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**Understanding domestic violence in multi ethnic rural communities: A focus on
collaborations among the courts, the law enforcement agencies, and the shelters**

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Abstract

The focus on minority women, especially Hispanic (Mexican/Mexican American) women, who are often oppressed by class, culture, ethnicity, economics, and race is imperative in states like New Mexico which have a culturally diverse population living in them. Approximately, 38% of New Mexico's population is Hispanic. Additionally, as a border state, New Mexico experiences a unique border culture brought about by migration, immigration, acculturation, and through the mingling of existing and new cultures brought about by friendships, relationships, and work. It is in this context that the current study examined the experiences of domestic violence of Hispanic and Anglo women recruited at a domestic violence shelter. The current research study documented and compared the domestic violence experiences of women living in rural communities, examined the various correlates of the domestic violence, and evaluated the formal services offered to study participants by the local shelter, courts, and law enforcement over a period of one year.

The methodology included a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and a longitudinal research design. This multi-method approach was helpful in studying a personal, difficult, and stigmatizing public health issue such as domestic violence. This approach was particularly important for a study of survivors of domestic violence because it allowed for a significant amount of time to be spent with the study participants to establish trust and rapport between a participant and the interviewer. The longitudinal nature of the study helped document the progression and changes in the components and correlates of domestic violence over time and the reasons for these changes.

A key study outcome included a documentation of the domestic violence experiences of and the significant differences in the experiences of a sample of Hispanic and Anglo women. Additionally the study explored the changes in these experiences over time, most importantly indicating a decrease or cessation of violence among those who continued in the study for the 12 months. With respect to mental health, study findings suggested two important trends. One, that depression, suicidality, and the use of prescription medications for psychological problems were prevalent among the study participants and two, that positive changes in mental health characteristics often occurred at or after 6 months after entering the shelter. Additionally, study participants indicated continuing to use medications (31%) and receiving outpatient counseling for psychological problems (14%) at the end of the 12-month study. The study findings highlighted the

intricate relationship between the abuse women experienced in their intimate relationships and the mental health problems they reported. With respect to the use of the three formal helping systems examined in the study, at the start of the study almost all of the study participants (99%) indicated that they had sought help from law enforcement agencies and from the shelter. Again, the court system and other local community agencies were not listed as the top referral sources. The help from law enforcement and the shelter appears to have been important to study participants in coping with the violence in their intimate relationships. As the abuse decreased, the number of participants who sought help from the formal systems also decreased. Overall, study participants had positive evaluation comments about law enforcement and the domestic violence shelter regarding the services they received and with respect to the changes they had initiated in participants' awareness and understanding of violence in intimate relationships.

The current represents one of the few longitudinal studies that included a predominantly Hispanic population. It therefore provides insights into the changes they experienced in domestic violence and mental health and the need to address these issues on a long-term basis and in an integrated manner with appropriate and culturally sensitive interventions and social support sources.

Executive Summary

The focus on minority women, especially Hispanic (Mexican/Mexican American) women, who are often oppressed by class, culture, ethnicity, economics, and race is imperative in states like New Mexico which have a culturally diverse population living in them. Approximately, 38% of New Mexico's population is Hispanic. Additionally, as a border state, New Mexico experiences a unique border culture brought about by migration, immigration, acculturation, and through the mingling of existing and new cultures brought about by friendships, relationships, and work. It is in this context that the current study examined the experiences of domestic violence of Hispanic and Anglo women.

Lack of access to and availability of appropriate services, and other issues brought about by the rurality of the state further compound the detrimental effects of domestic violence on those who experience it. Often, minority women may not be aware of the formal services available to them such as hospitals, domestic violence hotlines, or counseling services. Additionally, the use of formal services can be dependent on cultural beliefs and familial values that sometimes encourage greater reliance on informal sources of support than on formal support systems.

This research study focused on minority women and their domestic violence experiences through both quantitative and qualitative methods (surveys and life-history interviews). The study not only examined and documented domestic violence among a predominantly Hispanic population who utilized the services of a shelter but explored their experiences on a longitudinal basis over a period of 12 months. Few longitudinal studies with a predominantly Hispanic population have been conducted to understand the changes and the nuances of such experiences and relationships. Specifically, the study documented and compared the domestic violence experiences of women living in rural communities, examined the various correlates of the domestic violence, and evaluated the formal services offered to study participants by the local shelter, courts, and law enforcement over a period of one year.

Recruitment

A total of 82 shelter clients participated in the study at the end of a year of recruitment. During the same period, the shelter served 175 clients of whom 125 were eligible for the study. Only clients who had stayed at least one night at the shelter and had experienced violence in their current intimate heterosexual relationships were eligible to participate in the study. Of these, 82 agreed and participated in the study. This provided a participation rate of 66%.

Retention

The largest attrition occurred at the 3-month time point. Over the remaining 9 months (3-12 months), less than 38% attrition occurred. The initial unexpected attrition at the 3-month time point may have been due to one of the following three reasons as well as others that we can only speculate on:

1. Participants moved out of state or to a new location and had not provided correct tracking or contact information
2. Participants went back to their partners and were afraid to participate in the study
3. Participants when contacted did not want to participate/continue in the study

The above reasons were given to the interviewers when they were successful in contacting family, friends, or acquaintances or sometimes the participants themselves. The unexpected large attrition at the end of the 3-month time point led the researchers to regroup and update some of the tracking strategies. The changes in tracking strategies included obtaining a more detailed tracking profile and recording the number of contacts that interviewers made with their participants and presenting them to the Principal Investigator (PI) on a monthly basis. This information was reviewed carefully to ensure that it was detailed and complete. These added strategies greatly influenced the attrition rate by reducing it to less than 38%. The large attrition at 3-month time point led us to analyze the sociodemographic and other differences between those who continued in the study and those who dropped out of the study, as discussed in the report.

Referral Sources

Study participants were asked about the sources that referred them to the domestic violence shelter. The largest majority (29%) indicated that they were referred to or brought to the shelter by local law enforcement. A number of study participants (26%) referred themselves to the shelter and checked into the shelter on their own while others (17%) indicated that their family/friends were their sources of referral. Housing authorities, the local homeless shelter, family physicians, and the local hospital were listed as the other leading referral sources. It was interesting to note that the courts and other agencies in the community were not reported as the top referral sources.

Sociodemographic Characteristics

The ethnic/racial distribution of the study participants provided an important opportunity to document and examine domestic violence experiences of a large sample of Hispanic women over a period of time. A majority of the study participants were Hispanics making up 78%, while the Anglo population totaled 17%. Few studies have compared and contrasted the domestic violence experiences of Anglo and Hispanic

women and explored them longitudinally. Clearly, such an examination is essential if targeted and meaningful programs and strategies are to be developed to meet the needs of minority women in abusive relationships.

A majority (63%) of the study participants was between the ages of 26-45. Twenty one percent (21%) were younger than 25 years while 16% were over the age of 45 years. The largest percentage (34%) of study participants had at least high school/GED level education, were currently unemployed (40%), and had an average monthly income of \$500.00 or less. Additionally, they were Catholic (53%), were dating, living with, or married to their abusers (70%) at the start of the study, and had children under the age of 18 years (81%).

Domestic Violence Characteristics

For 59% of the study participants, the violence began early in their intimate relationship, either while dating or living together. The type of violence was varied and included physical, sexual, verbal and emotional/psychological abuse and had occurred for less than 10 years for 74% of the study participants. Study participants indicated being abused frequently with 67% experiencing abuse twice or more times a month, once a week, or daily. Approximately half of the study participants also reported abuse during pregnancy and indicated that their children had also been abused by their husbands/partners.

Changes in the domestic violence experiences of the study participants over the one-year time period were also documented and showed some promising trends. Overall, there was a decrease in the violence reported by those participants who continued in the study, especially in physical and sexual abuse. Those participants who continued participation indicated during the 12-month interviews that they had experienced neither of the above-mentioned types of abuse in the past three months. In fact, only one study participant reported abuse in her relationship at the 18-month time point. Similarly, participants reported a decrease in the severity of the abuse they experienced. The decrease and/or cessation of abuse reported by the study participants at the 12-month time-point were encouraging and confirmed in the 18-month interviews.

Mental Health Characteristics

The descriptive findings from the study suggest two important trends. One, that depression, suicidality, and the use of prescription medications for psychological problems were prevalent among the study participants and two, that positive changes in mental health characteristics often occurred at or after 6 months after entering the shelter. Additionally, study participants indicated continuing to use medications (31%) and receiving outpatient counseling for psychological problems (14%) at the end of the 12-month study. The

study findings highlight the intricate relationship between the abuse women experienced in their intimate relationships and the mental health problems they reported. Further, the study also points to the lag period that appears to exist between cessation of abuse and the occurrence of positive changes in mental health. The mental health problems documented in the study suggest the need for long-term solutions such as counseling and support groups that continue beyond a year. The findings also suggest that the period around 6 months was a critical period for the study participants because positive changes began to occur in their mental health during this time that needed to be supported by adequate support and services.

This study also documented the mental health characteristics over a period of 12-months that suggests that depression, serious anxiety/tension, and suicidality began to decrease at about 6 months after participants' entry into the shelter and leveled off by the 12-month time point. A small but significant percentage of study participants (26%) reported experiencing serious depression while others (31%) indicated using medications for psychological problems at the end of the one-year study. Fourteen percent (14%) of the participants also reported seeking outpatient counseling for emotional problems at the end of the one-year study period. The findings from this study add to the understanding of the long-term mental health consequences of domestic violence among a predominantly Hispanic study population and the need to address them in a culturally appropriate manner and on a long-term basis.

Social Support Characteristics

It has been suggested that Hispanic communities are more family centered and have often depended on relatives and friends for help and social support. The current study collected data to find out where and how participants sought support and help for their abuse in their relationships. At the start of the study, approximately half of the participants indicated that they had friends and family who would help them, whom they could talk to, and whose help and support they could count on. This perception of informal social support from only half of the participants may account for the large number of Hispanic women entering the shelter. It may well be that these women did not have access to their informal social support systems (for example because of moving to a new geographic location), or that they no longer felt comfortable with or trusted these sources, or perhaps felt ashamed of their circumstances. In order to reduce the social isolation that minority women may experience in such circumstances, formal support systems need to collaborate with informal networks through the use of community lay health workers or Promotoras, and be accessible and available in both traditional settings (shelters) or other settings (churches).

Life Circumstances and Stressors

Along with the violence in their intimate relationships, study participants also experienced other life stressors and circumstances including homelessness, providing for children with health and behavioral problems, and/or living with someone with alcohol/drug problems. The documentation of these life circumstances and stressors was important because of the influence they may have had on the types of coping strategies used and the extent to which study participants depended on formal and informal support systems for help.

Evaluation of the Formal Helping Systems

In the beginning of the study, almost all of the study participants (99%) indicated that they had sought help from law enforcement agencies and from the shelter. Again, the court system and other local community agencies were not listed as the top referral sources. The help from law enforcement and the shelter appears to have been important to study participants in coping with the violence in their intimate relationships. As the abuse decreased, the number of participants who sought help from the formal systems also decreased. Overall, study participants had positive evaluation comments about law enforcement and the domestic violence shelter regarding the services they received and with respect to the changes they had initiated in participants' awareness and understanding of violence in intimate relationships.

Stayers versus the Non-Stayers

The differences between those who continued to the end of the study ("stayers") versus those who did not ("non-stayers") were explored. Study participants who continued in the study appeared to have been able to seek help and social support from friends and family by talking to them about the abuse. They also talked to clergy, called the domestic violence hotline, reported the abuse to the law, and sought counseling. In a manuscript accepted for publication (Krishnan, Hilbert, McNeil, & Duncan, Accepted for publication in *Journal of Family Violence*, 2001) we reported findings from an earlier study that suggested that battered women who used the services of a shelter did so for the purposes of 'respite' or 'transition.' Those who used the shelter for transition were motivated to seek help and support similar to the 'stayers' in the current study. These participants continued to use the formal support sources because they provided the much-needed and essential services to them as well as an avenue to talk about their experiences and seek advice on coping strategies. In the above-mentioned manuscript we also reported that those who used the shelter for respite often used it as a place to get away, regroup, replenish, and return to their relationships. The 'non-stayers' in the current study resembled those women who used the shelter for respite in terms of their limited efforts to seek help and support from formal support systems. They often tended to use the shelter for respite and for a limited period of time and consequently dropped out of the study before its end.

Hispanic versus Anglo Study Participants

There were significant sociodemographic differences between Anglo and Hispanic study participants. The Anglo participants averaged a higher level of formal education, a larger percentage were not married to their abusers, had been homeless for 30 days or more because of the domestic violence before entering the shelter, and reported more abortions and miscarriages. Hispanic participants reported a higher percentage of children living within the home and reported more family members currently in jail for perpetrating domestic violence in the past year.

Although abuse began early for both Hispanics and Anglos, it began earlier for Anglos with significantly more of them reporting abuse onset during dating. Additionally significantly more Anglos reported that they experienced abuse more frequently with more than half indicating that they were abused on a daily basis. Significant differences also existed between the participants in the types of domestic violence experienced (physical, sexual, or emotional abuse), their help-seeking behaviors, and their perceptions of social support. Twice as many Anglo participants reported sexual abuse by their current intimate partners as compared to Hispanic study participants. They also sought help and social support both from formal and informal sources significantly more than Hispanic participants for symbolic violence, threats, and actual violence. Battered Hispanic women appear to be in a precarious position, both those who participated in the study and others, because they do experience abuse in intimate relationships but often do not report all of their abuse experiences and seek help less frequently because of cultural, social, and normative influences.

Preliminary Qualitative Data Analysis

We are currently in the process of completing the qualitative analyses using the software 'Atlas TI' version 4.2. We have completed transcribing all of the interviews and translating those conducted in Spanish. The report includes the results from our preliminary qualitative analysis.

Summary of Findings

The significant study findings include the following:

1. Documentation of domestic violence experiences among a predominantly Hispanic population (Mexican/Mexican American) with a comparison to a sample of Anglo/Caucasian women
2. The study represents one of the very few longitudinal studies conducted among Hispanic women in abusive relationships

3. An understanding of the relationship between domestic violence and the mental health consequences experienced by battered women over a 12-month period
4. An exploration of the social support systems available and used by Hispanic women in rural communities that are often characterized by limited and appropriate services
5. A recognition of the prevalence of use of prescription medications (for psychological problems) and over the counter medications in preference to the use of alcohol and illegal substances among study participants
6. An understanding of the differences between women who continued in the study for 12 months ('stayers') and those who dropped out the study ('non-stayers') before the end of the study.

Introduction

The 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was created in response to the millions of women affected by domestic violence in the US. While social scientists began studying family violence in general in the 1960's, the emphasis was on child abuse (Gil, 1971; Kempe et al., 1962). During that time, violence against women in intimate relationships was largely ignored. Straus (1976) suggested this difference might have been a result of an implicit and unrecognized 'social norm' that permitted a husband to hit his wife while Pagelow (1984) claimed this violence was not seriously researched earlier because it was too controversial. Since then, studies indicate that domestic violence is one of the most underestimated and underreported crimes in the United States and is the single most significant cause of injury to women (Bachman, 2000; Berrios & Grady, 1991; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). This is particularly true with respect to domestic violence among minority women.

Few studies have attempted to document domestic violence experiences and its correlates among women from minority communities (Sorenson & Telles, 1991) much less explore how these women might utilize the formal service delivery systems such as shelters, law enforcement, and courts. In an early study of domestic violence experiences of Hispanic, African American, and Caucasian women in a shelter, Gondolf, Fisher, and McFerron (1988) found no differences in the frequency of violence across ethnic groups. A significant difference, however, was found in that Hispanic women reported the longest duration of violent relationships. Sorenson and Telles's (1991) study revealed interesting findings regarding ethnic differences. It reported that Mexican born Mexican Americans had significantly lower rates of partner violence than either Caucasians or US born Mexican Americans. Such findings speak to the complexity of ethnicity and the influence of mitigating circumstances of immigration and acculturation. Additionally, other researchers (Neff, Holamon, & Schlutter, 1995; Sorenson & Telles, 1991) have indicated that correlates such as alcohol and other drug use, informal support from family and friends, socio-demographic factors, and residency status often become barriers to help-seeking in rural environments, particularly for women from minority communities living in violent relationships.

Similarly, information about domestic violence among Native American women is scant and anecdotal of tribal reactions and mores (Koss, 1994). Studies by Allen (1985, 1989), Duran, Guilory, and Tingley in Koss (1994) suggest social issues such as the introduction of alcohol, the extreme subjugation of Native Americans, and internalized hatred account for high levels of domestic violence among this population. Chester et al. (1994) point to the lack of research related to domestic violence among Native Americans. This despite data that indicates that this population is disproportionately affected by higher alcohol use and abuse, increased rates of homicide, accidental deaths, and motor vehicle accidents for both sexes compared to the general population. Research conducted by Allen (1985) and McIntire (1988) as well as others involving informal interviews indicate that domestic violence is a significant problem among Native American communities (Chapin, 1990; DeBruyn, Lujan & May, 1992; Poelzer & Poelzer, 1986).

The focus on minority women, especially Hispanic (Mexican/Mexican American) women, who are often oppressed by class, culture, ethnicity, economics, and race is imperative in states like New Mexico which have a culturally diverse population living in them. Approximately, 38% of New Mexico's population is Hispanic. Additionally, as a border state, New Mexico experiences a unique border culture brought about by migration, immigration, acculturation, and through the mingling of existing and new cultures brought about by friendships, relationships, and work. It is in this context that the current study examined the experiences of domestic violence of Hispanic and Anglo women.

Lack of access to and availability of appropriate services, and other issues brought about by the rurality of the state compound the detrimental effects of domestic violence on those who experience it. Often, minority women may not be aware of the formal services available to them such as hospitals, domestic violence hotlines, or counseling services. The use of formal services may be dependant of cultural beliefs and social norms with research suggesting that Hispanic communities have traditionally relied more on informal sources of support than formal systems.

Goals and Objectives

The current research study included the following goals and objectives:

1. *To document and systematically understand the domestic violence experiences of culturally diverse women in rural communities.*

The study examined domestic violence experiences in terms of the following five components:

- a. Onset of domestic violence in abusive intimate relationships
- b. Types of domestic violence (physical, sexual, or verbal/emotional)
- c. Frequency of domestic violence in intimate relationships
- d. Severity of domestic violence
- e. Duration of domestic violence in abusive intimate relationships

2. *To examine the correlates of domestic violence including those related to alcohol and other drug use, sociodemographic characteristics, and acculturation*

The study collected data on a variety of correlates including alcohol and other drug use, sociodemographic correlates including race/ethnicity, marital status, and educational level, and social support correlates

3. *To evaluate individual and collaborative formal support services offered by the shelter, law enforcement, and the court systems that can be accessible and available to women who experience violence in their intimate relationships*

Methodology

The methodology included a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and a longitudinal research design. This multi-method approach was helpful in studying a personal, difficult, and stigmatizing public health issue such as domestic violence. This approach was particularly important for a study of survivors of domestic violence because it allowed for a significant amount of time to be spent with the study participants to establish trust and rapport between a participant and the interviewer. The longitudinal nature of the study helped document the progression and changes in the components and correlates of domestic violence over time and the reasons for these changes. Such a research design also provided valuable information on the types of services sought from various formal support systems and their influence on how participants coped

with and addressed issues related to domestic violence over the period of one year. This time period was selected following consultations with the director and staff of the domestic violence shelter who indicated that once a woman sought assistance at a shelter for domestic violence, she usually came to some recognition, resignation, understanding, and/or decisions about her circumstances within a year. This may simply mean that during this time she may have become ready to acknowledge the existence of domestic violence in her life or more significantly have made decisions about leaving her abusive partner.

The research began with life-history interviews and was followed by the administration of surveys. An evaluation of the formal support systems and their services completed the data collection protocol. This sequence helped to engage participants who preferred not to immediately discuss the abusive events in their lives but felt comfortable with telling their story in their own words and at their own pace. The qualitative life-history interviews complemented, expanded, and confirmed the information collected by the quantitative methods. The quantitative survey helped collect specific data on variables that operated on the individual, interpersonal, familial, and community levels and shed light on the associations and interactions among the proposed components of domestic violence and its correlates.

Before the study instruments were administered, the interviewer explained the goals of the study, participants' rights, issues of confidentiality and privacy, financial compensation for participation, follow-up procedures, and asked that a consent form be signed. Tracking information was also solicited to help contact participants for follow-up interviews and surveys. After the initial data collection time point, data was collected at four additional time points (3, 6, 9, and 12 months). Life-history interviews were conducted first followed by surveys. The participants' interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, translated (if in Spanish), and analyzed. The survey was administered next following a short break. The evaluation of the formal systems completed the data collection process.

Research Findings

This research study included a sample of predominantly minority women. The study not only examined and documented domestic violence among a predominantly Hispanic population who utilized the services of a shelter but explored their experiences on a longitudinal basis over a period of 12 months. Few such longitudinal studies have been conducted to understand the changes in and nuances of such experiences in violent intimate relationships.

Recruitment of Study Participants

A total of 82 shelter clients participated in the study at the end of a year of recruitment. During the same period, the shelter served 175 clients of whom 125 were eligible for the study. Only clients who had experienced violence in their current intimate heterosexual relationships and had stayed at least one night at the shelter were eligible to participate. This provided a participation rate of 66%. This slightly lower than expected participation rate may have been the result of the number of activities and issues that the clients had to attend such as taking care of their children and being at their workplace while adjusting to life at the shelter. It was often difficult to track eligible clients and set up a time for the interviews and surveys. Other clients who did not participate in the study indicated that they were too tired, would not be staying at the shelter for too long (less than a day or two), or were not interested in participating in the study at this time. Other studies conducted previously by this research team suggest that exhaustion was a major issue that women in abusive relationships experienced. Consequently, they sometimes sought the services of a shelter for some respite and wanted to be left alone ((Krishnan & Hilbert, 1998 and Krishnan, Hilbert, McNeil, & Duncan, Accepted for Publication in *Journal of Family Violence*, 2001).

Number of Women at the Shelter (8/15/98-9/01/99)	Number of Women eligible for the study*	Number who participated in the study
175	125	82

*Shelter clients who had experienced violence from their current intimate male partner and who stayed at the shelter for at least one night that were eligible for the study.

The shelter intake staff provided the project recruiter a weekly list of incoming residents to contact. The recruiter approached and provided these clients additional details of the study along with flyers

about the study. Large posters were also displayed in the shelter to inform clients of the study. Clients were also informed that their decision to participate or not would have no influence on the quality of care and help they received at the shelter. Next, an interviewer contacted those clients who expressed an interest to participate to the recruiter. A time was set for the interview and survey.

Referral Sources

Study participants were asked about the sources that referred them to the domestic violence shelter. The largest majority (29%) indicated that they were referred to or brought to the shelter by local law enforcement. A number of study participants (26%) referred themselves and checked into the shelter on their own while others (17%) indicated that their family/friends were their referral source. Housing authorities, the local homeless shelter, family physicians, and the local hospital were also listed as the other leading referral sources. It was interesting to note that the courts and other agencies in the community were not reported as top referral sources. The table below provides a list of the referral sources and a breakdown of the "other" category.

Referral Sources	Number and Percentage of participants
Law Enforcement (police)	35 (29%)
Self	32 (26%)
Other*	23 (19%)
Family/Friends	20 (17%)
Counselors/therapists	9 (7%)
Courts	1 (0.8%)
Other agencies	1 (0.8%)
Other*	Number and Percentage of Participants
Housing authority/Homeless shelters (Local/other counties/Texas)	12 (44%)
Medical sources (Physicians and hospital)	6 (22%)
Youth related services (School counselor/FYI/ Jardin)	4 (15%)
Social service agencies (AFDC and others)	3 (11%)
Neighbors	1 (4%)
Victim Assistance Program	1 (4%)

Note: Participants could check more than one referral source.

Law enforcement was the leading referral source. Local law enforcement and the county sheriff's department continue to participate in regular training sessions and allow their employees to serve on various advocacy and collaborative boards and groups addressing the issues of domestic violence. Their victim assistance coordinator serves as a member of the team that responds to calls regarding domestic disturbance and violence. In addition, other factors such as knowledge about the local domestic violence shelter among the community residents and citizens and the visible role taken on by the staff of the shelter may explain why the other leading referral sources were the participants themselves and their families/friends.

Preliminary qualitative data analysis indicted the various reasons why participants entered the domestic violence shelter. These include the following:

For safety

For access to material resources and services

For respite

For transition

"For the sake of the children"

Preliminary qualitative data analysis also offered some insights into participants' initial impressions and experiences at the shelter. These included general apprehension about the shelter and other residents and ambiguity about the counseling they began to receive. Most participants seemed to have 'mixed feelings' about the counselors and the counseling. They indicated that it was almost as if they had to talk to them (counselors) and open up to them as part of their responsibility or payment for their stay at the shelter. The following quotes reflect some of these initial impressions and experiences:

"It was scary because you don't know what to expect and what kind of people are going to be there....And coming down to a strange place"

"Helpful staff and a safe place"

"People (shelter staff) around here help me because they understand my personal situation. Maybe some have experienced things like I have". "I am safe here. I don't have abuse any more"

"I try not to rely on them (other residents) too much because they are going through their own deal"

"I don't really talk to anyone, it is kind of hard. It is hard for me to go up to somebody and start talking"

Retention of Study Participants

The study was longitudinal in nature and included contacting participants every three months for a period of 12 months. Participants were also contacted at 18 months and asked three questions.

The questions were:

1. With whom are you presently residing? Is he the person you were with when you entered the shelter about 18 months ago?
2. Is your present relationship violent?
3. Did you find the intervention/help from the police in the past 18 months helpful? Did you find the court system helpful? Did you find the shelter helpful? Please comment on your experience.

The additional point of contact at 18 months and the above three questions were added to the 5-interviews/surveys to collect information about the violence in participants' lives. At the end of 12 months, study participants indicated that there was no physical and/or sexual violence. The 18-month time-point provided us the opportunity to follow-up on this and document if this trend continued.

To retain as many participants as possible, each of the 6 trained bilingual interviewers contacted about 14 participants and tracked them over the period of one year. It was felt that this process would build rapport and trust and could assist in the retention of the participants. The table below indicates the number of study participants who were interviewed at each time point.

0-Time Interviews	3-Months	6-Months	9-Months	12-Months
82	45	34	30	28

The largest attrition occurred at the 3-month time point. Over the remaining 9 months (3-12 months), less than 38% attrition occurred. The initial unexpected attrition at the 3-month time point may have been due to one of the following three reasons as well as others that we can only speculate on:

- Participants moved out of state or to a new location and had not provided correct tracking or contact information
- Participants went back to their partners and were afraid to participate in the study
- Participants when contacted did not want to participate/continue in the study

The above reasons were given to the interviewers when they were successful in contacting family members, friends, or acquaintances or sometimes the participants themselves. The unexpected large attrition at the end of the 3-month time point led the researchers to regroup and update some of the tracking strategies. The updated strategies included obtaining a more detailed tracking profile and recording the number of contacts that interviewers made with their participants and presenting it to the Principal Investigator (PI) on a monthly basis to be reviewed to ensure that the tracking data was more comprehensive and complete. These added strategies greatly influenced the attrition rate by reducing it to less than 38%. The large attrition at 3-month time point led us to analyze the differences between those who continued in the study and those who dropped out of the study. The significant differences are highlighted later in the report.

Descriptive Statistics

Sociodemographic Characteristics

The ethnic/racial distribution of the study participants provided an important opportunity to document and examine domestic violence experiences of a large sample of Hispanic women over an extended period of time. A majority of the study participants were Hispanics making up 78% of the study sample, while the Anglo population totaled 17%. Few studies have compared and contrasted the domestic violence experiences of Anglo and Hispanic women and explored them longitudinally. Clearly, such an examination is essential if targeted and meaningful programs and strategies are to be developed to meet the needs of minority women in abusive relationships.

A majority (63%) of the study participants was between the ages of 26-45. Twenty one percent (21%) were younger than 25 years while 16% were over the age of 45 years. A large percentage (64%) of study participants had at least high school/GED level education, were currently unemployed (40%), and had an average monthly income of \$500.00. Additionally, they were Catholic (53%), were dating, living with, or married to the abuser (70%) at the beginning of the

study, and had children under the age of 18 years (81%). The sociodemographic characteristics are compiled in Table 1.

Table 1 – Sociodemographic Characteristics

	Initial point	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
	N=82	N=45	N=34	N=30	N=28
Age	N=82				
Under 25	17 (21%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
26-45	52 (63%)				
Over 45	13 (16%)				
Ethnicity					
Hispanic	64 (78%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Anglo American	14 (17%)				
Other	4 (5%)				
Education	n=82				
None	0 (0%)				
Grade 1-6	18 (22%)				
Junior High School	11 (13%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
High School or GED	28 (34%)				
Post-secondary	23 (28%)				
Graduate Degree	2 (2%)				
Religion	n=79				
Baptist	8 (10%)				
Catholic	42 (53%)				
Jewish	0 (0%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hindu	0 (0%)				
Muslim	0 (0%)				
Protestant	5 (6%)				
Other	24 (30%)				
Usual Employment	n=77				
Full time	25 (33%)				
Part time	7 (9%)				
Part time irregular	4 (5%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Retired/Disability	8 (10%)				
Unemployed	31 (40%)				
Other	2 (3%)				
Worked Past 3 Months	n=82	n=45	n=34	n=30	n=28
	32 (39%)	20 (44%)	13 (38%)	12 (41%)	13 (46%)
Income Sources	n=80	n=45	n=34	n=29	n=28
Earnings from job	24 (30%)	16 (36%)	13 (38%)	12 (41%)	13 (46%)
Money from spouses job	11 (14%)	6 (13%)	4 (12%)	5 (17%)	7 (25%)
Family/Friends/partner	12 (15%)	5 (11%)	8 (24%)	3 (10%)	2 (7%)
Child support/Alimony	4 (5%)	7 (16%)	3 (9%)	5 (17%)	6 (21%)
SSI Disability	14 (18%)	9 (20%)	11 (32%)	10 (35%)	9 (32%)
Welfare/AFDC	24 (30%)	11 (24%)	9 (27%)	7 (24%)	6 (24%)
Food Stamps	39 (49%)	27(60%)	17 (50%)	16 (55%)	13 (46%)
Unemployment	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)

Savings	6 (8%)	2 (4%)	4 (12%)	1 (3%)	2 (7%)
Selling Items	8 (10%)	2 (4%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Illegal activities	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	3 (4%)	3 (7%)	1 (3%)	5 (17%)	3 (11%)
Income per month	n=57	n=41	n=31	n=30	n=26
\$0-500	41 (72%)	17 (42%)	9 (27%)	5 (18%)	7 (27%)
\$501-1000	12 (21%)	19 (46%)	16 (49%)	15 (53%)	11 (42%)
\$1001-1500	4 (7%)	3 (7%)	5 (15%)	3 (11%)	5 (20%)
\$1501-2000	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	2 (6%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)
Over \$2000	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	1 (3%)	3 (11%)	3 (11%)
Marital Status	n=82	n=44	n=34	n=30	n=27
Active	n=57	n=30 (68%)	n=22 (65%)	n=22 (73%)	n=15 (56%)
Dating	24 (42%)				
Living with	7 (12%)				
Married	26 (45%)				
Inactive	n=25	n=14 (32%)	n=12 (35%)	n=8 (27%)	n=12(44%)
Separated	19 (76%)				
Divorced	6 (24%)				
Widowed	0 (0%)				
Children < 18 years old	n=82	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	66 (81%)				
Where Living	n=81	n=43	n=34	n=30	n=28
Own house/apt	21 (26%)	22 (51%)	24 (71%)	24 (80%)	26 (93%)
Family's house/apt	6 (7%)	2 (5%)	2 (6%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)
Other house/apt	1 (1%)	2 (5%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Homeless shelter	10 (12%)	3 (7%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Domestic Violence shelter	39 (48%)	9 (21%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	4 (5%)	5 (12%)	4 (12%)	4 (13%)	1 (4%)
With Whom living	n=72	n=43	n=34	n=30	n=28
Parent(s)	4 (6%)	1 (2%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)
Sibling(s)	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	4 (12%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
Relative(s)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	3 (9%)	2 (7%)	4 (14%)
Spouse	20 (28%)	6 (14%)	3 (9%)	4 (14%)	6 (21%)
Intimate partner	13 (19%)	2 (5%)	5 (15%)	4 (14%)	1 (4%)
Own children	51 (65%)	28 (65%)	19 (56%)	19 (66%)	19 (68%)
Other children	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
Roommate(s)	5 (7%)	4 (9%)	3 (9%)	1 (3%)	1 (4%)

KEY TO TABLE:

N equals the number of subjects completing questionnaires for a particular time period

N equals the number of subjects who responded to a particular item

Outside parentheses are the frequency of respondents who endorsed the item

Inside parentheses are the percentage of respondents who endorsed the item

Domestic Violence Characteristics

Table 2 summarizes the nature of domestic violence (violence perpetrated by a current husband, significant other, or intimate partner) experienced by the study participants over a period of one year. For 59% of the study participants, the violence began early in their intimate relationship while dating or living together. The type of violence was varied and included physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional/psychological abuse and had occurred for less than 10 years for 74% of the study participants. The study participants indicated being abused frequently with 67% experiencing abuse twice or more times a month, once a week, or daily. About half of the study participants also reported abuse during pregnancy and indicated that their children had also been abused by their husband/partner. Previous studies involving participants recruited at domestic violence shelters, homeless shelters, and the hospital emergency departments documented similar characteristics of domestic violence (Krishnan, Hilbert, VanLeeuwen, & Kolia, 1997; Krishnan, Hilbert, & VanLeeuwen, 2001; Krishnan, Hilbert, & Pase, 2001). Other researchers and findings have also documented the frequency, duration, onset, severity, and types of violence experienced by women in intimate relationships.

Changes in violence experienced over the one year were documented and show some promising trends. Overall, there was a decrease in the types of violence study participants reported, especially in physical and sexual abuse. At the 12-month time point participants who continued in the study reported no such abuse. In fact, only one study participant reported abuse in her relationship at the 18-month time point. Similarly, there was a decrease in the severity of abuse experienced and reported by study participants. This decrease and/or cessation of abuse reported by study participants were encouraging and confirmed in the 18-month interview. Campbell and Soeken (1999) reported a similar trend in their 1999 study with a sample of predominantly African American women (79.6%). This current study appears to be one of the few studies that have documented longitudinally the domestic violence experiences of a predominantly Hispanic population living in rural and border communities.

Table 2 – Domestic Violence Characteristics

	Initial time point	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
	N=82	N=45	N=34	N=30	N=28
Onset of abuse	n=72				
While dating	12 (16%)				
While living together	32 (43%)				
Married less than 1 year	20 (27%)				
Married 2-5 years	7 (9%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Married 5-10 years	1 (1%)				
Married 10-20 years	3 (4%)				
Type(s) of abuse	n=75	n=11	n=5	n=5	n=1
Physical	64 (83%)	3 (27%)	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	0 (0%)
Sexual	n=70 32 (46%)	n=11 1 (9%)	n=5 0 (0%)	n=5 1 (20%)	n=1 0 (0%)
Verbal	n=76 75 (99%)	n=12 10 (83%)	n=5 5 (100%)	n=6 6 (100%)	n=1 1 (100%)
Emotional/Psychological	n=75 73 (97%)	n=12 10 (83%)	n=5 5 (100%)	n=6 6 (100%)	n=1 1 (100%)
Isolated incident	n=76 13 (17%)	n=12 5 (42%)	n=5 1 (20%)	n=6 2 (33%)	n=1 1 (100%)
Abuse during pregnancy	n=76 37 (49%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Duration of abuse	n=77				
Less than 1 year	18 (23%)				
1-2 years	10 (13%)				
2-5 years	16 (21%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5-10 years	13 (17%)				
10-20 years	12 (16%)				
More than 20 years	8 (10%)				
Frequency of abuse	n=75				
Less than once a year	7 (9%)				
Once a year	2 (3%)				
Two or more times a year	6 (8%)				
Once a month	10 (13%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Two or more times a month	11 (15%)				
Once a week	16 (21%)				
Daily	23 (31%)				
Children abused	n=74 36 (49%)	n=11 5 (46%)	n=5 2 (40%)	n=6 2 (33%)	n=1 1 (100%)
Used alcohol during incident	n=78 66 (85%)	n=13 2 (15%)	n=6 0 (0%)	n=5 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Partner used alcohol during	n=78 55 (71%)	n=13 5 (39%)	n=5 4 (80%)	n=5 4 (80%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Used drugs during incident	n=77 6 (8%)	n=14 13 (93%)	n=5 0 (0%)	n=5 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Partner used drugs during	N/A	n=13 2 (15%)	n=4 0 (0%)	n=8 1 (14%)	n=2 0 (0%)

Table 2B: Severity of Current Abuse

	Initial Point	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE	N=82	N=45	N=34	N=30	N=28
Partner kicked or hit walls, broke objects	n=77 56 (73%) n=82	n=14 5 (36%)	n=5 3 (60%)	n=7 3 (43%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Sought formal help	32 (39%)				
Sought informal help	36 (44%)				
Partner destroyed belongings or damaged possessions, kids, or pets	n=64 44 (69%) n=82	n=14 9 (64%)	n=5 2 (40%)	n=7 2 (29%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Sought formal help	17 (21%)				
Sought informal help	17 (21%)				
THREATS	N=82	N=45	N=34	N=30	N=28
Partner made threatening gestures, acted like a bully	n=75 60 (80%) n=82	n=14 6 (43%)	n=5 3 (60%)	n=6 4 (67%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Sought formal help	26 (32%)				
Sought informal help	29 (35%)				
Partner threatened harm with club, knife, gun, or threatened to kill himself	n=64 33 (52%) n=82	n=14 4(29%)	n=5 1 (20%)	n=7 1 (14%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Sought formal help	17 (21%)				
Sought informal help	16 (20%)				

ACTUAL VIOLENCE	Initial Point	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
Minimal Violence: partner held, pinned, pushed, shoved, or grabbed forcefully	n=77 63 (82%)	n=14 4 (29%)	n=5 1 (20%)	n=5 1 (20%)	n=2 0 (0%)
	n=82				
Sought formal help	36 (44%)				
Sought informal help	34 (42%)				
Moderate Violence: partner slapped, scratched, or pulled hair	n=77 53 (69%)	n=14 4 (29%)	n=5 2 (40%)	n=5 2 (40%)	n=2 0 (0%)
	n=82				
Sought formal help	33 (40%)				
Sought informal help	31 (38%)				
Severe Violence: partner kicked, stomped, choked, burned, beat up, or used a knife or gun	n=78 52 (67%)	n=14 4 (29%)	n=5 2 (40%)	n=5 2 (40%)	n=2 0 (0%)
	n=82				
Sought formal help	33 (40%)				
Sought informal help	25 (31%)				

Table 2C- Participants History of Abuse

	Initial Point
	N=82
Experienced abuse in previous intimate relationships	n=80 44 (55%)
Physical	n=44 40 (91%)
Sexual	n=40 22 (55%)
Verbal	n=46 42 (91%)
Emotional	n=45 43 (96%)
Experienced abuse as a child	n=80 50 (63%)
Physical	n=41 34 (83%)
Sexual	n=44 26 (59%)
Verbal	n=40 31 (78%)
Emotional	n=47 46 (98%)
Witnessed abuse as a child	n=76 42 (55%)

Table 2D- Partners History of Abuse

Partner witnessed violence as a child	n=71 43 (61%)
Partner has history of violence	n=76 57 (75%)
Previous partner(s) abused as children	n=41 27 (66%)
Previous partners witnesses abuse	n=44 28 (64%)
Previous partners with history violence	n=45 31 (69%)
Previous partners used drugs when abusive	N=46 25 (54%)
Previous partners used alcohol when abusive	n=48 37 (77%)

Preliminary Qualitative Data Analyses

We are currently in the process of completing these analyses using the software 'Atlas TI' (version 4.2). We have completed transcribing all of the interviews and translating those conducted in Spanish. The initial analyses provided valuable information and insights into the quality of participant's intimate relationships with their partners, the nature, experiences, and context of abuse, and its effect on their children and themselves. The qualitative findings provided explanations as well as a better understanding of the dynamics of abusive intimate relationships in which participants lived.

• ***Relational Dynamics***

Relationships started off without violence

Violence began soon after moving in together, early in the marriage, or during pregnancy

Most relationships progressed quickly often with less than 6 months between meeting one another and getting married. Pregnancy was often the catalyst for marriage

'Charm' was the most frequent 'attribute' participants associated with their abusive partners/spouses. One participant explained that she did not go to her neighbors for help because her husband had charmed them into believing that "she was crazy." Another participant indicated that her husband would typically apologize after an abusive incident, swear never to do it again, bring her flowers, and charm his way back into her life

- **History of Abuse**

Participants' interviews revealed that many of them had experienced abuse either as children and/or as adults in other relationships.

Almost all of the participants had grown up in poverty

A majority of the participants were brought up with traditional ideas about gender roles and expectations.

A number of the participants indicated that they were victims of both physical and sexual abuse as children

All participants who had troubled childhood said that they were trying to raise their own children differently

"I am trying to make sure that things are equal and fair. I want to raise my son to respect women and treat them as equals"

Participants who received the least support from their families were from families in which violence was normative and who had strong and traditional views about gender role and expectations

"They (family) act like it (violence) happens all the time. The man is king and the wife must bow down to his feet every time he sits"

Those participants who grew up in traditional households that were not violent had supportive families who were concerned about the abuse and were supportive of them and their efforts to seek help of leave

- **Experiences of Abuse**

Types of Abuse

Participants indicated that they had endured various types of abuse from their partners/spouses.

This included physical, emotional, verbal, and mental abuse, threats and numerous types of controlling tactics.

Fights and Arguments

Participants had very similar descriptions of the fights that led up to the violence in their relationships. Very often, their partners would pick fights by criticizing them. For example for the fact that the house was not cleaned right or the dinner was not ready, etc. One participant described a typical situation thus:

"The house could be spotless and he would throw something and ask me why I broke it"

Tactics of Control

Participants indicated that they were often belittled and threatened by their abusive partners/spouses.

"He had negative attitudes and criticisms against me. He told me that I was ugly, fat, and full of children, and nobody would want me. He (threatened) me saying 'I will call immigration so they will take you back.' On one occasion he stopped getting me money for food"

Participants described other forms of control that their partners/spouses subjected them to.

"My husband denied me food, he denied me to go to the bathroom." She went on to describe the toll the emotional abuse and control had on her. "...The emotional and mental abuse is probably by far the worse, extremely worse. The intensity of what he had, this control he had over me was far worse."

Jealousy, blame, and false accusations

Participants described their partners/spouses as being 'jealous' and always accusing them of being with other men. They would also criticize participants' families and friends and did not want them to spend time with these people. Additionally, many of the immigrant participants were far away from their families and had no way (phone/letters) to contact them.

"When I came here, I didn't know how to speak English, so I did not go anywhere"

"He threatened me that he would call the immigration, so I stayed inside the house all the time. He did not permit me to go out of the house"

Isolation

Participants described the isolation they experienced as a result of their abusive relationships

- Isolation was often dictated and imposed by their abusive partners/spouses
- At other times the isolation was 'self imposed' because of their own embarrassment about the violence they were experiencing
- Further, participants indicated that they isolated themselves because 'they did not trust anyone' and because they felt that 'no one supported them'

- Participants felt isolated because of the lack of financial and transportation resources to keep in touch with family and friends and their support networks
- **Effect on Children**

A majority of the participants were mothers. They worried and were concerned about the effect of the abuse on their children.

Children as witnesses to abuse

Often participants cited their concern and worry about their children being witnesses to the abuse and what effects it was having on their children, as their primary rationale for seeking help.

"I just feel guilty I didn't leave before now. And now, I want to protect them (children). Now I have to make up for the last eleven years"

Participants also worried about the fact that their children exhibited signs of being violent themselves at very young ages.

"One of my daughters is always upset and violent"

"My girl is a troublemaker and I am worried about her"

"We have to get out while our kids are small because otherwise kids grow up like that (violent)...I see the same thing in my daughter. She has a lot of anger. She has been charged with assault and battery twice"

Children as caretakers

Participants acknowledged that their children were in a very 'bad position.' They often acted as their mother's 'caretakers.'

"He (son) is trying to be my protector. Instead of me being his-he is trying to be the boss and take care of me. I keep reminding him that he is only a kid"

Children in Limbo

Participants felt that as a result of the abuse their children were 'stuck in a limbo.' Children often preferred to stay in their own homes despite the violence because they felt embarrassed to live at a shelter. There was no right place for these children. Some of the participants indicated that in the past they continued to stay in their abusive relationships so that their children could have a father. Other participants explained that they continued in their abusive relationships despite the violence because they felt 'their kids were protected and taken care of' when they were with their fathers.

Stressors

Participants listed and described a variety of stressors that exacerbated the abuse they experienced. A partial list include the following:

- Use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs by their partners/spouses
- Drug dealing by their partners/spouses
- Financial concerns and problems
- Job loss and unemployment
- Mental illness
- Poor relationships with his family

"Financial problems were the main stress"

"When I was living with my husband, his family lived very close to us. And they were not good with me, they called me a 'wet back'"

"Whenever he was on drugs we had nothing, no diapers for the kids...."

"I was afraid that my husband would kill me because he is an alcoholic and a very aggressive man"

"He is just crazy. I try to talk to him and he starts yelling especially when he is drinking"

Mental Health Characteristics

Table 3 summarizes the mental health characteristics of study participants over the one-year period of the study. The descriptive findings from the study suggest two important trends. One, that depression, suicidality, and the use of prescription medications for psychological problems were prevalent among the study participants and two, positive changes in the mental health characteristics often occurred at around 6 months after entering the shelter. The high prevalence rates of depressive symptoms in this study are consistent with the findings of other researchers (Campbell & Soeken, 1999; Cascardi & O'Leary, 1992) as well as with finding from our own recent studies (Krishnan, Hilbert, & Van Leeuwen, 2001). Additionally, study participants indicated continuing to use medications (31%) and receiving outpatient counseling (14%) for psychological problems at the end of the 12-month study.

These study findings highlight the intricate relationship between abuse in intimate relationships and the mental health problems experienced. Further, the study also points to possible lag period that exists between cessation of abuse and the positive changes that occur in mental health. The above long-term mental health consequences of violence suggest the need for long-term solutions such as counseling and support groups that extend beyond a year. The findings also suggest that the time period around 6 months appeared to be a critical period for the study participants because positive changes in their mental health began to occur at this time period that needed to be guided by adequate resources and support.

Table 3- Mental Health Characteristics

	Initial Point	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
	N=82	N=45	N=34	N=30	N=28
Serious depression	n=82	n=44	n=33	n=30	n=27
past year	59 (72%)	27 (61%)	10 (30%)	9 (30%)	7 (26%)
past 3 months		23 (52%)	10 (30%)	8 (27%)	6 (22%)
Past 30 days	53 (65%)				
Serious anxiety/tension	n=82	n=44	n=34	n=30	n=27
past year	59 (72%)	25 (55%)	22 (65%)	11 (37%)	7 (26%)
past 3 months		24 (55%)	14 (%)	11 (37%)	8 (30%)
Past 30 days	57 (70%)				
Trouble concentrating or remembering	n=82	n=44	n=34	n=30	n=26
past year	43 (52%)				
past 3 months		24 (55%)	13 (38%)	19 (33%)	7 (27%)
Past 30 days	41 (50%)	23 (52%)	13 (38%)	9 (30%)	6 (24%)
Trouble controlling violent behavior	n=82	n=44	n=33	n=30	n=26
past year	24 (29%)	9 (21%)	3 (9%)	4 (13%)	1 (4%)
past 3 months		23 (52%)	3 (9%)	4 (13%)	1 (4%)
Past 30 days	19 (23%)				
Thoughts of suicide	n=79	n=44	n=33	n=30	n=26
past year	25 (31%)	8 (18%)	4 (12%)	4 (13%)	1 (4%)
past 3 months		9 (20%)	2 (6%)	2 (7%)	2 (8%)
Past 30 days	16 (20%)				
Attempted suicide	n=78	n=44	n=34	n=30	n=26
past year	10 (13%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
past 3 months		3 (7%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
Past 30 days	6 (8%)				
Prescribed Medication for psychological problem	n=82	n=44	n=33	n=29	n=26
past year	17 (21%)				
past 3 months		15 (35%)	9 (27%)	8 (28%)	8 (31%)
Past 30 days	12 (15%)	11 (26%)	9 (27%)	8 (28%)	8 (31%)
Received inpatient counseling for emotional problems	n=82	n=45	n=34	n=30	n=28
	12 (15%)	7 (16%)	3 (9%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)
Received outpatient counseling for emotional problems	n=82	n=45	n=34	n=30	n=28
	21 (26%)	14 (31%)	10 (29%)	8 (27%)	4 (14%)

With respect to drug use very few study participants indicated using illegal drugs while less than half of them indicated using alcohol (Tables 3A and 3B). However, two thirds of the participants indicated being prescribed medications for psychological problems through the 12-month study period. Similarly on an average, 40% of the participants indicated using a variety of over the counter medications for headaches, gastric problems, and pain. Clearly, the mental health consequences of domestic violence become evident through these self-reports from participants and have been documented in other studies (McCauley et al., 1995; Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson, & Zak, 1986).

However, very few relevant longitudinal studies have explored mental health issues and consequences in violent domestic relationships for a period of a year or longer. Follingstad, Brennan, Hause, Polek, & Rutlaedge (1991) reported from a study with predominantly White women that their physical and emotional health was worse during the abusive period but improved afterwards. A study by R. Campbell, Sullivan, and Davidson (1995) in which 129 women (40% White and 40% African American) were followed for a period of 6 months after they left a 'wife abuse' shelter revealed that at exit, 46% of the study participants were moderately or severely depressed. At 10 weeks after their exit the depression was significantly lowered and leveled off at 6 months. This current study documents mental health issues for a period of 12-months and its findings suggest that depression, serious anxiety/tension, and suicidality began to decrease at about 6 months after participants' entry into the shelter and leveled off by the 12-month time point. A quarter of the study participants (26%) however, reported experiencing serious depression while 31% indicated using medications for psychological problems at the end of the one-year study. At the 12-month time-point participants (14%) also reported continuing outpatient counseling for their emotional problems. This study thus adds to the understanding of the long-term mental health consequences of domestic violence and the need for counseling, medications, and support to continue after battered women leave the shelter.

Table 3A – Participants Alcohol Use in the Past Year

	Initial Point	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
	N=82	N=45	N=34	N=30	N=28
Drink alcohol at least once a month	n=81 37 (46%)	n=43 21 (49%)	n=33 13 (39%)	n=29 12 (24%)	n=27 12 (44%)
Failed to meet expectations due to drinking	n=37 2 (6%)	n=20 1 (5%)	n=13 2 (15%)	n=12 1 (8%)	n=11 0 (0%)
Needed a drink to get going in the morning	n=36 0 (0%)	n=20 0 (0%)	n=13 0 (0%)	n=12 0 (0%)	n=11 0 (0%)
Felt guilt or remorse after drinking	n=36 9 (25%)	n=20 2 (10%)	n=13 3 (15%)	n=12 0 (0%)	n=11 0 (0%)
Memory loss after drinking	n=36 6 (17%)	n=20 1 (5%)	n=13 1 (8%)	n=12 0 (0%)	n=11 0 (0%)
Injured self or others as a result of drinking	n=36 5 (14%)	n=19 0 (0%)	n=12 2 (17%)	n=12 0 (0%)	n=11 0 (0%)
Trouble with the law as a result of drinking	n=36 2 (6%)	n=19 0 (0%)	n=13 0 (0%)	n=12 0 (0%)	n=11 1 (9%)
Neglected family as a result of drinking	n=36 2 (6%)	n=19 1 (5%)	n=13 1 (8%)	n=12 1 (8%)	n=11 0 (0%)

Table 3B – Participants Use of Other Drugs in the Past Year

	Initial Point	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
	N=82	N=45	N=34	N=30	N=28
Used non-prescribed drugs in the past year	n=81 13 (16%)	n=40	n=29	n=24	n=23
in the past 3 months		3 (8%)	1 (3%)	2 (8%)	2 (9%)
Used more than one drug at a time in the past year	n=12 2 (17%)	n=3	n=1	n=2	n=2
in the past 3 months		0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)
Been prescribed medication in the past year	n=79 44 (66%)	n=40	n=26	n=24	n=19
in the past 3 months		24 (60%)	14 (54%)	2 (8%)	10 (53%)
Used Over-the-Counter medication in the past year	n=73 32 (44%)	n=35	n=26	n=22	n=15
in the past 3 months		17 (49%)	11 (42%)	8 (36%)	10 (67%)
EFFECTS OF DRUGS IN PAST YEAR					
Always able to stop use	n=13 12 (92%)	n=3 3 (100%)	n=1 1 (100%)	n=2 1 (50%)	n=2 1 (50%)
Blackouts/Flashbacks	n=13 4 (31%)	n=3 0 (0%)	n=1 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Feel bad or guilty using	n=13 4 (31%)	n=3 1 (33%)	n=1 0 (0%)	n=2 1 (50%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Partner/parent complaints	n=13 4 (31%)	n=3 1 (33%)	n=1 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Neglected family	n=13 5 (39%)	n=3 1 (33%)	n=1 0 (0%)	n=2 1 (50%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Engaged in illegal activities to get drugs	n=13 5 (39%)	n=3 0 (0%)	n=1 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)

Withdrawal symptoms	n=13 4 (31%)	n=3 0 (0%)	n=1 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Medical problems	n=13 3 (23%)	n=3 1 (33%)	n=1 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Trouble with the law	n=13 2 (15%)	n=3 0 (0%)	n=1 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)	n=2 0 (0%)
Problems with prescription medication	n=72 13 (18%)	n=31 5 (16%)	n=14 3 (21%)	n=14 0 (0%)	n=11 1 (9%)
Problems with over-the-counter medication	n=65 8 (12%)	n=35 17 (49%)	n=19 0 (0%)	n=17 0 (0%)	n=12 0 (0%)

Social Support Characteristics

Table 4 indicates participants' perceived social support. It has been suggested that Hispanic communities are more family centered and have traditionally been more dependent on relatives and friends for help and social support. At the initial data collection point, approximately half of the participants indicated that they had friends and family who would help them, whom they could talk to, and whose help and support they could count on through their domestic violence experiences. This perception of informal social support from only half of the study participants may explain why a large number of Hispanic women sought help at the shelter, a formal source of support in preference to seeking help from informal sources of support. It may well be that they did not have access to their informal social support system (due to relocation or immigration), or that they no longer felt comfortable or trusted these informal sources of support, or perhaps felt ashamed of their circumstances. In order to reduce the social isolation that minority women experience in such circumstances, formal support systems need to collaborate with informal networks. This may include working with community lay health workers/Promotoras and be accessible and available in collaboration with informal support systems and both in traditional settings (shelters) or other settings (churches).

Social support among women in abusive intimate relationships can have a significant positive influence on adaptation. In their 1983 study, Mitchell and Hodson, found that women who received lesser amount of help from their informal networks indicated greater depression than those who received more help. Other studies indicate the effect of social support on battered women and how they responded to the abuse in their intimate relationships as listed below:

- That the instrumental and material support received by battered women have assisted them to leave their abusive relationships (Bowker, 1984; Donato & Bowker, 1984)
- That social support was an important factor in a woman's ability to recover from the violence experienced in her intimate relationships (Tan, Basta, Sullivan, & Davidson, 1995)
- That battered women who receive supportive responses from formal and informal sources were more likely to experience less apprehension about their ability to follow through and leave their abusive partners (Mitchell & Hodson, 1983)

The current study documents the prevalence of serious depression and other mental health conflicts among the study participants and their limited perception of informal social support.

These issues often hinder a woman's decision to leave her abuser and transition into a life without him (Dobash & Dobash, 1978; Donaghy, 1995).

Table 4 – Participants Perception of Social Support

	Initial Point	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
	N=82	N=45	N=34	N=30	N=28
Person around in times of need	n=81 46 (57%)	n=45 21 (47%)	n=34 23 (68%)	n=30 21 (70%)	n=28 18 (64%)
Special person with whom to share joys and sorrows	n=81 49 (60%)	n=45 27 (60%)	n=34 26 (76%)	n=30 22 (73%)	n=38 19 (68%)
Family tries to help	n=81 36 (44%)	n=45 24 (54%)	n=34 15 (44%)	n=30 21 (70%)	n=28 15 (54%)
Get emotional help and support from family	n=81 34 (42%)	n=45 24 (54%)	n=34 12 (35%)	n=30 20 (67%)	n=28 15 (54%)
Special person is source of comfort	n=80 51 (64%)	n=44 26 (59%)	n=34 23 (70%)	n=30 20 (67%)	n=28 18 (64%)
Friends try to help	n=81 37 (46%)	n=45 29 (64%)	n=34 20 (59%)	n=30 17 (57%)	n=28 14 (50%)
Can count on friends	n=81 36 (44%)	n=45 26 (58%)	n=34 17 (50%)	n=30 14 (47%)	n=28 14 (50%)
Can talk about problems with family	n=80 29 (36%)	n=45 23 (51%)	n=34 15 (44%)	n=30 16 (53%)	n=28 11 (41%)
Have friends with whom to share joys and sorrows	n=78 40 (51%)	n=45 27 (60%)	n=34 22 (65%)	n=30 16 (53%)	n=28 15 (54%)
Special person cares about my feelings	n=77 50 (65%)	n=45 28 (62%)	n=34 26 (76%)	n=29 21 (72%)	n=28 18 (64%)
Family willing to help	n=64 28 (44%)	n=45 24 (53%)	n=34 17 (41%)	n=29 21 (72%)	n=28 14 (50%)

Life Circumstances and Stressors

Along with the violence in their intimate relationships, study participants also experienced others stressors and life circumstances including homelessness, providing for children with health and

behavioral problems, and living with someone with alcohol/drug problems (See Table 5). The documentation of these life circumstances and stressors can be important because of the influence they can have on the types of coping strategies used and the extent to which study participants depend on formal and informal support systems for help.

Table 5 – Life Circumstances and Stressors

	Initial Point	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
	N=82	N=45	N=34	N=30	N=28
Live with someone w/ CURRENT alcohol/drug problem	n=81 36 (44%)	n=43 7 (16%)	n=33 3 (9%)	n=32 3 (10%)	n=28 3 (11%)
Live with someone with PAST alcohol/drug problem	n=36 20 (56%)	n=7 4 (57%)	n=3 1 (33%)	n=4 1 (33%)	n=3 2 (67%)
Live with someone now in recovery	n=81 10 (12%)	n=43 4 (9%)	n=33 3 (9%)	n=30 1 (3%)	n=28 1 (4%)
Currently homeless	n=81 51 (63%)	n=45 16 (36%)	n=34 8 (24%)	n=30 0 (0%)	n=28 1 (4%)
Homeless in past 30 due to domestic violence	n=81 50 (61%)	n=45 15 (33%)	n=33 6 (18%)	n=31 1 (3%)	n=28 1 (4%)
Living with children	n=69 56 (81%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Death of a child	n=73 14 (19%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Child w/ health problems	n=72 20 (28%)	n=37 10 (27%)	n=29 8 (28%)	n=26 3 (13%)	n=24 1 (4%)
Child w/ behavior problems	n=72 30 (42%)	n=37 13 (35%)	n=29 8 (28%)	n=31 7 (29%)	n=24 5 (21%)
Child w/ other problems	n=70 13 (19%)	n=34 3 (9%)	n=29 3 (10%)	n=25 1 (4%)	n=24 2 (28%)
Pregnant now	n=82 4 (5%)	n=44 0 (0%)	n=34 1 (3%)	n=30 2 (7%)	n=27 1 (4%)
Ever had an abortion or miscarriage	n=82 35 (43%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ever in jail	n=81 20 (25%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
In jail in the past year	n=60 10 (17%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Family member ever in jail	n=81 48 (59%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Family member ever in jail for domestic violence	n=68 20 (29%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Family member in jail for domestic violence in the past year	n=68 8 (12%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

The Use of Formal Services

The formal support systems explored in this study were the local law enforcement, the domestic violence shelter, and the court system. The role of the formal support systems were evaluated on the following criteria (See Table 6A-E):

- Raised participant awareness of domestic violence
- Increased participants knowledge of domestic violence
- Changed attitudes and perceptions of the participants of domestic violence
- Helpfulness in changing violent lifestyles

In the year preceding the initial interview, the largest percentage of study participants who sought help did so from the law enforcement agencies and the domestic violence shelter (See Table 6). During this period approximately a third of the participants seeking sought help from the court system. In the four interviews following the initial interview, the overall number of participants who sought help from the formal systems decreased. Again, law enforcement and shelters were used more frequently than the court system. Over half of the participants had sought help at the shelter up to the 3-month time point, approximately a third through the 6-month time point, and by the end of the year study only one participant indicated using the shelter for services.

The help from law enforcement and shelters appears to have been important to study participants in coping with the violence in their intimate relationships. As abuse decreased, the number of participants who sought help from formal systems also decreased. Overall, study participants had positive evaluations and comments about law enforcement and shelters regarding the services they provided and the changes they initiated in their awareness and understanding of violence in intimate relationships.

Participants evaluation of the courts, law enforcement and the shelter (indicated in Tables 6 and 6A-E) highlight the following benefits of the services they provided:

With respect to domestic violence: Over a third to half of the participants indicated consistently that there was a decrease in the domestic violence they had experienced and felt increasing safe for themselves and their children as a result of the services they received from the three formal systems that were evaluated.

With respect to their relationships: On an average, about a third to a half of the participants indicated that they were living away from their intimate partners and that the overall quality of their life and their relationship with their partners had improved as a result of the intervention and help from the three formal systems.

Economic Independence: Overall, about a third of the participants indicated that the three formal systems were helping them become economically independent. As some of the participants indicated in the 12-month life-history interviews, they were able to pay some of their bills and buy a few things for their children.

Help-seeking Behaviors: Overall, less than a third of the participants indicated that they were comfortable about reporting their abuse to the law and seeking restraining orders and were confident of their abilities in seeking the assistance of the courts seeing their cases through final adjudication.

Finally, study participants were also asked to evaluate the three formal systems and the services they provided in terms of being "user friendly," "fit together," and "supported each other." Initially participants rated the systems and the services higher but the ratings fell as they used the services and continued in the study. "User friendly" scored consistently higher followed by "fit together" and "supported each other."

Table 6 – Participants Evaluation of Formal Support Systems

	Initial point	3 months	6 months	9 months	12 months
	N=82	N=45	N=34	N=30	N=28
Sought help from the shelter	n=77 45 (58%)	n=45 29 (64%)	n=26 10 (39%)	n=19 6 (32%)	n=14 1 (20%)
Sought help from police	n=77 46 (60%)	n=45 12 (27%)	n=27 5 (19%)	n=19 6 (32%)	n=15 4 (40%)
Sought help from courts	n=77 25 (33%)	n=45 15 (33%)	n=27 9 (33%)	n=20 4 (20%)	n=15 0 (0%)
With current incident, first sought help from	n=74				
Shelter	36 (49%)				
Law enforcement	37 (50%)				
Court	1 (1%)				

Table 6A – Formal Support Systems at Initial Time Point

AWARENESS	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter increased awareness of domestic violence	7 (9%)	7 (9%)	7 (9%)	29 (39%)	25 (33%)
Police increased awareness of domestic violence	35 (57%)	8 (13%)	6 (10%)	6 (10%)	7 (11%)
Court increased awareness of domestic violence	38 (72%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	7 (13%)	4 (8%)

KNOWLEDGE	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter increased knowledge of domestic violence	8 (11%)	8 (11%)	6 (8%)	26 (30%)	26 (35%)
Police increased knowledge of domestic violence	36 (59%)	11 (18%)	5 (8%)	3 (5%)	6 (10%)
Court increased knowledge of domestic violence	35 (69%)	5 (10%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	3 (6%)

ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTION	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	10 (14%)	5 (7%)	7 (10%)	22 (30%)	30 (41%)
Police changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	38 (62%)	3 (5%)	6 (10%)	8 (13%)	6 (10%)
Court changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	39 (77%)	4 (8%)	0 (0%)	5 (10%)	3 (6%)

LIFESTYLE CHANGES	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter helpful in changing violent behaviors	3 (5%)	7 (10%)	6 (9%)	22 (33%)	29 (43%)
Police helpful in changing violent behaviors	28 (51%)	8 (15%)	5 (9%)	9 (16%)	5 (9%)
Court helpful in changing violent behaviors	33 (72%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	6 (13%)	3 (7%)

	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
The degree to which domestic violence has decreased in your life as a result of services received?	3 (4%)	3 (4%)	9 (12%)	24 (32%)	37 (49%)
The degree to which you have become economically independent as a result to services received?	29 (38%)	6 (8%)	15 (20%)	11 (14%)	16 (21%)
The degree to which you have become independent of you partner as a result of the services?	13 (18%)	2 (3%)	8 (11%)	19 (26%)	32 (43%)
How much has the quality of your life improved as a result of the services received?	7 (9%)	6 (8%)	14 (18%)	23 (30%)	26 (34%)
How much has the quality of your relationship with your partner improved as a result of the services?	40 (58%)	5 (7%)	5 (7%)	7 (10%)	12 (17%)
How much more safe do you feel for yourself and your children as a result of the services received?	4 (5%)	4 (5%)	10 (13%)	22 (29%)	37 (48%)
How comfortable are you at reporting violence to the police?	21 (28%)	7 (10%)	6 (8%)	17 (23%)	23 (31%)
How comfortable are you at securing a restraining order?	21 (29%)	4 (6%)	6 (8%)	23 (32%)	18 (25%)
To what degree do you feel confident in the court's assistance?	24 (35%)	7 (10%)	6 (9%)	18 (27%)	13 (19%)
To what degree do you feel confident in successfully completing a court case (final adjudication)?	25 (39%)	6 (9%)	10 (16%)	12 (19%)	11 (17%)
Over the past year, to what degree were the services you were offered "user friendly"?	5 (7%)	3 (4%)	10 (14%)	29 (40%)	26 (36%)
Over the past year, how well did you thing the services from the formal systems fit together?	13 (19%)	6 (9%)	18 (26%)	32 (31%)	11 (16%)
Over the past year, how much did you think the services from the formal systems supported each other?	13 (19%)	7 (10%)	12 (17%)	23 (33%)	14 (20%)

Table 6B – Formal Support System at the 3-month Time Point

AWARENESS	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter increased awareness of domestic violence	10(28%)	1 (3%)	4 (11%)	5 (14%)	16 (44%)
Police increased awareness of domestic violence	16 (53%)	5 (17%)	4 (13%)	3 (10%)	2 (7%)
Court increased awareness of domestic violence	18 (64%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	3 (11%)	3 (11%)

KNOWLEDGE	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter increased knowledge of domestic violence	10 (28%)	1 (3%)	3 (8%)	4 (11%)	18 (50%)
Police increased knowledge of domestic violence	21 (72%)	4 (14%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
Court increased knowledge of domestic violence	19 (68%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	3 (11%)	2 (7%)

ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTION	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	7 (19%)	2 (6%)	3 (8%)	4 (11%)	20 (56%)
Police changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	18 (62%)	6 (21%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	3 (10%)
Court changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	18 (64%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)	3 (11%)	4 (14%)

LIFESTYLE CHANGES	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter helpful in changing violent behaviors	6 (17%)	3 (8%)	2 (6%)	5 (14%)	20 (56%)
Police helpful in changing violent behaviors	20 (69%)	4 (14%)	3 (10%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
Court helpful in changing violent behaviors	19 (68%)	3 (11%)	2 (7%)	1 (4%)	3 (11%)

	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
The degree to which domestic violence has decreased in your life as a result of services received?	4 (11%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)	4 (11%)	24 (69%)
The degree to which you have become economically independent as a result to services received?	10 (29%)	10 (29%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	11 (32%)
The degree to which you have become independent of you partner as a result of the services?	9 (26%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	20 (57%)
How much has the quality of your life improved as a result of the services received?	4 (11%)	3 (8%)	8 (22%)	10 (28%)	11 (31%)
How much has the quality of your relationship with your partner improved as a result of the services?	13 (41%)	6 (19%)	2 (6%)	4 (13%)	7 (22%)
How much more safe do you feel for yourself and your children as a result of the services received?	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	8 (22%)	9 (25%)	16 (44%)
How comfortable are you at reporting violence to the police?	10 (28%)	1 (3%)	3 (8%)	8 (22%)	14 (39%)
How comfortable are you at securing a restraining order?	6 (18%)	2 (5%)	6 (18%)	5 (15%)	15 (44%)
To what degree do you feel confident in the court's assistance?	11 (32%)	1 (3%)	6 (18%)	5 (15%)	11 (32%)
To what degree do you feel confident in successfully completing a court case (final adjudication)?	10 (30%)	3 (9%)	6 (18%)	5 (15%)	9 (27%)
Over the past year, to what degree were the services you were offered "user friendly"?	4 (11%)	3 (9%)	5 (14%)	7 (20%)	16 (46%)
Over the past year, how well did you thing the services from the formal systems fit together?	5 (15%)	5 (15%)	6 (18%)	8 (24%)	9 (27%)
Over the past year, how much did you think the services from the formal systems supported each other?	3 (10%)	5 (16%)	9 (29%)	6 (19%)	8 (26%)

Table 6C - Formal Support System at the 6-month Time Point

AWARENESS	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter increased awareness of domestic violence	2 (14%)	4 (29%)	1 (7%)	2 (14%)	5 (36%)
Police increased awareness of domestic violence	7 (58%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	3 (25%)
Court increased awareness of domestic violence	7 (54%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)

KNOWLEDGE	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter increased knowledge of domestic violence	2 (14%)	4 (29%)	1 (7%)	2 (14%)	5 (36%)
Police increased knowledge of domestic violence	8 (73%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)
Court increased knowledge of domestic violence	7 (58%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)

ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTION	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	4 (29%)	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	7 (50%)
Police changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	7 (64%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	2 (18%)
Court changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	8 (67%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	2 (17%)

LIFESTYLE CHANGES	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter helpful in changing violent behaviors	4 (31%)	0 (0%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	6 (46%)
Police helpful in changing violent behaviors	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Court helpful in changing violent behaviors	8 (67%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)

	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
The degree to which domestic violence has decreased in your life as a result of services received?	0 (0%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (93%)
The degree to which you have become economically independent as a result to services received?	4 (27%)	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	1 (7%)	6 (40%)
The degree to which you have become independent of you partner as a result of the services?	4 (27%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (73%)
How much has the quality of your life improved as a result of the services received?	0 (0%)	1 (7%)	2 (13%)	1 (7%)	11 (73%)
How much has the quality of your relationship with your partner improved as a result of the services?	6 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (50%)
How much more safe do you feel for yourself and your children as a result of the services received?	1 (7%)	2 (14%)	0 (0%)	4 (29%)	7 (50%)
How comfortable are you at reporting violence to the police?	6 (40%)	1 (7%)	3 (20%)	1 (7%)	4 (27%)
How comfortable are you at securing a restraining order?	7 (47%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	4 (27%)
To what degree do you feel confident in the court's assistance?	6 (40%)	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	3 (20%)
To what degree do you feel confident in successfully completing a court case (final adjudication)?	5 (33%)	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)
Over the past year, to what degree were the services you were offered "user friendly"?	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	4 (29%)	4 (29%)	4 (29%)
Over the past year, how well did you thing the services from the formal systems fit together?	3 (23%)	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%)
Over the past year, how much did you think the services from the formal systems supported each other?	2 (14%)	4 (29%)	6 (43%)	0 (0%)	2 (14%)

Table 6D - Formal Support System at the 9-month Time Point

AWARENESS	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter increased awareness of domestic violence	4 (36%)	1 (9%)	3 (27%)	0 (0%)	3 (27%)
Police increased awareness of domestic violence	7 (70%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Court increased awareness of domestic violence	9 (75%)	1 (8%)	2 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

KNOWLEDGE	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter increased knowledge of domestic violence	6 (55%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)	2 (18%)
Police increased knowledge of domestic violence	8 (80%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Court increased knowledge of domestic violence	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTION	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	6 (50%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	4 (33%)
Police changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	7 (64%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)
Court changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	10 (83%)	2 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

LIFESTYLE CHANGES	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter helpful in changing violent behaviors	6 (50%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	5 (42%)
Police helpful in changing violent behaviors	6 (55%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)
Court helpful in changing violent behaviors	9 (75%)	2 (17%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)

	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
The degree to which domestic violence has decreased in your life as a result of services received?	4 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	6 (50%)
The degree to which you have become economically independent as a result to services received?	5 (46%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)	3 (27%)
The degree to which you have become independent of you partner as a result of the services?	3 (25%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	5 (42%)
How much has the quality of your life improved as a result of the services received?	3 (23%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)
How much has the quality of your relationship with your partner improved as a result of the services?	6 (46%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)
How much more safe do you feel for yourself and your children as a result of the services received?	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	5 (39%)
How comfortable are you at reporting violence to the police?	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	6 (46%)
How comfortable are you at securing a restraining order?	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	5 (39%)
To what degree do you feel confident in the court's assistance?	2 (18%)	4 (36%)	0 (0%)	3 (27%)	2 (18%)
To what degree do you feel confident in successfully completing a court case (final adjudication)?	4 (33%)	2 (17%)	1 (8%)	2 (17%)	3 (25%)
Over the past year, to what degree were the services you were offered "user friendly"?	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)
Over the past year, how well did you thing the services from the formal systems fit together?	2 (17%)	5 (42%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)
Over the past year, how much did you think the services from the formal systems supported each other?	2 (17%)	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)

Table 6E - Formal Support System at the 12-month Time Point

AWARENESS	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter increased awareness of domestic violence	5 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	3 (30%)
Police increased awareness of domestic violence	5 (67%)	4 (44%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Court increased awareness of domestic violence	4 (44%)	5 (56%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

KNOWLEDGE	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter increased knowledge of domestic violence	5 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (50%)
Police increased knowledge of domestic violence	5 (56%)	4 (44%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Court increased knowledge of domestic violence	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTION	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	6 (60%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)
Police changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	2 (22%)	2 (22%)	3 (33%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)
Court changed attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence	2 (22%)	7 (78%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

LIFESTYLE CHANGES	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
Shelter helpful in changing violent behaviors	1 (10%)	7 (70%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)
Police helpful in changing violent behaviors	2 (22%)	7 (78%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Court helpful in changing violent behaviors	2 (22%)	7 (78%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Great Deal
The degree to which domestic violence has decreased in your life as a result of services received?	1 (10%)	7 (70%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The degree to which you have become economically independent as a result to services received?	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
The degree to which you have become independent of you partner as a result of the services?	1 (10%)	7 (70%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
How much has the quality of your life improved as a result of the services received?	1 (10%)	6 (60%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)
How much has the quality of your relationship with your partner improved as a result of the services?	0 (0%)	7 (70%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)
How much more safe do you feel for yourself and your children as a result of the services received?	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)
How comfortable are you at reporting violence to the police?	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)
How comfortable are you at securing a restraining order?	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)
To what degree do you feel confident in the court's assistance?	1 (10%)	7 (70%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)
To what degree do you feel confident in successfully completing a court case (final adjudication)?	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)
Over the past year, to what degree were the services you were offered "user friendly"?	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)
Over the past year, how well did you thing the services from the formal systems fit together?	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)
Over the past year, how much did you think the services from the formal systems supported each other?	1 (10%)	7 (70%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)

'Stayers' versus the 'Non-Stayers'

The differences between those who continued in the study ('stayers') until the end versus those who did not ('non-stayers') are summarized in the tables 7A-D (at a significance level of .05). Study participants who continued in the study appeared to have been able to seek help and social support from friends and family by talking to them about the abuse. They also talked to clergy, called the domestic violence hotline, reported the abuse to the law, and sought counseling. In a manuscript accepted for publication (Krishnan, Hilbert, McNeil, & Duncan, Accepted for publication in *Journal of Family Violence*, 2001) we reported findings from an earlier study that indicated that battered women who use the services of a shelter did so for the purposes of 'respite' and/or 'transition.' Those who used the shelter for transition appeared to be highly motivated to seek help and support similar to the 'stayers' in the current study. The 'stayers' continued to participate in the study and use the services they had access to or were offered because they provided them an avenue to talk about their experiences and coping strategies and seek the needed advice and/or help. Further, the 'stayers' indicated that their participation in the study was empowering as well as therapeutic. We further reported in the article on those who used the shelter for respite who, like the 'non stayers' in the current study used the shelter as a place to get away, regroup, replenish for a short period of time and return their relationships.

Table 7A – Significant Sociodemographic Differences

	Stayers	Non-Stayers	p-value
Lived with someone who had a drug/alcohol problem	23%	74%	.003
Been homeless in the last 30 days as a result of the domestic violence	79%	51%	.039
Use of food stamps as income	64%	40%	.041
Have other sources of income	10%	0%	.018

Table 7B– Significant Differences in Abuse Characteristics (p=.025)

Duration of Abuse	Stayers	Non-Stayers	p-value
Less than an year	12%	29%	
Between 1-2 years	19%	9%	
Between 2-5 years	15%	24%	
Between 5-10 years	8%	22%	
Between 10-20 years	31%	8%	
Over 20 years	15%	7%	

Table 7C– Significant Differences in Mental Health Characteristics

	Stayers	Non-Stayers	p-value
Ever felt guilty about your drug use	0%	57%	.026
Engaged in illegal activities to get drugs	0%	71%	.008
Experienced withdrawal symptoms from drug use	0%	57%	.026

Table 7D – Differences in Help-seeking Behaviors

	Stayers	Non-Stayers	p-value
For Symbolic Violence: Shook finger, made threatening gestures, acted like a bully, but did not hurt you directly			
Shared with healthcare professional	43%	14%	.012
For Symbolic Violence: Destroy/Damage that belonged to you or was important to you			
Shared/Discussed with family and friends	60%	23%	.015
For Threats: Threatened to hurt, club, knife, or kill			

Sought Counseling	63%	22%	.031
Shared with clergy	38%	8%	.037
Shared with family and friends	88%	35%	.009
Called DV hotline for help	63%	19%	.019
For Actual Violence: Held you down, pinned you down, push, shove, or grab you forcefully			
Called DV hotline for help	0%	20%	.032
Reported to other formal systems	71%	38%	.025
For Actual Violence: Slapped, scratched, or pulled your hair			
Shared/discussed with family/friends	82%	44%	.009

Differences between Anglo and Hispanic Study Participants

We examined the differences between these two groups. Tables 8A-D summarize the significant differences (at a .05 significance level) between the two largest participating ethnic groups in various domains including help-seeking and social support. These study findings help extend existing literature and document ethnic differences that need to be considered in understanding the experiences of violence among ethnic minorities.

Significant differences between Hispanic and Anglo participants were noted in the type of domestic violence experienced, the help-seeking behaviors they engaged in, and their perceptions of social support. There were also significant sociodemographic differences between Anglo and Hispanic study participants. Significantly more Anglo participants averaged a higher level of formal education and had been homeless for 30 days or more because of the domestic violence. Additionally, a significantly greater percentage of Anglos were not married to their abusers and had indicated a higher number of abortions and miscarriages. Hispanic participants on the other hand reported a higher percentage of children living within the home and indicated more family members currently being in jail for perpetrating domestic violence in the past year.

Although abuse began early for both Hispanics and Anglos, it began earlier for Anglos with significantly more of them reporting abuse onset during a dating relationship with more than half indicating that they were abused on a daily basis. A significantly higher percentage of Anglo participants reported sexual abuse by their current intimate partner as compared to the Hispanic participants. It may indeed be that significantly more Anglo participants had experienced sexual abuse and/or that a variety of cultural, social, and normative influences often prevented Hispanic participants from reporting the sexual abuse they experienced. Anglo participants indicated that they had sought help and social support both from formal and informal sources significantly more often than Hispanic participants for symbolic violence, threats, and for actual violence. Battered Hispanic women are often in a precarious position, both those of the study and others, because they do experience a variety of abuse in their intimate relationships but often report less help-seeking behaviors from formal and informal support systems as compared to the Anglo population.

Table 8A – Significant Sociodemographics Differences between Anglo and Hispanic Participants

FORMAL EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Anglo Participants	Hispanic Participants
1 – 6 grade	0%	28%
Junior High School	0%	17%
High School	36%	33%
Post-secondary School	50%	22%
Graduate School	14%	0%

p-value: 0.0002

MARITAL STATUS	Anglo Participants	Hispanic Participants
Single	14%	30%
Living with someone	7%	9%
Married	21%	34%
Separated	36%	22%
Divorced	21%	5%

p-value: 0.0189

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS	Anglo Participants	Hispanic Participants	p-value
Currently Homeless	93%	57%	.0131
Homeless for the past 30 days due to domestic violence	93%	52%	.0047
Minor children live with you	45%	91%	.0001
Had abortions and/or miscarriages	79%	36%	.0032
Have ever been in jail	50%	17%	.009
Have been in jail in the past year	40%	12%	.040
Have a family member in jail for perpetrating domestic violence in the past year	0%	15%	.0037

Table 8B – Significant Differences in Abuse Characteristics

ABUSE CHARACTERISTICS	Anglo	Hispanic	P-value
Experienced abuse while dating	33%	12%	.008
Experienced abuse while living together	25%	47%	.009
Experienced sexual abuse	78%	39%	.033
Frequency of the abuse			
Less than a year	0%	12%	.037
Once a year	0%	4%	
2 or more times a year	8%	7%	
Once a month	0%	18%	
2 or more times a month	17%	12%	
Once a week	17%	23%	
Daily	58%	25%	
Abused in previous relationships	86%	45%	.0056
Did your current partner ever hit and kick walls or furniture, broke objects but did not hurt you directly	100%	67%	.015

Mental Health Characteristics

The ASI (for documenting the emotional conflicts experienced in the past year), AUDIT (to document alcohol use and abuse in the past year), and DAST (to document use of non-medical drugs other than alcohol) were used to solicit data on mental health characteristics of study participants. Questions regarding prescription medications as well as over the counter medications (OTC) were added to the DAST to collect data on such medication use among study participants. Table 8C (below) compiles the significant differences in the mental health characteristics between Anglo and Hispanic participants.

Table 8C – Mental Health Characteristics and Differences

CHARACTERISTICS	Anglo	Hispanic	P-value
Previous Partners used drugs when abusing	83%	47%	.0303
Trouble concentrating in the past year	79%	47%	.032
Have taken OTC medications in the past year	71%	36%	.0178

Table 8D: Help-Seeking Behaviors among Anglo and Hispanic Participants

CHARACTERISTICS	Anglo Participants	Hispanic Participants	p value
Sought <u>medical help</u> when partner hit and kicked walls or furniture or broke objects but did not hurt you directly	46%	10%	.004
Sought <u>counseling</u> when partner kicked walls or furniture or broke objects but did not hurt you directly	62%	20%	.005
Shared or discussed issues with an <u>health care professional</u> (social worker, therapist, nurse, etc..) when partner kicked walls or furniture or broke objects but did not hurt you directly	62%	20%	.005
Shared or discussed with <u>family/friends</u> when partner kicked walls or furniture or broke object but did not hurt you directly	77%	41%	.025
Sought counseling when current partner shook finger, made threatening gestures, or acted like a bully but did not hurt you directly	100%	76%	.001
Shared or discussed with family/friends when current partner shook finger, made threatening gestures, or acted like a bully but did not hurt you directly	69%	32%	.015
Did your current partner ever slap, scratch, or pull your hair			
Sought counseling	50%	15%	.019
Shared with a health care provider	60%	23%	.024
Did your current partner ever kick, stomp on, choke, punch, beat up, burn or use a knife or gun on you			
Sought counseling	78%	28%	.0049

18-month Follow-Up

Study participants were contacted at 18 months and asked three questions. The questions were:

1. With whom are you presently residing? Is he the person you were with when you entered the shelter about 18 months ago?
2. Is your present relationship violent?
3. Did you find the intervention/help from the police in the past 18 months helpful? Did you find the court system helpful? Did you find the shelter helpful? Please comment on your experiences

As indicated previously, this additional point of contact was added to the 5-interview/survey times to collect data to confirm some of the trends about the violence in participants' lives noted at the 12-month time-point. At the end of 12 months, most study participants had indicated that there was little or no physical and sexual violence. We wanted to follow-up on this and document if this trend continued.

Of the 28 participants in the study at the 12-month time-point, we were able to contact 16 participants. Those who could not be contacted had moved away from their previous address (at 12-month point), their phones were disconnected, or their friends/roommates/family did not know their whereabouts anymore. When questioned about the person(s) they were currently residing with, 6 participants indicated that they were living with their intimate partners/significant others/husbands. Only one of these six participants was in a new intimate relationship while the other 5 had moved back with their previous abusive partners. The participant in the 'new relationship' indicated that it was 'non violent.' The remaining 10 participants were living with non-intimate roommates, with their children, other family members, or were living alone on their own. In answer to the question about their present relationship being violent, only one participant of the six indicated that it was violent even though 5 participants reported going back to their previously abusive partners.

Changes over Time

- **Relationships**

At the end of the study a majority of the participants were no longer living with their abusive partners/spouses. However, none of them had filed for a divorce/legal separation through the first 9 months of the study. During the 9-month interview, a small percentage of the participants were seriously contemplating divorce. At the end of the year study with the exception of one participant the others had not become involved with a new intimate partner and indicated that they were not even thinking about men at this point of their lives. A couple of participants had dated a few times, while a few tried going back and living with their spouses/partners. Those participants who were no longer living with their intimate partner/spouse indicated that they were sad that their relationships had not worked out but they sometimes hoped for a 'miracle'. They often tried to talk, reason, bargain, draw up agreements with their spouses/partners but nothing seemed to have worked.

- **Experiences of Abuse:**

By seeking help at the domestic violence shelter, study participants indicated that they had altered and sometimes halted the abuse they were experiencing. There was no physical abuse as participants were living apart from their spouses/partners. Spouses/partners were also somewhat apprehensive about physically abusing participants because they now could get help and report to authorities.

However, whenever the participants and their partners/spouses met or interacted there was verbal and emotional abuse (shouting, belittling, and jealous accusations). Their partners were angry with them and tried to continue controlling them by keeping the children with them and by threatening to take away the children, by withholding money from them, and not cooperating with participants in getting their immigrations papers sorted out.

- **Other Changes**

At the end of the study:

- Participants and often their children lived in a place away from the abuser
- Most times the children were receiving counseling

- Participants did not make many new friends, but relied on one or two new neighbors, family, the church and pastor for help including financial and material support
- Participants still had a number of stressors in their lives that they were learning to deal with on their own. These included:
 - Financial burden
 - Immigration papers
 - Finding a job and regular work
 - Addressing their children's concerns and behavioral problems
 - Managing and coordinating things alone for the first time
- Participants were slowly finding jobs and making some money. These jobs included cleaning and cooking jobs, working in a cannery, or working in a field. Some of them were paying a few of their bills with this money. One participant took her children out for ice cream, something she had never done before.
- Participants were scared, hopeful, and proud of their choice to live separate from their partners/spouses. They wanted to go to school and learn English. They had become more observant and analyzed things more carefully.
- Participants indicated in the 9 and 12-month interviews that they were more confident and felt that they could take better care of themselves even if they encountered violent situations.
- Participants indicated that they now had a,
 - Recognition that abuse and violence were unacceptable
 - Respect for themselves and all women and their abilities and resiliency
 - Resignation that they could not change their spouses/partners behaviors
 - Still had a glimmer of hope for their relationships and they still wanted it to work but were wary about it
 - Hope for becoming educated in and learn to speak English
 - Sense that they had to support and consider the welfare of their children and not put them in abusive environments

Summary of Findings

The significant study findings include the following:

- Documentation of domestic violence experiences among a predominantly Hispanic population (Mexican/Mexican American) with a comparison to a sample of Anglo/Caucasian women
- The study represents one of the very few longitudinal studies conducted among Hispanic women in abusive relationships
- An understanding of the relationship between domestic violence and the mental health consequences experienced by battered women over a 12-month period
- An exploration of the social support systems available and used by Hispanic women in rural communities that are often characterized by limited and appropriate services
- A recognition of the prevalence of use of prescription medications (for psychological problems) and over the counter medications in preference to the use of alcohol and illegal substances among study participants
- An understanding of the differences between women who continued in the study for 12 months ('stayers') and those who dropped out the study ('non-stayers') before the end.

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