Bibliographies on Violence and Religion

Phase 1: Religion and Domestic Violence

Strand 3, of the MCRI Project, identified the interplay between violence and religion as one of its priority areas for investigation. We recognized that the literature on violence and religion is developing in ways that would never have been considered possible a decade ago. And that it was accumulating at a rapid pace.

In order to begin our preparation of a broad-based bibliography on Violence and Religion, the team members were asked to think about how their work interweaves with this priority area of study. Team members themselves represent a wide range of interest areas—even within the topic of religion and violence.

In the first of our bibliographies, Nancy Nason-Clark asked three colleagues who are working with her, to identify some recent publications that are informing their work (or publications reporting on their work) under the general title of Domestic Violence and Religion. The questions she posed for them and their responses are developed in the pages to follow.

Is there any evidence that battered religious women look to their faith communities for help in the aftermath of domestic violence?

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A woman's personal narrative and characteristics, including the importance of her religious faith, shape her disclosure of abuse and the road she travels in her quest for wholeness (Clarke, 1986; Fortune, 1991; Halsey, 1984; Schüssler Fiorenza & Copeland, 1994). Employing a variety of methodologies, and working with many faith traditions, a series of studies by the Religion and Violence research team of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Center for Family Violence research at the University of New Brunswick have included mailed questionnaires and personal in-depth interviews with clergy, focus groups of church women, telephone surveys of shelter workers and religious leaders, and community consultations (Beaman-Hall & Nason-Clark, 1997a; Beaman & Nason-Clark, 1999; Nason-Clark, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2004, 2005).

For many women who are religious, a first response to abuse by an intimate partner is to seek out help from their pastor or other faith leader. The advice that is received will in large measure determine her next steps. Religious leaders are being confronted by the issue of abuse on a regular basis (Horton & Williamson, 1988; Weaver, 1993). Religious women can be especially vulnerable when abused for they are very likely to hold the intact family in high esteem and to consider separation and divorce as unsatisfactory options (Nason-Clark & Clark Kroeger, 2010). Religious women have difficulty getting the support they need from their churches: 95% of church women report they have never heard a specific message on abuse preached from the pulpit of their church (Nason-Clark, 1997); 83.2% of pastors have counseled at least one abused woman; yet only 8% of pastors feel well equipped to respond to domestic violence (Nason-Clark, Holtmann, Fisher-Townsend, McMullin, & Ruff, 2009).

The most effective response to the problem of abuse among families of faith is that of church women themselves. 69.8% of church women have sought the help of another woman in their church regarding a family related problem and 58% of church women have helped an abused woman—one in four have offered her a bed for the night (The RAVE Project, 2007).

Women in ministry tend to be the most well-informed about issues pertaining to domestic violence. In their California study, Gengler and Lee (2001) conclude that female clergy were more understanding of the issue than males since they have had their own experiences of struggle against discrimination in the patriarchal institution of the Christian church. Researchers at the University of New Brunswick have also found that female ministers are more likely than Protestant males or Catholic priests to ask a woman if she was experiencing abuse (Nason-Clark, 1997; Stirling, Cameron, Nason-Clark, & Miedema, 2004). They report that some women clergy are reluctant to accept referrals of battered women from their male colleagues in neighboring parishes since they have experienced both the large number of such requests and the corresponding unwillingness of those male colleagues to avail themselves of training opportunities—metaphorically washing their hands of the problem (Nason-Clark, Mitchell, & Beaman, 2001).

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Are there elements of patriarchal religions that foster violent behavior?

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Churches have well-developed teachings that stress the importance of marriage and the family in Christian life and even refer to them as sacred. For example, Pope Benedict XVI has said that the family is "a divine institution that stands at the foundation of life of the human person and the prototype of every social order" (2007). The Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches acknowledged that "the family is the place for receiving warmth, compassion, nurture, respect and dignity," they also pointed out that "ever since Cain killed Abel, for far too many people, the family has been one of the most violent institutions in society" (2008). Since domestic abuse is so widespread in Canadian families and observes no religious boundaries, it represents a challenge to the Christian understanding of what constitutes family life.

Religious patriarchy affects both men and women, socially constructing patterns of relationship in which being male is understood as being the standard for human being and being female is not (Clifford, 2005). While recognizing that all theology is grounded in human experience, feminist theology takes as its starting point, women's experiences. Women's experiences within structures of religious patriarchy expose these structures as reflecting male experience rather than universal human experience. "Feminist theology makes the sociology of theological knowledge visible, no longer hidden behind mystifications of objectified divine and universal authority" (Radford Ruether, 1983, p. 13). The effects of patriarchy are found in the social, economic, political and religious inequality between men and women which is maintained through language, myth, symbol and belief (Penner, 2000).

From a sociological perspective, it is important to understand how women's religious agency is embedded within patriarchal religious structures (Korteweg, 2008; Mahmood, 2001). For example, Griffith (1997) has explored conservative evangelical women's prayer and story-telling in order to illustrate the process by which they construct their identities within the gendered hierarchies of church and family. Griffith describes this as a dialectic of female submission and empowerment. "Submission tactically helps the relatively powerless women recover power and *create space*" (Griffith, 1997, p. 186). Gallagher's study of evangelical family life (2003) shows how husbands and wives live within the tensions of symbolic traditionalism and pragmatic egalitarianism. Strongly held beliefs in the husband's headship in the family are held in practical tension with the demands of life in modern society in which both husbands and wives are income earners outside the home. As a result, evangelical parenting and homecare practices reflect a more pragmatic division of labour and responsibility within families than might be expected given their beliefs. Townsend Gilkes (2001) highlights the fact that the women of black Christian churches in the US have always worked outside the home and shouldered primary responsibility for the care of families in the home. Because of this, black women have a multiple consciousness of the intersection of work, race and gender. Yet black women do experience patriarchy in their churches and deal with this through a combination of dual-sex politics and a tradition of conflict (Townsend Gilkes, 2001, pp. 107-115). While men continue to dominate official positions of leadership in black churches, women have a variety of roles in which they

exercise parallel leadership and authority. Townsend Gilkes writes that the black churches have never been peaceful and that the distinct shape of religious patriarchy in these churches has been influenced by the persistent tradition of conflict that black women maintain. Black church women are proud of their commitment to the structures they are trying to change.

In the history of Catholic social teachings a few documents from the Vatican mention violence against women, but never in connection to writings about marriage or the family (Giblin, 1999; PCJP, 2005). Canadian Catholic leaders, however, have been less reticent to directly address the issue, at least in writing. Their statements stress the need to make resources on domestic violence for education and training of clergy and parishioners readily available. They also emphasize the need for a multi-disciplinary community response to domestic violence, urging Catholics to make use of and support all domestic violence services available. "A Heritage of Violence: A Pastoral Reflection on Conjugal Violence" was published by the Quebec Assembly of Catholic Bishops (1989) and written as a consciousness raising document for priests and pastoral workers. It contains extensive information on domestic violence and clearly names aspects of the Catholic church's history and practice that may have contributed to the abuse of women by their husbands including the patriarchal nature of Christianity, the church's over-emphasis on women's roles as wives and mothers, the exclusively masculine nature of religious language, the exclusion of women from sacramental ministry and the over-emphasis on marriage "for better or for worse." Twenty proposals for action in church and society are listed. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops released a pastoral statement on violence against women (2004). This document urges Catholics to work in collaboration with others for short and long term solutions to domestic violence.

An ecumenical partnership that Catholics have participated is the Women's Inter-Church Council (WICC) which has produced a handbook to encourage awareness about violence against women and action in congregations. It includes a feminist theological critique of Christian patriarchy as well as information on how to respond when witnessing abuse, how to create safe spaces in the church for abused women, and how to plan a worship service, a workshop or a bible study that address domestic violence (Penner, 2000).

Through participating in the life of the Catholic church women are immersed in a religious culture where males have all of the structural power. While the Catholic church professes the equality of men and women through baptism, it does not practice this equality within its institutional structures or reflect this equality in its rituals (Holtmann, in press). Religious imagery, language and liturgy all reinforce masculine supremacy. For Catholics, the moral bar was set very high which leaves many women feeling guilty about their inadequacy - no matter what they do. As well, sin is tightly bound up with understandings of sexuality, particularly female sexuality (Hunt, 2005). Women are given the message that their sexuality is problematic because of the church's prohibition against reproductive choice in all circumstances including contraception and abortion (Radford Ruether, 2006). Even though most Catholic women use contraception, they are nevertheless doing something wrong according to church teachings. These elements of the Catholic faith can contribute to an inferior sense of self among women. For women it can be a system of self-alienation (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2001). Yet there has been a long tradition of resistance to patriarchy among Catholic women (Holtmann, 2008). Religious identity for progressive Catholic women is an achieved identity, celebrated in movements that

provide solidarity and opportunities for religious leadership (Dillon, 1999; Ebaugh, 1993; Winter, Lumis, & Stokes, 1995; Wittberg, 1994).

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What forms of spiritual or emotional support are available to religious women who have been battered?

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Religious women suffering abuse who look to their pastors for help are often disappointed to find that there is limited awareness and understanding of domestic violence by their leaders, modest knowledge of the resources available, and a lack of ability (or discomfort) to offer them help of an explicitly spiritual nature (e.g., prayer, Bible readings, spiritual counsel) (Nason-Clark, 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2003; Nason-Clark & Clark Kroeger, 2010).

There is also evidence that community-based professionals experience difficulty in responding to the needs of highly religious women (Whipple, 1987).

Feminist theology and praxis can help women to take seriously their experiences, critically analyze attitudes, and reframe their past. It can also strengthen women's resolve to work for change so that women and oppressed people can become subjects of their own histories rather than objects of male domination and control (Clifford, 2005; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993). Feminist biblical scholarship points out that the Bible was originally written by men, for men. Yet beneath the patriarchal overlay there are the seeds of its own dismantlement - a liberating core of the biblical tradition for women (Nason-Clark & Clark Kroeger, 2001; Radford Ruether, 1986; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1992). The lesser known stories of biblical women – strong figures whose stories are not often told – can serve as spiritual role models (Winter, 1991, 1992a, 1992b). The stories of Hagar, Rachel, Ruth & Naomi, Esther, Mary of Bethany, and Priscilla highlight women's liberating actions and faith. Misogyny is critiqued through the stories of Tamar, Queen Vashti and Mary Magdalene. The image of Sophia, Wisdom of God, the divine feminine and model for understanding the person of Jesus can be reclaimed (Rupp, 2010; Schüssler Fiorenza, 2001). Women's roles in the history and development of the Christian church have been uncovered (Malone, 2000; Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993). Feminist work on ethics in the areas of sexuality and ecology raises the possibility that women's ways of making moral choices were both different and valid compared to men's (Eaton, 2005; Gilligan, 1982; Hunt, 2005). Much work has been done in the area of feminist spirituality in terms of finding and reshaping the spiritual resources of the Christian faith in order to assist women (Chittister, 1998; Harris, 1996; Hunt, 1992; Malone, 2006; Sewell, 1991; Weaver, 2001).

Women long to hear a message from their religious leaders that violence and abuse in marriage are wrong and intolerable. Therefore there is immense importance in breaking the silence about the reality of family violence from the pulpit (McClure & Ramsay, 1998). Additionally, public statements by church leaders can confirms women's experiences of oppression and offer them alternative ways of interpreting their tradition that are based on the belief in the fundamental equality of all human beings (CCCB, 2004; Holtmann, 2008; SACAQB, 1989).

Breaking the silence in churches about abuse and providing support for women includes the telling of stories of abuse. Providing a context for the safe sharing of religious women's stories

of abuse is important (Boehm, Golec, Krahn, & Smyth, 1999; Holtmann, in press). Providing safety includes attending to the problems of abuse perpetrated by religious leaders themselves (CCCB, 1992; Nason-Clark, 2000d; Nason-Clark & Ruff, 2004) and the difficulties female clergy have in ministering in a patriarchal context (Bouclin, 2006; Ternier-Gommers, 2007; Wallace, 1992).

One of the best-kept secrets of church life is the amazing support network women offer each other under the umbrella of their congregation or faith network. Substantial numbers of church women have offered an abused woman they know assistance—many have provided in-kind or financial contributions to their community battered women's shelter as well (Beaman-Hall & Nason-Clark, 1997a; Beaman-Hall & Nason-Clark, 1997b; Beaman & Nason-Clark, 1999; CWL, 1989, 1995; Nason-Clark, 1995, 2000b; Nason-Clark & Fisher-Townsend, 2005b).

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What is the interplay between ethnicity, immigration, religion and abuse?

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Of the more than six billion people alive on the planet today the majority live in poverty. Four billion people, most of whom are women and children, live below the relative poverty line and of the 1.3 billion people living below the absolute poverty level, 70% are women (WMW, 2000). According to the World Health Organization, while poverty is a barrier to positive health outcomes for both men and women, poverty places a greater burden on women and girls' health (2010). Life expectancy is higher for women than men in most countries, but a number of health and social factors combine to create a lower quality of life for women. Unequal access to information, care and basic health practices further increases health risks for women. Another troublesome aspect of this global picture is the high rate of violence against women. The most common form of violence experienced by women globally is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner. One in three women have experienced beating, sexual assault or some other form of abuse by a spouse, boyfriend or common law partner (UN, 2008).

Contemporary globalization dominated by neoliberal economic policies has meant an acceleration of international migration (Warburg, 2007). The number of international migrants more than doubled between 1970 and 2000 (Legrain, 2007). While global migration is not a new historical phenomenon, much of today's migration is not freely chosen. Millions of people are forced by economic conditions to leave their traditional homelands in search of a basic livelihood (Li, 2003). The majority of international migrants are moving from poor countries to rich countries. Canada's annual immigration rate relative to population size is the highest in the world. Today, approximately one in five Canadians are foreign born (Frank & Saunders, 2009). Canada's visible minority groups are expected to account for 29 to 32 per cent of the population in the next twenty years, which is double the proportion reported on the 2006 census (Hansen, 2010). However, the dominant socio-economic structures of Canadian society are capitalist, racist and patriarchal (hooks, 1984). These structures ultimately benefit Canadian-born, wealthy white men and women and lead to lower socio-economic status for people of other classes and races. Visible minority and aboriginal women occupy the lowest rungs on the socio-economic ladder.

In 2009, women made up 47.9% and men 52.1% of the total Canadian labour force, yet the gap between the income levels of women and men with similar levels of education, based on the difference in hourly wages, was 15.2% (NBACSW, 2010). Historically, the Canadian liberal welfare state has tried to ameliorate the socio-economic inequalities created by the capitalist labour market (Esping-Andersen, 1994). Public education and universal health care are aspects of the social economy that have been tremendously beneficial to women (Theriault, 2009). However, since the 1980s, pressure from neoliberal economic globalization has led to changes in Canadian social policies with a movement away from the public provision of social services to a greater emphasis on deregulation and privatization. Such restructuring is a gendered process in that social welfare programs and policies have had a particularly strong impact on the material conditions of women (Arts & Gelissen, 2002; Man, 2004). Neoliberal restructuring has also had

a negative impact on immigrants, severely curtailing their ability to successfully integrate into Canadian society (Kazemipur, 2004; Li, 2003). Immigrant women in particular, have borne the brunt of the socio-economic effects of the changing labour market in Canada as it responds to the forces of globalization.

Only forty-two per cent of immigrants actually find employment in their field of expertise (Frank & Saunders, 2009). According to Statistics Canada (2009) the average hourly wage gap in 2008 between Canadian-born workers and immigrant workers was almost 10%. When comparing immigrants with university degrees with their Canadian-born counterparts, the gap rises to 22%. Immigrant women with comparable education and job status earn less than their non-immigrant female peers (Wilkinson, Peter, & Chaturvedi, 2006). Visible minority immigrant women fared even worse, earning an additional 20% less than majority immigrant women (Tastsoglou & Preston, 2006). Immigrant women are more likely than Canadian-born women and men and immigrant men to be unemployed with rates of unemployment among new immigrant women nearly twice that of Canadian women (Tastsoglou & Preston, 2006). This is leading to the de-skilling of professional immigrant women (Man, 2004). Immigrant mothers spend a great deal of time shielding their children from discrimination and ensuring their success in the education system (McLaren & Dyck, 2004). Many educated immigrant women sacrifice their own career goals for their families well-being, be that caring for the aged, supporting their husbands' careers or out of hope for a better future for their children in Canada (Creese, Dyck, & McLaren, 2008; Dion & Dion, 2001).

Research examining the relationship between race/ethnicity and domestic violence in Canada has focused primarily on aboriginal and non-aboriginal comparisons (Johnson & Dawson, 2010). Few studies have focused on immigrant women's experiences of family violence. Research at the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre at the University of New Brunswick has explored some aspects of the problem of family violence in the lives of immigrant women (Wachholz & Miedema, 2004), but little research has specifically considered the role that religion plays in the lives of abused immigrant women. Religious immigrant women in Canada, most of whom adhere to patriarchal religious traditions, find themselves at the intersection of local, national and international cultural, political and economic forces (Korteweg, 2008). Women's religious agency is of particular concern when confronted with situations of crisis, such as the onset of domestic violence. For many religious women, a first response to abuse by an intimate partner is to seek out help from their faith leader. The advice that is received will in large measure determine her next steps (Nason-Clark, 2004). Research has shown that in addition to maintaining ritual practices, immigrant religious groups often become centers of social support (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Warner & Wittner, 1998). Formal and informal services are provided by the networks of support within immigrant religious communities. What kind of support do these networks offer abused immigrant women?

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What is the link between programs for batterer intervention and matters of religious faith?

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As we struggle to understand the causes of wife abuse, and to work towards ending, or at the very least reducing this criminal behaviour, the collaboration of the sacred and the secular offers great potential. In terms of attempting to change the thinking and behaviour of violent religious men there are three components – faith, batterers' intervention programs and the criminal justice response to wife abuse – that appear to fit together like three-dimensional pieces of a puzzle. For men of faith who are mandated to attend a batterers' intervention program through the criminal justice system, it is likely that a faith-based program would be most effective in not only meeting their needs but also addressing any misguided religious beliefs and thinking that they may use as justification for their behaviour.

North American courts are increasingly referring perpetrators of wife abuse to batterer treatment or intervention programs. Healey, Smith et al. (1998) report that 80% of clients in batterer programs are referred by probation officers or by court mandate. Additionally, women of faith who are victims of abuse look for hope that the violence will end but they may also look for hope that there can be reconciliation of their relationship within the context of their faith community. They live in family situations that are not peaceful and safe yet their faith tradition highlights family unit and celebrates the divinely ordained nature of family life. In interviews with women of faith experiencing abuse, Boehm, Golec, Krahn and Smyth (1999) noted that many of these women spoke of their spiritual anguish in the midst of family violence. To offer hope to these women it is important that therapeutic staff can condemn the abuse they have suffered using the language of faith (Nason-Clark and Kroeger 2004).

Next, Shupe, Stacey and Hazlewood (1987:93-94) report that the "most ominous use of religion occurred when men freely admitted that they had been violent but that since they had been "saved" by Jesus Christ, all their sins and weaknesses, including explosive anger, were forgiven…these men simply wrote off their violence as an unimportant foible. Their faith, they said, excused them entirely." Based on this type of thinking, an essential feature of a faith-based intervention program is the ability of therapeutic staff, who are knowledgeable of sacred texts and various religious traditions, to counter such use of religion in this context. Men in a faith-based intervention program cannot justify their violent behaviour using the language of their faith tradition. Here, the rationale of any abusive man that his faith encourages or even justifies the violence he has meted out on his victim will not be tolerated. Perhaps the victim's perspective increasingly will be recognized and understood as men in intervention programs are required to think about their behaviour and to discuss it in circumstances where trained therapists and other batterers can confront their beliefs and attitudes using the language of faith. Some would regard the worldview of men of faith as support for their rationalization of patriarchal authority, under which their wives are called to be "submissive." In two secular Texas batterer intervention programs, researchers found that religious men appealed to the Bible to justify their violence. "The most common word they used was submit: She will not submit, she did not

submit, she should submit" (Shupe, Stacey et al. 1987). A treatment context where this type of belief can be confronted is very important.

For men of faith, the availability of an intervention program where they can share experiences with men who have a common worldview, where their faith will not be attacked, and where, importantly, they cannot justify their actions using the language of their faith tradition, is essential. It is necessary that abusive men of faith have their behavior condemned both by the leaders of their faith community and in a therapeutic program that understands the language of faith and its sacred texts.

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Are religious families more or less violent than other families?
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The realm of the spiritual lies at the heart of many people's daily living experiences. Another part of the context of daily living for million of women is, unfortunately, the reality of domestic abuse. On the face of it, it appears contradictory that religion and family violence would be present within the same context. But they are – rates of abuse in religious families are the same as they are in secular families. And there are unique issues when considering violence within families of faith.

Historically, when dealing with issues of wife abuse, Christian churches have engaged in woman-blaming and excused men who abuse their intimate partners (deJonge 1995; Ammons 1999; Miles 2002; Schnabl Schweitzer 2004). Reasons posited for this position include denial and patriarchal ideology, as well as issues of male headship and female submission. Similar justifications related to patriarchal and non-egalitarian marital role expectations have been used in the Islamic tradition (Haj-Yahia 1998; Phillips 2001). Relatedly, and based on this historical precedent, Ellison, Bartkowski and Anderson (1999) argue that male perpetrated abuse is more likely when men held more conservative beliefs about the inerrancy and authority of the Bible than their partners and when they attended services more frequently than their partners. Again and again throughout the literature on faith responses to wife abuse the issue of patriarchy arises (Brinkerhoff, Grandin et al. 1992; Beaman-Hall and Nason-Clark 1997b; Ammons 1999; Battaglia 2001; Barry 2003; Ware, Levitt and Bayer 2003). Groth (2000) discusses the resistance to and recovery from patriarchy amongst men involved in the movement to end domestic violence. He found that the men in his research utilized images of divinity and creation to counter the root causes of violence and its structures of evil.

But, as Battaglia (2001:32) notes "[O]verwhelming evidence points to the mutually reinforcing relationship between patriarchy and ecclesiastical establishments…. Despite these facts, the social scientific community has granted the issue of wife battering and religious affiliation scant attention." Yet, as mentioned previously, the "haven" of one's belief system and the support of one's faith community in times of crisis is crucial for many people. Relatedly, Unruh and Sider (2005) state: "The last fifteen years have seen a remarkable transition in public attitudes toward faith. Scholarship has slowly begun to make up for its neglect of the role of religion in society."

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In what ways are religious women more vulnerable when abused?

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While little is known about the relationship between religion and wife abuse (Brinkerhoff, Grandin and Lupri 1992; Knickmeyer, Levitt, Horne and Bayer 2003), when considering the primacy of victim safety there are several key points which require mentioning. First, Statistics Canada (2005) report that, in 2004, 12 percent of female victims turned to a clergy member for some form of support. Second, it is important to note that religion can and does contribute to silencing this issue. For example, a series of articles that appeared in the Lancaster County, PA *Intelligencer Journal* chronicle stories of abused Amish and Mennonite women whose abuse was ignored or tolerated by their church leaders and who were silenced and abandoned by their faith communities (Espenshade 2004a; Espenshade 2004b; Espenshade and Alexander 2004a; Espenshade and Alexander 2004b). Buxton (2000) discusses a similar scenario. He says that victims who find their way to the sanctuary seeking help will find a double-edged sword where the people of the church are loving and caring but the church is not a safe place to talk about problems of domestic violence; it is a taboo subject. Third, a major criticism of the role of religion in relation to family violence relates to the strong patriarchal ideology of conservative Christian and other fundamental faith traditions (Giblin 1999) which serves to 'keep women submissive' and may indeed act as a root cause of violence intertwined with other identified causes[1].

Finally, women staying in or returning to unsafe relationships because of their religious beliefs is also a difficult issue. Griffin and Maples (1997) suggest that abused Christian women are strongly influenced by their beliefs and value systems and these values may be a powerful force in their decision to remain in an abusive marriage where their safety and that of their children may be at risk. In her study of observant Jewish women victims, Lebovics (1998) found similar factors at work – the tremendous emphasis placed on family as a sacred institution and the woman's central position as matron of the home and helpmate to her husband. Thus, a family breakup represents a woman's failure to handle the expectations of her role. Religion can and does offer women hope and comfort when faced with adversity (Senter and Caldwell 2002), but it may also increase their risk of harm from an abusive spouse Knickmeyer, Levitt et al. 2003 (Knickmeyer, Levitt et al. 2003). Based on Karl Marx's notion of religion as the "opiate of the masses," Bonnycastle (2004) argues that religion may lead to subservience and the acceptance of unjust treatment. For women victims of domestic violence acceptance of their 'lot in life' may prove harmful or even fatal. While repentance and reconciliation can be important elements in the healing journey of both women victims and male perpetrators, they are not enough to change behaviour and thinking and to keep women safe. Women victims require a blend of what Nancy Nason-Clark calls the language of contemporary culture and the language of the spirit in terms of advice and support as they deal with this crisis.

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[1] Explanations for violence conceptualise the phenomenon in three different ways – as embodied in individuals, social circumstances, and social relationships. Of these three, researchers have identified social relationships as the most powerful conditioning factor on individual behavioural predispositions. For people of faith the social relationships found within their religious community have a great impact on beliefs and on behaviour.

Religious victims of abuse may experience difficulty receiving sufficient guidance and support because of conflicting advice provided by secular and religious professionals (Shannon-Lewy and Dull 2005). There are several reasons for this. First, the degree of ministers' adherence to fundamentalist religious beliefs and their gender may affect their understanding and definitions of wife abuse and attributions of responsibility (Gengler and Lee 2001). Next, secular sources often have little understanding of the importance of the victim's beliefs and may attribute her abuse to her religion that, they believe, reinforces passivity and acts as a detriment to effective confrontation of abuse (Horton and Williamson 1988; Beaman-Hall and Nason-Clark 1997; Nason-Clark 1997; Nason-Clark 2000a; Nason-Clark 2000c). Finally, faith leaders can uphold the beliefs of victims but, given their limited training in the area, may not have the understanding and resources to keep them safe (Martin 1989). While unintentional, inappropriate responses of faith leaders may cause harm to victims of abuse (Horne and Levitt 2003).

Ammons (1999) points to other difficulties. He states that just as the courts have been slow to recognize the illegality and inhumanity of spousal abuse, many religious communities have been slow to re-evaluate their traditions, to acknowledge their culpability in tolerating domestic violence, and to actively challenge the ideological assumptions that support violence against women within the belief structures of their communities.

But that tide is beginning to turn. Theologians and researchers are working to clarify notions of headship and submission (Kroeger and Beck 1996; Kroeger and Beck 1998; Kroeger and Nason-Clark 2001). Paradigmatic notions of masculinity and the roles of men in faith communities are being transformed so that there may be recovery from institutionalized male violence entrenched in patriarchy. Faith-based organizations in the United States are increasingly offering batterer intervention programs and in Canada secular agencies are considering the importance of spirituality in the lives of abusive men.[2]

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What is the role of faith in relation to hope and accountability in men who have acted abusively?

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Accountability is a dynamic term that refers not only to becoming accountable within the criminal justice system and to society—*taking active responsibility*, but also to fulfilling obligations toward those who have been victimized directly and indirectly—*performing remorse*. Accountability is a process, inferring action rather than just intention. In order to launch the necessary continuum of actions—from entrenched denial at one end toward full accountability at the other—there must be a constellation of interwoven responses that lead to the ultimate goal of becoming accountable. These responses begin within the criminal justice system and continue through the batterer intervention program and into the family context. According to Jory, Anderson and Greer (1997) accountability relies on challenging the abuser's sense of entitlement and getting him to rethink the meaning of respect at every stage of the intervention process.

Realistic hope-in-action, as it is humanly lived, is the overriding element contributing to effecting change in the men enrolled in faith-based batterer intervention programs. Roy, Turcott et al. (2005) identify the instillation of hope as a key therapeutic factor in groups for men who batter. This therapeutic value of hope is also identified by Bergin and Walsh (2005) who state that, particularly at the beginning of the therapeutic process, clients invest the therapist with the role of being 'an ambassador of hope."

But what is hope, and specifically what is hope-in-action? The diverse array of definitions, frameworks, models and characterizations make it difficult to arrive at a concise definition. Yet a common theme that links all of these approaches is that hope is intrinsically adaptive and positive (Babits 2001 in Bergin and Walsh 2005). The word hope appears frequently in a spiritual context. It is seen as an abiding Christian characteristic, along with faith and love, in the New Testament (Ai, Cascio, Santangelo and Evans-Campbell 2005). Thus hope, particularly linked with faith, engenders positive attitudes and serves as a potential proteciton against despair, giving up, failing to meet goals. Hope is a necessary motivator.

Hope signals a warrant for action—that action process, based on personal agency or determination, forming the bedrock of accountability. It helps to provide the 'why' for behavior. For men who have acted abusively, hope is not based on a hoped for 'thing,' but rather on a 'state of affairs,' that being the prospect of 'tomorrow being a better day,' leading to the outcome of change.

Becoming accountable is very much linked to hope. Without hope for a changed future, why bother? Being in a state of no hope, hopelessness, inhibits action. The nurturing of hope as an action process in men who have acted abusively is a key to changing their behavior. It is the carrot dangling in their vision and they can keep moving forward because of rays of hope that come both from within themselves and from those with whom they interact.

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Are there unique vulnerabilities and specific spiritual resources related to violent men in aboriginal communities?

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Within the last decade in Canada it has been acknowledged that the cultural differences of Aboriginal abusive men require culturally appropriate and responsive services (Zellerer 2003). These men are unlikely to respond to contemporary "Eurocanadian" treatment strategies.

According to Proulx and Perrault (2000:100) colonization has left Aboriginal people, as a whole, exposed to racism, exploitation and institutionalized abuse. Many young Aboriginal men in conflict with the law have thus been disconnected from their heritage – some because of being raised in residential schools, others because they were placed in non-native foster or adoptive homes, and some because they have been raised exclusively in urban "white" Eurocanadian society. Feeling no sense of place and no sense of people leads young Aboriginal men to despair and they seek solace in alcohol and drugs. The alcohol and drugs fuel sexual, physical and emotional violence in generation after generation – within families and in the wider community. The process of reconnection with their history assists in changing this cycle. Based on research in a Saskatchewan prison, Waldram (1994) argues that there is explicit therapeutic value in Aboriginal spiritual programs as they have a significant effect on the well-being of offenders. The focus in intervention therefore has to be not only on treatment but also on healing for these men, synthesizing aspects of contemporary treatment with traditional cultural and spiritual healing (Ellerby 2000).

An important example of incorporating culturally relevant materials and services in the intervention process is provided by several Western Canadian Aboriginal treatment programs. Not only do these programs respond to the spiritual needs of group participants but they also move away from any notion of retribution to focus on 'healing' the trauma suffered by Aboriginal men in many aspects of their lives.

Kiyoshk (2003) skilfully makes the case for the integration of spirituality into the Change of Seasons domestic violence treatment program for aboriginal men in western Canada.[3] In this program, every third session is a cultural activity (e.g. smudge, talking circle, sweatlodge purification, pipe ceremony, ceremonial dancing) that augments the psycho-educational group format. He argues that ritual and ceremony are integral to counselling in the aboriginal community as their culture has a strong spiritual basis. The key to his argument is that since the survival of First Nations' people has depended on a worldview that does not separate spirituality from everyday life, this characteristic, which has been reinforced over hundreds of years, is also what ensures success in counselling assaultive men.

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Is there a relationship between religious leaders and community agencies that respond to the needs of violated women and children?

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For women of faith who are victims of domestic violence, it is important that clergy and secular responders in a community build relationships of mutual trust, respect, and understanding so that clergy have confidence to refer victims to appropriate community agencies (shelters, physicians, counselors, mental health professionals), while responders in secular agencies understand the ways that clergy and other religious leaders can provide appropriate spiritual care and guidance. For example, clergy who have visited a battered women's shelter and have met the staff are more likely to refer a victim to such a shelter than those who are not acquainted with the staff or the facility. Similarly, secular responders may be confused by a victim's expression of her religious ideologies and may discourage her from seeking help from a religious leader when such help may be essential for healing. The references below provide understandings for secular responders of ways that clergy view domestic violence, while discussing relationships between religious leaders and community responders and the importance of referrals in the response to abuse.

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Are religious leaders trained to respond to abuse in the family context?

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The lack of formal training among clergy for addressing and responding to domestic violence prevents clergy from providing guidance, support, referrals, and counsel. Poorly or inadequately trained clergy may be tempted to seek to respond to the victims' needs without seeking additional help and resources; they may also provide advice that will place the victim in greater danger or that will prevent the victim from seeking help from secular agencies who are equipped to respond. The following references discuss a variety of issues with regard to the training of clergy, including a curriculum for training clergy and other religious leaders. The articles demonstrate that when adequately trained, clergy can effectively address domestic violence in the congregation, they are more likely to refer victims for help, and that they can see that the spiritual and social needs of victims are addressed appropriately in the congregational context.

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