

New Resource Intends to Reach Hurting Hispanic Men, Women and Families

Moira Gaul, M.P.H. | April 8, 2014.

Grieving from abortion is an issue that Hispanic men and women living in the U.S. face and will grapple with for generations to come. *Cambiado* is a needed resource to provide assistance and lead towards healing.

Michaelene Fredenburg, founder of the Abortion Changes You (ACY) outreach (www.abortionchangesyou.com) and president of Life Perspectives based in San Diego, California, announced the release of the new after-abortion healing resource, *Cambiado* (or *Changed*), last month at the annual Heartbeat International pregnancy resource center conference in Charleston, South Carolina. Fredenburg and her team worked with a team of native Spanish speakers and translators to develop the pocket resource/booklet specifically geared towards Hispanic men, women, family members and friends searching for aid with unresolved grief and loss following an abortion. She states that it “invites men and women into a safe place to begin processing their abortion experience.”

The *Cambiado* pocket resource is the latest of the ACY resources and is an abbreviated form of Fredenburg’s book, *Changed: Making Sense of Your Own or a Loved One’s Abortion Experience* (2008, Perspectives, San Diego). Both the book and pocket resource begin with a compilation of stories expressing various abortion experiences encountered by women and or other people involved through a relationship with a woman who had an abortion.

Citing the statistic that at current rates one in three women will have an abortion by age 45, Fredenburg highlights the need for practical outreach to women as well as other individuals who have been affected by an abortion, including fathers, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and friends. The inclusive approach provides cohesion and synergy in the healing process and sheds light on the ripple effects an abortion can have on those involved both directly and indirectly.

The booklet progresses to invite the reader into a model of “Healing Pathways” developed with the help of Dr. Gary Strauss, a licensed psychologist and author who has been a professor of psychology at Biola University in California for over 40 years.

Fredenburg explains that therapists and counselors utilizing her longer version book as a guide requested a distilled version to give to patients and clients to help initiate the process of healing. She states, “The hope is that the booklet can help clients to begin healing earlier. It is an ideal size to discreetly tuck into a purse or pocket while big enough to tell the personal stories of men and women and briefly walk through the first few Healing Pathways.”

At the heart of *Cambiado* and ACY resources is the desire to assist those experiencing disenfranchised grief and/or complicated grief. Disenfranchised grief has been described by Fredenburg elsewhere and involves a process during which one is not able to have their grief fully affirmed because it is not culturally acknowledged or fully recognized as a valid source of loss.(1) Loss from elective abortion is not well accepted by major psychological professional bodies in the U.S., nor is it well recognized socially, and as such the outreach and access to resources to help people process abortion-associated grief and trauma remain an unmet need. Without affirmation of significant loss, a healthy grieving process cannot begin and recovery cannot progress. Complicated grief involves becoming “stuck” in grief which can be long lasting and so severe that it impairs a return to one’s life.

Due to deeply rooted religious and culturally held beliefs, Hispanics living in the U.S. are particularly at risk for disenfranchised and complicated grief following abortion experiences.

Hispanic women accounted for 25 percent of all U.S. abortions in 2008 according to the Guttmacher Institute.(2) This equates to a disproportionate rate and overrepresentation of Hispanic women aborting given that Hispanics make up just 16.3 percent of the U.S. population (by ethnicity) according to 2010 U.S. Census data.(3) Similar to overall national abortion rate trends, the abortion rate declined in Hispanic women from 2000 to 2008 by 14.3 percent (second only to African American women with an abortion rate decline of 18.4 percent during the same time period).(4)

The majority of the population from Latin America identifies as being Christian with 72 percent of the populace (Caribbean included) reporting Roman Catholicism as their primary religious affiliation.(5, 6) At least half of Hispanics living in the U.S. identify as Roman Catholic, and nearly half of U.S. Catholics under the age of 40 are Hispanic.(7)

Since the national religion of the majority of countries of origin for Hispanics is Roman Catholic and the belief that human life should be protected at conception is a tenet of Catholic teaching, it is a commonly held belief by foreign-born Hispanics that human life begins at conception and is sacred given biblical teaching that humans are created in the image of God.

Accordingly, foreign-born Latino Catholics in the U.S. are more likely to be against abortion in all/most cases than the general U.S. public. (These percentages vary within age groups and decline with each subsequent generation born in the U.S.)(8) Hispanic women and men who have gone through an abortion experience could be viewed as being at higher risk for disenfranchised grief given that the overarching U.S. professional medical and mental health cultures do not embrace grief and loss from a single elective abortion to the same extent that their cultures of origin would. Their potential emotional and psychological responses to the loss of life would not slot into models which do not recognize the loss as real.

Limited English proficiency is also a factor given that specialized after-abortion outreach in the U.S. is more limited for Spanish-speaking-only men and women than for English speakers/readers. The language barrier adds another layer of difficulty to access appropriate support and care. Such limited access to appropriate support and resources has the potential to increase isolation for an individual following an abortion experience. In addition, a lack of appropriate care and intervention when needed could affect the occurrence and perpetuation of associated complicated grief following an abortion experience.

Fredenburg’s hope is that *Cambiado* (and *Changed*) can serve as stepping stones to assist men and women in healing sooner. QR codes to more information and resources

throughout the booklets assist readers in going deeper if they would like.

While feedback is pending for *Cambiado*, the booklet *Changed* in English has met with positive reviews from therapists and counselors making it available to clients in over 20 states since its release last September.

Fredenburg and Dr. Strauss acknowledge that *Cambiado*, as with all of the other ACY resources, is not meant to replace professional counseling, and information is provided to connect readers to professional resources, specialized support and hotlines.

Fredenburg's ACY has further increased its outreach to Hispanic men and women with the abortionchangesyou.es website now available entirely in Spanish. It is described as an "interactive healing website providing men, women, family members and friends an anonymous place to start as well as bridge to more resources when they are ready." The site also provides a "Help Locator" for area-specific resources and additional tools to find support.

Moira Gaul is an Associate Scholar at Charlotte Lozier Institute.

Footnotes:

1. Fredenburg, M., Gaul, M. Stewart, L. R. and Strauss, G. (2011) *Grief and Abortion: Creating A Safe Place to Heal*. San Diego: Perspectives.
2. "Characteristics of U.S. Abortion Patients, 2008," Alan Guttmacher Institute, March 2014, at <http://www.alanguttmacher.org/pubs/US-AbortionPatients.pdf>.
3. "The Hispanic Population: 2010," Census 2010 Brief, March 2014 at <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf>.
4. "Changes in Abortion Rates between 2000 and 2008 and Lifetime Incidence of Abortion," *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 117(6): 1358-1366, June 2011.
5. "The Global Religious Landscape: Christians," Pew Research Center, March 2014 at <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-christians/>
6. "The Global Catholic Population," Pew Research Center, March 2014 at <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/02/13/the-global-catholic-population/>
7. "U.S. Catholics: Key Data from Pew Research," Pew Research Center, March 2014 at <http://www.pewresearch.org/key-data-points/u-s-catholics-key-data-from-pew-research/>
8. "When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity," Pew Research Center, March 2014 at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/04/v-politics-values-and-religion/>

Disclosure: Moira Gaul contributed to the ACY resource, *Grief and Abortion: Creating a Safe Place to Heal* (2011, Perspectives, San Diego.)



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