Traditional Latino Values and Domestic Violence

By Madeline Gillette

Hispanic Values

• May prefer folk remedies and informal supports to more formal assistance

• The typical method of addressing domestic violence where the family is separated (husband to jail, wife to shelter) clashes with Hispanic cultural values

• Latinas fear that reporting their husbands to the police will reinforce negative stereotypes of their culture
Familismo

- **Familismo defined:**
  - Conflicts are supposed to be handled internally within the family
  - Problems are not to be shared outside of the family

- **Implications**
  - Reluctance to utilize outside service providers, such as shelters
  - Reluctance to call law enforcement
  - Especially problematic when family members blame the victim

Machismo

- **Machismo defined:**
  - Responsibility and obligation to the family is important, as is maintaining one’s honor
  - Includes unspoken expectations that a man should be hyper-masculine, in control, domineering, a womanizer, and a heavy drinker

- **Implications**
  - “True men” are in control of their family
  - Hyper-masculine traits are associated with abuse, including a propensity to initiate violence
Marianismo

- **Marianismo defined:**
  - Uses the Virgin Mary’s self-sacrificing and uncomplaining nature as a role model for how women should behave
  - Often includes unwavering support of the husband’s decisions and an unquestioning acceptance of the husband’s faults

- **Implications**
  - Self-sacrificing behavior is seen as drawing the woman closer to God
  - Promotes unquestioning acceptance of abusive behaviors
  - Can discourage women from leaving violent and abusive situations

Fatalism

- **Fatalism defined:**
  - Negative events are seen as God’s will and suffering is one’s destiny

- **Implications:**
  - Victims may not seek help because they believe it is God’s will that they endure suffering
La Sufrida

- **La Sufrida defined:**
  - Abuse (or other difficult circumstance) is seen as a trial or tribulation which must be endured for religious reasons (as payment for past sins).

- **Implications**
  - Similar to fatalism, victims may not seek help as they believe the suffering is God’s will and a penance that they must pay.

Values as Protective Factors

- Latino values can also serve as a resource.

- These values can also serve as protective factors and build on cultural pride.
Protective Factors, cont.

- *Machismo* does not have to mean violent.

- *Machismo* can also refer to protecting the family from violence.

Protective Factors, cont.

- Emphasis on close family relationships (*familismo*) can also be a protective factor.

- The abuser can be encouraged to protect the family.

- *Familismo* does not give the abuser permission to be abusive to the victim and children.
Protective Factors, cont.

- Marianismo can be used to strengthen the role of the mother in the family.
  
  — An important component of marianismo is that the mother should be respected

Encuentro Latino
National Institute on Family Violence

www.latinodv.org      1-888-743-7545      mail@latinodv.org

Encuentro Latino is a collaborative project between the NMSU School of Social Work and La Casa, Inc.