



# TOWARDS DEVELOPING A MUSLIM BATTERERS' INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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# DEFINITIONS

Muslim: someone who follows the religion of Islam

- Arabic word that means “one who submits (to the will of God)

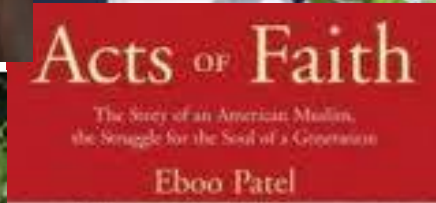
Islam: Monotheistic religion followed by 1.8 billion people in the world (Pew, 2015)

- Began in 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia with revelation to Prophet Muhammad
- Most diverse faith community in the US

Allah: Arabic word with literal meaning of “the One God”

- Arab Christians and Arab Jews refer to God as Allah

# MUSLIM AMERICANS: "MIDDLE CLASS & MOSTLY MAINSTREAM" (PEW, 2007)



# DIVERSITY AMONG MUSLIMS

Some factors that affect the way Islam is practiced

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

# INTERSECTION OF CULTURE & RELIGION

Distinguish between lived culture & religious teachings

Diverse interpretations of religious texts & teachings

Influence & shape each other; may be hard to tease apart; not static

Religious values may be congruent with broader cultural values or contradict them

- Example of divorce

Cultures may hold conflicting values

- Violence is glamorized AND condemned in American culture

# SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

## Qur'an

- Divine revelation
- Includes moral, principles, values, prophets' stories
- Illustrated in daily life of Prophet Muhammad

## Sunnah

- Body of traditional, social & legal practice based on life of Prophet Muhammad as transmitted through *Hadith* (his verbal sayings, actions, and silent permissions)



# 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)

# RELEVANT ISLAMIC VALUES

- Justice
  - All oppression, including domestic violence, is prohibited
- Mercy
  - No harsh treatment is acceptable
- Patience & Perseverance
  - Endure trials by maintaining relationship with God
  - Actively seek to end oppression
- Forgiveness
  - Does not mean acceptance of injustice/oppression
  - Process facilitated by accountability and justice-making



# FREEDOM OF CHOICE

- Religious teachings outline what is right & wrong, with consequences for each clearly outlined. Each person has the freedom of choice (Q 2:256; 18:29-31; 88:21-24).
- No one can blame someone else for his/her actions and choices (Q: 4:112; 53:38-41)

# ACCOUNTABILITY & REPENTANCE

- “The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing & insolently transgress...defying right & justice...” (Q: 42:42)
- “And those who, having done something to be ashamed of, or wronged their own souls, earnestly bring God to mind, and ask for forgiveness for their sins....and are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done.” (Q 3:135)

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Normal part of every relationship

Prophet Muhammad dealt with conflict with wives, companions, & his enemies using multiple tools

- Listening & validating when people complained to him
- Speaking and arguing in a kind, respectful manner (Q 16:125)
- Agreeing to disagree (Q 109)
- Consulting with others to problem solve (story of bringing Abu Bakr to mediate between him and Aisha; Um Salamah to solve problem with companions during Hdaybia)
- Being forgiving, gentle and patient (Q 3:159 after Uhud)
- Giving clear options (including divorce) when differences seem irreconcilable
- Taking time out

# BATTERER INTERVENTION

*“Help the oppressed and the oppressor. The Companions said, “We know how to help the oppressed. How do we help the oppressor?”*

*The Prophet replied, “By preventing him/her from committing injustice.”*

(Hadith: Bukhari & Muslim)

# 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

# REFRAMING CULTURAL VALUES SHAME/FAMILY HONOR

## Roadblock

- Shameful for woman to “break” family
- Shameful for woman to report her husband (or for Muslim to report fellow Muslim)
- Shameful to air “dirty laundry”

## Resource

- Shameful for a man to harm, instead of protect
- Shameful to break marriage covenant by oppressing spouse
- Shameful not to seek help to protect family & all of its members

# REFRAMING: OBEDIENCE

## Roadblock

- Survivor is told to obey her husband in order to be a good Muslim wife.

## Resource

- Allah (God) prohibits all forms of oppression and commands us to be just, including to ourselves.
- A husband's leadership should be patterned after the Prophet: consultative, collaborative, non-coercive, servant-leader model



# REFRAMING: SIN

## Roadblock

- Survivor is told that leaving the marriage is a sin because Allah (God) hates divorce.

## Resource

- Oppression is a sin, and abuse is one form of oppression.
- Divorce is a peaceful alternative to enduring continued oppression.
- “...live together in kindness or separate in kindness...” (Q 2:29)
- Prophet Muhammad presented the option of divorce when wives were unhappy with financial situation (Q 33:28-29)

# REFRAMING FORGIVENESS

## Roadblock

- Survivor is told to forgive the abuser and hold on to the marriage, tolerating bad behavior from abusive partner.

## Resource

- Perpetrator is responsible for seeking forgiveness through process of repentance.
- Forgiveness does not equal staying in the marriage, but can occur even if victim decides to leave.

# EMERGING TRENDS

- Muslim organizations partnering with county to develop & offer culturally sensitive batterer intervention programs
- Mosques holding batterer intervention programs in the mosque
- Imams getting training & certification in batterer intervention
- Curriculum for anger & domestic violence prevention based on Islamic teachings



## Presenter Contact Information

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