

## **POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AND DEPRESSION AMONG U. S. BORN LATINO STUDENTS EXPOSED TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE**

*by Marleen Wong, 2005*

**Objective:** This study examines the prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder and depression, a common co-morbid disorder, among a sample of U.S.-born Latino middle school students exposed to community violence. **Method:** 672 U.S. born sixth-grade students (11-12 years of age) were surveyed about their exposure to community violence utilizing a modified version of the Life Events Scale (Singer et al.1999), and were screened for symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, utilizing items taken from the FOA PTSD Scale and the Children's Depression Inventory of (Kovacs, 1992). **Results:** 91.2% of the participants reported violence exposure as victims and/or witnesses to violence. 35.3% of the participants reported PTSD symptoms in the clinical range. However, 48% of violence victims registered PTSD symptoms in the clinical range. 32% of female victims of violence and 17% of male victims registered symptoms of Depression. **Conclusion:** Screening measures may be necessary to identify the negative mental health effects of community violence exposure and the "hidden" disorders of PTSD and depression. These findings document the need for a public health approach to provide assessment and intervention to students in violence prone communities.