WHAT DOES ISLAM SAY ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

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WHAT IS ISLAM?

- Emphasizes the oneness of God
- Continuation of the message of Judaism & Christianity
- Teaches that God created human beings to worship Him and to be His representatives on Earth
- Teaches that everyone is accountable to God for his/her behavior
- Freedom to choose one’s behavior
- Day of Judgment for final accountability
WHO ARE THE MUSLIMS?

- “Muslim” means one who submits (to the will of God)
- Followers of Islam, an Arabic word from “peace”
- Muslims come from all over the world
- Approx 7 million Muslims in US
  - Largest concentrations: Detroit, CA, NY, VA
- Only 20% of all Muslims are Arab
- Largest populations are in Indonesia, Pakistan, India
- Approx 20 million Muslims in China
- Approx 90% of all Arabs are Muslim
Muslim Americans: “middle class & mostly mainstream” (Pew, 2007)
DIVERSITY AMONG MUSLIMS

Factors that affect the way Islam is practiced

- Ethnic background
- Religious knowledge
- Education
- Cultural rituals, values and norms
- Personality (flexible versus rigid)
- Degree of commitment
SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

**Holy Qur’an**
- Word of God
- Revealed to Prophet Muhammad through Angel Gabriel
- Revealed in Arabic
- Translated into most languages
- Contains main teachings, values, principles of Islam

**Sunnah**
- Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad
- Living example of how to live according to the Qur’an
- His words and example recorded as hadith & sunnah for detailed example of daily life of Muslims

**Shari’ah**: Islamic Law Derived from Qur’an & Sunnah
UNDERSTANDING THE QUR’AN

- Preventive model
  - Provides paradigm with principles, concepts & values for guiding human behavior

- Approach to interpreting Qur’an
  - Intra-textually; holistic approach
  - Referring to Prophet Muhammad’s words & actions

- Translations & Interpretations
  - Subject to the historical & individual context
  - Need to go back to original source & language rather than rely on exegesis & translations
ROLE OF RELIGION/SPRITUALITY

Resource
- Offers guidance for making difficult decisions
- Provides anchor, source of spiritual comfort
  - God is always there
  - Even the most righteous have been tested (prophets, companions of Prophet Muhammad)
- Offers hope for ultimate justice

Roadblock
- Uninformed imams & leaders misuse religion
- Abuser misuses religion as control tactic
- Survivor interprets abuse as punishment from God, or as destiny (kismet or naseeb)
Islamic Family Model

- Men & women are created from a single soul (Qur’an 4:1)
- Both men & women are created to worship God (Qur’an 51:56)
- Men & women are equally accountable to God (Qur’an 33:35)
- Marriage based on mercy, compassion, tranquility (Q 30:21)
  - Relationship of mutuality
  - Gender Equity
  - Complementary Roles
    - Men are given responsibility of financial support & family leadership through consultation & collaboration (Q 4:34)
Diverse
May be
Interracial
Interethnic
Interfaith
Dual or single income
Traditional or Modern
### DISPELLING MYTHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>MYTH</strong></th>
<th><strong>FACT</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslim women have no rights</td>
<td>Islam gave women the right to inherit, to vote, to lead, to own property….</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim women are uneducated</td>
<td>Islam encourages men &amp; women to seek knowledge to strengthen their faith</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men are responsible for women’s choices (<em>hijab</em>, career, etc.)</td>
<td>Islam holds men &amp; women accountable for their individual actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>All women who wear <em>hijab</em> are forced to do so by men</td>
<td>Modesty is expected of men &amp; women. Many women feel liberated by wearing <em>hijab</em></td>
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CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

- Women are usually held responsible for the success/failure of the marriage
- Women may not have job skills since men are financially responsible for them
- Family and community support varies widely
- Support from a religious leader will reduce guilt
CULTURE VS RELIGION
Taken from Sharifa Alkhateeb, “What’s the difference,” Understanding Muslim & ME women in DV work.

Tradition Bound Ideas
- Women created to serve men
- Men superior to women
- Men make all family decisions
- Divorce not accepted in many cultures

Qur’an Based Ideas
- “I did not create human beings...except to worship Me.” Q 51:56
- “Reverence your Guardian-Lord who created you from a single soul...” Q 4:1
- God rewards those who conduct their affairs “by mutual consultation...” Q 42:38
- Divorce accepted as a peaceful option. Q 2:227-241; Q65
**Garments for One Another**

**Verse:**

They (women) are your garments and you (men) are their garments...

(2:187)

- What is a garment?
- What purpose does it serve?
- How are garments cared for?
ISLAM & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- Completely unacceptable in Islam
- Occurs across all ethnic groups
- Low community awareness of the problem
- Religion may be misused to justify battering
- Some cultures tolerate or perpetuate norms that encourage or exacerbate the occurrence of domestic violence
ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR IS PROHIBITED

Contradicts the model of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in his treatment of his family members

"The Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand a Muslim is safe..." (Hadith: Bukhari & Muslim)

“The most perfect of the believers is the best of you in character, and the best of you are those among you who are best to their wives.” (Hadith: Tirmidhi)

“O you who believe...nor should you treat them (women) with harshness...on the contrary, live with them on a footing of kindness and equity...”(Q 4:19)

“The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrong-doing & insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right & justice....” (Q 42:42)
MISUSING RELIGION TO JUSTIFY BATTERING

- Abuser of any faith may take teachings out of context to justify behavior

- Abusers may use religion for control
  - Tell victim she is a “bad Muslim”
  - Restrict outside sources of teaching
  - Abuse leadership position of protection and become tyrant and dictator
AN ABUSED VERSE

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because God has given the one more than the other, & because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient [to God], and guard in (their husband’s) absence what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose part you fear nushuz (disloyalty & ill-conduct), admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, and last wadribuhunna (tap them or separate from them); But if they return to obedience seek not against them means of annoyance, for God is Most High, Great (above you all). Qur’an 4:34

Italicized words have multiple translations with significant differences in meaning. Only the original Arabic is considered divine revelation.
WHY DOES SHE STAY?

Adapted from Sharifa Alkhateeb, “What is she leaving?,” Understanding Muslims & Middle Eastern Women in Domestic Violence Work

- What is she leaving?
  - Legitimate living arrangement
  - A home, and an intact family unit
  - Safety from gossip and blame
  - A familiar environment culturally

- What is she going to?
  - Unfamiliar place, may not be culturally appropriate
  - Scary place that may have dangerous people
  - Threat of losing children to non-Muslims
  - Threat of separation from older male children in shelter

- Consequences
  - Possible blame from family and community
  - Possible shunning by community
  - Possible future of being single for rest of life
Core Values

Taqwa (God-Consciousness)
Equality
Mutuality

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبِّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنسَاءٌ وَاتَّقُوا اللهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

O humankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single soul, created, of like nature, its mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- reverence God, through whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for God ever watches over you. (Q4:1)
Men & Women

Different by design

Must get to know each other

Only superiority is in degree of taqwa (God-consciousness)

God is watching over all

O humankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). (Q 49:13)
The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey God and His Messenger. On them will God pour His mercy: for God is Exalted in power, Wise. (Q 9:71)
Marriage is mutual relationship between two equal partners designed to meet both spouses’ needs & to provide foundation for healthy family.

“And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect.” (Q 30:21)
How Spouses Relate to Each Other

Mutual care-taking, loving, nurturing

Mutual consultation for making decisions

Respect

Kindness

Mercy

Humility

“.... live with them (women) on a footing of kindness and equity...” (Q4:19)

“Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular Prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance” (Q42:38)
Gender Roles

God is the Creator of both spouses

Each spouse accountable to God

God gave men an added responsibility of financial support

This is NOT a right to be a dictator or tyrant, which is oppression

Men are the protectors & maintainers of women, because God has given the one more than the other, and because they (men) support them (women) from their means…. (4:34)
Obedience

Each spouse must obey God

Qanitaat refers to obedience to God, not the husband

Obedience to the husband is within the context of obedience to God. His leadership should follow model of Prophet (pbuh)

“...Therefore the righteous women are devoutly qanitaat (obedient to God), and guard in (the husband’s absence) what God would have them guard...” (4:34)
For a specific situation involving immoral behavior, it must begin with communication. Separate beds emphasize severity.

Daraba has multiple meanings including to leave, separate, strike, tap.

The Prophet (pbuh) was known to never hit a woman or child.

“...As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct (nushuz), admonish them first, then refuse to share their beds, and lastly wadribuhunna, but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means of annoyance, for God is Most High, Great” (4:34)
INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS

- **EMPHASIZE**
  - Safety versus leaving
  - Well-being of children

- **RESPECT**
  - Client needs & values
  - Different values which lead to different goals
  - Religious holidays (no appointments)

- **FLEXIBILITY**
  - Use what works & fits
  - Be creative & willing to deviate from traditional models
  - Include non-biological “family” members for support
  - Work with a community/religious leader if needed
BEST PRACTICES

- Assess importance of religion & spirituality
- Assess prior trauma history
  - Impacts coping, general mental health, decision-making
- Assess impact of geo-political events
  - Islamophobia, Muslim ban, increased anxiety/fear
- Explore cultural norms about gender roles
  - Work within paradigm to empower the client
- Focus on safety & well-being of each member of family including abuser
  - Educate about long-term psychological impact on children of witnessing/experiencing abuse
**Culture & Religion as Resources**

- Faith/spirituality help victims survive
- Islam teaches personal accountability
- Women are more likely to protect their children than themselves
- Ask the client to tell you what teachings support living a violence-free life
- Ask the client what God would want for the family
- Ask what Islam teaches about justice and what Islam views as oppression
ROLE OF IMAM

- Influential role
  - shaping attitudes
  - interpretation of Qur’an
  - teasing apart cultural norms from Islamic values
- Has captive audience during Friday prayers
- Provides education for general community
- May provide premarital counseling
  - Teach healthy gender roles
  - Use marriage contract as a preventive tool
- Should clearly communicate that all forms of violence & abuse are unacceptable
BUILDING BRIDGES

- Build relationships with community leaders to increase trust and credibility
  - Identify individuals within the community who are willing to work collaboratively
  - Have educational workshops in community centers, mosques, Islamic schools
  - Invite community members to your agency to increase awareness of services
Presenter Contact Information

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