

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE SLAVIC RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY.  
ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Anna V. Tyulyu  
B.A., Fresno Pacific University, 2006

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SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE SLAVIC RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY.  
ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

A Project

by

Anna V. Tyulyu

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Francis Yuen, DSW

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Student: Anna V. Tyulyu

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\_\_\_\_\_, Graduate Coordinator  
Teiahsha Bankhead, Ph.D., LCSW

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Division of Social Work

Abstract  
of  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE SLAVIC RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY.  
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*Statement of Problem*

Is sexual violence in the Slavic community a concern? As yet, there is no significant data available about the extent of sexual violence in the Slavic religious community that exists in Sacramento. A lack of both quantitative and qualitative data about the knowledge of this problem as well as perceptions of sexual violence within this community decreases the effectiveness of services provided by social workers. The purpose of this study is to shine light on the issue of the sexual violence in the Slavic religious community. For the purpose of this study, the researcher utilized both quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods and used both questionnaire and key informants interviews.

*Sources of Data*

Thirty-nine recent Slavic religious immigrants, both males and females, from 18 to 60 years old who arrived in the United States within the last twenty years were surveyed in this study. Five key informants including a social worker, a therapist, and three church ministers who worked with Slavic individuals were interviewed for this study.

### *Conclusions Reached*

The findings of this study demonstrate Slavic religious immigrants' hesitancy and desire to reject the idea that sexual violence might be happening in their community. The results show that sexual violence in this community is prevalent yet it is not regarded as a serious problem. Sexual violence is a taboo. Most Slavic women keep their victimization in secret; rarely do they disclose it to church ministers. Although all participants know that sexual violence is a crime, Slavic victims of sexual violence are unlikely to report this crime to law enforcement. Most participants believe that a woman invites sexual assault on herself due to her attire and, yet, they believe that women are not responsible for preventing sexual violence and do not provoke sexual violence on themselves. Their incoherent and conflicting responses reveal that Slavic religious immigrants do not know how to approach the issues of sexual violence and do not have a full understanding about it, its seriousness, and that it can be much nearer to them than they think. As a result, the issues of sexual violence in their community are being ignored and go unaddressed, just like an "elephant in the room."

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Francis Yuen, DSW

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to the Slavic women, children, and families. For YOU!

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Огромная благодарность всем участникам. Успешная реализация этого проекта была бы не возможна без Вашего участия. Thanks to all the Slavic individuals who volunteered to participate in my study. Thank you for being honest, open, and available!

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Dedication .....	vi
Acknowledgments.....	vii
List of Tables .....	xi
Chapter	
1. THE PROBLEM.....	1
Background of the Problem .....	3
Statement of the Research Problem .....	7
Purpose of the Study .....	8
Assumptions.....	9
Research Questions .....	9
Research Variables.....	10
Theoretical Framework .....	10
Definition of Terms.....	11
Justification .....	13
Limitations .....	13
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	14
General Information on Sexual Violence in the U.S. ....	14
Prevalence of Sexual Violence against Women .....	15
Impact of Sexual Violence .....	17
Risk Factors for Sexual Victimization .....	19
Sexual Violence in Ethnic Minorities .....	21
Socio-demographical Overview of Slavic Immigrants in Sacramento .....	23
Slavic Family .....	29
The View of Women .....	30
Perceptions of Sexuality .....	31



Slavic Church and Sexual Violence .....	32
Sexual Violence and Spirituality .....	35
Obstacles in Getting Help .....	37
Attitudes toward the Care Professions .....	37
Reporting to Police .....	38
Gaps in the Literature.....	40
3. METHODS .....	42
Study Design.....	42
Variables .....	43
Research Questions.....	43
Sampling Design.....	44
Sampling Selection Techniques.....	45
Measurement Instruments.....	46
Data Collection Procedures.....	48
Interview .....	48
Survey .....	48
Statistical Analysis Plan.....	49
Protecting of Human Subjects .....	50
4. DATA ANALYSIS & STUDY FINDINGS.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Socio-demographics of the Survey Participants .....	53
Quantitative Sample Data Analysis and Findings .....	56
Correlation between Variables.....	66
Socio-demographics of Key Informants .....	69
Qualitative Sample Data Analysis and Findings .....	70
Is sexual violence in the Slavic community a concern? .....	70
Taboo .....	71
Most common forms of sexual violence.....	71
Most common perpetrator.....	73

Sexual victimization happens before and after immigration .....	74
Reporting sexual victimization to law enforcement .....	74
Help seeking behavior.....	75
Recommendations for Addressing this Problem.....	76
Major Findings and Discussion .....	78
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, & IMPLICATIONS.....	81
Summary and Conclusions .....	81
Implications for Social Work.....	84
Implications for Future Studies.....	86
Appendix A. Informed Consent to Participate in a Study: Survey .....	90
Appendix B. Informed Consent to Participate in a Study: Survey (Russian Version) .....	91
Appendix C. Survey.....	92
Appendix D. Survey (Russian Version).....	96
Appendix E. Informed Consent to Participate in a Study: Interview .....	100
Appendix F. Informed Consent to Participate in a Study: Interview (Russian Version).....	101
Appendix G. Key Informant Interview Guide .....	102
Appendix H. Key Informant Interview Guide (Russian Version) .....	105
References .....	108

## LIST OF TABLES

		Page
1.	Table 1 Participants' Gender, Marital Status, Age and Length of Stay in the U.S.....	53
2.	Table 2 Participants' Proficiency in the English and Russian Languages and Education.....	55
3.	Table 3 Knowing Someone Who Has Been a Victim of Sexual Assault or Molest.....	57
4.	Table 4 View of Sexual Violence in the Slavic Community as a Concern.....	57
5.	Table 5 What Study Participants Consider as Sexual Violence by Percentage.....	58
6.	Table 6 The Most Common Perpetrator in the Slavic Community.....	60
7.	Table 7 Who do Slavic Victims of Sexual Violence Turn to for Help.....	61
8.	Table 8 Perceptions on Sexual Violence in the Slavic Religious Community.....	63
9.	Table 9 False Beliefs about Sexual Assault. ....	64
10.	Table 10 Statistically Significant Chi Square Tests.....	66

## Chapter 1

### THE PROBLEM

Sexual violence has no racial, class, age, religious, or geographic boundaries. It has been documented in different cultures across time. Although men are also victims of sexual violence, it is commonly recognized that the vast majority of those who experience sexual violence are women and girls. It is estimated that 14% to 20% of women will experience rape at some point in their lives, 8% to 24% will be stalked by someone known or unknown to them, and a 25% to 35% likelihood that the average adult woman has been sexually abused as a child (Briere & Jordan, 2004; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008). The epidemiology of sexual violence against women is a pressing social issue.

While sexual violence against women is as old as humanity, it is only in recent decades that it has been publicly recognized. In the United States, the women's rights and feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s initiated a radical change in social attitudes towards the violence against women and children, which resulted in official condemnation of such violence and the development of protective laws. However, it is important to study women of different ethnicities in the U.S. to determine if they experience similar violence as well as legal protection. In many countries around the world, including those of the former Soviet Union, sexual violence is still largely ignored and often accepted (Bunch, 1997; Morfas, 2000). Moreover, the rape-prone cultures propagate messages that victims are to blame for the assault, that they cause it, and indeed deserve it (Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009; Vaile Wright, Collinsworth, &

Fitzgerald, 2010). Victims are faced with disbelief, shame and blame, refusals of help from church, legal or health systems, and often from their own family and friends (Bunch, 1997; Vaile Wright et al., 2010; Yamawaki, 2007). Many ethnic minorities continue practicing their religions, cultural values and beliefs even after their immigration to the United States (Bondarenko, 2008; Morfas, 2000). Given the importance of the role of ethnic communities, this research focuses on how sexual violence is being perceived and addressed among members of the Slavic Christian community in Sacramento, CA.

My interest in writing this project stems from my personal and professional experiences. I am a first generation Slavic immigrant and was raised in a Christian family. My parents and I came to the U.S. from the Ukraine several years ago: living in this particular community and working with young Slavic women in the local Slavic churches, I became personally aware of the magnitude of the problem of sexual violence against women in the Slavic religious community in the Sacramento area. Moreover, through my professional relationships developed as a Victim Advocate Intern with the Victim Witness Assistance Program at the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office I have witnessed that child molest and rape cases are somewhat prevalent in the Slavic religious community. Although only a very small insignificant number of sexual assault victims choose to report this to the local law-enforcing agency, the vast majority continues to struggle and deal with their horrors in secret, not knowing how to address it or where to look for help.

Hopefully, study findings from this project will contribute to the culturally competent knowledge base about sexual violence in the Christian Slavic community that

resides in Sacramento, CA. Additionally, with this study I want to raise awareness of the magnitude of this issue and the importance of developing effective culturally sensitive sexual violence prevention programs to address this issue in our community. Pertaining to social workers, this project will be important in educating them about the unique traits of the Slavic community and to help them adapt their services to match the perception of each individual client.

### **Background of the Problem**

Sexual violence against women and girls is the most pervasive violation of human rights in the world today. However, it is so deeply embedded in cultures around the world that it is almost invisible (Bunch, 1997). Most rapes and sexual assaults are significantly underreported; however, the available statistics indicate that it is a pervasive problem in all societies. Researchers indicate that statistics on sexual violence from industrialized and developing countries show strikingly similar patterns and that between one in five and one in seven women will be victims of rape in their lifetime (Bunch, 1997). Although a rape is the most talked about form of sexual violence, it takes many forms including rape within marriage or dating relationships, systematic war rape during armed conflict, unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment including demanding sex in return for favors, sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people, sexual abuse of children, forced marriage or co-habitation, incest, denial of right to use contraception or to adopt other measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases, forced abortion, violent acts against sexual integrity, including sexual mutilation and obligatory inspections for virginity, and forced prostitution and trafficking of people for the purpose

of sexual exploitation (Behnken, Le, Temple, & Berenson, 2010; Bunch, 1997; Campbell et al., 2009).

As yet, there is no significant data available about the extent of sexual violence in the Slavic religious community that exists in Sacramento. In fact, there is very little known about this community in general. This is hardly surprising given the relatively short length of their existence in Sacramento as well as their isolation in a small community. Since members of this ethnic group are classified as White, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, very limited demographic data on the Slavic population is collected or disseminated. It is also believed that members of this community report incidents of sexual violence at a much lower rate than the general population. Nevertheless, the few studies, which have been conducted in the countries of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), suggest that sexual violence against women and children is as common in this region as it is in the rest of the world (Sherer & Etgar, 2005). Although the governments of countries originating in the former USSR do not provide the most reliable statistics, the available statistics are still alarming. In her study on dating violence in Russia, Lysova (2007) found that about 25% percent of women were victims of coercive sex and as many as 47% of domestic violence cases result in pressure to have sex (OMCT, 2003). In addition, The Angel Coalition, a network of Non Governmental Organizations fighting against trafficking in the region, in 2003 has documented 350 cases of trafficking in Russia, but they suspected that the number of victims could have been as high as 5,000 per year.

The sexual victimization at any stage of woman's life adversely affects her biological, social, economic and cultural milieu and is detrimental to positive outcome in life. Of all personal crimes, crimes of sexual nature have been considered the most serious and traumatic (Ben-Ezra et al., 2010; Chen & Ullman, 2010; Owens & Chard, 2001). Sexual violence experienced in childhood, adulthood, or both can lead to myriad long-term psychological and physiological consequences. Women develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, dissociation, interpersonal difficulties, self-destructing behaviors, chronic health problems, drug and alcohol use, low self-esteem, and sexual dysfunction (Ben-Ezra et al., 2010; Campbell et al., 2009; Knapik, Martsof, & Draucker, 2008; Owens & Chard, 2001). Moreover, a number of studies have shown that sexual violence has negative effects on a survivor's spirituality and religious beliefs (Ben-Ezra et al., 2010; Knapik et al., 2008).

Victimization by sexual violence affects woman's sense of safety, trust, power, control, esteem, and intimacy (Vaile Wright et al., 2010). Victims frequently engage in self-blame and take a full responsibility for their victimization. Their trust is replaced with the realization that men, even those that they know and care for, can be violent and should not be trusted (Vaile Wright et al., 2010). Sexual trauma victims are confronted with the reality that the world is not a safe and predictable place (Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Keita, & Russo, 1994). Unlike nonsexual traumas (e.g., the attacks of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina), sexual trauma victims often do not receive the support they need because they "face a culture in which prevailing beliefs at least partially implicate them for the provocation of their own sexual assault" (Koss et al., 1994, p. 187). These



victims are being blamed by their friends and families and are not being believed by their formal and informal social support networks (Yamawaki, 2007). Therefore, sexual trauma takes on the role of a secret tragedy, often silently endured by the victim alone. Additionally, a woman who has been sexually victimized is at greater risk for subsequent victimization (Katz, May, Sorensen, & DelTosta, 2010).

Research on sexual violence in immigrant populations indicates that the prevalence of sexual violence against women is quite high and that immigration itself might affect the frequency and severity of assault. More recent investigations have reported that, although, immigrants have lower levels of criminal involvement than their native-born counterparts, non-citizens' rates of involvement in sexual assault are higher than those for naturalized or citizens born outside of the U.S. (Olson, Laurikkala, Huff-Corzine, & Corzine, 2009). Similarly, a study about South Asian immigrants reveals an increase in sexual violence against women since they immigrated to the United States (Abraham, 1999). In addition, immigrant groups, including those originating in the countries of the former USSR, experience barriers to accessing appropriate services and resources, which creates an additional risk for these populations. Stresses and demographic characteristics including poverty and lack of job opportunities place ethnic minorities for greater tolerance of violence. Cultural isolation, lack of educational and job opportunities, limited English speaking skills, and poverty contribute to the increased risk of sexual assault and child sexual abuse (Olson et al., 2009; Pratt, 2009).

Slavic people are quite ignorant in matters of sexuality and sexual violence. Shapiro (2001) confirms that former Soviet mentality is characterized by archaic gender-

role stereotypes and sexism, which manifests itself in the rejection of condom use by many men and in harassment towards women and sexual violence in particular.

According to Shapiro (2001), sex education was absent not only in schools of the former USSR but also in the family, as a result, parents and teachers never discussed sexual issues with their children. The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)(2003) reports that Russia did not have adequate programs of protection for sexually assaulted victims, thus leaving them vulnerable to further contact with their perpetrator, members of the perpetrator's family, or the perpetrator's friends. Furthermore, there was no specific department within the police that dealt with sex crimes and there was no program of training available for police officers concerning how to handle rape cases in a sensitive manner (OMCT, 2003).

Therefore, even after Slavic women immigrate to the United States, where sexual violence is illegal, girls and women often remain unprotected in their own homes. Fear of receiving negative responses from legal authorities often discourages Slavic women and families from reporting their experiences to the police (Campbell, 2005; OMCT, 2003). Because law enforcement officials in the countries of the former Soviet Union used to treat women in a very harsh manner, Slavic immigrant women hold the same perception towards law enforcement officials in the United States.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Though the researcher believes that Slavic religious women and girls are at risk of sexual violence, there is a lack of quantitative evidence that sexual violence is prevalent in this community. Additionally, a lack of qualitative data about the knowledge of this

problem as well as perceptions of sexual violence within this community decreases the effectiveness of services provided by social workers. Moreover, it is the researcher's belief that if the issue of sexual violence is improperly addressed within this community it hinders the development and well-being of young Slavic women and their families. Research often focuses on how to work with Caucasian victims of sexual violence but fails to recognize other ethnicities. Therefore, it is important to pay considerable attention to the attitudes of Slavic immigrants toward sex in general, toward relations between men and women, toward sex offenders and victims in the Slavic religious community because there is a significant correlation between their attitudes and behavior. The identification of culture-related factors related to sexual violence may provide social workers with additional information needed to provide appropriate interventions and prevention services.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to shine light on the issue of the sexual violence in the Slavic religious community. To do so, the researcher will measure the prevalence of sexual violence against women and its magnitude among the members of this community. The purpose of the study is also to examine the knowledge Slavic religious people have about sexual violence. Specific attention will be placed on perceptions and attitudes that these Slavic religious immigrants hold toward sexual violence as well as the barriers for services. This study is ethnographic in nature because it studies the views of the people in this ethnic community, what they know, and what they think about this

issue. Lastly, this study functions as a tool in helping social workers to develop appropriate interventions that reflect a woman's cultural belief.

### **Assumptions**

This study is based on assumptions that include:

1. Sexual violence against women exists in the Slavic community, although a large number of cases of sexual assault are not reported due to a lack of knowledge and fear of law enforcement.
2. Drawing upon the unique mixture of religion and culture inherited by many Slavic immigrants, another assumption is that many Slavic immigrants have negative attitudes towards victims of sexual assault.
3. The shame and stigma that is associated with sexual victimization makes Slavic women struggle with their trauma in secret rather than seeking support and help.
4. Slavic religious people are quite ignorant in matters of sexuality, and are, therefore, ambivalent to the issues of sexual violence.
5. The belief that sexual violence is a sin and that a Christian person does not practice this sin instills in the religious Slavic people a belief that sexual violence is not existent. Thus, there is no need to address it.

These general assumptions, however, may not apply to all Slavic religious immigrants.

### **Research Questions**

The proposed research topic will explore the following research questions: Is sexual violence against women prevalent in the religious Slavic community in the Sacramento Region? If so, how serious is this problem? What do religious Slavic people

know about sexual violence? What are their attitudes and perceptions on issues of sexual violence? And last, but not least the question is, what are the barriers and challenges Slavic women who have experienced sexual violence face to obtaining services?

### **Research Variables**

The independent variables include knowledge, cultural beliefs, and religious beliefs among Slavic religious immigrants residing in Sacramento. The dependent variable is the attitudes toward sexual violence and the prevalence of sexual violence in the Slavic community. In essence, this study compares the impact of cultural and religious beliefs and attitudes on the identification and disclosure among Slavic survivors of sexual violence.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research is guided by feminist social theory in its attempt to understand and explain sexual violence in the Slavic community. Like many theories, feminist theory explains “why things are the way they are, how they got that way, and what needs to be done to change them” (Hardcastle, Powers, & Wenocur, 2004, p.48). The feminist approach addressing the question “And what about the women?” changed many fields and has led social workers to take a closer look at identity, differences, domination, and oppression. It has validated women’s experiences with oppression and furthered an interest in experiential knowledge, personal narrative by telling thier story, and the actualities of people’s living (Hardcastle et al., 2004). Although great diversity is found among feminist theologians concerning oppression and explanations of the self, feminists are united in their concern with the well-being of women and children and their liberation

from the complex dimensions of oppression (Beste, 2006). The feminist approach is useful for developing historical and contextual understanding of women's experience, accepting women's scrutiny without making women responsible and working against male violence in all its forms (Lee, 2001).

Feminist research has women's interests at its core. Feminist social workers who work with Slavic victims of sexual violence seek empowerment of women and protection of young children by ending patriarchy. They recognize the need for non-exploitive social order in the Slavic community. Feminist perspective helps social workers validate experiences of sexually assaulted women and empower them so that these women can take action to improve their situation and gain control over their lives (Greene, 2005).

### **Definition of Terms**

**Sexual violence** – an overarching term used to describe any violence, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. Sexual violence includes rape and attempted rape, and such acts as forcing a person to strip naked in public, forcing two victims to perform sexual acts on one another or harm one another in a sexual manner, mutilating a person's genitals or a woman's breasts, and sexual slavery.

**Sexual assault** – an assault of a sexual nature on another person. A sexual assault occurs when someone touches any part of another person's body in a sexual way, even through clothes, without that person's consent.

**Child sexual abuse** – also referred to as molestation, it is any behavior by any adult towards a child to stimulate either the adult or child sexually. Victims are

considered sexually abused if their sexual experience occurred before the age of 13 with someone 5 or more years older, between the ages of 13 and 16 with someone 10 or more years older, and or before the age of 17 involving force or coercion.

**Rape** – any act of sexual intercourse that is forced upon a person.

**Victim** – a person who has experienced sexual violence.

**Survivor** – a term meaning a person who has experienced sexual violence.

**Perpetrator** – one who commits a sexual offence or crime.

**Sexual attitudes** – refers to individual beliefs about appropriate male and female sexual activities and behaviors.

**Perception** – immediate or intuitive recognition or appreciation of moral, psychological, or aesthetic qualities, insight or intuition.

**Attitudes** – are judgments; these are generally positive or negative views, dispositions, feelings, or positions with regard to a person, place, thing, or event.

**Blaming the victim** – placing all the responsibility for the occurrence of sexual violence on the victim and refusing to acknowledge any part in the current issue.

**Immigrant** – refers to a person who has come into a foreign country in order to live there permanently.

**Religion** – is a cultural system that creates powerful and long-lasting meaning, by establishing symbols that relate humanity to truths and values.

**Religious refugees** – survivors of persecution who fled in search of refuge in times of religious persecution (Evangelical Christians, Ukrainian Catholics or Orthodox Christians).

**Slavic community** – a Russian-speaking group of people who belong to the latest wave of immigrants from the countries of the Former Soviet Union such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

### **Justification**

Culture shapes the way people make meaning of themselves and their life experiences. It is imperative that social workers familiarize themselves more closely with the particular experiences of sexual violence survivors of the Slavic immigrant community. This study attempts to provide the social workers with ethnographic data on sexual violence within the Slavic community. In addition, it will provide the unique insight about their cultural values, religious beliefs, and views on therapy, sexuality and attitudes toward sexual violence in their community. Lastly, this study attempts to fill the gap in the literature on sexual violence in the Slavic community.

### **Limitations**

This study is limited to the Slavic religious immigrants who belong to the latest wave of immigration from the countries of the former Soviet Union that began in 1995 and who resides in the Sacramento Region of California. Additionally, this study focuses mainly on the sexual violence against women. The findings of this study are based on a small population sample and may not reflect the views of all Slavic religious people who live in Sacramento. The method of the research also adds to the limitations of this study as it is based on self-reported data and, therefore, has all the limitations of such data.



## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In the researcher's search for literature on the Slavic Christian immigrant community in Sacramento and their experiences, cultural and religious beliefs about and attitudes toward sexual violence, she found there to be a dearth of literature that focused on this particular subject and population. Although there is some literature available on Russian Jewish immigrants in the U.S., the researcher finds it unsuitable to the particular Slavic community in Sacramento. The existing literature, however, was instructive in providing insight and background information necessary for understanding the Slavic immigrants' culture and religious beliefs and their influence on Slavic immigrants' perspectives and attitudes towards sexual violence against women. These resources include several peer-reviewed articles, governmental documents, newspapers, and a few recently written thesis projects. The review of the literature focuses on the following major themes: General Information on Sexual Violence in the U.S., Demographic Overview of the Slavic Christian Immigrant Community in Sacramento, CA, and Sexual Violence and the Slavic Community. Gaps in the Literature will conclude this chapter.

#### **General Information on Sexual Violence in the U.S.**

Sexual violence prevention is a relatively new field of practice and study, emerging out of the social movements of the late 1960s and 1970s. In the early Consciousness Raising groups of the feminist movement in the U.S., women started speaking about their experiences, everything from housework to domestic violence to workplace inequities to sexual assault (Meyer, 2000). Over the next three decades, many

books and studies addressing the issue of rape were published. This resulted in increased activism around the issues of sexual violence and the development of services for survivors. These efforts increased public awareness, helped reduce the trauma to survivors, and raised the demand for programs designed to prevent sexual violence (Meyer, 2000; Pratt, 2009).

In addition, the past several decades were marked by the passage of legislation aimed at preventing sexual violence through legal deterrence. Across the country, laws were enacted to increase penalties for criminals and the definition of “rape” was expanded. Slowly, some state laws were changed to recognize marital rape and congress passed the Rape Control Act in 1975 (Conyers, 2007; Meyer, 2000). The most recent piece of legislation to protect immigrant victims from domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking is The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) (Conyers, 2007). In 2005, The Child Status Protection Act expanded protections for immigrant children ensuring that immigrant children who are victims of incest and child abuse get full access to VAWA protections (Conyers, 2007).

### **Prevalence of Sexual Violence against Women**

According to The National Crime Victimization Survey (2008), persons ages 12 or older experienced an average annual 69,850 completed rapes, 70,770 attempted rapes and 107,660 completed and attempted sexual assaults. Most rapes and sexual assaults were committed against females. In a recent nationally representative survey of 9,684 adults conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2008), 10.6% of women reported experiencing forced sex at some time in their lives and 2.5% said that

they experienced unwanted sexual activity in the previous 12 months. Despite comprising a minority of the population, adolescents represent approximately one-third of sexual assault and rape victims (Freeman & Temple, 2009). The nationally representative survey states that 60.4% of females were first raped before age 18, 25.5% of females were first raped before age 12, and 34.9% were first raped between the ages of 12-17 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008).

While sexual violence encompasses a number of kinds of sexual contact, it is the nonconsensual nature of the contact that makes it sexual violence (Coomaraswamy, 2009). Sexual violence takes a variety of forms including forced sexual intercourse such as rape or attempted rape, sexual abuse, sodomy, child molestation, incest, and fondling (Behnken et al., 2010; Bunch, 1997; Campbell et al., 2009). Usually, a sexual assault occurs when someone touches any part of another person's body in a sexual way, even through clothes, without that person's consent. Sexual violence is obtained through threats, pressure or tricks, assault, or coercion (Coomaraswamy, 2009). Coercion can cover a wide range of behaviors, including intimidation, manipulation, threats of negative treatment, and blackmail (Coomaraswamy, 2009). Women may be sexually assaulted by various types of perpetrators, most often by someone they know such as acquaintances, friends, or family members (Chen & Ullman, 2010). The National Women's Study (1992) indicated that only 22% of rape victims were assaulted by strangers or someone they did not know well, 9% by husbands or ex-husbands, 11% by fathers or stepfathers, 10% by boyfriends or ex-boyfriends, 16% by other relatives, and 29% percent by other non-relatives such as friends or neighbors (Chen & Ullman, 2010).

## **Impact of Sexual Violence**

Victimization by some type of sexual violence is a persistent and serious threat to women's lives and well-being. Victims of sexual violence may experience a range of behavioral and psychological problems, which can last from a few months to as long as several years (Chen & Ullman, 2010). Numerous empirical studies have demonstrated that sexually assaulted women have more mental health diagnoses than non-abused women (Campbell et al., 2009; Freeman & Temple, 2009). Mental health problems associated with sexual victimization include depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), eating disorders, anger control problems, suicidality, substance abuse, sleep problems, and anxiety (Campbell et al., 2009; Freeman & Temple, 2009; Owens & Chard, 2001). Additionally, individuals who were sexually abused in childhood have a high risk of psychotic experiences such as hallucinations and delusional ideation (Kilcommons, Morrison, Knight, & Lobban, 2008). Moreover, the childhood sexual abuse is a significant predictor of a dissociative disorder in adulthood as it is trauma-related. In her study, Sarkar (2010) emphasizes that women who had a lifetime diagnosis of dissociative disorder had borderline personality disorder, somatization disorder, major depression, and a history of frequent suicidal attempts.

Cognitive distortions resulting from the trauma of sexual violence typically occur around five areas: safety, trust, power, self-esteem, and intimacy (Owens & Chard, 2010; Vaile Wright et al., 2010). These five areas of distortions are associated with certain psychological responses, including anxiety, social withdrawal, avoidant behavior, fear of

betrayal, isolation, passivity, anger and feelings of powerlessness and weakness (Owens & Chard, 2010).

Unbearable emotional pain that is caused through sexual assault victimization can lead victims to self-mutilating behavior (Sarkar, 2010). Through this unhealthy response to overwhelming emotional pain, some victims intentionally destruct tissue on their body to gain control over their emotions and provide a diversion from emotional pain (Hicks & Hinck, 2008; Sarkar, 2010). Survivors of sexual assault are more likely to have a lower self-worth and higher self-blame than their non-abused counterparts (Campbell et al., 2009; Lee, 2001; Pratt, 2009).

Sexual violence also has been associated with subsequent sexual risk behaviors that affect women's reproductive health. Sexual risk behaviors include more sexual partners, greater likelihood of sex with someone just met, earlier age at first intercourse, and a higher frequency of sexually transmitted disease diagnoses (Koci & Strickland, 2007; Lalor & McElvaney, 2010; Sarkar, 2010; Senn, Carey, Venable, Coury-Doniger, & Urban, 2007). The study by Koci & Strickland (2007) revealed that the history of sexual abuse in childhood was significantly associated with premenstrual symptoms (PMS). Sexually abused women in adolescence were found to have significantly more severe PMS patterns with more dysphoria than women without abuse (Koci & Strickland, 2007). The history of abuse was associated with higher rates of sexually transmitted infections. The odds of having sexually transmitted infections when tested were 2.5 times greater if abuse occurred at the age of 10 or younger (Sarkar, 2010; Senn et al., 2006).

### **Risk Factors for Sexual Victimization**

There are many factors associated with contributing to sexual violence against women. They include being a woman, age, family structure and living arrangements, alcohol, having rape-supportive beliefs or associating with peers who have these beliefs, number of dating and sexual partners, a lack of knowledge about what constitutes rape, exposure of sexual violence in childhood, and immigration (Behnken et al., 2010; Freeman & Temple, 2009; Testa, 2002; Thomson Ross, Kurth Kolars, Krahn, Lisansky Gomberg, Clark, & Niehaus, 2011). Young women are especially vulnerable to sexual violence (Thomson Ross et al., 2011). In their study of non-consensual sexual experiences among college women, Thomson Ross and her colleagues (2011) found that almost one-fifth (18%) of the sample reported a non-consensual sexual experience prior to entering the university. When participants were asked about the age at which they first experienced a non-consensual sexual experience, 30% said they were less than 13 years old, 8% reported being 13 or 14 years old, 34% reported being 15 or 16 years old, and 27% reported being 17 years or older. Many (45%) reporting a non-consensual sexual experience said that it occurred more than once. Clearly, sexual violence against women in America “is a tragedy of youth, with the majority of rape cases occurring during childhood and adolescence” (Thomson Ross et al., 2011, p. 400).

The considerable risk of those who experienced sexual violence at an early age is revictimization later in life (Draucker & Martsolf, 2010; Lalor & McElvaney, 2010; Katz et al., 2010). Katz et al., (2010) suggests that women with child sexual abuse histories are two to three times more likely than others to be revictimized in adulthood.

Many studies have shown that there is a strong, consistent relationship between alcohol consumption and sexual victimization. Thomson Ross et al. (2011) validates that it is more common for both perpetrators and their victims to drink at the time of the assault (28%) than it was for the man (16%) or the woman (2%) to drink alone. Buddie and Testa (2005) found that college women reporting a rape or attempted rape in the previous year also reported both heavier drinking and more sex partners during that time period. Even among adolescents, sexual violence is likely to involve alcohol. Nearly one fifth of the assaults reported by teens in a web based survey by Young, Grey, Abbey, Boyd, and McCabe (2008) involved alcohol. Franklin (2010) affirms that alcohol reduces a woman's ability to assess and respond to a sexual coercion thereby frustrating her ability to resist unwanted sexual advances. It has been well documented that alcohol influences how men interpret female behavior so that they perceive women's friendliness as sexual interest, even when women's intentions are not sexually motivated (Franklin, 2010). Additionally, men perceive women who are drinking alcohol as more promiscuous and sexually available than women who do not drink; consequently, these women may be targets for excessive sexual attention because they are viewed as more easily seduced and more willing to engage in sex (Franklin, 2010).

Another major risk factor, which is associated with sexual victimization, is family structure. A population based survey study of 281 female registered voters in one North Carolina city found that single status, divorce status, and having children were associated with increased risks of sexual assault (Elklit & Shevlin, 2010). Single mothers were found to be over three times more likely than partnered mothers to report at least one

form of physical or sexual violence. These findings suggest that living without a partner and having children increased the risk of sexual victimization (Elklin & Shevlin, 2010). However, it could also be argued that current family structure was a result of prior sexual victimization; previously partnered women may have become un-partnered due to their experience of sexual victimization.

Living arrangements are also closely related with prevalence of sexual violence among young women. Buddie & Testa (2005) suggest that living away from parents is a key factor for young women of having a higher chance of being sexually assaulted. Young women living with both of their parents reported lower non-consensual sexual experience rates than their peers living away from parents, regardless of whether they were in college (Buddie & Testa, 2005; Freeman & Temple, 2009). In their study of adolescents' self-reported sexual assault victimization, Freeman & Temple (2009) compared children living with both parents to those living with one parent and they found that those living with one parent were 2.5 times more likely to report a history of being forced into sexual intercourse. Further, adolescents living with their grandparents were 3.18 times more likely, and those living with another relative or a non-relative were 5.54 times more likely to report a history of sexual assault victimization than were adolescents living with both parents (Freeman & Temple, 2009).

### **Sexual Violence in Ethnic Minorities**

Ethnic minority women are confronted with numerous barriers to obtaining protection and assistance due to cultural beliefs and community attitudes towards sexual violence. Bryant-Davis, Chung & Tillman (2009) found that cultural beliefs that devalue



women while making women responsible for male sexual behavior and cultural beliefs that honor silent sacrifice of the self for the assumed honor of the family or community are common among African American, Asian American, Latina, and Native American communities in the U.S. The contemporary realities of oppression create a climate in which ethnic minority women's bodies have been systematically and routinely objectified, exoticized, and devalued (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2006). For example, many African Americans hold negative attitudes toward victims of sexual assault such as blaming the victim, questioning the victim's credibility, and trivializing the rape experience (Bryant-Davis et al., 2009).

Victims of sexual violence in Asian American communities endure negative cultural attitudes as well. In fact, one study found Asian American students were more likely to believe that the victims themselves precipitate rape, and therefore hold the responsibility for preventing rape (Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo, & Rheinboldt, 2005). Moreover, some Japanese American students were more likely to normalize sexually abusive behavior and tended to minimize the seriousness of rape more than their European American counterparts (Bryant-Davis et al., 2006). In general, due to this phenomenon of victim blaming, many groups of Asian Americans discourage victims from reporting or seeking help when sexual violence has been perpetrated (Lee et al., 2005).

The stereotypical portrayal of Latinas is often an image of women who are passionate, teasing, hypersexual, and flirtatious (Bryant-Davis et al., 2009). An awareness of societal myths surrounding Latinas results in the fear that they will not be believed and therefore lessens their inclination to report sexual assaults. The cultural

reinforcement for rape myths is that Latino men endorse rigid sex-role expectations and norms tied to machismo standards that privilege men's status over women (Bryant-Davis et al., 2009)

### **Socio-demographical Overview of Slavic Immigrants in Sacramento**

Although the Slavic population in Sacramento shares the Russian language and many of its cultural and religious beliefs, a historical connection with the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) proves that it is not a homogeneous group. This is made apparent in the numerous terms that are used by the group members to describe themselves. The most common terms are Russians, Russian-Americans, Slavic immigrants, Ukrainians, Armenians, etc. The heterogeneity of this population is further made evident in the following descriptions of Slavic immigrants.

After 1985 the more liberal policy of the Soviet government under Mikhail Gorbachev allowed anyone to leave the Soviet Union, thus, migration has increased considerably and includes an unprecedented number of people who left the countries of the USSR (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan) as a result of its dissolution in 1989. Émigrés include Jews and Christians who were discriminated against because of their religious backgrounds, as well as others seeking improved social and economic conditions. More than 600,000 people were estimated to have emigrated from the former USSR to the United States between 1987 and 2009 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2010). In the past ten years, combined immigration from Russia and the Ukraine exceeded 300,000 people and ranked fifth among countries

from which legal immigrants were admitted to the United States and throughout the 1990s and 2000s they constituted one of the largest groups accepted with refugee status (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2010; Miller & Gross, 2004).

Family reunification is a top priority of the U.S. immigration policy, so the numbers of new arrivals have continued to grow with the arrival of the parents, children, and other family members of these post-Soviet-era refugees (Hardwick, 2007). According to Hardwick (2007), an estimated 90 percent of these Slavic refugees remain in the area after their initial settlement in the region because of the support provided by refugee resettlement agencies, church networks, and family and friends from home.

However, because they are white, Slavic refugees who settled in Sacramento have become an invisible and underserved minority in this area. Thus, there is very limited demographical data on the Slavic population to be found in the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Approximately 2.3% or 41,405 people reported that Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania were the countries of their ancestry (US Census, 2000). The demographic data revealed in the most recent study by Bondarenko (2008) show that the Sacramento area is home to approximately 100,000 Russian-speaking residents from the former Soviet Union. Robertson (2006), on the other hand, states that the Slavic Community in Greater Sacramento is estimated at 230,000 and is growing by about 20,000 a year. Although these numbers do not match, they demonstrate how large this community really is. In fact, it is considered the second largest Russian speaking community in the United States (Bondarenko, 2008). Slavic immigrants are residing all over Sacramento County; they are densely populated in the areas of South Sacramento, North Sacramento, West

Sacramento, Rancho Cordova, and Citrus Heights. Some of these areas consist of impoverished neighborhoods with high rates of street crime, gang violence, and limited community resources.

A few studies conducted in Sacramento on the local Slavic community describe the majority of Slavic immigrants in the Sacramento area as Evangelical Christians who fled from the religious persecution caused during the Communist Regime (Bondarenko, 2008; Fanina, 2009; Morfas, 2000). The majority of these Slavic Evangelical Christians are divided into two denominations: Baptist and Pentecostal. Fanina (2009) notes that both groups have experienced extreme hardships and persecution in their homeland because of their uncompromising faith and their resistance to the demands of the government. Prior to fleeing to the United States, many of these Slavic Christian refugees have experienced torture, endured trials and confinement in prison and labor camps, and many were sent to mental hospitals. Some were even deprived of their parental rights. Almost every person who affiliated himself or herself with Christianity in the former USSR was denied the opportunity to practice their faith, hold desirable jobs, and take part in higher education. Therefore, Fanina (2009) states that many Slavic religious people who moved to the United States are not well educated and their job skills are limited to farming, mining, construction, factory work, and general labor. Many Slavic immigrants are employed in the manufacturing, trade, and service industries. Also many small, Slavic-owned businesses have been successfully launched in Sacramento. There are also Slavic immigrants who hold professional positions such as physicians,

engineers, lawyers and teachers; many, however, encounter difficulties pursuing careers in the U.S. due to certification or licensing requirements (Stratis Health, 2010).

According to Hardwick (2007), Sacramento is home to the largest Slavic fundamentalist community in the United States. Sacramento has more than 70 Slavic churches, which conduct their church services in the Russian or Ukrainian languages (Bondarenko, 2008). Several studies describe that the motivation for such a large number of Russian and Ukrainian Evangelical Christians to settle in Sacramento consisted in their impression that Sacramento was a Christian bastion (Bondarenko, 2008; Morfas 2000). Morfas (2000) in her study explains that while secretly practicing their religion back home, people listened to a radio station, Word to Russia, which would record Christian programs in Sacramento and then broadcast them across the Soviet Union through transmitters outside the country. It was headed by a very well respected figure in the Slavic immigrant community Michael Lokteff of West Sacramento (Bondarenko, 2008; Morfas, 2000).

Many Slavic Christian churches in Sacramento send missionaries to Russia, Ukraine, and other former Soviet republics. They launch and organize new church congregations that are supported financially and by weekly radio/internet shows broadcast from studios inside those churches. These provide evidence of the increasingly important role of Slavic values and beliefs in our area.

Drawing on this background, the Slavic community in Sacramento is different from other Slavic immigrant communities residing, for example, in New York's Brighton Beach, San Francisco's Richmond district, or West Hollywood that are mostly Jewish or

Russian Orthodox (Bondarenko, 2008; Morfas, 2000). Given the distinctive experiences of the Slavic Christian immigrants with the former Soviet government prior to their migration to the U.S., there are unique aspects of this particular community that cannot be ignored. These unique aspects include mistrust of authorities and a strong affiliation with the church and faith.

Being a part of the Slavic community, the author of this study has a special insight into the fact that there is a big difference of how government and authority is looked upon by the Slavic community verses the local mainstream community. Because Slavic immigrants have had mistrust and fear of law enforcement and the authority of the Communist Party in the former Soviet Union for generations, they tend to continue to have that same mind set for the authorities here. Slavic immigrants have experienced the KGB installing listening devices in their apartments, spying on them by sending the KGB undercover during their church services, accused them of being American spies, and detained them for interrogation (Morfas, 2000). With this background, Slavic individuals living in the U.S. usually do not seek out professional assistance from the government and its social programs. They turn either to their families or church and church leaders for help.

A few studies done on the Slavic community in Sacramento found that Slavic immigrants use spirituality and religious involvement to cope with life stressors ranging from financial or social problems encountered during the difficult times of adjustment to recovery from mental and psychological problems (Fanina, 2009; Morfas, 2000). Fanina (2009) describes that many believers turn to the clergymen in their church for help with

serious personal problems or family problems because of the trust that they have in the men of God. Besides the spiritual guidance and support, Slavic churches are a major place where immigrants form a Slavic community by coming together and by passing on traditional teachings, cultural influences, and education in the same way as back in their homeland (Fanina, 2009). Moreover, many Slavic churches serve as community resources in that they offer classes that teach English and computer and employment skills (Bondarenko, 2008). In addition, Slavic churches established several Russian schools where Slavic immigrant children are learning Russian grammar, Russian literature, and Russian history.

Russian is the largest of the Slavic languages and is spoken today by over 250 million people (Magocsi, 2011). For most first-generation immigrants the Russian language is used to communicate with one's family and friends until they attain knowledge of English. Additionally, the Russian language takes on a symbolic function and is maintained to preserve a sense of Russian identity. Therefore, most Slavic churches use the Russian language during church services. Also Slavic media helps to keep traditional Slavic culture alive. The Russian media includes several Russian-speaking radio stations and cable television stations as well as numerous newspapers, magazines, and books. In addition to speaking Russian, most Slavic immigrants also speak the language of the republics where they formerly lived such as Armenian, Belarusian, Moldavian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, etc.

**Slavic Family**

The family is a source of stability for Slavic immigrants. Bondarenko (2008) confirms that Slavic immigrants have very strong bonds and are focused on nuclear family including grandparents. Traditionally, children live with their parents until they get married (Bondarenko, 2008). Grandparents are expected to help raise their grandchildren if both parents are working and children are expected to care for their older parents in old age. Children are expected to be respectful of their elders. In addition, by not using the English language at home children show respect to their parents who do not speak English very well. Bondarenko (2008) explains that the extended family members such as aunts, uncles, and cousins share all family holidays and usually live in close proximity. Extended family members usually have strong kinship bonds and they provide support for each other during a crisis and often participate during any decision-making.

Slavic Christian families hold traditional views on men and women. The male is seen as the dominant head and the female is his helper. Males are seen as protectors, providers, and being courageous. Fanina (2009) affirms that if the husband is the head of the household and provider, then the wife is the subservient caregiver and maintainer of the home. Most of the family responsibilities and care are put on the women and girls. The responsibilities in the Slavic households are divided accordingly. Husbands are the financial providers; boys are responsible for fixing the cars and mowing the lawn, and mothers and girls are responsible for taking care of children and elders, cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, and all the other mundane matters of daily living.



## **The View of Women**

Within the religious community, the women and young girls are encouraged to be feminine, kind, obedient and submissive to men, being central caregivers and supporters of the family, becoming mothers, and being self-sacrificing. Sexual purity, virginity, and innocence are strongly emphasized and are taught from the pulpits of the churches and at home. For example, the Apostle Peter's letter is used as evidence by stating that women should not be "concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes" (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:3, New Living Translation). Instead, they should clothe themselves "with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God" (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:4).

Feminization of Slavic women is greatly discouraged. There is a belief that females cannot take a leading position in church or other important events. They can only assist men. For example, in his first letter to a church in Corinth the Apostle Paul writes:

Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings (1st Corinthians 14:34-35).

The humiliating attitude toward women can also be found in Russian proverbs where the most common word is baba, which has a cheap connotation, and not zhenshchina, which means a woman. For example, "a woman has long hair and a short brain," "just as a

chicken isn't a bird, so the baba isn't a human," and "a woman isn't made of china - hit her and she won't shatter."

### **Perceptions of Sexuality**

According to a few studies and behavioral indicators, Slavic people are quite ignorant in matters of sexuality. Issues of sexuality are often differentiated and eradicated from the Slavic community and churches. The tendency to label sexuality as taboo within the Slavic community and the churches in Sacramento has resulted in the non-existence of a vital dialogue regarding human sexuality, sex, sexual violence, abuse by the clergy and others in positions of power, and other sex related crisis in the Slavic immigrant community (Shapiro, 2001). Sex-talk is frequently conducted in secret and in shame, it is often on the outside of the four walls of the church, over the phone, in the home of a trusted other, but too frequently dialogue regarding sexuality is not initiated from the pulpit (Moore, 2007). Parents are often hesitant to speak with their children about sex issues, changes of puberty, etc.

Shapiro (2001) emphasizes that questions of sexuality and sexual behavior were taboo under Communism, therefore, even now many adults feel awkward to talk about these issues. He asserts that there still is a belief among many conservative Slavic people that any talk on sexual matters by adults to children or youth will awaken excessive interest in matters of sex among teenagers, stimulate an early start to sexual life, and provoke sexual permissiveness, masturbation and homosexuality, which are considered forms of deviance. Also, he adds that the idea of contraception and family planning is counter to the doctrines of the Christian church. Thus, the absence of sex-talk in the

Slavic community creates the illusion that the issues concerning sexuality are non-existent.

### **Slavic Church and Sexual Violence**

Existing literature indicates that spirituality and faith in God are integral parts of coping when Christian women face sexual violence. As a result, the women view both their experience of abuse and recovery from abuse as occurring within the context of their faith. Not surprisingly, then, many of the women turned to their religious communities for support. Some of these communities have minimized, denied, or enabled the abuse, whereas others have provided much needed social support, practical assistance, and spiritual encouragement (Gillum, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006; Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000).

Unfortunately, the help for victims of sexual violence from Slavic Christian churches in Sacramento is practically nonexistent. The widespread notion in these churches is that rape, molestation, incest and other forms of sexual assault are a problem only for those outside of church. This view results from the belief that sexual violence is immoral and sinful and, thus, should be unmentionable. As a result, it has become taboo among Slavic Christians to speak of it. Such neglect leaves Christian women particularly vulnerable, because those who are less knowledgeable may put themselves at greater risk (Walters & Spring, 1992). It also leaves women who have been sexually assaulted, Christian or not, without help from a key resource: the church.

Walters and Spring (1992) suggested that the number of Christians who are victimized by sexual violence could be extremely high because the church perpetuates

naïve views such as “God protects us if we are living right,” “it’s no wonder, look at how women dress these days,” and “that’s not a problem in our church.” In the Slavic Christian churches the sexual violence myths persist. It appears that many Christians do not understand that sexual violence is about aggression, rage, violence, domination, and is not only about sexual gratification; sex is the weapon (Walters & Spring, 1992). Research shows that many Christian women remain silent or anonymous and do not seek counsel from pastors because they rightly fear they will be misunderstood or judged (Bondarenko, 2008; Fanina 2009; Walters & Spring, 1992).

There is a stigma attached to sexual victimization in the conservative Christian community. Young women who have been victimized by sexual violence are considered to be sinful, disgraced, and discredited because they are no longer sexually pure and innocent. These women are bombarded with shameful, victim-blaming looks and messages. Such messages encompass the belief that the victim of a sexual assault wanted, asked for, enjoyed, or deserved to be assaulted because of her behavior or character (Koss, Goodman, Browne, Fitzgerald, Keita, & Russo, 1994; Yamawaki, 2007). In addition, women who dress in revealing clothing are judged much harsher and are perceived to be more promiscuous than women who dress in less revealing clothing. Thus, male sexual aggression against a woman is often justified and excused if the woman’s attire is somewhat physically revealing (e.g., short skirts, see-through clothing, tight-fitting clothing, tops that reveal cleavage) (Maurer & Robinson, 2008).

One of the major reasons for Slavic victims of sexual assault not to seek counsel from their pastors is the pastor’s inability to keep it confidential. Sadly, many Slavic

pastors speak to their spouses or other church leaders about the information disclosed by the victim which further jeopardizes the victim's privacy and safety and allows it to be exposed to the whole Slavic community. Hence, rarely seeking counsel from pastors creates an impression that sexual violence in the church is almost nonexistent.

Although, pastors in the Slavic Christian community are powerful gatekeepers who could become a valuable resource in helping Slavic victims to recover from their sexual victimization, they are very poorly equipped to deal with victims of sexual violence (Bondarenko, 2008; Fanina, 2009; Morfas, 2000; Walters & Spring, 1992). It is not that they do not want to help victims of sexual assault, they just do not know how. Many pastors lack the time and training to provide adequate, long-term counseling to sexual violence survivors (Walters & Spring, 1992). In the majority of cases, though, the most recognized "treatment" for sexual trauma among many Slavic church leaders is to ask the survivor of sexual violence to forgive, forget, and reconcile with her abuser. Fanina (2009) in her study emphasizes the Slavic Christians' belief in Christian duty that is to quickly forgive and reconcile with the perpetrator just as Christ did. In this situation, Dijk (2008) believes that forgiveness and reconciliation are in danger of becoming "cheap grace." Moving on to forgiveness and reconciliation as quickly as possible prevents the abuser from being fully accountable for his wrongdoing, which adds more suffering to the survivor. Fanina (2009) argues that by not requiring an abuser to take full responsibility for his action prevents the victim from a successful process of healing from the experience of the abuse since it is not shown as being wrong.

## **Sexual Violence and Spirituality**

Sexual violence can generate either negative or positive spiritual outcomes for its survivors. A number of studies have demonstrated that sexual violence has negative effects on survivors' spirituality. Research on outcomes of sexual violence against women by clergy, for example, has shown that survivors experience a distancing from their religious faith, spiritual distress, and decreased trust in clergy, church, and God (Dijk, 2008; Mart, 2004). Women who were sexually assaulted by non-clergy perpetrators also have been shown to experience negative spiritual effects, including a distancing from God and their religion, lesser involvement in church activities, more expressed anger at God, and experience of God as more distant (Ben-Ezra et al, 2010; Fallot & Heckman, 2005). Evidence, however, suggests that spirituality remains an important part of the recovery of sexual violence trauma for many survivors and can strengthen their religious beliefs (Ahrens, Abeling, Ahmad, & Hinman, 2010; Chapman & Steger, 2010; Gillum et al., 2006; Knapik et al., 2008; Ross, Handal, Clark, & Vander Wal, 2009).

Some researchers have found that for many survivors of sexual violence, spirituality is an integral aspect of their healing process (Ahrens et al., 2010; Knapik et al, 2008; Pargament et al., 2000). Aspects of spirituality found to be helpful for women who experienced sexual violence include belief in God's help, hope and spiritual encouragement (Ahrens et al., 2010; Gillum et al., 2006; Knapick et al., 2008). Prayer has been reported to be a major coping resource for religious people in the process of selecting solutions to problems (Wang et al., 2009).

Knapik and his colleagues (2008) found in their study that experiencing trauma could lead to a deepening of religion and spirituality. Several researches suggest that having a strong connection to God or a Higher Power for female survivors of sexual violence creates for these survivors the possibility of being supported and guided in their struggles, obtaining new insights that aid in their recovery, and acquiring strength as a result of passing spiritual challenges (Knapik et al., 2008; Pargament et al, 2008; Rowntree, 2010). For instance, a majority of women reported making sense of the violence by coming to believe that their violence and abuse served as a test provided by God through which they could become stronger (Knapik et al., 2008; Rowntree, 2010). Rowntree (2010) in her study on situating the survivor's knowledge about sexual violence found that survivors come to attribute spiritual meaning to their violence and experience divine interventions that change the course of their lives. Knapick et al (2008) found that women who experienced significant violence and abuse throughout their lives engaged in a process of reclaiming their spirit. This process is similar to "being awakened in so far as the women had to recover their vitality and the "animating force" that had been destroyed by years of abuse" (Knapik et al., 2008, p.347). Knapik et al. (2008) found that the progression from spiritual connection to spiritual journey to spiritual transformation represents a deepening and intensifying of "Being Delivered" from sexual violence.

However, Ross and her colleagues (2009) suggest that it is wrong to assume that people who identify as religious will employ their religion as part of their ways of coping with sexual violence. They argue that those individuals who perceive their relationship

with God as an important part of their daily functioning are more likely to actively engage in strategies that include God in problem solving rather than exclusively putting the responsibility of solving problem on themselves. Therefore, Ross and her colleagues (2009) suggest that it is insufficient for social workers to simply ask their clients: “Are you a religious person?” Rather, they encourage social workers to assess how religion helps their client by asking questions such as: “In times of stress do you utilize your religion and how do you utilize your religion?” And “Does it help you?”

### **Obstacles in Getting Help**

Slavic victims of sexual violence face a series of obstacles in getting help with their sexual trauma. Some studies suggest that immigrant women are faced with several social, cultural, and political barriers in getting help that include social isolation in the small community, language barriers, discrimination, fear of being revictimized when pressing charges against the perpetrator and shame and religious and societal stigma associated with sexual violence (Bondarenko, 2008; Fanina, 2009; Leipzig, 2006; Morfas, 2000). Both Bondarenko (2008) and Leipzig (2006) emphasize that because of their lack of familiarity with mental health services, many Slavic immigrants hold numerous misconceptions about psychotherapy and counseling and approach it with suspicion and resistance, and are hesitant to seek services.

### **Attitudes toward the Care Professions**

Several studies suggest that there is no culture of psychological therapy and no approach and understanding of the matter among Slavic immigrants. It is a foreign concept to many of them. Cohen (1994) notes,



The professional/support system in the former USSR was deficient not only in practical terms, but suffered from rejection in ideological terms as well. In a society where seeking help and initiative in accepting help, during emotional and mental distress, is considered personal failure, then the stigma for a person in distress is to feel parasitic and worthless (cited in Sherer & Etgar, 2005, p. 684). Therapist Leipzig (2006) found that when a Slavic immigrant comes to a session, he/she is very guarded and careful in what they disclose. She confirmed that they are not comfortable with professional boundaries and a strictly business demeanor of a professional. At the same time, she explained, for Slavic immigrants to form a bond they need social worker or therapist to be their “friend” and to be available and helpful when they need.

Concerning social work, Sherer and Etgar (2005) noted that it was not a recognized profession in the former USSR. It had no professional status, and, in fact, the term cannot be translated into the Russian language. The roles generally attributed to the social worker were fulfilled by members of a labor union (Sherer and Etgar, 2005).

### **Reporting to Police**

There are several reasons why Slavic victims of sexual assault do not report this crime to the police. The first reason consists in their fear and mistrust in the governmental authorities. The police in the former Soviet Union were perceived as corrupt, dishonest, rude, mean, and lazy officials who expected bribes for everything and would refuse to do anything in a timely manner. People would informally call them “musor,” which means trash. Thus, many Slavic people would never expect anything

positive to come from such authorities. Also, in the Former Soviet Union as well as in the new Russia and the new Ukraine there was no specific department within the Law Enforcement Agency that would deal with sex crimes and handle such cases in a sensitive manner, Slavic women did not form a habit of reporting sexual assaults to the police. Moreover, the World Organization Against Torture's (OMCT) program on Violence against Women in the Russian Federation that emerged from the fall of the Soviet Union (2003) reveals that women often faced further violence when they went to the police station. The report gives the example of a case, in which two women went to the police station to report the rape of one of the women: both women were then locked up and raped in the police station by the police officers (OMCT, 2003). It was reported that this case was not out of the ordinary. OMCT (2003) also reports that victims of rape faced serious obstacles in pressing charges against the perpetrators because of the stereotypical views that the victim was to blame for promiscuous behavior, which "invited" rape. These women were faced with disbelief and blame.

A final yet important reason for Slavic Christian women that prevents them from reporting this crime to the police is their religious belief. There is a teaching among the Slavic Christians that discourages lawsuits. Not only does it discourage lawsuits, it also discourages believers from disclosing their complaints outside of the church, for this is considered unrighteous. This teaching is based on the Scripture and is written in the first letter of the Apostle Peter to the church in Corinth. It states that:

When one of you has a dispute with another believer, how dare you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter instead of taking it to other believers!

So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disputes in this life. If you have legal disputes about such matters, why go to outside judges who are not respected by the church? Even to have such lawsuits with one another is a defeat for you. Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated? (1st Corinthians 6:1-7)

### **Gaps in the Literature**

Across disparate fields, there has been a growing call for culturally competent research that documents Slavic immigrant's cultural values, beliefs, and views on sexual violence. Despite a growing body of literature documenting issues of Russian Jewish immigrants in the U.S., there is a serious insufficiency in academic research about Slavic immigrants living in the Sacramento area. Drawing this conclusion from the background information provided, the Slavic immigrant community in Sacramento is different from other Slavic immigrant communities residing in other places in the U.S. and, therefore, the existent knowledge cannot be used for interventions with this particular community. Leipzig (2006), for instance, has explored the attitudes of Russian-speaking immigrants about counseling and psychotherapy; however, the limitation of this research is that it does not test the relationship between Russian-speaking immigrants' religious background and attitudes toward therapy. There is limited research on sexual violence among ethnic minority women, in general. Most of the literature on sexual violence issues is written with information and data on the general population residing in the U.S. Only a few researchers have done studies on racial/ethnic minorities such as African American, Asian American, Latina, and Native American (Abraham, 1999; Bryant-Davis

et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2005). Many studies utilized self-reporting surveys, which in turn had limitations pertinent to this method (Behnken et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2009).

This study seeks to fill the gap in the literature by conducting a mixed survey study to document Slavic immigrants' understanding of sexual violence and their perceptions and attitudes toward sexual violence against women in the Slavic immigrant community in Sacramento. In addition, this study aims to find the prevalence and magnitude of sexual violence among Slavic immigrants in Sacramento.

## Chapter 3

### METHODS

#### **Study Design**

To study the cultural considerations of Slavic immigrants in the Sacramento Region on sexual violence against women this study utilized a descriptive research design to examine and gain in-depth information about the prevalence of sexual violence, community knowledge on matters of sexual violence, and their perceptions and attitudes. To address the research questions, the researcher pursued both quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods. It was a mixed survey study using both questionnaire and key informants interviews. This approach was appropriate because this study was seeking to examine the relationship between the knowledge Slavic people have about sexual violence, their attitudes and perceptions about it and the prevalence of sexual violence against women in the community.

The quantitative survey design was utilized to precisely describe the characteristics of a population and was based on quantitative data obtained from a sample of people that was thought to be representative of that population (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). A structured questionnaire comprised of multiple-choice questions and Likert-type statements was designed and administered to measure the Slavic religious people's understanding, behavior and attitudes toward the issues of sexual violence in the Slavic community.

The qualitative design, on the other hand, utilized an interview guide to measure the prevalence of sexual violence in the Slavic community, inspected deeper meanings of

the behavior and attitudes Slavic people have, and provided some recommendations for future social work practice among Slavic immigrants. The interview guide was comprised of multiple choice questions and open-ended questions.

There are some weaknesses pertaining to both the survey and the key informants' interviews, though. Because this study surveyed only forty subjects, it is impossible to say that the total population of Slavic religious immigrants has the same knowledge, attitudes and behavior as the forty participants who completed the questionnaire. Therefore, generalizations cannot be made to the larger population. Additionally, the findings of this study will be applicable only to the Slavic religious community in Sacramento, CA. Finally, the researcher may have influenced the data collected from the key informants. Subsequent researchers may interpret the information differently.

### **Variables**

This study examines the impact of cultural and religious beliefs and attitudes on the identification and disclosure among Slavic survivors of sexual violence.

### **Research Questions**

This study examines the following: Is sexual violence against women prevalent in the religious Slavic community in the Sacramento Region? If so, how serious is this problem? What do Slavic religious people know about sexual violence? What are their attitudes and perceptions on issues of sexual violence? The last question explores the barriers and challenges that Slavic women who survived sexual violence face to obtaining services.

## **Sampling Design**

The research study design required thirty five to forty participants for the survey and three to five participants for the interviews. The surveyed study population included thirty-nine recent Slavic immigrants both males and females from 18 to 60 years old who arrived in the United States within the last twenty years. All of these participants considered themselves as first-generation immigrants from the countries of the former USSR such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan who continue using the Russian language in their households. This study included equal numbers of single and married participants. All participants of the study were churchgoers who identified themselves with a variety of denominations such as Baptist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Non-denominational. English language proficiency varied among participants. The majority of the participants were high school graduates, many had completed some college or had 4-year college degrees, and several had obtained graduate degrees. Equal numbers of Russian and English questionnaires were distributed and collected.

The five key informants were also first-generation Slavic immigrants and continued using the Russian language when needed. Not all key informants identified themselves as churchgoers. Most participants were married and had completed at least 4 years of college. The key informants included a female social worker, a male psychotherapist, two male pastors, and a female church counselor. All five key

informants had some degree of professional knowledge on the issue of sexual violence in the Slavic community.

### **Sample Selection Techniques**

The 39 survey participants were recruited using convenient and purposive sampling methods. The researcher insured that the participants were Russian-speaking first-generation immigrants who attended different local Slavic community churches. She found convenient locations where the potential participants could be easily reached. These activities included a choir rehearsal, a bible study group and a visit to a church office. With the permission of a choir director, the researcher visited a young adult choir rehearsal where she informed the choir members about the research project. The researcher then asked the potential participants to voluntarily participate in the study. The second event involved a visit to a middle age adult bible study. With the permission of a bible study leader, the researcher used similar steps in recruiting participants. The last visit was to a local church office. With the permission of a church secretary, the researcher visited that office where she approached each participant in person. The researcher invited the participants to voluntary participate in the study and informed them about the research subject. Participants received no compensation for completing the survey.

The selection of the subjects for the interview was done through a judgmental sampling method due to the specific predefined group and the purpose the study was seeking. The researcher used her knowledge and judgment of the community to hand pick five key informants who had some professional knowledge on the subject matter.



The researcher was aware that there were a few Russian-speaking church counselors, social workers and a therapist who worked within the Slavic community and provided some form of counseling, therapy or consultation. Although the researcher was not personally familiar with most of the key informants, through the network of community leaders and other professionals the researcher was able to gather potential key informants' contact information and to invite them to participate in the study. The researcher contacted all potential key informants via telephone and asked them to voluntarily participate in the study. These participants received no compensation for completing the survey.

### **Measurement Instruments**

The researcher used a questionnaire and an interview guide developed by the researcher for use in this study. The researcher took all the possible steps to develop culturally competent measurement instruments that ensured the same value and meaning when administered across English speaking or Russian speaking cultures (Rubin & Babbie, 2008). The translation equivalence was attained when both instruments had been translated in Russian and back translated in English. The people speaking both languages who had expertise in human services facilitated the conceptual equivalence between the English and Russian versions of the instruments. For example, the researcher, while creating a Russian version of both instruments, was faced with a cultural and linguistic dilemma that had to be addressed in the study. Surprisingly, there was no direct translation of "sexual assault" in Russian - in the Russian language the concept of sexual

assault meant a sexual attack, therefore, the researcher had to modify this study and, instead, use a concept of sexual violence.

The development of the data collection tools was guided by the research questions and informed by the current literature and practical knowledge of the researcher. The study's survey questionnaire consisted of four parts, with 41 well-developed questions. The majority of the questionnaire was comprised of multiple-choice questions and statements which the participant was asked to rank on a Likert-type scale (e.g., strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree) his/her opinion on each criteria. Only the demographic section included open-ended questions.

The survey questionnaire assessed the following: 1) a subject's level of spirituality, 2) a subject's understanding of and perceptions on the issues pertaining to sexual violence in the Slavic community in Sacramento, 3) a subject's attitudes toward sexual violence, and 4) demographics. The English version of the questionnaire is available in Appendix C and the Russian version is available in Appendix D.

The interview guide consisted of 27 open-ended and multiple-choice questions. The interview guide assessed the following: 1) the nature of the services the interviewee provided, 2) characteristics of the clientele, 3) the knowledge obtained from the professional experience about sexual violence against Slavic women in the Slavic community, and 4) recommendations. The English version of the interview guide is available in Appendix G and the Russian version is available in Appendix H.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection procedures for this study involved one-on-one meetings with the interviewees and visits to a choir rehearsal, a bible study group and the church office. The researcher contacted the key informants, the choir director, a bible study leader, and a church secretary via telephone in order to introduce herself, inform them about the project, determine if they met the required characteristics, and obtain permission to meet.

**Interview.** The day of the interviews, the research subjects were made aware that their participation was voluntary. The researcher provided the participants more information regarding the nature of the study and the estimated amount of time needed for the interviews. The research participants were assured confidentiality and were asked to sign the consent form. The researcher also obtained their permission to have their interviews recorded audibly. The interviews were recorded on the digital recorder in order to assure the accuracy of the responses. Finally, the researcher thanked the participants for their participation. All interviews were conducted in Russian language.

**Survey.** The day of the data collection for the surveys, the research subjects were made aware that their participation was voluntary and if a potential participant chose not to be a part of the study, there would be no judgment or pressure put on him or her. The researcher then provided the participants with more information about the nature of the study and the estimated time needed for completing the questionnaire. The research participants were assured confidentiality and were asked not to write their names on their questionnaire. The researcher explained that all questionnaires and consent forms would be collected separately and kept at different secured locations. The participants were

reminded that if they wished to discontinue their participation or drop out of the study they could do so at any time without explanation. When the consent forms and the questionnaires were distributed to the potential clients, the researcher provided each participant with a preferred language version. Equal numbers of Russian and English questionnaires were distributed. The participants were encouraged to be honest and respond with an answer, which closely reflects their own opinion, knowledge, or attitude. After completion of the survey, each participant placed their own consent form and survey in separate boxes so that the researcher did not see their handwriting. Finally, the researcher thanked the participants.

### **Statistical Analysis Plan**

The analysis of the collected data was completed in two different ways due to the two measuring instruments utilized in this study. Quantitative data was input and analyzed using SPSS. The researcher numbered each questionnaire with a number 1 through 39 and coded each question and answer. The researcher examined similarities and differences among all the surveys to determine the level of knowledge about sexual assault and perceptions and attitudes toward sexual violence in the Slavic religious community. Descriptive and inferential statistics including frequency distribution, central tendencies, dispersion, cross tabulation, and chi-square tests were performed. The study findings are presented in Chapter 4.

The qualitative data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics. Percentage and frequency distribution were utilized to describe characteristics of the target population. The correlation and differences between the variables were

analyzed by chi-square, cross tabulation, and central tendencies. The qualitative data were organized and sorted by themes and patterns. Other analysis methods were also used. The results and recommendations were utilized to help modify future services to victims of sexual violence in the Slavic community and to develop culturally appropriate sexual violence prevention and education programs.

### **Protecting of Human Subjects**

The researcher obtained approval from California State University, Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in the Division of Social Work to conduct the study as a minimal risk study.

Two versions of consent forms were developed: one for the key informants participating in the interview and one for the survey participants. Additionally, both informed consents were translated in the Russian language to accommodate all participants. Please see Appendix A and Appendix B for the survey informed consents in the English and Russian languages. The interviewee informed consents in the English and Russian languages are available in Appendix E and Appendix F. The researcher destroyed all data as soon as the study was complete.

## Chapter 4

### DATA ANALYSIS & STUDY FINDINGS

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides information related to results of the surveys and interviews completed by the Slavic participants who reside in the Sacramento area in California. Thirty-nine individuals agreed to complete the questionnaire and five individuals agreed to participate in the key informants' interviews. Using survey questionnaires and key informants interviews the researcher inquired about these Slavic people's understanding of and perceptions on the issues pertaining to sexual violence in the Slavic community and their attitudes toward sexual violence. In addition, this study examined whether sexual violence against women is prevalent in this particular community and whether it is perceived as a concern. The researcher of this study also examined identification and disclosure among Slavic survivors of sexual violence as well as barriers and challenges that Slavic women who survived sexual violence face to obtaining services.

The guiding hypotheses of this study are the following:

1. Sexual violence against women exists in the Slavic community, although a large number of cases of sexual assault are not reported due to a lack of knowledge and fear of law enforcement.
2. Drawing upon the unique mixture of religion and culture inherited by many Slavic immigrants, another hypothesis is that many Slavic immigrants have negative attitudes towards victims of sexual assault.

3. The shame and stigma that is associated with sexual victimization makes Slavic women struggle with their trauma in secret rather than seeking support and help.
4. Slavic religious people are quite ignorant in matters of sexuality, and are, therefore, ambivalent to the issues of sexual violence.
5. The belief that sexual violence is a sin and that a Christian person does not practice this sin instills in the religious Slavic people a belief that sexual violence is not existent. Thus, there is no need to address it.

These hypotheses were guiding the research tools and subsequent data analysis.

This chapter presents demographics of the study population, description of findings obtained from the surveys and interviews, and a discussion about major findings. The researcher utilizes a number of tables to demonstrate frequency distribution, percentage distribution, and other study findings. Using inferential statistics, the researcher presents some statistically significant correlations and differences in the gathered data. The findings obtained from interviews were analyzed by content and are presented according to common themes, trends, and unique concerns. The discussion of major findings will conclude this chapter.

For data collection purposes the researcher visited a church choir rehearsal, a bible study group and a church office to ensure that the potential participants are Russian-speaking first-generation immigrants who attend different local Slavic community churches. The researcher distributed 55 copies of the consent forms and the survey questionnaires and a total of 39 completed questionnaires and consent forms were returned back to her.

### Socio-demographics of the Survey Participants

Table 1

*Participants' Gender, Marital Status, Age and Length of Stay in the U.S*

Measure		Frequency	Percentage
Gender:	Female	22	56
	Male	17	44
Marital Status:	Single	19	49
	Married	20	51
Age:	18-35 years old	29	75
	36-60 years old	10	25
Length of Stay in the U.S.:	1-10 years	9	23
	11-20 years	30	77

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the participants by gender, marital status, age and their length of stay in the U.S. Out of 39 participants 22 (56%) were females and 17 (44%) were males. Five more females participated in the study in comparison to males. About the same number of participants indicated that they were single ( $N=19$ , 49%) and 20 (51%) were married. Only one more married respondent participated in this study.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 60. The question regarding age in the survey was an open-ended question. The researcher categorized the participants' age in two categories: 18 to 35 and 36 to 60. The majority of the respondents were between the



ages of 18 and 35 (75%). The fewer number of the respondents were between the ages of 36 and 60 (25%). The median age of the respondents was 27 years old.

The majority of the participants (77%) reported that they have resided in the United States between 11 and 20 years. 23% of participants have lived in the U.S. between 1 and 10 years. The median stay of the participants in the U.S. is 13 years.

All participants indicated that they attended Christian churches that belonged to a variety of denominations. Baptists were the most represented group with a total of 19 (49%) participating in the study. Respondents who attended Non-denominational churches were the second largest group with a total of 15 (38%). Two participants (5%) who indicated that they attended the Pentecostal church were least represented in this study. The “other” category was comprised of individuals who did not attend churches that were Baptist, Non-denominational, Pentecostal, Orthodox, or Charismatic or it could also mean that they did not attend any church at all. This category included three participants (8%). None of the participants attended Orthodox or Charismatic church.

An overwhelming proportion of the participants (94%) indicated that faith was very important in their lives. Only one respondent (3%) reported that faith was not important to her. The vast majority (87%) of respondents participated in most church activities and two thirds of the participants (77%) attended church on weekly basis. Thirteen percent reported that they did not participate in most of the church activities and 23% of participants did not attend church on weekly basis.

Table 2

*Participants' Proficiency in the English and Russian Languages and Education*

Categories	Levels	Percentage
Comfort / Proficiency Level in the English language:	Very low	10.3
	Average	28.2
	Good	17.9
	Proficient	43.6
Comfort / Proficiency Level in the Russian language:	Very low	2.6
	Average	7.7
	Good	28.2
	Proficient	61.5
Level of Education:	High School or GED	12.8
	Some College	53.8
	College Graduate	23.1
	Post-graduate or Professional Degree	10.3

Table 2 provides information related to participants' proficiency in the English and Russian languages and their education level. The majority, 44% ( $n = 17$ ) reported proficient knowledge in the English language and 18% ( $n = 7$ ) felt comfortable in English. In 28% ( $n = 11$ ) of respondents, the proficiency level in English was average and 10% ( $n = 4$ ) had very low English language proficiency.

About two thirds, 62% ( $n=24$ ) of respondents indicated that they are proficient in the Russian language. About a quarter of participants, 28% ( $n=11$ ), stated that their level of proficiency in Russian was good and 8% ( $n=3$ ) had average proficiency in Russian. Only one participant (3%) admitted that his Russian proficiency level was very low. It is so because this particular participant is 18 years old and has lived in the U.S. his whole life.

Table 2 demonstrates that the majority of the participants in this study had a significantly high education level. For example, 54% ( $n=21$ ) have completed some college, 23% ( $n=9$ ) have graduated from college and 10% ( $n=4$ ) have completed post-graduate or professional degree. The other 13% ( $n=5$ ) of the respondents either currently attend high school, have completed high school, or took the GED exam.

### **Quantitative Sample Data Analysis and Findings**

In this section, the researcher will present findings from the survey that will demonstrate participant's perceptions on and understanding of the issues pertaining to sexual violence against women in the Slavic religious community.

Participants were asked several questions that helped the researcher identify what they know about the issues of sexual violence in the Slavic community. Frequency statistics indicated that the study population has some common knowledge about sexual violence, however, their knowledge is limited.

Table 3

*Knowing Someone Who Has Been a Victim of Sexual Assault or Molest*

Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	11	28
No	24	62
Maybe	4	10
Total	39	100

As shown in Table 3, two thirds of the respondents ( $n = 24$ , 62%) reported that they did not know anyone, 11 (28%) of the respondents knew someone who has been sexually violated, and 10% of participants ( $n = 4$ ) were not sure.

Table 4

*View of Sexual Violence in the Slavic Community as a Concern*

Views	Agree	Disagree	Total
Within the Slavic Christian community sexual violence is a concern.	20 (51%)	19 (49%)	39 (100%)
Sexual violence is an unspoken problem in the Slavic community.	37 (95%)	2 (5%)	39 (100%)
Sexual violence prevention should be a priority for action in the Slavic community.	30 (77%)	9 (23%)	39 (100%)

The information provided in Table 4 indicated that the participants' perception on sexual violence being a concern in the Slavic community was divided in half and is incoherent. 51% ( $n=20$ ) felt that sexual violence within a Slavic Christian community is a concern and 49% ( $n=19$ ) felt that sexual violence is not a concern. However, almost all participants ( $n=37$ , 95%) of this study believed that sexual violence is an unspoken problem in this community and 77% ( $n=30$ ) reported that sexual violence prevention should be a priority for action in the Slavic community.

Table 5

*What Study Participants Consider as Sexual Violence by Percentage*

Types of Sexual Violence	Percentage
Stranger rape	100
Asking or pressuring child or teenager to engage in sexual activities	100
Sexual exploitation by someone in a place of authority	100
Indecent exposure of the genitals to a child or a teenager	97
Incest against a person's will	97
Ongoing sexual abuse or a single incident of sexual intercourse with child or teenager	97
Touching intimate parts of a person, against their will	95
Displaying porno/sexual shows and pictures to child/ teenager	92
Unwanted or forced sexual intercourse with wife or girlfriend	90
Non-consensual sexual play (e.g. kissing, fondling, pinching)	87

Participants were asked to check what they considered as sexual violence out of the list provided in their questionnaires. Unanimously participants (100%) of the study reported that sexual violence included stranger rape, asking or pressuring child or teenager to engage in sexual activities, and sexual exploitation by someone in place of authority. Although the vast majority of participants believed that other types listed in the questionnaire were sexual violence, three percent ( $n=1$ ) did not consider incest, indecent exposure of genitals to a child or teenager, and ongoing sexual abuse or a single incident of sexual intercourse with a child or teenager a problem. Five percent ( $n=2$ ) indicated that touching intimate parts of a person, against their will is not violent. Eight percent ( $n=3$ ) excluded displaying porno/sexual shows and pictures to child/teenager from the list of types of sexual violence. Ten percent ( $n=4$ ) of participants did not consider an unwanted or forced sexual intercourse with wife or girlfriend as sexual violence, and so did thirteen percent ( $n=5$ ) with non-consensual sexual play like kissing, fondling, and pinching.

Table 6

*The Most Common Perpetrator in the Slavic Community*

Perpetrator	Frequency	Percentage
Stranger	25	64
Friend or coworker	19	49
Extended family member	18	46
Significant other	14	36
Immediate family member	10	26

The information provided in Table 6 indicated that a large percentage of participants believed that the most common perpetrator is detached from the family system, but are somewhat close and have an access to the victim. For example, two thirds of participants ( $n=25$ , 64%), perceived a stranger as the most common perpetrator. Almost half of participants, ( $n=19$ , 49%) believe that a friend or a coworker is the most common perpetrator. 46 % ( $n=18$ ) indicated that an extended family member is the most common perpetrator. Conversely, significant others are perceived to be the most common perpetrator by 36% ( $n=14$ ) of the group while an immediate family member is believed to be the least common perpetrator ( $n=10$ , 26%).

The most responsible party for causing sexual violence, as indicated by vast majority of participants ( $n=33$ , 85%) is the perpetrator. Five percent ( $n=2$ ) of respondents blamed the victim for causing sexual violence. Ten percent ( $n=4$ ) believed that both the victim and the perpetrator are responsible for sexual violence events.

The study findings show that all participants ( $N=39$ , 100%) share a common knowledge that sexual violence is a crime; however, the vast majority of respondents ( $n=33$ , 85%) feel that it is unlikely for a Slavic woman to report this crime to law enforcement. Moreover, 95% ( $n=37$ ) strongly believe that if sexual violence should happen to a Slavic woman, she would keep it secret. On the contrary, 87% ( $n=34$ ) did not view woman's experience of sexual violence as a private matter. Only a small number of participants, ( $n=5$ , 13%) agreed upon woman's experience of sexual violence being a private matter that should not be dealt with in the public arena.

Table 7

*Who do Slavic Victims of Sexual Violence Turn to for Help*

	Number	Percent
Family	17	43%
Nobody	16	41%
Friend	14	36%
Church minister	5	13%
Law Enforcement	5	13%
Health Care Professional	5	13%
Social Worker	2	5%

Table 7 provides information in response to Slavic victims' help seeking behavior. The majority of participants reported that these victims would seek help from their families, friends, or simply would keep it quiet. 43% of participants ( $n=17$ ) indicated that



Slavic victims would first turn to their family for help. 41 % ( $n=16$ ) of respondents reported that these victims would not turn to anyone for help, and 36% ( $n=14$ ) believed that they would seek help from their friends. An equal number of participants ( $n=5$ ; 13%) considered a church minister, law enforcement, or social worker as someone who they would first turn to for help. Only two participants (5%) believed that Slavic victims of sexual violence would turn to a social worker for help.

In addition, out of five respondents who indicated that they would seek help from a church minister, four of them were young participants between 18 and 35 years old. Similarly, a majority ( $n=4$ , 10%) of those participants who indicated that they would turn for help to law enforcement or health care professional were young. Older participants were more likely to seek help from social workers.

Table 8 and Table 9 present findings about participants' perceptions and attitudes toward sexual violence in the Slavic religious community, their attitudes toward sexually violated women, and their perceptions on victims' behavior. Participants were asked to rank on a Likert-type scale (e.g., strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree) their opinion on each criteria. For the purpose of this study, the researcher combined results for each statement in two categories: Agree and Disagree.

Table 8

*Perceptions on Sexual Violence in the Slavic Religious Community*

Opinion Statements	Agree	Disagree
Molestation of children almost never happens in their own home.	18%	82%
Rape never happens in the woman's own home.	13%	87%
Sexual violence mainly occurs in large families.	31%	69%
Sexual violence only occurs in unchristian families.	10%	90%
Men from Christian families very rarely rape women.	56%	44%
Men who belong to Slavic churches in Sacramento never molest children.	49%	51%

The information provided in Table 8 indicated that most of the participants are aware that sexual violence against women and children can happen in their own home, which demonstrated that the respondents do not exclude the fact that the perpetrator can be a family member. For example, the majority of participants ( $n=32$ , 82%) indicated that molestation of children can happen in their own home and 87% ( $n=34$ ) of participants indicated that Slavic women can be raped in their own home. About two thirds of the participants, 69% ( $n=27$ ) disagreed with the statement that sexual violence mainly occurs in large families. However, the respondents' opinions divided in half when they were asked about Christian men attempting rape or molest. Although, the vast majority of participants ( $n=35$ , 90%) admitted that sexual violence does not only occur in

unchristian families, 56% ( $n=22$ ) of participants believed that Slavic Christian men very rarely rape women and 49% ( $n=19$ ) believed that Slavic Christian men never molest children. However, 51% ( $n=20$ ) reported that they do not believe that men from Slavic Churches in Sacramento never molest children.

Table 9

*False Beliefs about Sexual Assault*

Beliefs	Agree	Disagree
Women that go around wearing low-cut tops or short skirts are just asking for trouble.	62%	38%
In most cases, this is the woman who provokes sexual assault on herself.	23%	77%
The woman is responsible for preventing sexual assault.	38%	62%
Sexual satisfaction is the primary motivation for sexual violence.	54%	46%

Table 9 provides a list of false beliefs about sexual assault that are common among many ethnic groups. The information in this table reveals Slavic religious immigrants' beliefs about sexual assault. A majority of those surveyed ( $n=24$ ; 62%) indicated that a woman's appearance and dress contributes to the happening of sexual violence. Conversely, the majority of participants ( $n=30$ , 77%) did not believe that in most cases it is the woman who provokes sexual assault on herself. Additionally, 62% ( $n=24$ ) of respondents believed that it was not only a woman's responsibility for

preventing sexual violence. More than half of participants, ( $n = 22$ , 54%), though, believed that sexual satisfaction is the primary motivation for sexual violence.

In response to participants' perceptions of how sexual violence affects Slavic women, a majority of participants believed that victimization by sexual violence affects victims alone, especially those who were virgins. For example, 64% ( $n = 25$ ) strongly believed that experiencing sexual assault brings more disgrace on someone who was a virgin and 36% ( $n = 14$ ) challenged this perception. Also a majority ( $n = 28$ , 72%) disagreed that a woman, who was sexually violated, would bring shame on her family and 28% ( $n = 11$ ), on the contrary, believed that this would bring shame on a woman's family. Finally, a majority of respondents ( $n = 23$ , 59%) reported that, in their opinion, victims of sexual assault, as a rule, blame themselves for provoking sexual assault; however, 41% ( $n = 16$ ) of participants disagreed that victims of sexual assault, as a rule, blame themselves for provoking sexual assault.

In response to participant's view of women who disclose their experience of sexual violence, a majority of participants, ( $n = 31$ , 79%), believed that Slavic women would not exaggerate how much sexual assault affects them. Furthermore, a majority of participants ( $n = 23$ , 59%) indicated that Slavic women do not lie about rape as means to punish men. However, 41% ( $n = 16$ ) believed that women do lie about rape to punish men.

### Correlation between Variables

Table 10

*Statistically Significant Chi Square Tests*

Correlation Between Variables	$\chi^2$	df	$p < .10^*$
Woman is responsible for preventing SV** vs. Gender	13.14	1	.000
Christian men rarely rape women vs. Age	6.171	1	.013
Christian men rarely rape women vs. Marital Status	3.086	1	.079
Christian men never molest children vs. Age	5.267	1	.022
Christian men never molest children vs. Marital Status	4.356	1	.037
Mostly women provoke SV** vs. Age	5.491	1	.019
Women's appearance vs. Marital Status	5.912	1	.015
Victims blame themselves vs. Marital Status	3.313	1	.069

*Note.* \* Significant, two-tailed, \*\*Sexual Violence

The information in Table 10 indicated that the differences between listed above variables were statistically significant upon performing chi-square tests. For example, the responses regarding a belief that a woman is responsible for preventing sexual assault significantly differed by gender ( $\chi^2=13.14$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p = .000$ ), where p-value  $< .000$ . The majority of female respondents ( $n=19$ , 85%) are more likely to disagree that a woman is responsible for preventing sexual violence. A majority of male respondents ( $n=12$ , 70%), on the other hand, are more likely to agree that it is a woman's responsibility to prevent sexual violence.

Upon performing Chi-Square analysis to test the difference between perceptions of young and old participants on whether Christian men rarely rape women, the results indicated the correlation between these variables was statistically significant ( $\chi^2=6.171$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p = .013$ ). A majority of young respondents ( $n =16$ , 55%) tend to disagree that Christian men very rarely rape women. A vast majority of older respondents ( $n =9$ , 90%), on the contrary, tend to agree that Christian men very rarely rape women. The results also indicate, that although the majority of young participants are more likely to disagree with this statement, there is a large number of young participants ( $n =13$ , 45%) who agreed that Christian men rarely rape women.

Statistical significance was also found between single and married participants and their perception on whether Christian men rarely rape women ( $\chi^2=3.086$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p = .079$ ). Single respondents ( $n =11$ , 58%) are more likely to disagree that Christian men rarely rape women. Conversely, married respondents ( $n =14$ , 70%) are more likely to agree that Christian men very rarely rape women.

There is a statistically significant difference between older and young participants in regard to whether Christian men never molest children ( $\chi^2=5.267$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p =.022$ ). A majority of young participants ( $n =18$ , 60%) tend to disagree that Christian men never molest children, while the majority of older participants ( $n =8$ , 80%) tend to agree that Christian men never molest children.

Also, there is a statistically significant difference between single and married participants in regard to whether Christian men never molest children ( $\chi^2= 4.356$ ,  $df=1$ ,

$p=.037$ ). The majority of single respondents ( $n=13$ , 68%) are more likely to disagree that Christian men never molest children, while the majority of married participants ( $n=13$ , 65%) are more likely to agree that Christian men never molest children.

There is a statistically significant difference between young and older participants and their responses regarding whether it is a woman who provokes sexual violence on herself, in most cases ( $\chi^2=5.491$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.019$ ). The results indicate that a majority of young respondents ( $n=25$ , 86%) tend to disagree that a woman in most cases provokes sexual violence on herself. Interestingly enough, older participants equally agreed ( $n=5$ , 50%) and disagreed ( $n=5$ , 50%) about whether it is the woman who provokes sexual violence on herself.

Another statistically significant difference was found between single and married participants concerning woman's appearance and its contribution to her sexual victimization ( $\chi^2=5.912$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.015$ ). A majority of single participants ( $n=11$ , 58%) is likely to disagree with the statement that when women go around wearing low-cut tops or short skirts, they are asking for trouble. A majority of married participants ( $n=16$ , 80%), on the contrary, is likely to agree that when women go around wearing low-cut tops or short skirts, they are asking for trouble.

Finally, there is a statistically significant difference between single and married participants in response to a belief that victims of sexual assault, as a rule, blame themselves for provoking sexual assault ( $\chi^2=3.313$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=.069$ ). A majority of single respondents ( $n=14$ , 74%) tend to agree that victims blame themselves for provoking

sexual assault, while a majority of married participants ( $n = 11$ , 55%) tend to disagree that victims blame themselves for provoking sexual assault on themselves.

### **Socio-demographics of Key Informants**

The key informants were comprised of five individuals including a female social worker, a male psychotherapist, two male pastors, and a female church counselor. All five key informants identified themselves as first-generation Slavic immigrants. Two out of five interviewees stated they were not churchgoers and the rest further identified themselves as being Christians who attended church on a regular basis. All of the five interviewees stated they felt very comfortable in Russian and/or Ukrainian, and three of them felt very comfortable in English. Four key informants were married and one was single. A level of education of the key informants varied. Three key informants had completed a master's degree or higher, while two key informants have completed some college.

All of the five interviewees had some degree of professional knowledge on the issue of sexual violence in the Slavic community due to the nature of their professions. The services that these interviewees provided are in nature social, spiritual, and human. These include but are not limited to formal and informal individual, family, premarital, marriage, and Christian counseling, psychotherapy, consultations, spiritual guidance, court support and assistance for victims of violent crimes, education services, groups, and other mental health and spiritual health services. Three out of five key informants stated they served mostly Slavic clients out of which a majority (approximately 60%) is churchgoers. The other two stated that Slavic religious clients were not the only clients



they served. However, all five of the key informants indicated that many Slavic clients turn to them for help outside of their professional field. They stated that although they do not advertise themselves, word of mouth was one of the main ways through which these clients find them. Furthermore, all five interviewees specified that in most cases they spoke Russian or Ukrainian with their Slavic clients. However, three key informants mentioned that they would use English with their young Slavic clients (e.g., kids, teenagers, or youth) who felt more comfortable in English.

### **Qualitative Sample Data Analysis and Findings**

**Is sexual violence in the Slavic community a concern?** In response to the question of whether sexual violence in the Slavic community is a concern the majority stated that it was a concern. For example, one interviewee strongly believed that it was a concern. Another respondent, who was familiar with the population through a religious organization, stated, “I don’t consider sexual violence to be a mass problem in the Slavic religious community, nevertheless, whenever I speak about this issue many people turn to me for help.” Two respondents stated that it was a concern in a sense, as one of the interviewee further explained it, “it affects them just like any other community. They are not immune to it.” The last respondent did not consider the issue of sexual violence in the Slavic community big enough to become a concern.

It was difficult for all key informants to give a specific number (percentage) of the Slavic female victims of sexual violence whom they provided services to. However, one key informant stated that more than 90% of her clients have experienced some form of sexual violence in their lives. One of the key informants who was familiar with the

population through a religious organization stated that the number was very small (less than 10%). Two respondents were not able to make up any number and the last key informant stated that there was a high number of sexual violence among married couples (at least 25%).

**Taboo.** As suggested in the literature review, sexual violence is a taboo subject in the Slavic community. Several, if not all, key informants stated that currently the topic of sexual violence in the Slavic religious community for the most part is still taboo.

However, three key informants further stated that some progressive churches slowly began to talk about this issue. In addition, two key informants believed that the younger generation feels less reluctant to speak about issues of sexual violence than does the older generation. Consequently, all key informants believed that the topic of sexual violence should be discussed within this community. One key informant specified, however,

It is important to talk about this topic, but it is also important to know where to talk about it and how. This topic must be approached in a very delicate manner.

Technically, 90% of people do not need to hear about it; nevertheless, I raise this topic in public so that those who need help would know where to get it.

**Most common forms of sexual violence.** The responses about most common forms of sexual violence within the Slavic community varied among the interviewees. Three of the respondents stated though there were numerous cases of molest and child abuse, they believed that the spousal rape and forced sexual intercourse with a wife was the most common among the Slavic immigrants. One key informant stated,

Sexual violence within marriage was the most common among the older generation because it has never been perceived as violence in the former Soviet Union. Moreover, female sexuality was a major taboo. This taboo had an impact on the Slavic women's experiences and attitudes toward sex. Most Slavic women viewed sex as shameful, sinful, and an unpleasant baby-making act, so they tried to avoid these sexual activities. Thus men, in order to release their sexual energy, had to "fight" for it.

Two key informants stated that molest and other forms of child sexual abuse were the most common among Slavic immigrants. One key informant, in particular, argued that the experience of sexual violence within marriage, in most cases, was a direct consequence of an untreated childhood sexual trauma. Drawing from this key informant's professional experience, she stated that many Slavic women were revictimized in their adulthood and marriage. These key informants also stated that indecent exposure of the genitals to children and teens, physical contact with the child's or teenager's genitals as well as sexual play with children were common experiences among many of their clients. Other forms of sexual violence that were mentioned by the interviewees included stranger rape, incest, displaying pornographic shows and pictures to children, stalking, and sexual exploitation by someone in a place of authority or leadership (e.g., church minister, teacher, etc).

When interviewees were asked to point out what age group of Slavic women was most likely to experience sexual violence, yet again, they gave different answers that reflected various age groups. Three key informants stated that based on their professional experience, sexual violence most commonly happened to women of 19 years and older.

This perception was associated with sexual violence that happens within marriage. Two key informants stated that children of 12 years and younger were the most common group and were especially vulnerable to sexual violence. One key informant suggested that teenage girls, who could drive a car on their own and for the most part were not under parental supervision, were now becoming one of the most common groups at risk of sexual violence by their peers or acquaintances.

**Most common perpetrator.** Several, if not all, key informants indicated that in most cases the perpetrator is a male. Furthermore, there was uniformity regarding most common perpetrators being within a family system. All key informants agreed that the most common perpetrator in the Slavic community was an immediate family member such as a husband, father or brother. Extended family members like a grandfather, an uncle, or a cousin were also very common according to the three key informants. One of these key informants specified, “In my opinion, when it comes to cases of sexual violence in childhood and early teens the most common perpetrator is someone within the family system.” Two key informants stated that a friend or an acquaintance was another common perpetrator in the Slavic community. One key informant stated that a perpetrator who is detached from the family system such as an acquaintance or a friend is commonly associated with sexual violence against young single adult females. One of the key informants added that females themselves are now becoming more often perpetrators. This key informant stated,

Nowadays, in 50% of cases of sexual violence, young women (friends, sisters, and cousins) themselves are perpetrators. Many young girls who were raised in the U.S. are very aggressive and sex-driven so they often become perpetrators.

**Sexual victimization happens before and after immigration.** Sexual violence does not have a special place where it occurs the most. Based on the key informants' responses, the likelihood of Slavic women and children to experience sexual violence prior to their immigration to the U.S. and after their immigration is quite similar. Those key informants (n=2) who generally worked with children and young adults indicated that most of their clients have experienced childhood sexual abuse and other forms of sexual violence after their immigration to the U.S. Those key informants (n=3) who typically served middle aged and older populations indicated that many of their clients had experienced sexual violence prior to their immigration to the U.S. and some have been exposed to sexual violence after their immigration to the U.S.

**Reporting sexual victimization to law enforcement.** All key informants believed that a majority, if not all, Slavic immigrants have a common knowledge that sexual violence is a crime. Moreover, the survivors of sexual violence or their families who seek help from these key informants already know about an option of reporting this crime to the police. Yet, all interviewees stated that it is unlikely for Slavic women to report their victimization to the police. Nevertheless, one key informant stated, "a more Americanized Slavic woman is more likely to report it to the police while a more traditional woman is not." Another key informant, who works within the criminal justice

system and is familiar with some cases of molest and child sexual abuse which were prosecuted, described,

Every case I dealt with, the parents were devoted and loving, with an exception if the parent was a perpetrator. So they wanted to protect their children and keep them safe but sometimes they did not know how. They were afraid to call the police or were misadvised by their pastor to keep it within their community. It made it very confusing for the parents to know how to deal with it, especially, if this situation involved someone within their family or from their church. So these parents wanted to protect their children and at the same time they felt sorry for the offender. Guided by their religious belief, these parents tried to forgive this perpetrator and did not always want this person to go to jail. So this created a barrier for them to report it to the police even if they really wanted to protect their children.

This key informant also stated that it takes these parents a while “to sort everything through, as a result, by the time the police hear about it some time has passed.” Two key informants indicated that during their formal or informal counseling sessions or consultations they would educate and warn their clients about reporting this crime to the police.

**Help seeking behavior.** All key informants stated with sadness that most Slavic victims of sexual violence do not disclose their victimization to anyone. There are many reasons for such behavior. One key informant described four reasons in regard to why Slavic Christian women keep their victimization secret and stated,

First of all, Slavic victims of sexual violence feel dirty, sinful, ashamed, guilty, and are awfully afraid of being misunderstood and misbelieved. When it comes to disclosing, she feels that it is taboo. Secondly, she hardly knows anyone who would really understand, accept, and believe her. The third reason is that she is not ready to go through the shame when the community learns about what happened to her. For people around her it is beneficial not to believe what she is saying is true; unfortunately many Slavic people tend to blame victims for what happened to them. Lastly, if this victim is not married and has lost her virginity to sexual assault she does not know how to go about disclosing this to her boyfriend. In addition, three out of five key informants stated that Slavic victims of sexual violence would turn to a church minister, usually a pastor, for help when they cannot keep it in silence any more. One key informant stated,

After I speak about issues of sexual violence in public, many people would turn to me for help and it would be their first time ever to disclose this issue to anyone.

Many, many, many people keep it secret for years and some for decades.

Another key informant described a chain of disclosing sexual violence in some cases where children or teen were involved and stated, “This chain would start with children telling their parents, parents then would discuss this with their pastors, and then this chain would either stop or continue its way to law enforcement.”

### **Recommendations for Addressing this Problem**

At the end of the interview, the key informants were asked a question: “If you had \$50,000, what would you do in the Slavic community to address the problem of sexual

violence?” Although the respondents had their unique ideas, there was uniformity regarding the importance of prevention of and education about sexual violence. All participants indicated that they would invest this money in prevention through education and outreach to a young generation and young parents by having informational workshops on the topics of sexual violence. Two key informants suggested conducting seminars and parent classes to educate parents about how to talk to their children about sexuality and sex. These topics may include inappropriate touching, where those places are, by whom and when this touch is appropriate, and what parents should do when their children disclose an incident of sexual violence.

Two participants suggested education of teenagers and young adults by conducting seminars where young Slavic people would learn about how they can protect themselves from situations where they can become victimized, their rights, and where they can find help. One participant suggested making and distributing culturally and linguistically appropriate pamphlets, brochures and fliers with information about sexual violence, victim’s rights, and available services.

Only one participant believed in the importance of addressing this issue by investing money in training Slavic Christian counselors to provide help to victims of sexual violence. This key informant believed that without deep faith in Jesus Christ full recovery from sexual victimization was impossible. In addition, this interviewee believed this community lacked trained counselors who can provide culturally appropriate services.



## Major Findings and Discussion

The researcher of this study prefaces this section by noting that the incoherence and conflict in the survey participant responses took her by surprise. In addition, when comparing responses of survey participants and the key informants, the researcher found some major differences in the community perceptions on the issues of sexual violence and individuals who directly work with victims of sexual violence.

Sexual violence in the Slavic community is not really a concern according to the quantitative findings of this study. While a majority of key informants ( $n=4$ ) considered sexual violence against women in the Slavic community as a concern, a surprisingly small number of survey participants (28%) indicated they knew someone who was sexually violated and nearly two thirds of participants (62%) indicated that they do not know anyone. Conversely, half of participants (51%) indicated that sexual violence was a concern in this community. What is more interesting, is the majority of participants ( $n=30$ ; 77%) believed that sexual violence prevention should be a priority for action in the Slavic community. These contradicting findings point toward a lack of knowledge about these problems in Slavic immigrant community. Indeed, sexual violence prevention should be a priority.

There are many reasons for these participants to believe that sexual violence is not serious enough to become a concern. First, as indicated by the key informants, sexual violence, for the most part, is a taboo subject in the Slavic community. Second, as found in quantitative and qualitative data and supported by the literature review, Slavic victims of sexual violence are least likely to disclose their victimization to anyone, even to their

pastors. This secretiveness, in turn, makes it seem like sexual violence is not happening in the community. Third, as presented in the quantitative data, Slavic people have very little knowledge about sexual violence in general. For example, the majority of participants believed that the most common perpetrator is someone outside of the family system which contradicts with key informants responses (they stated that someone within a family system is the most common perpetrator). What was more surprising for the researcher to find out was the perception by a majority of participants that a stranger was the most common perpetrator. This finding demonstrated their tendency to visualize sexual violence as a jumping-out-of-the-bushes stranger. As a result, this indecisive and conflicting data indicates that in general people do not have a full understanding about what is sexual violence, its seriousness, and that it can be much nearer to them than they think it is.

As noted in the literature review, Slavic religious immigrants know that sexual violence is immoral and should not be happening within their community; as a result, most people believe that it is not happening in their community. The findings of this study demonstrate their hesitancy and desire to reject the idea that sexual violence might be happening in their community. The findings also show that most participants (82%) are aware that sexual violence against women and children can happen in their own home and does not necessarily occur only in unchristian homes (90%); yet, many still believe that Slavic Christian men very rarely rape women (56%) and never molest children (49%).

However, the findings in this study indicate that the younger generation is becoming more open to talk about issues of sexual violence in the community. For example, findings from qualitative data indicated that young people are less reluctant to speak about sexual violence and to lessen taboos. Qualitative data findings indicated that the younger generation is more likely to report sexual violence to police. In addition, the younger generation is more likely to disclose their victimization to a church minister.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, & IMPLICATIONS

#### **Summary and Conclusions**

This study sought to describe a number of cultural, religious, and personal values that influence Slavic religious immigrants' knowledge, behavior, perceptions of, and attitudes toward issues of sexual violence in the Slavic religious community in Sacramento. For the purpose of this study, the researcher utilized both quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods. It was a mixed survey study using both questionnaire and key informants interviews. The surveyed study population included thirty-nine recent Slavic religious immigrants, both males and females, from 18 to 60 years old who arrived in the United States within the last twenty years. These participants were recruited using convenient and purposive sampling methods. The selection of the subjects for the interview was done through a judgmental sampling method due to the specific predefined group and the purpose this study was seeking. All five key informants were Russian-speaking individuals who worked within the Slavic community and provided some form of counseling, court support and assistance within the criminal justice system, therapy, Christian counseling and consultations. These key informants were comprised of a social worker, a therapist, and three church ministers.

Analyzed quantitative data review includes the following findings:

1. Sexual violence in the Slavic community is not a concern: most study participants did not know anyone who experienced sexual assault or other forms of sexual violence.

2. Slavic religious immigrants do not regard sexual violence as an issue, yet, they do not deny it. The findings also show Slavic religious people's hesitancy and desire to reject the idea that sexual violence might be happening in their community.
3. Slavic religious immigrants have limited knowledge about sexual violence in general. Most of the participants believed that a stranger was the most common perpetrator and a small number of participants did not consider spousal rape and non-consensual sexual play as violence.
4. Although all participants knew that sexual violence was a crime, most participants stated that Slavic victims of sexual violence are unlikely to report this crime to the police.
5. Slavic victims of sexual violence would most likely keep their victimization in secret or would seek support from an informal social network such as family or friends rather than from formal assistance like police, church ministers, social workers, or health care professionals.
6. There is a conflict in these Slavic religious people's responses regarding their attitudes that promote false beliefs about rape and a hostile climate toward victims of sexual violence. On one hand, they believe that a woman can invite sexual assault on herself due to her attire and, on the other hand, they believe that women are not responsible for preventing sexual violence and do not provoke sexual violence on themselves. In addition, most of the participants believe that sexual satisfaction is the primary reason for sexual violence.
7. The younger generation is less reluctant to speak about issues of sexual violence.

The findings from the key informants' study show a slightly different perspective. The results show that sexual violence is a prevalent problem in the Slavic religious community yet it is not regarded as a serious problem. Sexual violence in the Slavic community is a taboo subject and is deeply hidden. The majority of key informants identified a family member as the most common perpetrator within this community. In response to their help seeking behavior, most Slavic women keep their victimization in secret or disclose it to church ministers. Most Slavic victims of sexual violence do not report this crime to the police due to their religious beliefs and close family bonds.

Relating this data collection to the hypotheses of this study indicated that four of the five hypotheses were supported by data. The researcher believes that the quantitative study findings do not fully support hypothesis 2, which states that Slavic immigrants have negative attitudes towards victims of sexual assault. However, qualitative data results show that Slavic people usually hold negative views toward victims of sexual violence. Hypothesis 1 states that sexual violence against women exists in the Slavic community, although a large number of cases of sexual assault are not reported due to a lack of knowledge and fear of law enforcement. This hypothesis is supported by both qualitative and quantitative study findings. In addition, hypothesis 3 is supported by both qualitative and quantitative data and states that shame and stigma that is associated with sexual victimization makes Slavic women struggle with their trauma in secret rather than seeking support and help. Hypothesis 4 is supported by the study findings and indicates that Slavic religious people are quite ignorant in matters of sexuality, and are, therefore, ambivalent to issues of sexual violence. The quantitative data supports hypothesis 5

revealing Slavic religious immigrants' belief that sexual violence is a sin and that a Christian person does not practice this sin. This, in turn, instills in the religious Slavic people a belief that sexual violence is not existent.

An English idiom "elephant in the room" symbolizes ambivalence of Slavic religious immigrants regarding issues of sexual violence, which was found in this study. Their incoherent and conflicting responses reveal that Slavic religious immigrants do not know how to approach the issues of sexual violence. The findings of this study demonstrate their hesitancy and desire to reject the idea that sexual violence might be happening in their community. Furthermore, they do not have a clear understanding of sexual violence; therefore, there is indecision in their attitudes and beliefs towards sexual violence against women and children. As a result, the issues of sexual violence in their community are being ignored and go unaddressed.

### **Implications for Social Work**

As estimated by Robertson (2006), the Slavic community in Greater Sacramento is at 230,000; there is an increasing need for culturally competent research, services, and prevention efforts to address sexual violence/assault in the Slavic community. It is imperative for social work professionals working with this population to be aware that Slavic religious immigrants have very limited knowledge about sexual violence and, therefore, often become ambivalent in dealing with it. It is important for social workers to be trained and to become familiar with the traditional and religious values and attitudes toward sexual violence and its victims. It will help them have a greater understanding of

the impact these traditional and religious values have on these individuals' help seeking behaviors and experiences.

Furthermore, social workers need to be in tune with the Slavic Christians' help seeking behavior. Social workers need to become aware of how Slavic immigrants view help outside of their community including social workers, therapists, health care professionals and law enforcement and what prevents these individuals from accessing these services. It is also important for social workers and other helping professionals to understand that for Slavic religious individuals receiving services from these helping professions are seen as foreign and stigmatizing. Therefore, social workers need to build trust within this community by providing culturally competent informational and educational workshops. This can be done through outreach and community development and by educating this community to break their false beliefs and misconceptions of helping professionals.

Also this study functions as a tool in helping counselors to develop appropriate interventions that reflect a Slavic woman's cultural and religious beliefs. It is important for social workers to provide these victims and their families with practical skills and means. For example, the study findings show that Slavic victims turn to their families for help; however, it does not mean that these victims receive adequate support from their families, which in turn may hinder their well-being and recovery. Therefore, social workers need to educate these victims where to get help. Furthermore, parents need to know their children's rights and to be able to navigate the process of reporting sexual violence to the police and getting appropriate help for their children.



In addition, it is important to educate the whole community about sexual violence stressing that it is not only a girl's problem. It is important to raise awareness in men and to help them understand what sexual violence really means and how it affects women. When educating this community, social workers need to let Slavic people know that there are other people in the same boat and they are not alone. It will expand this community's horizons and it will allow them to see what other communities have done in preventing the issue of sexual violence.

For religious people who care about the well-being of this community, it is imperative to develop appropriate intervention tools that can be used within Slavic churches. For example, one session program can be incorporated into a Sunday school curriculum that will train and educate children about sexuality, inappropriate touching, etc. Conducting seminars and major conferences that focus on parents and youth may serve as a prevention tool where issues of sexual violence are presented from the perspective of a health issue as well as a moral issue. Victims of sexual violence may find information about available competent services and information about other resources.

### **Implications for Future Studies**

This is currently the first and only study about sexual violence in the Slavic religious community in Sacramento. With the exception of a few studies that have been done on the topic of domestic violence in the Slavic community in Sacramento, this immigrant group has been largely ignored by academic and social interests. Although this study was limited in terms of the small sample size, age, and religious diversity, the

research findings provided meaningful insight into the interdependence of limited knowledge, views on, attitudes toward, behaviors, and experiences of sexual violence of first-generation Slavic religious immigrants. The researcher found a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research very useful for this study. It provided deeper understanding of the general population's perceptions on the issues of sexual violence and a realistic knowledge based on key informants' professional experience.

The researcher believes that this study's findings have set the foundation for additional research on this topic and population. Therefore, it is imperative for social workers to conduct additional extensive research on larger samples of Slavic victims of sexual violence and to extend this research to non-religious Slavic people. Furthermore, there should be individual qualitative studies focusing on the Slavic sexual assault survivors' perspective: to capture their stories by studying their various experiences including help seeking behaviors, barriers to disclosing their victimization, ambivalence in attitudes and feelings of their family and church, and how these women are working to resolve their struggles and their accompanying feelings. Giving voice to the victims who were in silence will help social workers in community change.

The researcher believes that subsequent studies would be easier to go about because the younger generation is becoming more open and less reluctant to speak about these issues. Furthermore, when searching for potential participants for subsequent studies, the researchers are encouraged to utilize anonymous internet surveys and contact professional and non-religious organizations to connect with people who have a real story to tell. However, it is important to remember that when social work researchers become

activists and are driven by their belief in social justice they must know their boundaries and not to force victims of sexual violence into talking about their victimization when they are not ready.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

**Informed Consent to Participate in a Study: Survey***Sexual Violence in the Slavic Community in the Sacramento Region*

INVESTIGATOR: Anna Tyulyu, MSW candidate at California State University, Sacramento

This study is being carried out in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Social Work for the researcher. The study investigates general knowledge and the issues of sexual violence in the Slavic community in Sacramento Region. In addition, this study explores culturally competent and socially appropriate approach to address this issue in the Slavic community.

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey that will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. The survey is composed of multiple choice questions and statements that you will be asked to rate on a Likert-type scale. The survey has a total of 34 questions that cover such areas as the importance of religion, general knowledge of sexual violence, behavior and attitudes towards sexual violence in the Slavic community in Sacramento, and demographics. Upon completion, you will be asked to return the survey and this informed consent form into the boxes provided.

There is no direct benefit to you by participating in this study. However, the findings of this study may result in recommendations, specific practices, and prevention strategies for Slavic immigrants and will contribute to the development of culturally competent sexual violence prevention programs to educate Slavic community.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. Informed consents and surveys will be kept separate so that even the researcher will not know which survey you completed. Survey data will be kept in a secure, locked location that is only accessible by the researcher. All research data will be destroyed after the completion of the research project (no later than June 2011). No individually identifying data will be collected or included in any papers or publications that result from this study.

Participation is voluntary. There is a minimal risk to you by participating in this study. You can discontinue your participation or drop from the study at any time without explanation. You may decline to participate now or at any time in the future without any risks or consequences. You are, however, encouraged to stop the survey if you experience excessive discomfort while completing it, and you may contact county mental health services at (916) 875 - 1000.

If you have any questions or comments in regard to this study, please feel free to contact Anna Tyulyu at (916) 952-3463 or anichca22@yahoo.com, or Dr. Francis Yuen at (916) 278-7182 or fyuen@csus.edu.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be entitled after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

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Signature of Participant

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Date

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Participant's Name (Please print)

## APPENDIX B

**Informed Consent to Participate in a Study: Survey (Russian Version)****Согласие на Участие в Исследовании**

*Исследование о сексуальном насилии над женщинами и детьми в славянском христианском обществе города Сакраменто*

ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬ: Анна Тюлю, MSW candidate at California State University, Sacramento

Пожалуйста, примите участие в исследованиях Анны Тюлю, студентки Калифорнийского государственного университета города Сакраменто. Это исследование является одним из требований при получении степени Магистра. Эта анкета предназначена для того чтобы определить степень осведомленности и Ваше личное отношение к проблемам сексуального насилия в христианском славянском обществе города Сакраменто. Ваши ответы будут чрезвычайно полезны и помогут социальным работникам и руководству славянского общества сделать их услуги более приемлемы для русско-говорящего населения, а так же найти новые способы защиты женщин и детей, подверженным сексуальному насилию.

Если Вы решитесь на участие в этом исследовании, Ваше участие не займет более 10 минут. Отвечая на вопросы пожалуйста, постарайтесь поставить ответ который максимально точно передает Ваше личное мнение или опыт.

Ваше участие в данном исследовании является добровольным. Вы не обязаны принимать участие в исследовании. Более того, никто в Вас не разочаруется или обидется на Вас, если Вы откажетесь участвовать в исследовании.

Конфиденциальность данных, полученных для исследования, будет максимально обеспечена. Опубликованные результаты не будут указывать вашу фамилию. Ваша фамилия никоим образом не будет ассоциирована с полученными данными. Ваша анкета и бланк о согласии на участие будут храниться отдельно так что даже исследователь не будет знать кому принадлежит какая анкета. Все документы будут храниться в закрытом помещении. Доступ к анкетам будет иметь только Анна Тюлю. В соответствии с требованиями Университета данные этого исследования будут уничтожены после 30 Июня 2011 года.

Само исследование не имеет никаких серьёзных факторов риска и не вызывает побочных реакций. Однако, если печаль и грусть возникшие при участии будут продолжаться, Вы можете обратиться за помощью в окружной офис психиатра по телефону (916) 875 -1000.

В случае возникновения у Вас каких-либо вопросов о данном исследовании Вы можете в любое время обратиться к Анне Тюлю по телефону (916) 952-3463 или по электронной почте anichca22@yahoo.com, а так же Dr. Francis Yuen по телефону (916) 278-7182 или по электронной почте fyuen@csus.edu.

Подписание данного документа означает что Вы прочитали вышеперечисленную информацию, а также что Вы добровольно согласны на участие.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Подпись участника/цы

\_\_\_\_\_  
Дата

\_\_\_\_\_  
Имя и фамилия участника/цы

## APPENDIX C

**Survey**

**Do not put your name on this survey.**

Please complete this survey by checking an appropriate box for each question.

**1. My faith is very important to me.**

☐ Strongly Agree    ☐ Agree    ☐ Disagree    ☐ Strongly Disagree

**2. I participate in most of the church activities.**

☐ Strongly Agree    ☐ Agree    ☐ Disagree    ☐ Strongly Disagree

**3. I attend church on weekly basis.**

☐ Strongly Agree    ☐ Agree    ☐ Disagree    ☐ Strongly Disagree

**4. I attend church that is:**

☐ Baptist                      ☐ Non-denominational    ☐ Pentecostal  
☐ Orthodox                      ☐ Charismatic  
☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Within the Slavic Christian community in Sacramento region sexual violence is a concern.**

☐ Strongly Agree    ☐ Agree    ☐ Disagree    ☐ Strongly Disagree

**6. I know someone who has been a victim of sexual assault/molest.**

☐ Yes                      ☐ No                      ☐ Maybe

**7. Sexual violence/assault is a private matter that should not be dealt in the public arena.**

☐ Strongly Agree    ☐ Agree    ☐ Disagree    ☐ Strongly Disagree

**8. As far as I know sexual violence includes: (check all that apply)**

- ☐ Stranger Rape
- ☐ Attempted Rape
- ☐ Unwanted and forced sexual intercourse with wife or girlfriend
- ☐ Incest (a sexual assault of a person by a family member such as a parent, sibling, or other relative)
- ☐ Asking or pressuring a child or teenager to engage in sexual activities
- ☐ Indecent exposure of the genitals to a child or a teenager
- ☐ Displaying porno/sexual shows and pictures to a child or a teenager
- ☐ Physical contact with the child's or teenager's genitals
- ☐ Ongoing sexual abuse or a single incident of sexual intercourse with a child or teenager
- ☐ Touching an intimate part of a person, against their will
- ☐ Non-consensual sexual play like kissing, fondling, leaning over, or pinching
- ☐ Non-consensual sexual contact perpetrated by someone in a place of authority or leadership (church minister, teacher, physician, boss, etc)

**9. In your opinion, sexual assault most commonly happens to women of what age group?**

- ☐ 12 years or younger      ☐ 13 - 18 years      ☐ 19 years or older

**10. As far as you know, who of the following most often is the perpetrator?**

*(check all that apply)*

- ☐ Stranger  
☐ Immediate family member (sibling, parents, grandparents, step-parents)  
☐ Extended family member (uncles, cousins)  
☐ Friend/Coworker  
☐ Significant other (husband or boyfriend)

**11. Sexual violence/assault is a crime.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree    ☐ Agree    ☐ Disagree    ☐ Strongly Disagree

**12. Who is most responsible for causing of the happening of sexual violence?**

- ☐ Victim      ☐ Perpetrator      ☐ Both ☐ None

**13. If sexual violence happens to them, most Slavic women would keep it secret.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree    ☐ Agree    ☐ Disagree    ☐ Strongly Disagree

**14. How likely a Slavic woman is to report sexual violence to her to law enforcement?**

- ☐ Very Likely    ☐ Likely      ☐ Unlikely    ☐ Very Unlikely

**15. If sexual violence happens, most Slavic women would first turn to which of the following for help? *(check one only)***

- ☐ Church minister      ☐ Family      ☐ Friend      ☐ Nobody  
☐ Health Care Professional      ☐ Law Enforcement      ☐ Social Worker  
☐ Others \_\_\_\_\_

**16. If family is not an option, who do they turn to then? *(check all that apply)***

- ☐ Church minister      ☐ Friend      ☐ Nobody      ☐ Law Enforcement  
☐ Health Care Professional      ☐ Social Worker      ☐ Others \_\_\_\_\_

**17. In your opinion, how many percent of the sexual assault in the Slavic community have gone unreported?**

- ☐ Above 75%      ☐ 50-75%      ☐ 25-50%      ☐ 25% or less

**18. Sexual violence is an unspoken problem in the Slavic community.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree    ☐ Agree    ☐ Disagree    ☐ Strongly Disagree

**19. Sexual violence mainly occurs in the large families.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree    ☐ Agree    ☐ Disagree    ☐ Strongly Disagree

**20. When women go around wearing low-cut tops or short skirts, they're just asking for trouble.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree    ☐ Agree    ☐ Disagree    ☐ Strongly Disagree



- 21. Some women lie about rape to punish men.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 22. Rape never happens in the woman's own home.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 23. Sexual violence only occurs in the unchristian families.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 24. Sexual assault brings more disgrace on someone who was a virgin.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 25. Men from Christian families very rarely rape women.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 26. Victims of sexual assault, as a rule, blame themselves for provoking sexual assault.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 27. Women tend to exaggerate how much sexual assault affects them.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 28. Sexual assault on children almost never happens in their own home.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 29. The woman is responsible for preventing sexual violence.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 30. Sexual satisfaction is the primary motivation for sexual violence.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 31. Men who belong to Slavic Churches in Sacramento never molest children.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 32. In most cases, this is the woman who provokes sexual assault on herself.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 33. A woman who was sexually violated brings shame on her family.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 34. Sexual violence prevention should be a priority for action in the Slavic community.**  
☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

What is your gender?

- ☐ Female  
☐ Male

What is your current marital status?

- ☐ Single  
☐ Married

How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_ years

How long have you been in the U.S.A.? \_\_\_\_\_ years

What is your comfort level/proficiency in English?

- ☐ Very Low                      ☐ Average                      ☐ Good                      ☐ Proficient

What is your comfort level/proficiency in Russian/Ukrainian?

- ☐ Very Low                      ☐ Average                      ☐ Good                      ☐ Proficient

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Less than High School  
☐ High School or GED  
☐ Some College  
☐ College Graduate  
☐ Post-graduate or Professional Degree

Thank you for participating in this study!

It is greatly appreciated.

Please drop this questionnaire into the “SURVEY / АНКЕТЫ” box.

## APPENDIX D

## Survey (Russian Version)

## АНКЕТА

**Не указывайте свое имя на этой анкете.**

Пожалуйста, выберите правильный, с Вашей точки зрения, ответ, поставив крестик в соответствующий квадратик.

**1. Моя вера очень важна для меня.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**2. Я участвую во многих церковных мероприятиях.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**3. Я посещаю церковь еженедельно.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**4. Я посещаю церковь которая является**

☐ Баптистской ☐ Межденоминационной ☐ Пятидесятнической  
☐ Православной ☐ Харизматической ☐ Другой \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Сексуальное насилие в славянской христианской среде в Сакраменто это насущная проблема.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**6. Я знаю кого - то в моем окружении, кто был подвержен сексуальному насилию.**

☐ Да ☐ Нет ☐ Может быть

**7. Сексуальное насилие это личное дело каждого и оно не должно обсуждаться публично.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**8. Насколько я знаю, сексуальное насилие включает:**

(отметьте все подходящие ответы)

- ☐ Изнасилование незнакомцем
- ☐ Попытка изнасилования
- ☐ Половой акт с женой или подругой вопреки ее воле
- ☐ Инцест (половой акт с близкими родственниками — дочь, сестра, племянница и т.д.)
- ☐ Сексуальное совращение ребенка
- ☐ Непристойное обнажение гениталий перед ребенком или подростком
- ☐ Показ порнографических фильмов или картинок ребенку
- ☐ Прикосновения к половым органам ребенка или подростка
- ☐ Принуждение ребенка или подростка к половому акту
- ☐ Прикосновения к интимным частям тела против воли человека
- ☐ Сексуальные ласки, поцелуи, объятия, щипки и тому подобное без согласия человека

☐ Сексуальная эксплуатация авторитетной личностью или руководителем (церковный служитель, преподаватель, врач, босс и т.д)

**9. Как Вы считаете, женщины какой возрастной группы чаще всего подвержены сексуальному насилию?**

☐ 12 лет или моложе      ☐ от 13 до 18 лет      ☐ 19 лет или старше

**10. Кто из ниже перечисленных, по Вашему мнению, чаще всего является насильником? (отметьте все подходящие ответы)**

☐ Незнакомец      ☐ Друг/Сотрудник      ☐ Муж или "бойфренд"  
☐ Член семьи (родители, отчим или мачеха, бабушка или дедушка, брат, сестра)  
☐ Родственник (дядя, тетя, двоюродный брат или сестра)

**11. Сексуальное насилие это преступление.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна    ☐ Согласен/сна    ☐ Несогласен/сна    ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**12. Кто, по вашему мнению, виноват в проявлениях сексуального насилия?**

☐ Жертва      ☐ Насильник/ца      ☐ Оба      ☐ Никто

**13. Подвергаясь сексуальному насилию, большинство славянских женщин держат это в тайне.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна    ☐ Согласен/сна    ☐ Несогласен/сна    ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**14. Насколько вероятно, что подвергнувшись насилию славянская женщина сообщит об этом в полицию?**

☐ Очень вероятно      ☐ Вероятно      ☐ Маловероятно      ☐ Невероятно

**15. К кому славянская женщина в первую очередь обратится за советом в случае сексуального насилия? (отметьте только один ответ)**

☐ К церковному служителю    ☐ К родителям или родственникам    ☐ К подруге/другу  
☐ Ни к кому    ☐ К медработнику    ☐ В полицию    ☐ К социальному работнику  
☐ Другое (уточните) \_\_\_\_\_

**16. Если не к членам семьи, к кому еще женщина обратится за помощью?**

(отметьте все подходящие ответы)

☐ К церковному служителю    ☐ К подруге/другу    ☐ Ни к кому    ☐ В полицию  
☐ К медработнику    ☐ К социальному работнику    ☐ Другое \_\_\_\_\_

**17. По Вашему мнению, какой процент случаев сексуального насилия в славянском обществе Сакраменто остается скрытым от органов правопорядка?**

☐ 75% и выше      ☐ 50-75%      ☐ 25-50%      ☐ 25% и ниже

**18. Сексуальное насилие это необсуждаемая проблема в славянском обществе.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна    ☐ Согласен/сна    ☐ Несогласен/сна    ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**19. Сексуальное насилие обычно происходит в больших семьях.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна    ☐ Согласен/сна    ☐ Несогласен/сна    ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**20. Когда женщины одеваются вызывающе они сами ищут себе неприятностей.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**21. Некоторые женщины лгут о насилии, чтобы наказать мужчин.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**22. Насилие никогда не случается в собственном доме девушки.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**23. Сексуальное насилие происходит только в нехристианских семьях.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**24. Сексуальное насилие приносит больше позора девственнице.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**25. Мужчины из христианских семей очень редко насилуют женщин и девушек.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**26. Жертва насилия, как правило, винит саму себя в том, что с ней произошло, считая, что именно она спровоцировала насилие над собой.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**27. Женщины имеют тенденцию преувеличивать насколько сексуальное насилие влияет на них.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**28. Сексуальное насилие над детьми практически никогда не случается в их собственном доме.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**29. Ответственность за предотвращение сексуального насилия лежит на женщине.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**30. Сексуальное удовлетворение это главная мотивация сексуального насилия.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**31. Мужчины в славянских церквях Сакраменто никогда не совращают детей.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**32. В большинстве случаев, женщина сама провоцирует насилие над собой.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**33. Женщина подвергнувшаяся сексуальному насилию приносит позор своей семье.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

**34. Борьба против сексуального насилия над женщинами и детьми должна быть важным приоритетом в славянской общине города Сакраменто.**

☐ Полностью Согласен/сна ☐ Согласен/сна ☐ Несогласен/сна ☐ Абсолютно Несогласен/сна

Ваш пол?

- ☐ Женский  
☐ Мужской

Ваше семейное положение

- ☐ Не замужем/ Не женат  
☐ Замужем /Женат

Ваш возраст? \_\_\_\_\_ лет

Как долго Вы живете в С.Ш.А? \_\_\_\_\_ лет

Ваш уровень английского языка?

- ☐ Начальный    ☐ Средний    ☐ Уверенный    ☐ Свободный

Ваш уровень Русского/Украинского языка?

- ☐ Начальный    ☐ Средний    ☐ Уверенный    ☐ Свободный

Какой самый высокий уровень образования Вы закончили?

- ☐ Меньше чем Средняя школа  
☐ Средняя школа или GED  
☐ Училась/ся в колледже  
☐ Выпускник университета  
☐ Аспирантура или Профессиональная степень

Спасибо за Ваше участие в этом исследовании!

Пожалуйста, положите эту анкету в ящик обозначенный "SURVEY / АНКЕТЫ".

## APPENDIX E

**Informed Consent to Participate in a Study: Interview***Sexual Violence in the Slavic Community in the Sacramento Region*

INVESTIGATOR: Anna Tyulyu, MSW candidate at California State University, Sacramento

This study is being carried out in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's Degree in Social Work for the researcher. The study investigates general knowledge and the issues of sexual violence in the Slavic community in Sacramento Region. In addition, this study explores culturally competent and socially appropriate approach to address this issue in the Slavic community.

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will take approximately 30 minutes of your time and will be audio recorded. The interview questions are composed of 27 open-ended and closed-ended questions and statements that you will be asked to rate on a Likert-type scale. The questions cover such areas as the kinds of services that you provide, who is your clientele, your professional knowledge about sexual violence in the Slavic community, attitudes and behaviors that you find in the Slavic clients, and your recommendations. You will be asked to return this consent form into the "INFORMED CONSENT" box before participating in the interview.

There is no direct benefit to you by participating in this study. However, the findings of this study may result in recommendations, specific practices, and prevention strategies for Slavic immigrants and will contribute to the development of culturally competent sexual violence prevention programs to educate Slavic community.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. The interview will be audio recorded, the results of the interview will then be transcribed, and the recording will be deleted, thereafter. The interview content will be kept in a secure, locked location that is only accessible by the researcher. All research data will be destroyed after the completion of the research project (no later than June 2011). No individually identifying data will be collected or included in any papers or publications that result from this study.

Participation is voluntary. There is a minimal risk to you by participating in this study. You can discontinue your participation or drop from the study at any time without explanation. You may decline to participate now or at any time in the future without any risks or consequences.

If you have any questions or comments in regard to this study, please feel free to contact Anna Tyulyu at (916) 952-3463 or anichca22@yahoo.com, or Dr. Francis Yuen at (916) 278-7182 or fyuen@csus.edu.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be entitled after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Participant's Name (Please Print)

## APPENDIX F

**Informed Consent to Participate in a Study: Interview (Russian Version)****Согласие на Участие в Исследовании**

*Исследование о сексуальном насилии над женщинами и детьми в славянском христианском обществе города Сакраменто*

ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬ: Анна Тюлю, MSW candidate at California State University, Sacramento

Пожалуйста, примите участие в исследованиях Анны Тюлю, студентки Калифорнийского государственного университета города Сакраменто. Это исследование является одним из требований при получении степени Магистра. С помощью этого интервью исследователь сможет определить на сколько распространена проблема сексуального насилия в христианском славянском обществе города Сакраменто. Ваши знания и профессиональный опыт будут чрезвычайно полезны и помогут социальным работникам и руководству славянского общества сделать их услуги более приемлемы для русско-говорящего населения, а так же найти новые способы защиты женщин и детей, подверженным сексуальному насилию.

Если Вы решитесь на участие в этом исследовании, Ваше участие не займет более 30 минут. Все 27 вопросов на интервью касаются темы о сексуальном насилии женщин и детей в христианском славянском обществе города Сакраменто. В конце интервью, вы сможете предложить идеи для того чтобы решить проблему сексуального насилия в этом сообществе.

Ваше участие в данном исследовании является добровольным. Вы не обязаны принимать участие в исследовании. Более того, никто в Вас не разочаруется или обидется на Вас, если Вы откажетесь участвовать в исследовании.

Конфиденциальность данных, полученных для исследования, будет максимально обеспечена. Опубликованные результаты не будут указывать вашу фамилию. Ваша фамилия никоим образом не будет ассоциирована с полученными данными. Запись вашего интервью и бланк о согласии на участие храниться в закрытом помещении. Доступ к содержанию вашего интервью будет иметь только Анна Тюлю. В соответствии с требованиями Университета данные этого исследования будут уничтожены после 30 Июня 2011 года.

Само исследование не имеет никаких серьёзных факторов риска и не вызывает побочных реакций. Однако, если печаль и грусть возникшие при участии будут продолжаться, Вы можете обратиться за помощью в окружной офис психиатра по телефону (916) 875 -1000.

В случае возникновения у Вас каких-либо вопросов о данном исследовании Вы можете в любое время обратиться к Анне Тюлю по телефону (916) 952-3463 или по электронной почте anichca22@yahoo.com, а так же Dr. Francis Yuen по телефону (916) 278-7182 или по электронной почте fyuen@csus.edu.

Подписание данного документа означает что Вы прочитали вышеперечисленную информацию, а также что Вы добровольно согласны на участие.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Подпись участника/цы

\_\_\_\_\_  
Дата

\_\_\_\_\_  
Имя и фамилия участника/цы



## APPENDIX G

**Key Informant Interview Guide**

1. What services do you provide?
2. How many percent of your clients are Slavic individuals?
3. What language do you use when counseling your Slavic clients?
4. How do they get to you?
5. What percent of these Slavic clients attend church on a regular basis?
6. Do you think that sexual violence in the Slavic community is a concern?
7. What percentage of Slavic women that you provide services to have been victims of sexual violence?
8. Do you think that sexual violence in the Slavic community is taboo?
9. Do you think we need to raise the topic in this community?
10. According to your professional experience, what types of sexual violence are common in the Slavic community?
  - ☐ Stranger Rape
  - ☐ Attempted Rape
  - ☐ Unwanted and forced sexual intercourse with wife or girlfriend (Spousal Rape)
  - ☐ Incest (a sexual assault of a person by a family member such as a parent, sibling, or other relative)
  - ☐ Molest:
    - ☐ Asking or pressuring a child or teenager to engage in sexual activities
    - ☐ Indecent exposure of the genitals to a child or a teenager
    - ☐ Displaying porno/sexual shows and pictures to a child or a teenager
    - ☐ Physical contact with the child's or teenager's genitals
    - ☐ Ongoing sexual abuse or a single incident of sexual intercourse with a child or teenager
    - ☐ Non-consensual sexual play like kissing, fondling, leaning over, or pinching
    - ☐ Sexual battery: touching an intimate part of a person (coworker or acquaintance), against their will
    - ☐ Sexual exploitation by someone in a place of authority or leadership (church minister, teacher, physician, boss, etc)
11. Which types are the most common?
  - ☐ Stranger Rape
  - ☐ Attempted Rape
  - ☐ Unwanted and forced sexual intercourse with wife or girlfriend (Spousal Rape)

- ☐ Incest (a sexual assault of a person by a family member such as a parent, sibling, or other relative)
- ☐ Molest:
- ☐ Asking or pressuring a child or teenager to engage in sexual activities
- ☐ Indecent exposure of the genitals to a child or a teenager
- ☐ Displaying porno/sexual shows and pictures to a child or a teenager
- ☐ Physical contact with the child's or teenager's genitals
- ☐ Ongoing sexual abuse or a single incident of sexual intercourse with a child or teenager
- ☐ Non-consensual sexual play like kissing, fondling, leaning over, or pinching
- ☐ Sexual battery: touching an intimate part of a person (coworker or acquaintance), against their will
- ☐ Sexual exploitation by someone in a place of authority or leadership (church minister, teacher, physician, boss, etc)
12. According to your professional experience, sexual violence most commonly happens on average to Slavic women of what age group?
- ☐ 12 years or younger                      ☐ 13 - 18 years                      ☐ 19 years or older
13. What percentage of the sexual violence/assault happened to Slavic women before their immigration to the U.S.A.?
14. Who most likely was the perpetrator? (*Stranger; Immediate family member (sibling, parents, grandparents, step-parents); Extended family member (uncles, cousins); Friend/Coworker; or Significant other (husband or boyfriend)*)
15. What percentage of the sexual violence/assault happened to Slavic women after their immigration?
16. Who most likely was the perpetrator? (*Stranger; Immediate family member (sibling, parents, grandparents, step-parents); Extended family member (uncles, cousins); Friend/Coworker; or Significant other (husband or boyfriend)*)
17. How likely Slavic women are to report sexual assault/abuse to law enforcement in the U.S.?
- ☐ Very Likely                      ☐ Likely                      ☐ Unlikely                      ☐ Very Unlikely
18. Do most Slavic women know that sexual assault/abuse is a crime? *If not, what would you do?*
19. If sexual assault happens, most Slavic victims would first turn to which of the following for help?
- ☐ Church Minister                      ☐ Family                      ☐ Friend                      ☐ Nobody
- ☐ Law Enforcement                      ☐ Health Care Professional                      ☐ Social Worker
- ☐ Others \_\_\_\_\_

20. If family is not an option, who do they then turn to?
- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Church Counselor/Leader  | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend          | <input type="checkbox"/> Nobody        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Care Professional | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____             |  |  |
21. When a female client comes for counseling how likely her sexual victimization is her main concern?
22. Sexual violence is a very private matter and is a taboo subject in the Slavic community. However, do you believe that this problem should be voiced in the Slavic community?
23. Who do these victims tend to blame for the happening of sexual assault?
24. What are the ways the Slavic victims of sexual assault cope with their victimization?
25. What kind of interventions seem to work with Slavic victims?  
*(Therapy, family therapy or workshops, confession)*
26. If you had \$50,000, what would you do in the Slavic community to address the problem of sexual violence?
27. What other suggestions do you have for this study?

## APPENDIX H

**Key Informant Interview Guide (Russian Version)*****Интервью***

1. Какие услуги Вы предлагаете?
2. Какой процент из ваших клиентов являются Славяне?
3. На каком языке Вы говорите с вашими Славянскими клиентами?
4. Как они Вас находят?
5. Какой процент из этих Славянских клиентов посещают регулярно церковь?
6. Как Вы считаете, сексуальное насилие в славянской христианской среде в Сакраменто это насущная проблема?
7. Как вы считаете, является ли тема о сексуальном насилии табу в славянском христианском обществе?
8. Как вы считаете, нужно ли поднимать эту тему в нашем славянском обществе?
9. Какой процент из Славянских женщин, с которыми Вы работаете, были подвержены сексуальному насилию?
10. Согласно вашему профессиональному опыту, с какими типами сексуального насилия над женщинами и детьми вы сталкивались в работе со Славянами?
  - ☐ *Изнасилование незнакомцем*
  - ☐ *Попытка изнасилования*
  - ☐ *Половой акт с женой или подругой вопреки ее воле*
  - ☐ *Инцест (половой акт с близкими родственниками — дочь, сестра, племянница и т.д.)*
  - ☐ *Molest:*
  - ☐ *Сексуальное совращение ребенка*
  - ☐ *Непристойное обнажение гениталий перед ребенком или подростком*
  - ☐ *Показ порнографических фильмов или картинок ребенку*
  - ☐ *Прикосновения к половым органам ребенка или подростка*
  - ☐ *Принуждение ребенка или подростка к половому акту*
  - ☐ *Сексуальные ласки, поцелуи, объятия, щипки и тому подобное*
  - ☐ *Sexual battery - Прикосновения к интимным частям тела против воли человека*
  - ☐ *Сексуальная эксплуатация авторитетной личностью или руководителем (церковный служитель, преподаватель, врач, босс и т.д.)*
  - ☐ *Другое* \_\_\_\_\_
11. Какие типы являются самыми распространенными?
  - ☐ *Изнасилование незнакомцем*
  - ☐ *Попытка изнасилования*
  - ☐ *Половой акт с женой или подругой вопреки ее воле*
  - ☐ *Инцест (половой акт с близкими родственниками — дочь, сестра, племянница и т.д.)*
  - ☐ *Сексуальное совращение ребенка*
  - ☐ *Непристойное обнажение гениталий перед ребенком или подростком*
  - ☐ *Показ порнографических фильмов или картинок ребенку*
  - ☐ *Прикосновения к половым органам ребенка или подростка*
  - ☐ *Принуждение ребенка или подростка к половому акту*

- ☐ Прикосновения к интимным частям тела против воли человека  
☐ Сексуальные ласки, поцелуи, объятия, щипки и тому подобное без согласия человека  
☐ Сексуальная эксплуатация авторитетной личностью или руководителем (церковный служитель, преподаватель, врач, босс и т.д)  
☐ Другое \_\_\_\_\_

12. Согласно вашему профессиональному опыту, женщины какой возрастной группы чаще всего подвержены сексуальному насилию?

- ☐ 12 лет или моложе      ☐ от 13 до 18 лет      ☐ 19 лет или старше

13. Какой процент ваших клиентов стали жертвами сексуального насилия до их иммиграции в США?

14. Кто обычно (вероятнее всего) являлся насильником?

- ☐ Незнакомец      ☐ Друг/Сотрудник      ☐ Муж или "бойфренд"  
☐ Член семьи (родители, отчим или мачеха, бабушка или дедушка, брат, сестра)  
☐ Родственник (дядя, тетя, двоюродный брат или сестра)

15. Какой процент ваших клиентов стали жертвами сексуального насилия после их иммиграции в США?

16. Кто чаще (вероятнее всего) являлся насильником?

- ☐ Незнакомец      ☐ Друг/Сотрудник      ☐ Муж или "бойфренд"  
☐ Член семьи (родители, отчим или мачеха, бабушка или дедушка, брат, сестра)  
☐ Родственник (дядя, тетя, двоюродный брат или сестра)

17. Насколько вероятно, что подвергнувшись насилию славянская женщина сообщит об этом в полицию?

- ☐ Очень вероятно      ☐ Вероятно      ☐ Маловероятно      ☐ Невероятно

18. Как Вы считаете, знают ли наши славянские люди, что сексуальное насилие является преступлением и карается законом в США?

19. Знают ли об этом Славянские жертвы? Если нет, чтобы вы сделали?

20. К кому славянская женщина в первую очередь обратится за советом в случае сексуального насилия? (отметьте только один ответ)

- ☐ К церковному служителю      ☐ К родителям или родственникам  
☐ К подруге/другу      ☐ Ни к кому      ☐ К медработнику  
☐ В полицию      ☐ К социальному работнику      ☐ Другое \_\_\_\_\_

21. Если не к членам семьи, к кому еще женщина обратится за помощью?

(отметьте все подходящие ответы)

- ☐ К церковному служителю      ☐ К подруге/другу      ☐ Ни к кому  
☐ В полицию      ☐ К медработнику      ☐ К социальному работнику  
☐ Другое \_\_\_\_\_

22. Когда к Вам приходит женщина за помощью, как часто главная причина ее беспокойства (нужды) связана с сексуальным насилием над ней.
23. Кого обычно винят жертвы сексуального насилия в том, что с ними произошло?
24. Какими путями Славянские жертвы сексуального насилия пытаются справиться (бороться) с этой травмой в себе? *(держат это в тайне, говорят об этом с кем-то кому они доверяют, молятся, исповедуются, обращаются к психологам, и так далее)*
25. Согласно вашему опыту, что помогает *(какие виды вмешательства)* славянским христианским жертвам насилия преодолеть эту травму?
26. Если бы у Вас было \$50,000, что бы Вы сделали для того чтобы решить проблему сексуального насилия в Славянском обществе?
27. Есть ли у Вас еще какие-нибудь предложения для этого исследования?

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