Latino Protestants: Religion, Culture, and Violence Against Women

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Latinos: A Brief Overview

Generations of Latinos have come to the USA, with or without documentation, seeking a better life for themselves and their families. Many came to improve their families' economic status, others to escape oppression in their home countries. Latinos value close relationships with their immediate and extended family members, relationships they sacrifice when they immigrate (Martinez et al. 2012). As they adjust to a new culture, many face the stresses of poverty and unstable employment and find themselves the targets of prejudice and oppression in everyday life (Cunradi et al. 2002; Pew Hispanic Center 2007).

The U.S. Census Bureau (2011) currently designates as Hispanic or Latino people "of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race" ("Understanding Hispanic origin data" text box). Although Latinos are often viewed by non-Latinos as a single ethnic or minority group, Latinos may identify themselves as White, Black, Asian, American Indian, and various combinations of these racial identities (Qian and Cobas 2004). In the 2010 census, 53 % of Latinos identified themselves as "white." The next largest groups were the 36.7 % who classified themselves as "some other race" and 6 % who identified as "two or more races" (U.S. Census Bureau 2011, Table 6).

Latinos are the largest minority group in the USA, comprising 16 % of the population (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). This simple statement belies the complexity of understanding and discussing the diversity among Latinos. Individuals who are categorized as Latino or Hispanic differ in national origin, racial identity, immigration history and status, length of time they have resided in the USA, and socioeconomic status. Even the terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" have been open to debate, interpretation, and change. In 1978, the US Government designated "Hispanic" as the official term to represent a racial category. In 1997, it changed the term to "Hispanic or Latino" and the definition from race to ethnicity (OMB 1997).

Latinos share a history of conquest and colonization in Latin America (Flores-Ortiz 2000; Tammelleo 2011). The Spanish and Portuguese colonists enslaved the indigenous people and raped the women, creating "a new race called 'mestizo' which…was despised as inferior to the pure Spanish race" (Lozano 2007, p. 120).[1] The Spanish and Portuguese also brought African slaves to their Latin American colonies, adding yet another component to the diverse ethnicity and culture of Latin America (Ramos et al. 2010; Tammelleo 2011). To explain the diversity

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that exists today among Latino subgroups in the USA, we provide a brief overview of their unique historical experiences.

Mexicans

After the Mexican–American War (1846–1848), Mexico surrendered to the USA the territory that comprises Texas, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California, and part of Colorado. The Mexicans who lived there lost their land and their political rights and were discriminated against in a variety of ways (Tammelleo 2011). Rapid economic growth in the USA in the mid-nineteenth century led to recruitment of Mexican workers and their continuing migration for economic opportunities (Baca Zinn and Wells 2000). Mexican immigrants are the largest Latino group in the USA. Despite high levels of labor force participation, most are poor, working class, and have low educational attainment (Baca Zinn and Wells 2000; Guarnaccia et al. 2007).

Puerto Ricans

Unlike other Latinos, all Puerto Ricans are American citizens by law because Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the USA. Puerto Rico became a US possession in 1898 at the end of the Spanish–American War. Subsequent widespread unemployment motivated many Puerto Ricans to migrate to the US mainland (Tammelleo 2011). After World War II, high unemployment and inexpensive travel between Puerto Rico and the mainland spurred increases in migration, primarily to New York City, but also to the Northeast and parts of the Midwest. Most of the blue-collar jobs that brought Puerto Ricans to the mainland have disappeared leaving them, as a group, more economically disadvantaged than Mexicans and Cubans (Baca Zinn and Wells 2000).

Cubans

Cubans did not arrive in the USA in large numbers until after Fidel Castro's ascension in 1959. The first Cuban immigrants had been economically well-off and politically powerful in Cuba; those who followed were less well-off. Cubans were the only group to receive economic assistance from the US Government to help them resettle and reestablish themselves in this country (Baca Zinn and Wells 2000). They have the highest incomes, highest educational attainment, and lowest poverty rates of all major Latino subgroups. However, unlike other Latinos, they cannot freely travel back to their home country (Baca Zinn and Wells 2000; Guarnaccia et al. 2007).

Central Americans and Dominicans

The US Government classifies as "other Latino" Central Americans and Dominicans (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). Central Americans, specifically Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans, began migrating to the USA in the mid-1970s, motivated by economic and political instability in their home countries (Baca Zinn and Wells 2000; Tammelleo 2011). The majority live in southern California and a high percentage are undocumented. As a group, Central Americans have low rates of educational attainment, often speak little English, and generally hold low-wage jobs (Baca Zinn and Wells 2000).

The migration of significant numbers of Dominicans began in the 1960s. These families were considered well educated and middle class in the Dominican Republic but were often unable to maintain that status once in the USA. Most settled and reside in New York City where many live in poverty (Baca Zinn and Wells 2000).

The Evolution of a Pan-ethnic Latino Identity

Tammelleo (2011) suggests that the arrival of successive waves of Latino immigrants has been a key factor in the development of a pan-ethnic

Latino identity. Once in the USA, these immigrant populations were united by their common language and by the fact that people in the USA viewed them, regardless of their country of origin, as members of one homogeneous group. Both immigrant and native-born Latinos have experienced—and continue to experience - prejudice and racial discrimination (Pew Hispanic Center 2007). Women bear the added burden of sexism originating in their traditionally subordinate role in Latino cultures, a role that continues in the USA (Lozano 2007; Ramos et al. 2010).

The complicated histories that influence the ways in which contemporary Latinos define themselves, and are defined by others, form the backdrop for our discussion of Latino Protestants and violence against women. In addition to recognizing that each individual and family is unique, it is important for practitioners to remember that some aspects of violence against women are universal (e.g., men exerting power and control over their intimate partners) while others may be specific to the gender socialization and cultural values we will discuss later in this chapter (Gorton and Van Hightower 1999; Low and Organista 2000). Finally, we should note that much of the research on Latinos focuses on people of Mexican origin; thus, we must be cautious when applying the results to other Latino subgroups.

Latino Protestantism

It is difficult to track the rise and spread of Protestantism among Latinos in the USA because it is not well documented (Martinez 2007). Its roots go back to nineteenth-century missionaries who sought to convert the conquered Mexicans in the southwestern USA and who traveled to Latin America to evangelize (Martinez 2011b). Modern-day Latino Protestant churches, congregations, and movements in the USA are as diverse as Latinos themselves. Some mainstream English-speaking churches maintain Latino ministries. Other Latino Protestants have founded their own denominations and groups of churches. There are denominations and groups of churches that originated in Latin America and a growing number of independent Latino Protestant churches (Martinez and Scott 2009). These small, independent churches are evidence "that when Latinos do not feel welcome in the mainline churches, they will leave and start their own" (Urrabazo 2000, p. 218).

According to the Pew Research Center (2007), 68 % of Latinos in this country are Catholic, 15 % are evangelical Protestants, and 8 % percent have no religious affiliation. Five percent identify as mainline Protestants. The majority (73 %) of those affiliated with mainline denominations speak English; 70 % have at least a high school diploma. Among Latino evangelicals, 63 % are primarily English-speakers or bilingual (Pew Research Center 2007).

Nearly one in five Latinos reports having changed their religious affiliation with those born in the USA more likely to convert than immigrants (Pew Research Center 2007). Latino Protestants represent all countries of origin although Puerto Ricans are the most likely to identify as evangelical Protestants (Pew Research Center 2007). Ninety percent of evangelical converts report leaving Catholicism as part of a spiritual quest for "a more direct, personal experience with God" (Pew Research Center 2007, p. 42) and describe their church services as more exciting and animated than Catholic masses (Diamant 2007; Pew Research Center 2007). For Latinos who migrate from rural areas to cities, small evangelical churches can be "a means of recreating a religious and family support system amidst the urban amorality that they perceive in their new American environment" (Welland and Ribner 2008, p. 56–57).

Latinos and Violence Against Women

The literature uses the terms domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and interpersonal violence to describe violence between married, unmarried, and separated couples. Domestic violence is most often used by Latinos themselves (Ames et al. 2008; M. Flores, personal communication, February 28, 2013). We have used both intimate partner violence and domestic violence,

depending on the context. In discussing women who have experienced violence in their personal relationships, we have used survivor, which is favored by professionals, and victim, the term most often used in the Latino community (Ames et al. 2008; M. Flores, personal communication, February 28, 2013).

The actual incidence of intimate partner violence among Latinos is difficult to estimate because the research on this population is limited (Carlson 2003), and existing research results are inconclusive (Bonomi et al. 2009; Ingram 2007). Research is also hampered by a scarcity of culturally competent, Spanish-language survey instruments (Cuevas et al. 2012). In one national survey of 2000 Latino women living in the USA, 53.6% reported at least one incident of child or adult victimization "by a variety of perpetrators" (p. 377), with two-thirds of those women reporting multiple incidents (Cuevas et al. 2012).

As is true for women of all ethnicities, young, low-income Latino women with low educational attainment are at higher risk for relationship violence (Hazen and Soriano 2007; Vidales 2010). Perpetrator substance abuse, while not a cause of abuse, is associated with physical violence (Hazen and Soriano 2007). Additional factors that increase Latino women's risk include psychological stress, witnessing domestic violence as a child, and experiencing childhood victimization (Kaufman Kantor and Jasinski 2002). Jealousy, a need for control, unemployment, and occupational stress increase the risk that Latino men will abuse their female partners (Ramos et al. 2010).

Latino Personal, Religious, and Cultural Identity

Gender Roles

Despite the ethnic, cultural, and economic differences among Latinos, they share some similar values and behavioral norms (Fong and Furuto 2001; Kasturirangan and Williams 2003). One commonality is the sharp contrast between gender-role expectations for women and men. The female ideal of *marianismo* emphasizes being submissive, chaste, and dependent and making sacrifices for one's family (Edelson et al. 2007; Perilla et al. 1994; Raffaelli and Ontai 2004). It incorporates the assumption of a gender-based hierarchy in the family that places men at the top (Duffey 2000). "Women are expected to dedicate themselves to the home, to serve the man and the children, and to pass on cultural values to the next generation" (Welland and Ribner 2008, p. 62).

The concept of *marianismo* originated in the Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary but is generally accepted as a cultural expectation for all Latino women (Lozano 2007). It defines motherhood as sacred and makes women responsible for keeping the home peaceful and free of conflict (Low and Organista 2000). Lozano (2007)[2] captures the stresses Latino women face in attempting to live up to the ideal of *marianismo*:

> Women are expected to be like the Virgin: submissive, docile, passive, sacrificial, patient, and pure. These characteristics, while frequently positive, in many cases turn oppressive when they are abused. If a woman does not manage to fulfill this ideal, she is quickly identified…[as] the traitorous, evil, and sinful temptress…neither model is a good option for the Hispanic woman since neither presents her as a real human being, with virtues and defects, struggling to be the whole woman God calls her to be. (p. 207)

In contrast, the male ideal of *machismo* is defined as being dominant, aggressive, sexual, and independent as well as strong and stoic in the face of pain and adversity (Perilla 1999; Welland and Ribner 2008). Some studies suggest it can also include heavy drinking and promiscuity (Perilla 1999; Wolfinger et al. 2009–2010). *Machismo* incorporates positive characteristics as well. It calls for men to be honorable, responsible, respectful, and courageous (Perilla 1999) and

> …to protect and provide for the family, to work hard and yet have time for the wife and kids; to be responsible in all dealings within and without the family; to be a good role model for the children, a tower of strength for his sons, and a compassionate heart for his daughters. (Urrabazo 2000, p. 220)

[2] Quotes from Lozano (2007) used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers, www.wipfandstock.com.

Living up to *machismo*'s behavioral expectations can be stressful for Latino men, especially for immigrants who are coping with the dual pressures of conforming to their ethnic cultural roles and adapting to the demands of acculturation. These stresses are compounded for immigrant Latino men who work in dirty, dangerous, exhausting jobs and may sometimes result in anger and violence that they direct at family members (Kugel et al. 2009).

Immigration exacerbates the stresses on Latino families and challenges traditional gender role expectations. It is often easier for Latino women to find work in low-wage cleaning, cooking, and other service jobs than for their male partners. Immigrant women who begin working outside the home are not conforming to traditional gender roles, which changes the balance of power within the family. These factors can combine to threaten the male role of dominant, assertive provider for the family, and may result in aggression, threats, and violence toward others, especially romantic partners (Bacigalupe 2000; Ramos et al. 2010). Some research indicates that the more a woman contributes to the family's income, the greater her risk of abuse (Ellison et al. 1999; Ramos et al. 2010).

Sexuality

Traditional Latino gender roles include specific, distinct expectations for male and female sexual behavior (Bourdeau et al. 2008; Raffaelli and Ontai 2004). Men are expected to be sexually active, knowledgeable, and confident while women are supposed to remain virgins until marriage and to learn about sex from their male partners (Faulkner and Mansfield 2002; Gonzalez-Lopez 2004; Raffaelli and Ontai 2004). The expectation that men should be powerful and in control of relationships can be especially damaging if it is interpreted to mean that men have the right to control their female partners' sexuality. The ultimate expression of men's control, according to Perilla (1999), is a "disturbingly high" (p. 121) incidence of marital rape among Latinos.

In traditional Latino homes, parents enforce strict gender role expectations but do not talk openly about sexual matters (Bourdeau et al. 2008; Faulkner and Mansfield 2002; Raffaelli and Ontai 2004). Although acculturation appears to affect parental expectations, even acculturated Latino parents are more protective of their daughters than their sons. This includes imposing stricter dating rules on girls and generally allowing boys more freedom than girls outside the home (Raffaelli and Ontai 2004). Young unmarried Latino women who are sexually active must reconcile their behavior with explicit cultural expectations of chastity and innocence. In order to be seen as "moral" by family members, friends, partners, and others in the community, they must find a way to "reduce dissonance between cultural messages about proper sexual behavior and actual sexual experiences" (Faulkner and Mansfield 2002, p. 317).

Parental emphasis on virginity for girls can be influenced by environmental challenges. A study of Mexican-origin immigrant fathers found that they were less concerned about preserving their daughters' virginity than about protecting them from "pregnancy out of wedlock, sexually transmitted diseases, sexual violence, casual sex and promiscuity, and sexual dangers associated with drugs, alcohol use, and gang violence, among other risks" (Gonzalez-Lopez 2004, p. 1127). These fathers' willingness to compromise a traditional cultural value speaks to the magnitude of the social-environmental challenges many Latino families face.

For adolescents, religiosity may play a role in sexual behavior. Data from a large national survey indicate that Latino adolescents with traditional attitudes who attend church regularly are less sexually active, begin sexual activity later, and have fewer partners (Edwards et al. 2008). Acculturation also influences adolescents' sexual behavior with those born outside the USA less likely to be sexually active than those born here (Afable-Munsuz and Brindis 2006; Edwards et al. 2008).

Personal and Relational Health

The Latino value of *familismo* emphasizes the collective good of the nuclear and extended family. Immigrants, however, are separated from their extended families. Thus, immigrant Latino women who experience intimate partner violence are likely to be without the assistance and support family members could offer (Adames and Campbell 2005; Hancock and Ames 2008; Vidales 2010). At the same time, cultural beliefs about the privacy and sanctity of the family, traditional beliefs about marriage, and respect for authority may discourage women from seeking help or reporting intimate partner violence (Ahrens et al. 2010; Edelson et al. 2007; Marrs-Fuchsel et al. 2012).

For undocumented women, fear of deportation and losing their children is a constant concern that makes them wary of seeking formal help (Aguilar-Hass et al. 2000; Ingram 2007; Vidales 2010). These women may be unaware that the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) affords survivors of domestic violence some legal rights regardless of their immigration status (Vidales 2010). VAWA allows abused immigrant women "both legal and unauthorized" (Immigration Policy Center 2012, "Why are female immigrants uniquely vulnerable?" para. 2) to apply for residency for themselves and their children. In order to qualify, women must be married to US citizens or legal permanent residents (U.S. Department of Homeland Security n.d.) The law is complicated. Before a woman applies, she should ask an immigration attorney, a domestic violence agency, or an immigration organization for help. It is important for those serving the Latino community to investigate the options available to immigrant victims of domestic violence as these will vary over time and locality and may shift as the political climate changes.

Familismo does more than emphasize the needs of the family over the individual; it requires men to be responsible for the care of their families and to protect them from external harm (Baca Zinn and Wells 2000; Welland and Ribner 2008). However, although both women and men value *familismo*, women are more explicitly socialized to accept "respect for patriarchal authority, interdependence with other family members, [and] sacrifice in the service of the family…" (Flores-Ortiz 2000, p. 62). Both *familismo and marianismo* encourage women to sacrifice their own well-being for the benefit of their families.

The value of *simpatico* reinforces the ideals of *familismo* and *marianismo*. It stresses the importance of establishing and maintaining harmonious personal relationships (Holloway 2006; Vidales 2010). All of these cultural values relegate women to a subordinate position in the family and may discourage Latino women from revealing abuse or leaving violent partners (Ahrens et al. 2010; Vidales 2010). Some women interpret these values to mean that their husbands have the right to harm them (Vidales 2010).

Latino women whose partners abuse them are often more willing to disclose the abuse to informal networks, such as family members and friends, than to seek help from formal sources (Brabeck and Guzman 2008; Ingram 2007; Sabina et al. 2012). The lack of culturally and linguistically competent community services may be one reason Latino women more often turn to informal sources (Sabina et al. 2012; Sorenson 1996). Some research indicates that abused women of color, including Latino women, are more likely to turn to the church for assistance than to health or social service agencies (Bent-Goodley and Fowler 2006; Brabeck and Guzman 2008). Undocumented women, in particular, may view the church as their only safe source of help (Hancock and Ames 2008).

Given the cultural diversity and individual differences among Latino women, it is difficult to generalize about their experience of and response to intimate partner violence (Low and Organista 2000). The length of time a woman has lived in the USA, her level of acculturation, and her educational attainment can affect her views of appropriate male-female roles and her response to violence (Acevedo 2000; Harris et al. 2005; Sabina et al. 2012). One commonality Perilla, Serrata, Weinberg, and Lippy (2012) have identified from more than 20 years of working with battered

Latino women is that "what most of the women wanted was for the violence to stop, not to leave their partners, with whom many of them continued to live" (p. 95). As we will discuss in the last section of this chapter, this suggests a need for interventions that incorporate both women and men.

Ideals and Values that Contribute to Unhealthy, Violent Relationships

Cultural definitions of appropriate male and female roles and behavior, as well as other cultural ideals that support hierarchical relationships, have the potential to contribute to the development of intimate partner violence. Latino women often cite *machismo* as the cause of or trigger for violence although research results on *machismo's* effects on family life and the incidence of intimate partner violence are inconclusive (Welland and Ribner 2008). Because *machismo* discourages men from revealing the anxiety, confusion, or uncertainty prompted by changes in the family's power structure, some men may respond by becoming more authoritarian and using violence or threats to maintain control over their partners (Bacigalupe 2000).

Latino men have historically held the most power in families, and the concept of *respeto* supports deference to those with power. *Respeto* has broader connotations in Spanish than the English word "respect," incorporating an obligation to defer to those who hold power whether that power is based on age, social or economic status, or gender (Welland and Ribner 2008). Children owe respeto to their elders; wives owe it to their husbands. Thus, demonstrating *respeto* supports men's superiority and dominance in the family.

Latino men are socialized to be dominant and to expect women to defer to them. At the same time, Latino men are often disparaged and disrespected in the world outside their homes where many face poverty, racism, and discrimination (Bacigalupe 2000; Klevens et al. 2007). The gap between the cultural expectation of dominance and leadership within the family and a social reality of powerlessness outside the family may increase the likelihood that Latino men will feel threatened by women who challenge them or want equal status. If they feel threatened, they may react with violence as a way to control the situation (Klevens et al. 2007; Morash et al. 2000). Latino women who have been socialized to respect their husbands' authority, put the good of the family ahead of their own welfare, and preserve the family unit may see few options other than submitting to the abuse.

How Religion and Spirituality Contribute to Men's Violence Against Women

Faith and religion can be sources of support for battered Latino women (Acevedo 2000; Brabeck and Guzman 2008; Ellison et al. 2007; Ellison et al. 2010). Churches can provide emotional comfort for women experiencing abuse, but they can also do harm if they encourage women to remain silent about their abuse (Knickmeyer et al. 2010; Pyles 2007). Protestant theologian A. E. Martinez (2011a) alleges that Latino clergy who "read into the Bible their own biases and predispositions" (p. 146) contribute to the marginalization, discrimination, and abuse of power against women and other oppressed groups.

Evangelical churches, in particular, stress doctrines that require women to be submissive to their husbands' authority (Brown and Parker 1989; Dobash and Dobash 1979; Nason-Clark 1997; Shannon-Lewy and Dull 2005). The message of submission may be reinforced by telling women they were meant to suffer and that "suffering is a Christian virtue" (Heggen 1996, p. 22). An abuser may use the doctrine of wifely submission to justify his violent behavior, accusing his wife of failing to be submissive enough. "This assertion is the language that hooks other Christians and keeps them from questioning him" (Fleming 1996, p. 178).

Among Latino Protestants, a patriarchal religious tradition reinforces patriarchal cultural

values. Pastoral responses that uphold the supremacy of the husband and father, regardless of his behavior, perpetuate the message victims hear from their abusers (Bent-Goodley and Fowler 2006; Hancock and Ames 2008). The doctrine of male authority may be construed by clergy as grounds for ignoring or minimizing violence against women (Drumm et al. 2006; Shannon-Lewy and Dull 2005). It can also be the basis for pastoral responses that blame the victim and fail to hold perpetrators accountable for their abusive behavior (Nason-Clark 2004, Shannon-Lewy and Dull 2005). Some research suggests that Latino church leaders may place the responsibility for stopping the violence specifically on abused women (Ames et al. 2011; Behnke et al. 2012; Perilla 1999).

Clergy who tell abused women that they have a Christian duty to remain married, to forgive and forget the abuse, and to stay with their partners "for better or worse" place more value on preserving the marital relationship than on the abused woman's safety. They also fail to take into account that "domestic violence violates not only the victim, but damages and destroys the covenant of marriage itself and impacts the whole community in negative terms" (Frederick 2004, p. 12). Pressuring a woman "to quickly 'forgive and forget' excuses the abuser from being accountable for his actions and can be life threatening for the victim." (Nason-Clark 2004, p. 304).

One structural reality abused Latino women face is that their pastors are usually male. Although there are Latino women who are ordained ministers and lay ministers, patriarchal cultural and religious traditions have made it difficult for women to enter the ministry in most Latino churches and denominations (Lozano 2007). The absence of women in leadership positions may convey to abused women that the church does not value them or their concerns (Gillett 1996). At the same time, evangelical groups that ordain women must contend with the paradox of allowing women authority in the church at the same time that church doctrine calls for women to "submit to their husbands…as the heads of the household" (Lozano 2007, p. 135).[3]

It does appear that women who are very religious may be less likely to leave their abusers. They may want the abuse to stop but will not terminate the relationship in order to stop it (Nason-Clark 2004). The importance of family for many Latinos can result in little support for an abused woman who does choose to leave her partner. This lack of support is compounded when church leaders or members accuse women who leave their abusers of being the sinners and defend the men as "the true victims of an unjust separation from their partners" (Fleming 1996, p. 181). If clergy respond by offering couples counseling in order to preserve the marriage, they silence the victim, who will be unable to speak freely in front of her abuser, and leave "the perpetrator satisfied that the problem is not his" (Frederick 2004, p. 10).

Religious and Spiritual Resources for Helping Survivors

Faith is a source of strength for Latino individuals, families, and communities (Urrabazo 2000). Although religious doctrine has been used to silence women and keep them in violent relationships, the Bible is rich with text that encourages love, respect, nonviolent family relationships, and repentance for sins committed against others, as we illustrate below.

Scripture Supports Respectful, Nonviolent Marital Relationships

> So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church… let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:28–33)

[3] Quotes from Lozano (2007) used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers, www.wipfandstock.com.

In addition to the above quote, Ephesians 5:25, Colossians 3:19, and 1 Peter 3:7 call for respect between partners. These passages allow survivors of intimate partner violence to see the abuse as a violation of God's will rather than as something they must accept as the submissive partner in the relationship.

Scripture Calls for Nonviolent Expressions of Anger

> But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. (Colossians3:8)

Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 19:11, Ephesians 4:26, Ecclesiastes 7:9, and the quoted Colossians verses all decry the use of violence as an expression of anger and call for calmer, more peaceful forms of communication. This helps to reinforce to victims that acts of verbal or physical abuse are not appropriate ways for their partners to express emotions, regardless of the reason for the anger. This is particularly important in cases where victims blame themselves for the abuse because "I made him so angry."

Scripture Describes Caring for the Physical Body as the "Temple" of the Lord

> Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

The previous quote, along with 2 Corinthians 6:16, highlights the idea that one's body is God's temple and should be treated with respect. Therefore, harming one's own body or that of another person is harming God's temple and a sin against God. This makes the act of abuse a sinful act. However, it is important to remember that a woman in an abusive situation may not blame the abuser for the abuse; she may instead turn that blame inward. A survivor of abuse who blames herself may use this scripture to further reinforce this blame, believing that "it's my fault that this temple of my body is abused."

Scripture Advises Acknowledging Sins, Asking for Forgiveness, and Making Restitution

> He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

Psalms 38:18, Numbers 5: 7, Psalm 41: 4, Isaiah 1:18, Mark 11:25–26, and Ephesians 4:32 also call on those who sin to speak of that sin and confess it to others. These, too, can be tricky passages to use with victims, as they call not only for the confession of sins, but for the forgiveness of sins. Many victims are told their faith requires them to forgive their abusers, while the abusers are not called on to stop the abuse. However, Acts 26:20 calls for sinners to "repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance." It is important to emphasize, therefore, that forgiveness is not based solely on the abuser's confession of his sins. Only those who confess their sins *and* who demonstrate true repentance by changing their sinful behavior are forgiven, not those who hide their sins.

Intimate partner violence affects survivors' spirituality and religious practices (Bent-Goodley and Fowler 2006), which gives churches a stake in confronting it. Churches can take action in a variety of ways. Rather than remaining silent, they can acknowledge the existence of intimate partner violence in their congregations and make challenging it part of their spiritual calling. Clergy can address it in their sermons and sponsor family activities that incorporate education on intimate partner violence (Ames et al. 2011). Churches can create policy statements, action plans, or educational training programs to teach clergy, laity, and staff about domestic violence and how to constructively address it (Frederick 2004; Jones et al. 2005). These steps communicate that the church is a safe place for survivors to seek assistance and that abusive behavior is unacceptable.

Religious and Spiritual Resources for Addressing Men's Needs

Much of the literature on intimate partner violence focuses on healing the victim. However, if churches are to heal families suffering from abuse, they must assist abusers as well as victims. Failing to address the abuser "reinforce[s] his grip of power in an abusive situation" (Fleming 1996, p. 175). This means that churches must address the abusers' accountability for the violence (Fleming 1996; Hancock and Siu 2009). Because many Latino men face very real and painful injustices in their daily lives, those who work with abusers must acknowledge and emphasize that oppression is not an excuse for abusive behavior (Flores-Ortiz 2000; Hancock and Siu 2009).

The scriptures cited earlier in this chapter that support survivors can also be used to counsel abusive men. They provide a biblical basis for mutually respectful and loving relationships and condemn violent expressions of anger. They emphasize that abuse is wrong and that stopping it is the perpetrator's responsibility, not the victim's. Abusers and church leaders who use Ephesians 5:22 as justification for enforcing wives' subservient position (Fleming 1996) should note:

> The root of the problem across the spectrum of Christian and biblical counseling is the fundamentalist biblical belief that wives must be under submission to their husbands, taking the statement in Ephesians 5:22 "Wives, be subject to your husbands" out of its context in verse 21: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Cooper-White 2011, p. 6)

Pastoral counselors can clarify that while the Bible acknowledges that people feel anger, it does not condone violence. In Malachi 2:16, God declares, "I hate a man's covering himself with violence." Many additional passages recognize anger as a human emotion but admonish against expressing it in destructive or violent ways. For example:

- Ephesians 4:26—"Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger."
- Psalm 37:8—"Refrain from anger and forsake wrath."
- Proverbs 15:1—"A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger."
- Ephesians 4:31—"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice."
- James 1:19–20—"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

Men can be counseled to demonstrate their love for their wives by giving them physical, emotional, and spiritual comfort and security just as Christ sacrificed his life to demonstrate his love for the church. The Bible commands wives to respect their husbands (Ephesians 5:33), but Colossians 3:19 also advises, "Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them." In 1 Peter 3:7 husbands are told to: "…be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

Implications for Professional Practice and Future Research

Latinos often turn to turn to their religious communities rather than seek help from mental health, social service, or health care providers (Bent-Goodley and Fowler 2006; Nason-Clark 2004; Urrabazo 2000). Unfortunately, there is little research on how Latino Protestant churches and clergy address intimate partner violence. Existing research indicates that clergy of all backgrounds, denominations, and faiths have little or no formal training on intimate partner violence (Behnke et al. 2012; Hancock et al. in press; Shannon-Lewy and Dull 2005). One study of Latino church leaders found that the majority desired training and information to learn how to respond constructively to church members experiencing intimate partner violence (Hancock and Ames 2008).

There is much to be gained from expanding the resources for intervention. Latino women with a lifetime history of intimate partner violence have

significantly worse mental and physical health status compared to non-abused women (Bonomi et al. 2009). This, in addition to cultural factors and scarce community resources, contributes to the difficulties abused Latino women experience when they seek help (Ahrens et al. 2010). Latino churches could ease these difficulties if church leaders had the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to assist women struggling with intimate partner violence (Rotunda et al. 2004; Shannon-Lewy and Dull 2005; Ware et al. 2004).

Culturally sensitive interventions, whether religious or secular, must take into account the wishes of Latino women who choose to remain in their relationships (Hancock and Siu 2009; Perilla et al. 2012). At the same time, interventions for Latino men must specifically address their responsibility for the violence and find ways to stop it without challenging or condemning traditional cultural values (Hancock and Siu 2009; Perilla and Perez 2002).

Existing services for abusive men often fail to accommodate the needs of Latinos. Many states require men to demonstrate accountability for their intimate partner violence by regularly attending batterers' groups for which they must pay a fee. These fees, as well as the location of the groups, can be barriers to Latino men who have limited resources. Easing access by locating programs in Latino neighborhoods and addressing economic inequality by providing alternatives to paying a fee, such as community service, could mitigate these barriers (Bacigalupe 2000).

Latino churches could play a role in creating attainable and affordable alternatives to existing services for Latino women and men. One role for social workers and other human service professionals could be to offer church leaders training and consultation (Behnke et al. 2012; Hancock and Ames 2008; Hancock et al., in press). Such efforts should involve members of the Latino community because churches with undocumented clergy or congregation members are likely to be suspicious of outsiders' motives for offering to work with them (Hancock et al., in press).

There is still much to be learned about men's violence against women among Latino Protestants. Most research on intimate partner violence focuses on Latinos of Mexican origin and does not examine the role of religious beliefs and practices. Additional research on other Latino subgroups could identify significant similarities and differences and provide information on how ethnicity and religion affect the use of and response to violence against women. Researchers might also examine the strengths within Latino Protestant communities that helping professionals could build upon to help clergy and families address intimate partner violence.

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