Age</td>
<td>21 years old</td>
<td>20 years old</td>
<td>20 years old</td>
<td>22 years old</td>
<td>36 years old</td>
<td>40 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>Hispanic / Mexican American</td>
<td>Hispanic / Mexican American</td>
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<tr>
<td># of Assaults</td>
<td>1 (CSC IV – Flashing)</td>
<td>2 (CSC I – Penetration; CSC III – Statutory Rape)</td>
<td>1 (CSC II – Molestation)</td>
<td>1 (CSC II – Molestation)</td>
<td>2 (CSC II – Molestation; CSC IV – Inappropriate sexual talk)</td>
<td>1 (CSC I – Penetration; CSC II – Molestation)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Age (Assault)</td>
<td>10 or 11 years old</td>
<td>12 years old</td>
<td>17 or 18 years old</td>
<td>6 or 7 years old</td>
<td>13 or 14 years old</td>
<td>From 11 to 12 years old</td>
<td>5 or 6 years old</td>
<td>Probably about 6 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (Disclosure)</td>
<td>10 or 11 years old</td>
<td>Around 13 years old</td>
<td>20 years old</td>
<td>20 years old</td>
<td>17 or 18 years old</td>
<td>20 or 21 years old</td>
<td>36 years old</td>
<td>Same night (6 years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Assault</td>
<td>“He flashed me.”</td>
<td>Dating 18 y/o when she was 12; after break-up, he forced himself on her</td>
<td>Sex without consent; didn’t see it as rape or some kind of abuse</td>
<td>Molestation – lay on her and rub his penis on her vagina</td>
<td>Molestation – he would rub his hand down interviewer’s body</td>
<td>Molestation – several incidents of grabbing her inappropriately</td>
<td>Molestation – old man (neighbor) invited her in for candy, but then touched her inappropriately</td>
<td>Vulgar language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time for Disclosure</td>
<td>“Right away”</td>
<td>About a year</td>
<td>“It has been about a year.”</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>“a few years”</td>
<td>About 8 to 9 years later</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>Within minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What led to Disclosure?</td>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Discussion of project with interviewer</td>
<td>Felt like she could talk to the interviewer because it would stay between them.</td>
<td>A conversation she was having with her boyfriend who’s currently her fiancé</td>
<td>Older sister began talking about the same guy (step-dad) during a night of drinking together.</td>
<td>Preparing for this interviewer with her Godmother</td>
<td>She felt uncomfortable and scared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator(s)</td>
<td>Stranger (male, mid 40s, white)</td>
<td>Ex-boyfriend (as boyfriend – 18y/o); relative of relative</td>
<td>Boyfriend (baby’s father)</td>
<td>Older male cousin (10 to 15 years older)</td>
<td>Uncle by marriage on maternal side</td>
<td>Mom’s 1st serious boyfriend</td>
<td>Older Hispanic male neighbor</td>
<td>African American male neighbor (mid twenties)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS</td>
<td>MATRIX 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>What delayed disclosure?</td>
<td>No delay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Sexual Assault</td>
<td>CSC IV – flash of pants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recipient(s) of disclosure</td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Perpetrator Residing with Family</td>
<td>Provided</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Credibility Statement</td>
<td>&quot;I don’t know if it was going on or just let it go.&quot;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Why wouldn’t you want your parents to know? | "She kept tellin’ me that I had to want it."
<p>| &quot;I didn’t want my parents to get involved.&quot; |
| &quot;Mom didn’t believe me, but she declared me kind of ignored me.&quot; |
| &quot;Mom didn’t believe me, but she declared me kind of ignored me.&quot; |
| &quot;Don’t know if it was going on.&quot; |
| &quot;I didn’t want my parents to get involved.&quot; |
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| &quot;I didn’t want my parents to get involved.&quot; |
| &quot;Mom didn’t believe me, but she declared me kind of ignored me.&quot; |
| &quot;Mom didn’t believe me, but she declared me kind of ignored me.&quot; |
| &quot;Don’t know if it was going on.” |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2a</th>
<th>#2b</th>
<th>#3</th>
<th>#4</th>
<th>#5a</th>
<th>#5b</th>
<th>#5c</th>
<th>#6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Disclosure</td>
<td>Student safety</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
<td>Boyfriend then best female friend in college</td>
<td>Sisters</td>
<td>Godmother</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Disclosure Reaction</td>
<td>“She was afraid as much as I was.”</td>
<td>Reported the act to CPS, then mom found out - “I guess she was confused; she couldn’t believe it.”</td>
<td>She was helpful.</td>
<td>“You were very understanding; you were comforting about it; I could go to you for anything and that is was going to stay just between us two.”</td>
<td>“She was upset; she was to know that happened to me.” Boyfriend was also upset, but questioned if these incidents affects them.</td>
<td>Older sister - “She was angry because she felt like if I would have said something before, my mom might have listened to her.” “She blamed me for not speaking up.”</td>
<td>“She just shared that she had been through similar things.”</td>
<td>“She kind of ignored me.” “Didn’t really care, she was involved with her party”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Person or Event leading to Disclosure | None | 1st physical – answering questionnaire | Discussion of current project | Discussion of current project with interviewer | Discussion with boyfriend about abuse in his own life. | Older sister disclosed her rape by same perpetrator. | Preparing for this interview. | She was scared and felt uncomfortable. | A big argument between mother and daughter |
| Most Supportive | “my mom” | My mom | “myself, I guess” | Interviewer, best friend, and her fiancé | Godmother | Godmother | Foster Parents | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Disclosure Concerns</th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2a</th>
<th>#2b</th>
<th>#3</th>
<th>#4</th>
<th>#5a</th>
<th>#5b</th>
<th>#5c</th>
<th>#6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of getting in trouble</td>
<td>Didn’t want to talk to anyone.</td>
<td>“No, not necessarily. I just, I just took it out and wanted to talk.”</td>
<td>Afraid, felt ashamed, afraid that your father and brother would do something about it; and afraid that parents would be angry with her doing what her cousin told her to do</td>
<td>She was worried that people weren’t going to believe her, that she was going to be a home wrecker, and that she was going to cause problems within the family.</td>
<td>“Oh yeah, I mean, I was angry because she wasn’t protecting me and carried that around forever!”</td>
<td>“I just didn’t know how he would react.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear, scared (cried), upset, shock</td>
<td>“it was more like a fright, maybe embarrassed”</td>
<td>“it was not that much; I was more aware of what happened and I was just talking about it”</td>
<td>“I’m mad for what happened. I wish I could have done something; like, to not let it get so far.”</td>
<td>“I just felt really grossed out.”</td>
<td>“Anger, I actually, um... I actually attacked my mom. Like, I had literally, like slapped her.”</td>
<td>“relief, but a lot of hatred because I told her out of hate”</td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>Possibly felt blamed because her mother often asked her, “Why didn’t you wait?” “Like, I had just disappointment them; I wasn’t their little girl anymore.”</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>“I feel like it changed me to be, more like a person who keeps things in.” Finds it hard to trust Hispanic or any kid of Latino, Mexican men. She prefers to date white males.</td>
<td>“A lot of anger stemmed out of, you know, I really over looked the being victimized and went straight to the anger.”</td>
<td>“I don’t believe I did, nope, some people would say, my mom says, you know, me being taken out of the home, but that’s not a consequence.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coping Techniques</td>
<td>#1</td>
<td>#2a</td>
<td>#2b</td>
<td>#3</td>
<td>#4</td>
<td>#5a</td>
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<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>&quot;in a way trying to forget about it; like trying to move on&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I don't really know if I really have. I just don't talk about it.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Definitely God has helped me get through it.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I just believe in God and karma.&quot;</td>
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| Feelings Now | "Put it behind me"; no emotion left | "I just experienced it. I take it as being in the past"; not uncomfortable hearing his name anymore; | "a little better about it" | talking about always kind of puts me in the nervous kind of range" | "I just believe God is still revealing things to heal, that's really been my thing this year" | "Happy" |

| Regrets | No | "I regret knowing the two persons." | No | "No, I don't think so." | "Definitely, going after my mom and hitting her." | "No, nope because she wouldn't believe me any other way." |

| Do Differently? | "maybe not stopped" | "if I knew more, like I would say something" | "I don't know." | "I wouldn't have even done it under the influence" | No |

| Connections with Latino Culture | "puts us in shame; think less of you; think you weren't pure" | Where I come from, I just think it's wrong." | taught to obey elders; did want she was told to do; didn't parents her parents in the middle of it; didn't want others talking about her parents | No answer. | Interviewee feels that culturally she wanted the best for her single mother. | "Just that he was also a Latino" |
Appendix I

Approval Letters From Western Michigan University’s Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Date: June 15, 2010

To: Nickola Nelson, Principal Investigator
    Melissa Villarreal, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 10-04-09

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled “Latina Women’s Reasons for Disclosure of Sexual Assault: A Qualitative Investigation” has been approved under the full category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: April 21, 2011
Date: April 25, 2011

To: Nickola Nelson, Principal Investigator
Melissa Villarreal, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 10-04-09

This letter will serve as confirmation that the change to your research project titled “Latina Women’s Reasons for Disclosure of Sexual Assault: A Qualitative Investigation” requested in your memo February 28, 2011 (to replace Nickola W. Nelson as the Principal Investigator with Doris J. Ravotas; move Nickola W. Nelson to the position of Co-Principal Investigator; change project title to “Latina Women’s Experience and Reasons for Disclosure of Sexual Assault: A Qualitative Investigation; revise consent forms to reflect the changes) has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

The conditions and the duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: April 20, 2012
Appendix J

Approval Letter From Hope College’s Human Subjects Review Board
MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 22, 2010

TO: Melissa Villarreal, Social Work

FROM: Mary Inman, Chairperson HSRB
       Psychology Department

RE: HSRB Approval

Your research proposal titled, "'Latina Women's Reasons for Disclosure of Sexual Assault: A Quality Investigation' has been approved by Hope College's HSRB.

This approval is good for 1 year. If you plan to continue past June 22, of 2011, you need to apply for continuation to the HSRB. Follow "Continuation" instructions at www.hope.edu/admin/hsrb.

Thank you for submitting your proposal and I hope all goes well with your work.

Mary Inman