

### **Factors Contributing to Domestic Violence Attitudes**

Domestic violence is one of the leading causes of injury among women (Kulwicki, Aswad, Carmona & Ballout, 2010). In the United States, 30% of women are victims of domestic abuse; however, due to high rates of underreporting this number is considered an underestimation (Collins et al. 1999). Domestic violence is especially challenging for immigrants and refugees living in the Western world. This difficulty stems from the lack of culturally appropriate resources available to Muslims as well as stressful life experiences related to political, economic and cultural conditions (Abu-Ras, 2010).

As immigration rates of Muslims to the United States continue to increase, it becomes necessary to understand the factors contributing to domestic abuse within this population (Pew Research, 2013). Examining such factors becomes increasingly more important when research reports victims of domestic violence suffer not only physical injuries but are left with emotional scars that manifest themselves in anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation (Haj Yahia, 1999; Haj Yahia, 2000a). With a clearer understanding of the Muslim American population's experience of domestic violence, we can create culturally appropriate interventions to help victims suffering from domestic violence as well as prevention programs that can educate those vulnerable to abuse.

One variable in capturing the overall experience is the attitudes of Muslim women towards domestic abuse. The emphasis on the family unit in Arab and Muslim culture is an attitude that may make these women feel that family is the only place they can turn for help. Muslim women feel as though they are trapped in an abusive marriage and may justify or accept their abuse. Haj-yahia (2002) found that while Jordanian women may believe wife abuse is inexcusable, they still had a tendency to justify wife beating, for instance, "if [the wife] challenges her husband's manhood."

In the Islamic context that some Muslims adhere to, traditional gender roles are made concrete in the Quran in which the woman's main role is to respect the husband, granting the husband power to discipline the wife if she disobeys (Haj-yahia, 1998). Such rigid dichotomous gender roles has shown to produce individuals who hold more accepting attitudes toward wife abuse. Despite the extensive research of gender roles and attitudes towards domestic abuse, the relationship between these variables among Muslim women in a Western context, remains unclear.

The definition of domestic abuse is a critical variable that has been addressed in a limited amount of research. Haj-yahia (2004) found Arab women define violence against women in the context of verbal, emotional and physical abuse more often than acts of economic and sexual abuse. By investigating specific items related to domestic violence in the Muslim population (e.g., threats of marrying a second wife), we can gather a more accurate perception of domestic violence within this community and its influence on attitudes toward domestic violence (Abdel Meguid, 2006).

In this literature review, we will examine research contributions relating to gender roles, perception of domestic violence and attitudes towards domestic violence.