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Combatting Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Islam: Muslim Religious Leaders as the Bridge
between Misinterpretation and Resolution

On an international scale, Islam is largely perceived as a religion condoning domestic abuse against women, particularly in the form of “wife beating.” Though gender-based violence is determined to exist in nearly all societies and for various reasons, there is a strong association between Islamic religious practice and the prevalence of domestic abuse against women in Muslim societies. In the Islamic practice of wife beating, the issue is most directly attributed to the Qur’anic verse 4:34, which appears to legitimize the practice of wife beating as an acceptable Islamic practice (Domestic Violence | WISE). On the other hand, this source remains challenged by a lack of Islamic legal framework for understanding intimate partner violence (IPV) and the various, contradictory significances of words and phrases found in the verse itself (Mohammad and Ibrahim 2010). In cases of domestic concerns, many Muslims seek out an imam in order assist them in settling their issues. Within their communities, not only are imams looked up to for spiritual leadership and guidance, imams are readily called up to counsel, resolve, and mediate conflicts, amongst which domestic abuse is commonplace (Siddiqui, 2014). As religious leaders in Islam, imams serve an integral purpose in managing Muslim communities, as their obligations to the community surpass those of solely leading prayer and services and involve more integral roles such as those of mentors and mediators. In their roles as mediators of conflict within

Muslim communities, imams can substantially contribute to the alleviation of IPV in Muslim society and the restoration of Islam's positive image of peace, mercy and equality.

This paper provides evidence from initiatives taken by various Islamic religious leaders (imams) in North America to demonstrate their potential in prohibiting the practice of IPV in Muslim communities. In the paper, the foundations for legitimization of IPV in Muslim societies, prevalence of IPV in Muslim communities, the role of the imam in Islam, and the various applicable processes of mediation which imams actualize or are suggested to actualize in engaging in cases of domestic abuse within their communities are explored. Substantial empirical evidence is presented to illustrate the constructive role of imams as the critical link between faltering misinterpretation and insufficient legal framework for dealing with IPV and its treatment in citing various examples of mediation efforts from imams in North America. To draw upon foundational findings regarding the pressing issue of domestic abuse in Islam, empirical findings from Muslim societies in North America are analyzed in order to strengthen the proposed claim. Furthermore, the findings presented in this paper provide implications for research, practice, and policy in characterizing and treating IPV as a trans-cultural form of gender-based violence.

In order to take a closer look into the issue of IPV within Muslim society, this paper will provide an analysis of endeavors taken on by Islamic religious leaders in Muslim minority communities in the Western hemisphere. These examples illustrate concrete, though developing efforts in structuring the involvement of imams in mediating domestic abuse within their communities. Statistics on IPV in America (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2007) based on continuous data sets, shows that one in four women annually experience serious assault by their intimate partners, with only one-seventh of the cases coming to the attention of the police

(Mohammad and Ibrahim 2010). To draw on this emergence of social change advocacy that has been modeled by shelter systems (Schechter 1982), mosques provide a direct and even favorable source of counseling for IPV that can also contribute to changing Islamic religio-cultural ideas that support men's domination of women. It is useful to focus on these Muslim minority communities in North America as they operate in a context in which there is a legal framework for dealing with cases of domestic abuse, despite low cases of reporting. In some cases, guidelines are established for balancing the role of mediation practiced by imams in respect to professional guidelines. Overall, this paper is to illustrate the *potential* which imams, as leaders in Muslim communities, have in combatting IPV in Islam.

In addressing the issue of gender-based violence in Islam, it is crucial to determine precisely what is meant by domestic violence (DV) and what is meant by intimate partner violence (IPV). Used often to characterize the violent experiences of partners in domestic settings, DV is in fact, most accurately, a general term for the various configurations of domestic violence or abusive behaviors experienced. Domestic violence includes violence or abuse by a husband against a wife violence by a wife against a husband, a child against a parent, parent against a child (commonly referred to as child abuse), sibling abuse, and abuse of the elderly (Hegarty et al., 2000). Using the "Power and Control Wheel" diagram for guidance, DV can be defined as a behavioral pattern manifested in any relationship that is ultimately used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner, a broader definition of DV suggested by the National Domestic Violence Hotline (USA) ("Abuse Defined). On the other hand, in regards to contemporary understandings of domestic violence, it appears that it is no longer considered scientifically or ethically acceptable to speak of domestic violence without specifying the type of partner violence to which one refers (Johnson, 2008).

Although DV is a broader term used to address the coercive patterns of abuse experienced in domestic setting, intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to a more specific configuration of intimate (domestic) violence. In the literature, IPV specifically refers to the domestic abuse of an intimate partner against another, and in Islam, partners are can only refer to marital partners as all other intimate relationships are forbidden outside of marriage (Al-Qaradawi, 1982) Based on a multitude of definitions found in literature, IPV can be best defined as abuse in the form of physical, nonphysical or sexual coercion that takes place in the context of a close relationship between partners or ex-partners that results in (or has the potential to result in) injury, harm, or death, and is shaped by situation, society, relationship, and culture (Mohamad and Ibrahim 2010). IPV, as opposed to a general reference to DV, provides a more comprehensive understanding of violence which occurs between partners, incorporating factors beyond the direct, physical consequences that victims endure as well as the possibility of female-perpetrated abuse. Research conducted in the United States demonstrates that IPV takes hold as the most prevalent form of interpersonal violence (Mohammad and Ibrahim, 2010).

Understanding IPV and its prevalence in society requires recognizing the vast spectrum of abuse or violence that it encompasses. In his *Typology of Domestic Violence*, Michael Johnson distinguishes between four types of IPV that are defined according to the extent to which the perpetrator and his or her partner use violence in order to attempt to control the relationship. Johnson argues that intimate terrorism is what is usually meant by domestic violence. The control sought in intimate terrorism is general and long term, and despite that each particular act of violence may appear to have short-term, specific goals, it is embedded in a larger pattern of power and control that permeates the relationship (Johnson 2008). With that said, it is crucial to consider that intimate terrorism is in fact perpetrated almost entirely by men (Johnson 2008). In

respect to the IPV seen in Muslim communities, Islamic stipulations against homosexuality in religious decree and thus the prevalence of heterosexual marriage turns the attention to the scope of IPV in Muslim communities focused on male perpetrators against female victims (Spilsbury 2012). Although the incorporation of homosexual intimate relationships is vital to discourse regarding IPV, the cultural context for this paper warrants a hetero-normative focus. For the sake of this paper, in the context of spousal abuse experienced within Muslim communities, IPV will refer to the experiences of female victims brought on by the violence or abuse of an intimate male spouse. More specifically, this paper will turn to address IPV in Muslim societies in the form of wife beating due to the nature of religious influence that is at play in the manifestation of this form of violence in Muslim societies.

Although IPV is recognized as a world phenomenon, very little research reflects a comprehensive understanding of IPV's prevalence in Muslim communities in the West. On the other hand, research which has been collected attempts to gather information regarding which women experience such abuse and the types of abuse which they experience as well. In gathering this information, Muslims religious institutions (i.e. mosques), Muslim religious leaders, as well as domestic violence organizations have been useful. A survey of sixty-three Muslim leaders showed that 10% of Muslims experienced physical abuse in their homes (Alkhateeb 1999). Quantitative and qualitative interviews conducted with the executive directors of nine domestic violence organizations serving significant numbers of Muslim women found that of the 1,962 total Muslim women served annually, the average age was 32-years-old, and 85% were of immigrant background (Alkhateeb 2010). The women experienced various forms of domestic violence including 82% emotional or verbal abuse, 65% financial abuse, 49% spiritual abuse, 74% physical abuse, and 30% sexual abuse. In a study of 190 Muslims seeking mental health

counseling in Northern Virginia, 41% experienced domestic violence in the form of verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Victims were 71% adult females, 12% adult males, and 16% children. 60% of all clients experienced verbal or psychological abuse in their lifetime, 50% physical abuse, 14% sexual abuse, and 3% reported having a relative killed (Abugideiri 2007).

What is presented here is quite a compelling array of information regarding the prevalence of IPV in Muslim minority communities in the West, all which validate the existence of IPV in these communities, especially in cases of physical or emotional abuse and those in which victims are young-adult immigrant women.

Based on this research, it is critical to examine the ways in which Muslim religious institutions play roles in dealing with the problem of IPV within Muslim communities. Research conducted shows that there is a significant reliance of members on the religious centers to which they belong as they navigate daily life matters and even alarming problems such as the prevalence of IPV which may have taken over their lives. While practitioners pose as a useful source in the treatment of IPV, there remains a need to recognize the integral role that Muslim scholars, imams, and leaders can play in the prevention or intervention of cases of wife beating, as they are readily called upon in order to partake in the decision-making process of such issues (Ibrahim 2001 and Potter 2007). In one study, although both Christian and Muslim women described patriarchal religious experiences, Muslim women described how clerics and other members of the mosques employed a more intervening and proactive perspective about intimate partner abuse (Alkhateeb, 1999 and Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001). This proves to be a contrast to previous research on battered Muslim women, which determined that battered Muslim women's support from clergy was similar to the responses by Christian clergy to battered Christian women (Alkhateeb, 1999 and Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001). In addition, Muslim women reported positive

support from clergy, although the support was paternalistic and patriarchal in nature regarding how the Islamic mosques and clerics handle domestic abuse among their followers (Potter 2007). A study of 22 mosques in New York found that 96% of the participants perceived the imam as a counselor, and 74% had sought counseling from imams for safety issues. (Abu-Ras and Gheith 2006). This turn to Islamic clergy is at the center of this paper's focus as it presents a significant potential in determining the way that IPV is actualized in Muslim societies as it is dealt with internally, inside religious and cultural practices that otherwise support intimate partner violence.

In a community in which it is very important to initiate and end relationships according to religious tradition, it is important to understand how to treat the problems which arise along the way in maintaining these relationships and how or if religious tradition deals with them. Religious beliefs, in general, play a significant part in determining not only the way people live, but their choices, and their social lives as well (Mohammad and Ibrahim, 2010). In the case of patriarchal societies, male perpetrators who hold strong theological beliefs play a direct role in the way violence plays out in their intimate relationship. In other words, this allows for perpetrators to misuse their faith as a means of asserting power and control over their spouse, a defining characteristic of IPV. Such male perpetrators see to an ideology of male supremacy perpetuated by their cultures of origin, in which women are given inferior status and/or women are viewed as male property (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001). Such research can be used to explain the striking prevalence of IPV experienced by immigrant, young-adult women in Muslim minority communities in the United States, where different cultural norms come into play. This is complicated by the religious decree found in the Qur'an itself which rejects any claims of either men or women being greater than the other: "Whosoever does right whether male or female and is a believer, Allah shall quicken with good life and Allah shall pay recompense in

proportion to the best of what they do” (16: 97). This goes to show that texts may be misinterpreted and rationalized by these male perpetrators to justify their behavior (UNIFEM, 2001). Even more so, they may be utilized to induce shame, guilt, and distress in their victims (FaithTrust Institute [FTI], 2007).

While many factors may be at play in contribution to IPV, including marital conflict-fights, tension, and other struggles, marital instability-divorces or separations, dominance and control of the relationship by one partner over the other, economic stress, unhealthy family relationships and interactions, (Intimate Partner Violence: Risk and Protective Factors) religious influences can play a substantial role in the perpetration of IPV in Muslim communities. Although male supremacy and the interpretation of religious texts can provide dangerous circumstances for IPV, the role of religious leaders can influence the perpetration of IPV. The attitudes of religious leaders can ultimately exacerbate violence within families in their reluctance to deal with violence against women in their communities (Pyles, 2007). This can prove to be the case especially when the perpetrators are prominent members of the community (FTI, 2007). Imam Mohamed Kamal Mostafa in Spain, the author of book 'The Woman in Islam,' that claims that Muslim men have the God-given right to hit their wives, has been sued out of concern over the rights of immigrant women as he writes that if a wife disobeys her husband, he should reason with her and if she disobeys then, he may hit her (Socolovsky 2003). Though this contemporary example demonstrates an instance in which an Islamic religious leader pursued his own agenda, it documents the caliber of religious influence on daily life practices, one met with drastic legal repercussion from Spanish authority. In general, the communities' shared racial, national, cultural or religious identities may be summoned by perpetrators to justify violence towards women and rationalize noninterference by the state (UNIFEM, 2001). For this reason, it

is useful to consider the endeavors of imams in Muslim minority communities in the Western Hemisphere, as their community dynamics are a microcosm of larger Muslim society.

In Islam, unlike in many other religious traditions, the basic guidelines for marital dynamics are explicitly outlined in the Qur'an:

Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand (Qur'an 4:34).

It is this particular verse which gives rise to misinterpretation in condoning the practice of wife beating in Islam. Scholars from the Global Muslim Women's Shura Council have noted, "while no other passages (in the Qur'an) support the 'beating' interpretation of 4:34, there are other passages that support the 'distancing' or 'going away from' meaning." As a result, many scholars translate and interpret 4:34 in the following way: "But those whose resistance you fear, then admonish and abandon them in their sleeping place, then go away from them" (Domestic Violence | WISE). Contrary to the interpretations which advocate for beating or chastising one's wife, it is narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "The most perfect of believers in belief is the best of them in character. The best of you are those who are the best to their women," and in another tradition, "The best among you are those who are kindest to their wives," (Islam & Domestic Violence). Further Qur'anic evidence reinforces this passivity of man towards his wife: "Live with them in kindness; even if you dislike them, perhaps you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good" (Quran, 4:19). The words largely responsible

for the misinterpretation of this Qur'anic verse are “daraba” or “beat” and “nushuz” or “disobedience” that are translated as such out of context here (Mohammad and Ibrahim 2010).

Correct interpretations of the words daraba and nushuz are in agreement with the general notions of non-violence in marital relationships in the Qur'an. For example, Chapter 30, Verse 21 states:

"And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect" (Domestic Violence | WISE).

For English speakers, this lack of accurate translation further complicates the Islamic position taken on IPV based on this verse.

To complicate matters even more, very little research has been done regarding the Islamic legal position on IPV. On the other hand, in utilizing the Qur'an, Sunnah, and Islamic legal pronouncements, a position can be determined. In this case, the attitude which Islam takes on towards women, particularly in their treatment as wives, is a necessary part of this deductive process. Since God created both male and female from a single, primordial soul, the married couple must share the quintessential qualities of humankind: compassion, mercy, tenderness, dignity and honor, as described in the opening chapter of An-Nisa, an entire chapter dedicated to women (Kabbani and Ziad, 2011). The Qur'an itself indicates that marriage is “a sharing between two halves of society and that its objectives, besides perpetuating human life, are emotional well-being and spiritual harmony” (Mohammad and Ibrahim, 2010). In terms of Sunnah or Prophetic tradition, it has been clearly established that the Prophet Muhammad never struck any of his wives, despite how controversial of circumstances they may have found themselves in. Even in light of a wife's shortcomings, the Prophet advised that one still remain positive, as has been narrated in one such hadith:

“It was narrated from Umm Salamah (RA) that she brought some food in a dish of hers to Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) & his Companions, then Aishah (RA) came, wrapped up in a garment, with a stone pestle and broke the dish. The Prophet (PBUH) gathered the broken pieces of the dish and said (to his Companions), “Eat; your mother got jealous,” twice. Allah’s Messenger (PBUH) took the dish of Aishah (RA) and sent it to Umm Salamah (RA) and he gave the dish of Umm Salamah (RA) to Aishah (RA)” (Hadith No. 3408, Book of Kind Treatment of Women, Sunan An-Nasa’i, Vol. 4).

In addition, it is important that 4:34 be understood in reference to pre-Islamic pagan society in which women lacked no rights and to which the Qur’an emerged as a response. During these times, a wife’s alleged misbehavior often resulted in a brutal beating, isolation, or starvation and sometimes even death, yet men were rarely held accountable for their actions against their spouses (Kabbani and Ziad, 2011). The Qur’an brought a transformative message of mercy and spiritual equality in which Muslims were taught that there is no distinction between a Muslim man and woman in faith in contrast to a society that had lack such a conception of equal rights (Kabbani and Ziad, 2011). In deducing an Islamic legal position on IPV, it can be asserted that the current position taken is one that does not condone but rather prohibits any and all violence against women. Both classical and contemporary Muslim scholars view all forms of IPV specifically as forms of oppression, a condition not condoned by Islam (Mohammad and Ibrahim, 2010). Consistent with these finding, certain contemporary Muslim scholars such as Shaykh M. Hish Kabbani and Dr. Homayra Ziad, Ph. D., whose research is drawn upon in this paper, have issued fatwas (legal pronouncements) which directly prohibit domestic violence in Islam. Overall, it remains clear that, in Islam, IPV is a forbidden act and or behavior.

In contemporary society, especially in Western countries, the role of the imam has evolved to surpass the solely the role of prayer leaders, marriage legitimizers or burial conductors. In their roles as leaders in their communities and in their intimate engagement with certain Muslim populations, they can play central roles in promoting social change. This is due to the fact that imams of mosques have extensive opportunities to closely interact with everyday Muslim people—to address them, as during the Friday congregational prayers, and to participate in their occasions of joy and sorrow, and this is why they can play an effective role in social reform (The American Muslim [TAM]). On the other hand, the issue that arises in what seems to be a direct implication of the imam's role is their lack of professional training in generating social change as well as a fully realized understanding of the mosque as an institution established for far more engagement than religious service. To note, there are ten conditions of an imam: (1) mature, (2) male, (3) of sound mind, (4) a Muslim, (5) of good character, (6) reciter of Qur'an (indicates knowledge about its interpretation and recitation) (7) faqih (expert in Islamic jurisprudence) regarding what is required of him in his salat, (8) Capable of performing the salat the way it is supposed to be done, (9) having an eloquent tongue (10) and in the case of Jumu'a (ritual Friday noon prayer and sermon) free and living in the place (As-Sufi, 2004). Wariz Mazhari, a madrasa graduate, based on his experience in Indian imam training and attendance, identifies the need for the mosque to regain its role as “a place where education is imparted, social welfare schemes are implemented, and discussion and dialogue on a range of social issues takes place in a planned and well-organised manner” (The American Muslim [TAM]). In the Western world, certain Islamic organizations and places of worship have recognized this need to educate imams on pervasive issues such as IPV, which they encounter in their communities, in a way that they can be addressed as they are accessible and influential forms of change.

In light of a lack of professional training as a part of the clergy certification process, there has been a push for the education of imam in the West regarding issues Muslims face in their daily lives, particularly in the domestic sphere. In the Muslim minority community, while practitioners can be useful in developing an informed understanding of IPV, imams can play critical roles in the education and prevention of the practice of wife beating. The first part of this process is generating an increasing awareness of the cultural contexts in which IPV occurs as a way of improving the health and wellbeing of IPV victims (Hassouneh-Phillips, 2001). An effective resolution for issues of IPV in Muslim communities from a religious perspective would be to see to culmination of services initiated by their Muslim community leaders. This paper, in addressing the issue of IPV takes on a different lens in which IPV is viewed within a specific religious and cultural context and is explored for its foundations in religion (FTI, 2007). While Islam does not present any circumstances for sanctioning IPV, imams can provide resources for mediation that are then reinforced by advocacy through sermons and similar services.

Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid, an American Muslim leader and president of Sound Vision, has long recognized this need for imams to recognize the issue of IPV in their communities and combat it upon doing so. In his work, he has gathered the following prescriptions for imams: (1) Listening to the Community, (2) Learning about the Problem, (3) Be proactive about domestic violence, (4) Understand that this is not a personal matter, (5) Prepare your community for zero tolerance, (6) Open up the mosque or Islamic center for abused women, (7) Make yourself available (8) Establish a social services system or committee, (9) Set up support groups, (10) Make Dua (collective prayer) (Malik-Mujahid, 2014). It is such a synthesis of efforts that serves as the framework for the contemporary work which is undergone in mosques in the United States alone. Imam Abdul Malik understands that there is a substantial amount of pressure on imams to

deal with issues like domestic violence, and although most of them have no proper training in such crucial areas, all imams must learn the basics of domestic violence and how to deal with it, as a result of which he has created the presented guidelines (Malik-Mujahid, 2014). This integration of understanding, service, and advocacy has been applied in various Islamic centers in the United States. As a part of its strategic assistance, emerging from Bosnia Task Force USA which got rape declared a war crime and organized the largest Muslim rally in America, Sound Vision has expanded, under the leadership of Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid to initiate 27 Muslim organizations fighting domestic violence (Sound Vision). It is this form of work that mirrors the caliber to which IPV ought to be addressed in Muslim minority communities and the capability of religion, specifically religious leaders, to be used as a task force for combatting IPV in Islam.

As a response to the social needs of the Muslim minority communities in the Western Hemisphere, several Islamic centers have taken action against domestic abuse, working based on the premise that IPV is not tolerated by Islamic practice. Amongst those initiatives, several have been inaugurated in the United States. In this paper, explore these initiatives in order to highlight these efforts as models for combating the issue of domestic violence in Islam. More specifically, I look into these programs in order to determine ways for imams in Muslim communities to become involved as part of an ongoing synthesis of efforts towards educating and treating IPV in this context. These initiatives provide examples of understanding, ownership, proactivity, and engagement that otherwise come with the role of an Islamic religious leader (refer to page 12).

This year, the Islamic Social Services Association Inc. (Islamic Social Services Association [ISSA]) compiled and developed a groundbreaking professional guide for Canadian imams. While this guide establishes the professional grounds for mediation that imams engage in in providing assistance to Muslim members, recognizing their integral role in the reconciliation

of such issues, it showcases how prevention and intervention efforts on the part of imams as leaders of religious institutions are different and perhaps more accessible in the West. This accessibility may be attributed to Congress' renewal of the Act on Violence Against Women in October 2002, coupled with programs and organizations that seek to eradicate domestic abuse and seek to promote health and wellbeing (Ahmed, 2014). In addition, they have compiled a booklet "Helping Victims of Domestic Abuse: A Guide for Imams and Community Leaders" which places an additional, effective layer of advocacy and prevention in the hands of imams. ISSA encourages every imam to speak in their weekly sermons against victim blaming and the emotional, verbal, spiritual, physical, and sexual forms of abuse regularly and further encourages imams to show their commitment to combatting domestic violence by signing on to a zero tolerance policy regarding acts of domestic violence (ISSA). Under the leadership of imams, the Muslim community can develop a coordinated response to IPV which includes resources (provided in the guideline and handbook) as well as an understanding of the promotion of health, wellbeing, and tranquility that is essential to Islam (ISSA). Additionally, as a part of this response, the process of mediation in Islam, a role taken on by imams, is laid out.

As a part of its collective initiative, ISSA recognizes the benefits of mediation as a method of intervention in IPV in Muslim communities. ISSA defines mediation in the following way:

Mediation is a process provided by a neutral third party to assist two or more parties to resolve their dispute and reach a voluntary settlement. The neutral party does not make a decision. The parties may terminate the process at any time. Parties to mediation meet privately with the mediator to resolve their dispute on their own terms, rather than a judge or arbitrator making a decision after hearing evidence. Mediation is confidential

and without prejudice and cannot be used in court. The parties are encouraged to seek independent legal advice. Where a voluntary settlement is achieved, it only becomes binding when the parties have concluded a settlement agreement (Siddiqui, 2014).

As mediators dealing with the pressing issue of IPV, imams can provide a source of resolution from a religious perspective that can be used alongside criminal sanctions (i.e. court action). It is often found that mediation, as a part of the civil dispute process, is required prior to a trial in which parties have up to 30 days to select their mediator (Siddiqui, 2014). While imams may be required to document the process for legal purposes, their religious counsel can prove to be instrumental by individuals who may be misusing religion as a source of power and control over their partners or for partners who are victimized by this misuse (refer to page 7).

Alongside ISAA's endeavors, the Rahmaa Institute (an organization studying issues facing Muslims in North America) takes into account in outlining the process of mediation in Islam in their efforts in dealing with IPV. Recognizing that the role of mediation falls on the imam, the Institute illustrates the source of mediation as a useful tool in reconciling matters in the domestic sphere as derived from Qur'an and Sunnah. The basis for this is derived from the same chapter of the Qur'an, a verse after 4:34. The following is stated:

If ye fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation: For Allah hath full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things (Qur'an 4:35).

Taking on an Islamic adaptation to the definition of mediation determined by ISAA, the Rahmaa Institute determines Islamic mediation to be based on the following principles: fair process with equal representation from each side, process of collaborative problem solving between those in dispute, effort to aim for a 'win/win' situation which is acceptable to all parties, focus on the

future, with emphasis on rebuilding relationships or recognizing that agreeing to disagree is also acceptable but in a civilized manner, respect for all concerned must be in the forefront of all discussions and dealing, belief that acknowledging feelings as well as facts allows participants to let go of their anger and move forward, and re-affirming the belief that Allah is watching over everything (“Islamic Mediation”). This is affirmed by the Prophet’s encouragement to the following: thinking on a common sense level which is beneficial to all, stepping back, looking inwards, coming up with practical solutions, rebuilding relationships, and reaching individual agreements (“Islamic Mediation”). By facilitating the grounds for mediation in a case of IPV, imams can function within the parameters of religious influence in order to facilitate reconciliation in a way that develops bond that otherwise may have not existed due to perpetration and in a way in which all parties’ concerns are heard. The idea here is that there is a conversation going about the expectations in a relationship amongst spouses in Islam, one that stems from tolerance and respect and feeds into the community as a whole.

In respect to the guidelines set up for mediation as a source of engagement by imams in the education and treatment of IPV in Muslim communities, imams can be useful in generating social change in the way IPV is perceived and preventing its actualization. The Islamic Association of Collin County and The Muslim Center for Human Services provides examples of synthesized efforts to educate Muslim communities about IPV and to work towards its elimination. The Islamic Association of Collin County works under the notion that in order to stop IPV in Muslim communities, imams (and scholars) must be involved. The Social Services Committee (SSC) is dedicated to providing services in response to the social needs of the Muslim communities of Northern Dallas, working with other center such as the Muslim Community Center for Human Services (MCCHS) in order to secure help for community

members seeking assistance in domestic issues (“Islamic Association of Collin County”). The SSC is based on a referral and mediation based program assisting in cases of IPV alongside other social issues (“Islamic Association of Collin County”). On the other hand, Muslim Community Center for Human Services (MCCHS) “Roshni” Domestic violence program’s main objective is to promote healthy and harmonious family relationships in the Asian, Middle Eastern, and African immigrant communities in providing the following: community education, culture-sensitive peer counseling, professional counseling, case management, client advocacy, information on rights, how to seek help and victim compensation (Ahmed, 2009). MCCHS’s Domestic Violence January 2009 Report indicates that 38% of the help provided by the center was for “domestic abuse” (Ahmed, 2009). While these two examples provide overarching examples of the Islamic Center’s institution-wide initiatives, they present the grounds for significant imam involvement as they are the leaders of these centers. As leaders of such socially proactive Islamic centers, imams are able to instill a prohibition of IPV, preventing its proliferation in the name of Islam, and moving forward in overseeing services that provide Muslim community members the tangible resources they need to regain their equality momentum, particularly for immigrant Muslim populations that are at high risk for IPV (refer to page 6).

In understanding and treating IPV, it can be concluded that various factors come into play in the manifestation of this form of gender-based violence. In education and treatment, research suggests that religious influences can play an integral role in preventing the perpetration of violence against women. In Islam, this can be taken into account in dispelling the notion that Islam is a religion which condones wife beating, a form of intimate terrorism that falls under IPV. This paper demonstrates how imams come into play in their roles as mediators within their

Muslim communities to bridge the gap between misinterpretation surrounding the Islamic position on IPV and its prevention. Based on the exploration of the supposed legitimization of IPV in Islam, through religious texts, laws, and contemporary views of Muslim scholars, it can be understood that Islam itself does not condone this form of violence. Though much weight has been placed on verse 4:34, its contextual deliberation ultimately reveals a different, non-violent implication, analogous to Prophetic tradition. It is safe to postulate that the prevalence of IPV in Muslim communities can be attributed to ignorance of authentic Islamic law and practice, an issue that imams can regularly engage with in their roles as leaders and counsels in their communities. In the Western Hemisphere, where there is a specific legal framework for dealing with domestic abuse, it is necessary to analyze the endeavors taken up by imams in Muslim minority communities to demonstrate Islamic religious leaders' potential in preventing abuse against women in Islam. As they take into consideration the correct understanding of religious texts and law and are sought after in mediating affairs in the domestic sphere, imams present efficient IPV treatment models which can be utilized outside of Muslim communities in recognizing the influences of religion and other delicate factors that come into play in the manifestation and treatment of IPV.

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