



Latinas and Domestic Violence

Presented by Katherine Ruiz



Framework and History of Domestic Violence

- Domestic Violence, also known as Interpersonal Violence, is the abuse that occurs between two individuals in a close relationship (married, divorced, engaged, dating, etc.) and involves the use of violence to intimidate, control, and/or cause harm to one's partner.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- punching, kicking, burning, slapping, and/or any other use of physical force.
 - forcing a partner to take part in a sexual act, threatening with words, weapons, gestures, or any other means used to communicate harm-- verbal or psychological--, threatening a partner's sense of self-worth, threatening a partner's possessions and/or loved ones, stalking and/or restricting a partner from engaging with friends and/or family.
- Domestic abuse does not discriminate and affects both men and women. However, studies indicate women are 5–8 times more likely than men to experience domestic violence in their intimate relationships. (US Dept. of Justice, 1998). The Dept. of Justice notes that use of physical force is the oldest documented means for keeping “subordinate groups in their place.”
 - “Throughout US history, state laws and cultural practices supported a man's right to ‘discipline his wife through whatever means he felt necessary’.” (Gelles, 1997)/
 - “Prior to the 19th century, it was considered a necessary aspect of a husband's obligation to control his wife through the use of physical force and violence.”
 - Today, domestic violence is a societal problem that requires legal action and the development of therapeutic interventions for both the perpetrator and victim.

Statistical Data on Latina Victims

- Violence is a significant health issue for Latinas in the US with 54.9% reporting violent victimizations.
- A 2004 study was conducted to describe domestic violence in the hispanic community, the type and frequency of violence experienced, and barriers to obtaining treatment and serviced by victims of abuse.
- The US Dept. of Justice estimates that 4.5 million women are victims of domestic violence each year.
 - 23–37% of emergency rooms visits made by women are from injuries sustained by their domestic partner. 75% of those women will experience further abuse from their abusive partner.
 - 87% of crimes against women are committed by their intimate partner.
- Each year, 200,000 emergency room visits are for domestic violence costing an estimated 4.1 billion dollars each and every year.
 - “Domestic violence claims the lives of 4 women each and every day in the U.S.”
- Studies note that hispanic victims face “unique challenges when coping with domestic violence-- including stressors related to immigration, challenges of acculturation, language, legal, and economic pressures.”
 - 21.7% of women state their fear of being reported to immigration authorities by their abuser as their primary reason for remaining in the relationship.
 - 30% of hispanics live in poverty and comprise of 25% of the medically uninsured individuals in the US.
- Emotional responses of latinas to domestic violence include depression, anxiety, phobia, and 45–85% suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (“PTSD”).
- The study also notes that prolonged stress of battering predisposes victims to chronic health problems-- pelvic pain, arthritis, autoimmune disorders, and cardiovascular disease.



Barriers to Resources for Latina Victims

- A 1990 study comprised of over 400 undocumented women found that 34% of the respondents had experienced some form of domestic violence.
 - only 6 of these women ever called the police for help.
- Studies have shown that judicial intervention in the lives of domestic violence have been effective in stopping the abuse.
 - a study of 285 battered women who obtained protective orders found that 2/3 of the orders were not violated within 6 months of being issued.
 - 80.5% of the women responded they felt safe. 92.7% felt better about themselves, and 95% stated they would seek a protective order again.
- Immigrant communities face higher rates of poverty than non-immigrants-- many domestic violence victims do not speak English and thus face many barriers when seeking help from the court system.
- The language barrier is extremely detrimental to hispanic victims. Courts have explicitly held there is no constitutional right to a free interpreter in a civil case.
 - the American legal system views civil matters as ones whom individuals engage in at will, as opposed to criminal cases which are involuntary in nature.
- Given the a victim's life, liberty, and property being intimately intertwined with matters of domestic relations-- it is imperative that the judicial system grant indigent victims with certified interpreters during legal proceedings.
- *Florida has no specific statutory provision mandating courts to provide an interpreter to non-english speaking victims. It is at the court's discretion, upon request of the victim.*

FAMILISMO / FAMILISM

- Refers to the attitudes, behaviors, and family structures within the familial unit--it is believed to be the most important factor influencing the structure of hispanic families.
- Studies note that hispanic women are raised with a sense of loyalty, at all costs, to the familial unit. This sense of loyalty has long been attributed to the reason why hispanic women
 - remain in domestically abusive relationships; appear to be incapable of recruiting support systems; and less likely to obtain help from sources outside of the family.
- **Attitudinal Familism** is the belief that family members possess more positive traits and characteristics than outsiders. It is the belief that family matters remain "in the family" and emotional resources are to be obtained from the familial unit only.
- **Behavioral Familism** focuses on the amount of support received from family members and not other social support systems, such as church and friends.
- Studies show three (3) types of self-blame occurring in hispanic women for seeking help outside of the family:
 - **(1) blame for causing or "occasioning" violence;**
 - **(2) blame for being unable to stop the violence or "change" the batterer**
 - **(3) blame for being unable to tolerate the violence**
- Studies show that hispanic women believe that keeping the family together is their sole responsibility in life which in turn, keeps her from seeking help and places her in the position of continuous "self-sacrifice" for the better good of the family.
- Literature reveals that these attitudes exist long before maternity and arises from the moment she denies her own needs and instead focuses on fulfilling the needs of others in her family-- a pattern and belief that continues into marriage and motherhood.
- Literature also reveals that hispanic parenting styles teach their children to obey their parents (especially female children)--ingraining a sense of "obedience" from childhood that continues through adulthood.

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES & EFFECTS

- “One of few studies reported that partners who differed in religious affiliations reported higher risks of partner abuse.” (Gelles, 1974).”
- A large percentage of hispanics adhere to beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. According to the first Roman Catholic Law of Marriage, married women were to conform themselves entirely to the temper of their husbands and that husbands would rule all aspect of their lives. (Dobash & Dobash, 1992).
 - Today, many of these beliefs remain intact and remnants of these beliefs have an effect on the hispanic familial unit and its norms.
- The Roman Catholic religion and its prohibition of divorce is an important aspect of hispanic life and whose values and views are embedded into every aspect of their lives--with specified focus on their familial life. (Diaz-Guerrero, 1994).
- Factors that impede hispanic women from reporting domestic violence are strongly connected to their socio-cultural values:
 - **(1) dedication to their children**
 - **(2) willing to self-sacrifice for their families**
 - **(3) level of marital devotion**
 - **(4) culture's value on collectivism**
 - **(5) strong belief in family privacy**



Machismo/Marianismo

- The noted imbalance of power between hispanic men and women has been coined “Machismo.” The negative aspects and traits associated with Machismo include:
 - **(1) sexual prowess**
 - **(2) heavy alcohol consumption**
 - **(3) aggressive behaviors toward women**
- On the other hand, pertaining to the hispanic women, the term coined is “Marianismo.” Traits and aspects associated with Marianismo include:
 - **(1) submissiveness**
 - **(2) docile nature**
 - **(3) self-sacrificing attitude**
 - **(4) stoic and composed in nature**
- Cultural beliefs in hispanic communities include the notion that the male reigns supreme over the woman and his family, placing the male in a position of power and responsibility.
- “Marianismo and Machismo both embody concepts that include the beliefs that:
 - **(1) a child should always be obedient to their parents**
 - **(2) female virginity is of great value to a single woman**
 - **(3) life is meant to be harder for a woman than for a man**
 - **(4) a good wife must always be faithful to her husband**
 - **(5) good wife maintains the traditional structure of dynamics within the family**
 - **(6) it is more important to obey and respect your husband than to love him**
 - **(7) a woman who dishonors her family should be severely punished.” (Perilla, 1994)**
- Scripts accompanying this belief system breed a pattern and notion that a woman is meant to be submissive in all aspects of her life and subservient to those around her-- never putting herself first.
 - Habits are difficult to break and norms are difficult to unteach. It is probable that a woman who is taught to be obedient her entire life will not only blame herself when familial issues arise but also feel the need to remain in order to “remedy her wrongs.”

Resources for a Safe Exit

- **Police/Sheriff Department:** 911
- **Prosecutor's Office for Orange County:** 407-836-2400
- **Prosecutor's Office for Osceola County:** 407-742-5200
- **Orange County Booking & Release Center:** 407-836-3400
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 800-799-7233 / 800-787-3224
- **United Way:** text zip code to 898-211
- **Embrace Families:** 321-207-8200 / 321-441-1567
- **Florida Dept. of Children & Families:** 1-800-500-1119 / 400 W. Robinson Street, Orlando, FL 32801
- **Love is Respect:** 1-866-331-9474 / Text: LOVEIS to 22522
- **Nuevo Sendero:** 407-332-6200
- **Orange County Crisis Family Counseling Program:** 407-254-9370
- **Stand Up Survivor:** 321-430-5307
- **University of Central Florida Victim Services:** 407-823-1200 / Text: 407-823-6868
- **Victim Information & Notification Everyday:** 866-277-7477
- **Shelters:**
 - **Harbor House (pet friendly):** 407-886-2856
 - **Coalitions for the Homeless:** 407-426-1250



Citations



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