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# Beyond machismo : a theoretical exploration of domestic violence in Latino men

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Daniela Sanchez  
Beyond Machismo: A Theoretical  
Exploration of Domestic Violence in  
Latino Men

### **ABSTRACT**

This theoretical thesis explores psychodynamic explanations for differing rates of domestic violence (DV) between Latino men born in the U.S. and Latino men who immigrated to the U.S. This study specifically focuses on DV in the form of intimate terrorism. Critical race theory and Klein's object relations theory are applied to Dr. Christauria G. Welland's case of Lorenzo to demonstrate how racism influences internal and interpersonal dynamics in DV relationships. The author encourages social workers to apply critical race theory to traditional psychodynamic theories for a more comprehensive case formulation, especially when working with Latino clients involved in a DV relationship.

**BEYOND MACHISMO: A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION OF DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE IN LATINO MEN**

A project based upon an independent investigation,  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2014

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND METHODOLOGY.....	4
III. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN LATINO MEN.....	8
IV. OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY.....	20
V. CRITICAL RACE THEORY.....	26
VI. DISCUSSION.....	31
REFERENCES.....	43

## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

Complex and dangerous dynamics occur within a domestic violence (DV) relationship, which are further complicated when racism and acculturation are part of the mix. There are very few empirical studies and even less literature regarding DV among the Latino population. The few studies that have compared the rates of DV between Latino and non-Latino groups have found that there is no significant difference between the rates of DV among these groups. However, the consistency and rates of DV change when solely looking at the Latino population within the United States. The few studies on this topic suggest that the longer Latino immigrants have been in the U.S., the higher the likelihood that they will be involved in a DV relationship (Klevens, 2007). These studies also suggest that the highest rates of DV occur in relationships involving American-born Latinos (Baker, Perilla & Norris, 2001; Barranco, 2013; Bloom et al., 2009; Klevens, 2007; Lipsky, Caetano, Field & Larkin, 2006; Parra-Cardona et al., 2013; Sabina et al., 2013; Saez-Betacourt et al., 2008; Sugihara & Warner, 1999; Welland & Ribner, 2008). In order to have effective interventions, it is important to examine the impact of American culture, and institutional racism, on the identities and relationships of Latino men in the United States. This thesis will be an attempt at exploring this topic through the lenses of critical race theory (CRT) and Kleinian theory.

The goal of this study is to cultivate a deeper understanding of why Latino men choose to become aggressive, taking into account personal and social experiences that are unique to the

Latino experience. The hope is to gain a better understanding of what role racism plays in the complex dynamics of a DV relationship. Unfortunately, little research has been done on the internal workings of batterers and even fewer studies have looked at the difference between men of color and White men who batter. A further obstacle is that it is rare for researchers to distinguish between different Latino cultures and even rarer to distinguish between the subgroups found within individual Latino cultures. There is one study that does examine the DV experience of subgroups of Mexican people. These subgroups are defined as Mexicans living in Mexico, Mexican immigrants, and American-born Mexicans. The study found that both Mexican immigrants and American-born Mexican men are more likely to abuse their intimate partners than Mexican men living in Mexico (Kantor, Jasinski, & Aldarondo, 1994; Sokoloff, 2004). Findings also suggested that the longer a Mexican immigrant man has lived in the U.S., the higher the likelihood that he will become abusive toward an intimate partner (Kantor et al., 1994; Sokoloff, 2004). Additional studies reinforcing the findings of Kantor et al. have raised the question of what occurs within the U.S experience that increases the likelihood of DV.

The need to take a critical look at this phenomenon is established by the social work Code of Ethics. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) established three generic methods of social work practice:

1. Changing the individual in relation to the social environment
2. Change the social environment in relation to the individual
3. Change both the individual and environment in relation to their interaction (Mizrahi & Davis, 2008)

These generic guidelines can also be called the person-in-environment perspective. This approach challenges social workers to think critically while taking into account both individual

and social factors that leads to problems in individual lives (Mizrahi & Davis, 2008). The person-in-environment perspective highlights the reciprocity that occurs between the individual and the environment and how together they affect an individual's behavior. When talking about a DV relationship this perspective places importance on understanding the dynamics both in the relationship and outside the relationship. DV among couples of color, more specifically, among Latinos, is not the only form of violence they face on a regular basis. Racism and anti-immigrant sentiment increase exposure to violence and greatly affect the dynamics within the relationship.

The following chapter will introduce CRT and Kleinian object relations theory, as well as describe how these theories will be applied to DV in Latino men in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Conceptualization and Methodology**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the differing rates of DV between Latino men born in the U.S. and Latino men who immigrated to the U.S from a theoretical perspective. This chapter will go into further details on this topic by first giving a brief explanation of Klein's object relations theory and CRT, and then outlining the methodology on how these theories will be applied to case material. Later, Chapter III provides demographic information for the population studied in this thesis and expands on the phenomenon of why Latino men are at higher risk of becoming batterers the longer they are in the U.S. Additionally, Chapter III introduces the case material that will be used to demonstrate how these theories can be applied to DV in Latino men. Chapter IV and V give in-depth explanations of each of the theories used to explore the phenomenon. Finally, Chapter VI is the application of Kleinian object relations theory to case material in order to provide examples of Klein's concepts of projection and projective identification as they manifest in the individual. Chapter VI also employs CRT to examine how projection and projective identification manifest within U.S society to produce acts of racism, provides a critical understanding of how racism happening outside of the intimate partnership affects the manifestation of violence within it, and explains the implications of this thesis for the field of social work.



## **Theoretical Framework**

This theoretical study attempts to answer this question of why DV rates vary between different groups of Latino men in the U.S. by applying Klein's object relations theory and CRT to the lived experiences of Latino men. The core principle of object relations theory is that a person's internal experience is far more complicated and powerful than the external world around them (Berzoff, 2012). Klein's theory, more specifically, her idea of projection and projective identification, is not only relevant to the understanding of the individual's psyche but also has the potential to grant a complex understanding of large groups (Alford, 1989). This is important because both racism and DV share similarities in that they both use violence to impose oppression on an individual or group with the goal being power and control over the identified individual or group.

CRT, on the other hand, focuses on the everyday lived experiences of people of color, which sometimes vary between racial groups. In particular, this thesis will focus on four major ideas from CRT:

1. Racism is the everyday experience of people of color, often in the form of microaggressions
2. Racism benefits the dominant group both materially and emotionally
3. Race and ethnicity are social construction rather than scientific facts
4. Oppression gives people of color a perspective that allows them to see truths about race and racism that White people are often not able to see (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012)

These ideas from CRT will be used to explain how Klein's object relations theory can be used to explain social as well as interpersonal phenomenon. Specifically, CRT and object relations

theory will be applied to the case of a Latino man named Lorenzo who perpetrates DV in his relationship.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

Applying Klein's theory to Latino men calls for coupling it with theories that are able to make up for shortcomings that are inherent in all behavior theories. In its original form, Kleinian theory is only looking at the didactic relationship between an individual and an object, not an individual and their environment. To accommodate for this shortcoming, application of a social critical theory, such as CRT, is imperative. Applying CRT to Kleinian theory leads to a stronger and more comprehensive understanding of DV in Latino men, since both intrapsychic and social factors are taken into account. Further strengths and limitations are discussed in Chapter VI, following the application of these theories to the phenomenon.

### **Statement of Identity**

In theoretical explorations of any phenomenon, the author's identity can influence the choice of theories as well as the way the theories are applied. For this study, it is important to keep in mind that the author is a Latina American woman and the daughter of an undocumented Latino Mexican immigrant. The ideas expressed in this thesis are the culmination of not only my academic studies on but also my personal lived experiences.

### **Conclusion**

The theories chosen to explore domestic violence in Latino men provide a detailed and balanced explanation of how racism and intrapsychic dynamics impact this phenomenon. The following chapter will explore in detail the phenomenon these theories will be applied to. Specifically, Chapter III will discuss different types of DV, the Duluth model for treating DV, and the scope of the issue within the Latino community. Chapter III will also introduce the case

of Lorenzo, which will serve as an example of how object relations theory and critical race theory can be used to explain the occurrence of DV in Latino communities.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Domestic Violence in Latino Men**

In order to understand why DV occurs among Latino men, an in-depth understanding of DV as a whole must be outlined. Johnson (2005) argues that there is not a single form of DV, and that approaching DV with one-size fits all mentality leads to the creations of theories and treatment models that overlook the unique nuances that occur among different groups. In order to expand on this point, this study will be utilizing Johnson's topology of DV, which argues that DV is a broad term that incorporates multiple types of violence that happen within intimate partnerships (Johnson, 2005, 2006, 2008).

It is without question that DV goes beyond class, race, ethnicity, and culture. The feminist movement brought DV to the forefront of social consciousness and rightly identified violence against women as a social epidemic. The feminist paradigm see all social relations through the leans of gender relations shaped by neo-Marxist view where men hold power advantage over women and that DV is the male's attempt to maintain that power advantage (Dutton & Nicholls, 2005). The Duluth model of treating DV, which embodies a feminist cognitive behavioral approach and identifies battering as an oppressive tool levied against women, has become the primary curriculum in both domestic violence shelters and batterer programs (Parra-Cardona et al., 2013). The Duluth model has two major goals:

1. Help men to recognize and change beliefs associated to male supremacy over women
2. Learn new interpersonal skills that support that change

This model strives to create equality within intimate relationships between men and women.

However, one problem with the Duluth model is that it only looks at the oppression between men and women and fails to look at all other sociocultural forms of oppression and how they affect relationships. This approach fails to validate the experiences of men of color who experience multiple forms of oppression caused by racism on a daily basis. The goal of this project is to further the understanding of DV by challenging the assumption that all batterers have the same motive, which is to further the oppression of women. For men of color, specifically Latino men, DV may be an attempt to remedy the sense of helplessness caused by racial oppression by trying to gain agency in at least one life domain.

Johnson's typology outlines four types of DV: *intimate terrorism* (IT), violent resistance, situational couple violence, and mutual violent resistance (Johnson, 2005, 2006, 2008). IT is described as one partner using violence to gain power and control over the other partner. *Violent resistance* is when one partner uses violence to gain power and control and the other partner responds with violence, as a means of self-defense. *Situational couple violence* is defined as incidental violence between one or both partners, where neither is trying to be in control; such incidents are usually followed by remorse. This type of DV is thought to be the most common (Johnson, 2008). When DV advocates say that 50% of all marriages involve DV, they are often referencing situational couple violence (Johnson, 2006). Finally, *mutual violent resistance* is defined as both partners using violence to gain power and control. In order to work within the constraints of a master's thesis, this study will only be examining one type of DV, intimate terrorism.

IT is highly coercive, with the perpetrator using aggression and violence to gain and maintain power and control. Felson (2002) defines coercion as verbal or physical impositions

that use aggression and violence in order to achieve a want or goal. These wants fall into three categories:

1. To influence wanted behavior
2. To promote self-image
3. To restore justice for a perceived wrongdoing (Felson, 2002; Davis, 2008)

*Aggression*, used in coercion, is the behavior intended to cause harm to another person. This harm can be physical, psychological, or material (Felson, 2002; McClennen, 2010). *Violence* is a form of aggression that incorporates or threatens to incorporate physical bodily harm. It is important to distinguish between aggression and violence because all batterers are aggressive but not all batterers will use violence. In this study, the term batterers will be used to refer to those that perpetuate physical or non-physical aggression against women.

The hallmark of batterers involved in IT is the use of aggressive tactics such as threatening, intimidation, monitoring, undermining the will to resist and undermining the ability to resist (Johnson, 2008). Though violence is used, there is no pattern to the severity or frequency of violence. This lack of pattern adds to the argument that not all perpetrators of DV are the same; some will use violence selectively in order to add strength to their aggressive tactics, some will use violence frequently, and some choose to never use violence. Finally, aggression always involves personal choice. People decide when and when not to use aggressive tactics.

### **Scope of the Problem**

Since the 1980s there has been a 343% increase of the number of foreign-born Latinos residing in the United States (Barranco, 2013). This increase is a calling for treatment modalities and clinicians that have a complex understanding of how immigration and acculturation affect

the mental health of the individual as well as the challenges placed on community and family structure. Immigration in the U.S. has three principles that guide policy: the reunification of families, admitting immigrants with skills that are valuable to the U.S. economy, and protecting refugees (Immigration Policy Center, 2010). Immigration law is an interesting paradox where the individuals who are the most effected by the policy have no input on how policies are created or implemented. The lack of representation of the Latino immigrant voice, both documented and undocumented, has led to the creation of policies that are often oppressive to Latinos, all under the pretext of protecting an American way of life. It is important that immigration policy is understood before going into greater detail of how IT manifestation in Latino immigrants.

Though immigrants come from vastly different countries the majority of U.S. immigration policy has targeted Mexican migration and the U.S. Mexican border. The Immigration Reform and Control act of 1986 granted residency to millions of undocumented immigrants (Barranco, 2013). An unforeseen consequence of the Act of 1986 was that it changed migration from a regional phenomenon to a national phenomenon. With millions of immigrants being granted residency and the ability to work the labor markets in traditional immigrant communities became flooded, creating a competitive job market. Permanent residents were also granted the freedom to leave traditional communities and many chose to settle in new locations that had more job opportunities (Barranco, 2013).

Prior to the 1990s, migration followed a circular process where migrants came to United States temporarily to work and would then return home. The new policy of enforcement that was focused mostly on the Mexican-American border, known as prevention through deterrence, put an end to the circular migration pattern as immigrants chose to stay within the U.S. instead of risking not been able to return at a later date. In 2005, the Bush administration implemented an

immigration policy known as Consequence Delivery System that not only widened the net of deportable individuals but also replaced the policy of voluntary return (Ewing, 2014). Prior to this policy change migrants could return to their home countries with no criminal consequences, however, the new policy made crossing the border out of the U.S. a misdemeanor for first time crossers and a felony with up to two years of jail time for repeat offenders.

The increase of permanent residence in the early 1990s, and the increased difficulty of circular migration, means that immigrants who settle in nontraditional communities is a phenomenon that continues today. These increases in minority population are concentrated along the coastal areas of the United States starting in the East Coast (from Massachusetts to Florida), and extending to the Gulf of Mexico (Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana), and finally across the Southwest through the estates lining the US Mexico border (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). Before the 1990s, 48% of Latino immigrants were settling within the areas of California and Texas. That number has since dropped to 42% so it can be concluded that Latinos have continued to settle outside of traditional destinations which could account for the increase of minorities in other states. (Barranco, 2013).

The increase of Latino migration has led to increased interactions between Latinos and non-Latinos. These interactions affect both groups as acculturate takes place. *Acculturation* can be defined as a phenomenon where two groups with distinctly different cultures come into firsthand contact, resulting in one or both groups adopting and changing cultural patterns while remaining two distinct groups (Gordon, 1964; Johnson, 2011; Kantor et al., 1994; Sabina et al., 2013). Current research looking at DV rates among Latino partners have found a positive correlation to high acculturation rates and the manifestation of DV (Baker et al., 2001; Barranco, 2013; Bloom et al., 2009; Klevens, 2007; Lipsky et al., 2006; Parra-Cardona et al., 2013; Sabina



et al., 2013; Saez-Betacourt et al., 2008; Sugihara & Warner, 1999; Welland & Ribner, 2008). One of these studies comparing the rate of DV among Latino immigrants vs. U.S. born Latinos found that higher acculturation levels lead to higher rates of victimization (Sabina et al., 2013). Factors considered in this study were language preference (Spanish vs. English), legal status (documented vs. undocumented), and cultural orientation (Anglo vs. Latino). The findings showed that Latinos who had English language preferences or had permanent legal status as well as greater Anglo orientation not only had higher rates of victimization, but also associated more strongly with the masculine gender roles. Additionally, in a study of 159 Mexican-American men in a court-mandated IT program in San Diego California, 63% of the men interviewed were permanent residents, 12% were U.S. citizens, and 13% were undocumented (Welland & Ribner, 2008). A final study looking at sexual coercion among Latino women found that 12% of immigrant women report a lifetime sexual abuse opposed to 29.4% of U.S.-born Latino women (Sabina et al., 2013). These studies raise the question of what happens during the acculturation process to increase likelihood of IT.

One study explored this question by looking at the need for desirability, or to social accepted (Sugihara & Warner, 1999). The study looked at 16 Mexican-American batterers in court ordered IT treatment in Texas and found that Mexican-American batterers have a higher need for desirability than non-Latino counterparts. This need for desirability resulted in more cases of avoidant and passive aggressive behavior along with hypersensitivity to rejection. It was also noted that they were more likely to use projection as a defense and blame other for their problems. Overall, the men in the study were characterized by their fear of interpersonal relationships and were more likely to be described as loners who became anxious and fearful in interpersonal situations.

These two studies create an interesting framework for analyzing other studies about the impact of community, or lack thereof, on Latino men. Barranco (2013) showed that the development of community is important for the thriving of Latinos within geographic areas that have a non-Latino majority. However, Latinos that settle in non-traditional locations (e.g., far from areas in which there are currently established, constructed communities of Latino immigrants) are far more socially isolated. In the face of this isolation, Latinos often try and form or tap into community networks among each other, but often find that they do not have the same ability when it comes to building connections into non-Latino communities (Sugihara & Warner, 1999). This suggests that acculturation has an isolating consequence; though Latino men attempt to mitigate the isolation by feeling connected to a larger Latino community, this can further feelings of isolation from the dominant culture and systems of privilege that control their lives through vicious cycles of marginalization, oppression and aggression. Community isolation also impacts Latino women and non-Latino women differently, since Latino victims are less likely to utilize IT resources within the community such as emergency room services, domestic violence shelters, and calling the police (Bloom et al., 2009). Collectively, this data shows the existence of a disconnect between Latino and non-Latino communities, which has major implications regarding the adaptive functioning of Latinos.

Numerous studies demonstrate that Latino culture is a collectivist culture, placing emphasis on family, community place, interdependency, and loyalty, often referred to as Familismo (Saez-Betacourt et al., 2008; Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002). Overall, these studies show that less acculturated communities and individuals are less likely to be plagued by all types of violence, including IT, than their more acculturated counterparts (Barranco, 2013). A few studies have looked at this phenomenon and made the bold assumption that unlike non-

Latino Blacks, Latinos may benefit and even prefer racial segregation (Barranco, 2013). This is a potentially dangerous interpretation of these findings as it could further promote anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment. A better understanding of why isolated Latino communities tend to be less violent could be found in understanding the process of acculturation and how the individualism culture of the U.S. challenges collectivism.

### **The Role of Machismo**

One final point brought up in the literature is the role of machismo as the cultural standard for understanding Latino masculinity and a primary cause for the manifestation of IT in Latino domestic partnership (Barranco, 2013; Bloom et al., 2009; Klevens, 2007; Parra-Cardona et al., 2013; Sabina et al., 2013; Saez-Betacourt et al., 2008; Sugihara & Warner, 1999). The definition of machismo is complicated and takes on multiple meanings depending on cultural background. The lack of clear definition can be explained using Falicov's (2010) idea of the grand narrative or an abstract idea that is thought to be a comprehensive explanation of knowledge regarding a topic. In addition to the grand narrative there is also the literary and philosophical concept of tropes. In philosophy, *tropes* are understood as ontological unstructured abstract particulars that are neither universal nor concrete but yet makeup our understanding of the world (Maurin, 2014). In literature, movies, and other forms of media, tropes are used to convey information to an audience about common patterns in a story or recognizable character attributes. Machismo is a trope that conveys an abstract idea of Latino masculinity (Welland & Ribner, 2008). *Machismo* is used broadly to represent a series of characteristics associated with a batterer that include violence, irresponsibly, disrespect, selfishness, cowardliness, impulsivity, and bravado (Falicov, 2010; Welland & Ribner, 2008).

The history of machismo can be traced back to Spain's conquest to the New World and the Indigenes' saying of "el diablo nunca duerme" or "the devil never sleeps" (Falicov, 2010). This saying refers to the violent and destructive nature of the Spanish conquistadores. A more modern understanding of machismo really took form in the 1950s with the Golden era of Mexican cinema and the use of the Mexican bandido that was also adopted by American moviemakers to betray Latino men as hotheaded villains. The use of cinema has been a powerful tool in perpetuating the machismo trope.

Machismo as a grand narrative or trope has influenced how IT is studied and treated. Addressing machismo is important in IT among Latinos in the same way it is important to address misogyny with White batters (Parra-Cardona et al., 2013). What appears to be missing in IT and DV literature is the connection between the violence and impulsivity associated with machismo and the violence and impulsivity associated with misogyny. Here I challenge the ideas that machismo and misogyny are more similar than not and the difference between the two is an issue of semantics rather than culture (Torres et al., 2002).

Machismo/misogyny issues are seen worldwide according to the World Health Organization, 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner on an ongoing basis. In addition, intimate partners commit 38% of all murders of women (Welland & Ribner, 2008; World Health Organization, 2013). The World Report on Violence and Health, which was created through the collection of IT research worldwide, states that wife beating is considered a man's right in more traditional societies and is a suitable punishment when the wife fails to obey. Situations where it is considered acceptable to use violence against a partner in certain areas of the world include: not obeying the man, arguing back, not having food ready on time, not caring adequately for children or home, questioning the

man about money or girlfriends, going somewhere without the man's permission, refusing the man sex, and the man suspecting his wife of infidelity (World Health Organization, 2013). These findings complement other IT research and support the long-standing idea that the purpose of using violence in an intimate relationship is to gain power and control over a partner and is a product of misogyny. The manifestation of IT among Latinos does not differ in terms of rates compared to other groups. The difference in IT rates appear within the group itself, with more acculturated Latinos having the highest manifestation of IT.

### **Case Material: The Case of Lorenzo**

The following case study by Christauria G. Welland, PsyD, entitled Individual Treatment for Latino Partner Abusive Men: A Case Study, will be used throughout the remainder of this paper to provide an example of the manifestation of IT in a Latino immigrant (2011). Only relevant information from the case study will be presented with the author's discretion.

This case study involves the individual treatment of a 35-year-old Latino man of Mexican descent living in the Southern California area. The treatment goals were identified as the eradication of abusive behavior towards his wife of 13 years and developing strategies to guide his children through the pain of divorce while also trying to establish a closer relationship with them. The subject of this case study was identified as Lorenzo, who ran his own private housecleaning business and was a financially responsible husband and father. He grew up in Mexico City where he completed high school and one year of vocational training before coming to the United States at age 19 in 1988. Lorenzo was undocumented, as he arrived after the amnesty deadline set by the Immigration Reform act of 1966 and had no way of obtaining legal residency (Barranco, 2013; Welland, 2011). He met his wife, Elaina, in the U.S. and all three of their children were born in the California area.

Lorenzo was the middle child and had three siblings: an older brother, an older sister, and a younger sister. In Lorenzo's early childhood, there was frequent conflicts between his parents in which his mother would pull his father's hair and slap him in front of the children. Lorenzo's father often complained about his mother but Lorenzo never witnessed his father abusing his mother. In this case study, Lorenzo's mother often favored Lorenzo's older brother while Lorenzo's emotional and physical needs were often ignored. When he immigrated to the U.S., Lorenzo's mother often demanded that he send money back to Mexico, which resulted in great sacrifice on Lorenzo's part.

While living together, Lorenzo and his wife were able to purchase a house, although making mortgage payments became a financial hardship for the couple. In order to alleviate this difficulty, they had multiple family members live in the home at different times. For a six-month period Lorenzo's, in-laws lived in the family home, which was difficult for Lorenzo as they attempted to turn his children away from his Catholic faith by taking them to an Evangelical church. This was also the time where Lorenzo reported an increase in physical violence as disagreements between Lorenzo and his wife increased. The catalysts for these violent interactions were identified as financial hardships and the religious faith of the children.

Other family stressors included Lorenzo's wife refusing to work outside the home and instead having her parents move in to help with household expenses. As far as relationships outside the family, Lorenzo said that historically he had very few friends and that has been described as being rude, abrupt, narcissistic, and annoying throughout most of his life. Throughout Lorenzo's 13-year marriage, there were up to 40 incidences of physical assault within the marriage, although none resulted in any hospitalization or an attempt to connect with outside supports in the community. In regards to the relationship with his children, Lorenzo was

often jealous of the attention that his children received from his wife. Lorenzo paid very little attention to his two oldest children but had formed a more caring relationship with his youngest child.

### **Conclusion**

Domestic violence is serious and pervasive issue in the U.S., and the case of Lorenzo is just one example of what DV can look like for a Latino man living in the U.S. We return to Lorenzo in Chapter VI to examine his case theoretically. First, Chapter IV and Chapter V provide in-depth descriptions of object relations theory and CRT.

## CHAPTER IV

### Object Relations Theory

Melanie Klein is a key thinker in the creation of object relations theory. Klein's theory distinguishes itself from Freud's drive theory by drawing a comparison between the adult psyche and child psyche (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Freud viewed the psyche as being shaped through the oedipal conflict<sup>1</sup> and eventually becoming a coherent stable structure. Klein saw the human psyche a highly unstable entity shifting back and forth from one stage to another, which she labeled positions (Berzoff, Flanagan, & Hertz, 2011; Mitchell & Black, 1995). Klein's positions are affected by the relationship between an individual (the self) and the individual's caregiver (the object). These positions are best understood as patterns of internal and external relationships, anxieties, and defenses that are used throughout the individual's life (Rusmussen & Salhain, 2010). Klein names these two positions the paranoid–schizoid position and the depressive position.

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<sup>1</sup> The oedipal conflict is a component of Freud's psychosexual stages of development. The oedipal conflict manifests within a child when they begin to develop sexual feelings towards a caregiver of opposite sex and aggression towards the caregiver of the same sex. The conflict is resolved when these emotions start feelings troubling to the child and the child begins to repress these feelings. This is where the child begins to develop a conscience, an understanding of right and wrong. The development of the conscience is what resolves the oedipal complex (Berzoff, 2011).



The *paranoid-schizoid* position is marked by high anxiety and fear of annihilation, also known as paranoid anxiety (Berzoff et al., 2011; Mitchell & Black, 1995). Individuals functioning in this position have a highly fragmented sense of self and others caused by annihilation anxiety<sup>2</sup>. People within this position are functioning in a binary world where they view themselves and others as either all good or all bad. This binary existence creates a situation where it is nearly impossible to feel safe, protected, and loved because neither the self nor the object can be both good and bad at the same time. This inability to integrate both bad and good means neither the self nor the object can be seen as both and must hold separate designations. In order to preserve the self the individual will designate the good to the self and the bad to the object. The outcome of this is that anything outside of the self is dangerous and poses grave danger to the individual.

In Klein's *Envy and Gratitude* (1957), she stated, "the first and foremost function of the ego is to deal with anxiety" (p. 60). In order for an individual to protect their ego they must employ ego defenses and do so from the very "beginning of postnatal life" (Klein, 1957, p. 60). These early defenses are omnipotence, denial, and splitting, which are all associated with the paranoid-schizoid position and are strengthened by envy. Before discussing envy, it is helpful to understand the differences between jealousy, greed, and envy as they all serve specific functions within Kleinian theory. *Jealousy* is the feeling to exclude all others from enjoyment of the good object (Alford, 1989). Jealousy is linked to greed for greed is the aim to possess all the goodness from the object (Alford, 1989). When jealousy and greed fail the end result is envy. *Envy* is a destructive form of protective identification where the individual perceives others as possessing something good that has been stolen from them such as a job, culture, or a way life (Rusmussen

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<sup>2</sup> Fear of complete disintegration of the self in response to external stimuli (Berzoff, 2011)

& Salhani, 2010). When the individual is unable to take back that which they perceive has been taken from them, they feel the need to destroy the object. This need to destroy the object is envy.

In order to conquer feelings of envy, idolization of the primary object must occur in normal splitting. *Splitting* is defined as a defense that keeps good and bad experiences, and objects, separate and is the precursor to viewing them as whole objects (Berzoff, 2012; Rasmussen & Salhain, 2010). Splitting is used to protect the fragile ego, and can cause an individual to be highly impulsive in behavior and rigid in thinking and perception. Normal splitting in early life, allows for the inexperienced ego to control the environment while the individual learns how to integrate experiences and people as a whole with guidance from the primary caregiver. Without this normal splitting the outside world, as well as the internal world, can overwhelm the self and cause the individual to be overcome by annihilation anxiety. According to Klein (1957), normal splitting is caused by the super-ego because “early super-ego is immeasurably harder and has more holes than that of an older child or adult, and that it literally crushes down on the feeble ego of a small child” (p. 248).

Functioning under a dominant super-ego means that the individual is unable to internalize a fully integrated object (Klein, 1957). It also means that a person risks viewing the object under a phantasic light, or not internalizing the real object, but the perceived object, which then invokes fear of the real object, causing anxiety to become a phobic anxiety, or deep fear of annihilation or abandonment (Klein, 1957; Mitchell & Black, 1995). Along with splitting the ego, the individual also employs other ego defenses known as projection and projection identification in order to further protect the ego from envy.

Berzoff (2012) defines *projection* as “the process of expelling, sending outward, and getting rid of unwanted or bad feelings (parts of the self) and placing them in others” (p. 143). It

is an unconscious mental process whereby unacceptable ideas, feelings, and impulses are attributed to the external world (Klein, 1957). Personal attributes that an individual cannot bear to see in themselves are easily found in others and are a representation of the fantasized object opposed to the real-world object. Projection protects the individual by allowing them to view themselves as right and good. However, the consequences of this view are that the outside world feels dangerous and that the self will eventually begin to feel depleted and empty.

*Projective identification* is an extenuation of projection, where a person continues to have impulses, generally angry ones, that are projected onto the object, causing the individual to fear the object as an enemy who must be controlled (Goldstein, 1995; Ogden, 1979; St. Clair, 2004). Projective identification is a product of extremely blurred lines between the self and the object. The goal of projective identification as a defense is to satisfy the phantasy of wanting to control the bad parts of the self. This defense protects the ego by projecting the parts of the self that produced the most anxiety and that hold the biggest threat of annihilation. The projector does not see the real object, but the fantasized object. Looking at archetypal behavior only, the tendency for batterers to distrust their partners and use this distrust to justify the use of violence as a method of control is an example of this phenomenon. The batterer does not see their partner as a whole object; instead, they only see the fantasized object on which they have projected their own insecurities and fear of annihilation on to. The need to control their partner has little to do with the actual partner, but the need to control the bad parts of the self. The batterer is now only able to see their partner through the lens of their projection.

When the defenses of splitting, projection, and projective identification are functioning and adaptive, they can help facilitate normal human development and the movement of the self into the depressive position. The *depressive position* is marked by the integration of the object. It

is the awareness that the good object that gratifies omnipotent fantasy is at the same time the bad object that deprives and frustrates (Klein, 1984; Mitchell & Black, 1995). The phobic anxiety that triggered envy is replaced by guilt as the individual grows to recognize that the destructiveness of his or her own rage can destroy the loved object. In the paranoid–schizoid position primitive love impulses are aggressive and carry a quality of destruction that is unaffected by consequences (Winnicott, 1965). In order to successfully enter the depressive stage the individual must believe that they can atone for the destructive behavior against the bad object and save the loved object (Mitchell & Black, 1995). In terms of IT the most violent types of abuse occur when the batterer is in the paranoid-schizoid position. In treating a batterer the primary goal is to guide the batter as they negotiate through their annihilation anxiety and assist in the integration of good and bad objects.

Object relations theory is helpful in understanding how people interact with their environment but it fails to elaborate how the environment interacts with the person. Speaking in psychodynamic terms, the question is: does the environment do an adequate job in containing the individual so they feel protected enough to engage with the world around them? Object relations is geared and tailored to the social understanding of the dominant culture. What is understood as maladaptive and adaptive behavior is behavior that complies with the dominant culture's social norms. By only looking at how the individual responds to their environment, and not how the environment responds to the individual, we are inherently complying with and asserting the social conventions of the dominant culture, which runs contrary to social work ethics.

Object relations theory is also commonly criticized as being unscientific or difficult to support empirically. However, Masling and Bornstein (1994) argued that it is possible to operationalize and test object relations theory. Studies have explored shame and guilt, self-

concept, and attachment between children and caregivers. Additionally, techniques have been developed to tap into the unconscious mind, such as Rorschach-based measures (Mitchell, 1981). Although psychodynamic theories are generally more difficult to test than psychological theories that are more concrete, many aspects of object relations theory have been studied and supported.

### **Conclusion**

Object relations theory was developed with the dominant group in mind, so it does not always fit the needs or social understanding of individuals of different races, cultures, and sexualities. This study argues that object relations does not include the dyadic feedback loop between person and environment, which has a significant impact on people outside of the dominant normative group. In order to accommodate this shortcoming, this study will be looking at object relations theory through the lens of critical race theory.

## CHAPTER V

### Critical Race Theory

CRT is centered on the idea that racism is ordinary and is the lived experience of people of color, and that differences between racial groups are not only radically different from the dominant white race, but among each other as well (Bell, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT was created to question the foundation of the liberal order and to create through which to analyze how racism influences the creation and application of celebrated liberal theories. Feminist theory is one such liberal theory and is the driving source of using the Duluth model for treatment of IT. This thesis in no way aims to discredit the feminist model of treating the batterer in the IT relationship. What is being challenged is the idea that gender oppression is the only form of oppression at play in an IT relationship. Among people-of-color, more specifically Latinos, the oppressive force of racism must be recognized as another form of violence and incorporated into treatment models.

Critical race theory is used to understand how racism manifests in the United States today, which is drastically different than the racism of the Civil Rights Movement. CRT was built on ideas borrowed from radical feminism and critical law theory and can be broken down into three major tenants (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The first major tenant of CRT is that racism is the ordinary everyday experience of people of color. These everyday acts of racism are known as microaggressions. *Microaggressions* are defined as commonplace daily indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which occur in all realms of social interaction.

Microaggressions communicate racial slights and insults towards people of color and/or those who hold other marginalized identities (Martin, 2014).

This tenant also addresses the idea of color-blindness, which asserts that race should not matter in public decision-making or private interactions and that it is therefore illegitimate to take race into consideration even if the goal is to ameliorate equality or correct past injustices (Daniels, 2011; Doane, 2006; Valdes, 1998). *Color-blindness* is a strategy of denial that claims that racism is a historical phenomenon and no longer a significant problem in U.S. society. Color-blindness is used to devalue the experiences and feelings of people of color by implying anybody can be racist and that racism is universal. This approach not only removes the burden of responsibility from the White dominant group from past and present acts of racism, but also allows Whites to claim victimization that delegitimize claims of victimization by people of color (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). This form of racial disclosure is to reinforce White dominance in the U.S. by marginalizing challenging perspectives and maintaining the power and privilege experienced by the dominant group.

The concept of color-blindness leads us to the second tenant of CRT, which is that racism benefits the dominant group both psychically and materially (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This addresses the rationale for color-blindness because the dominant group directly benefits from acts of racism, and therefore has little incentive to address and change historic and present acts of racism. It also implies that our systems of government, business, and education were created to benefit the dominant group at the expense of the economical, psychological, and physical wellbeing of people of color.

Finally, the third tenet of critical race theory incorporates two vital theses: the social construction thesis and the voice of color thesis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The *social*

*construction thesis* argues that race, culture, and ethnicity are social constructions that have no scientific bases. These classifications are instead used and manipulated by those who hold power in order to maximize their power. It should be clarified that this social construction thesis does not give legitimization to the color-blind approach of thinking about race and racism. Instead it debunks any claim that biology or other natural causes are the reason to why race and ethnicity classification exist. The ability to classify people into different racial and ethnic groups is a privilege held by those who hold the most power and is a tool used to maximize that power (Bernal, 2002). This maximization of power is reflected historically as different groups have been classified differently in response to shifting needing of those in power. In other words racism is a means by which society allots power and privilege.

The *voice of color thesis* holds that because of different experiences with oppression both historically and currently Black, American Indian, Asian, and Latino writers and thinkers are able to communicate to their White counterparts matters that the Whites are unlikely to know (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Also, due to the ever-changing state of definitions and classifications, the voice of color thesis also argues that no two marginalized groups experience oppression in exactly the same way, making one overarching theory incapable of addressing the experience of all groups. This opens the door for the development of sub-theories that can look past the Black/White binary of racism and provide a framework of understanding to a complex topic. One such sub-theory, which will be used throughout this study, is Latino critical race theory. *Latino critical race theory* takes into account the unique experiences that come from being bicultural and bilingual. It also takes into account that identifying as Latino is an experience unique to the United States. In total there are 21 different Latin American countries that all have their own unique history and culture (Welland & Ribner, 2008). Latino critical race



theory takes into consideration multiple ethnicities that are linked to Latinos and addresses issues often ignored by critical race theory such as language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotypes, and sexuality (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Few empirical studies exploring the use of CRT exist, because CRT is used as a framework for many studies, but is not a theory that can be applied in the same way as a psychological theory. For the purposes of this thesis, rather than a review of empirical studies on CRT, since none could be found, this will serve as a review of the current literature surrounding this theory. Whites in general have greater social, cultural, and economic privileges, including decision-making power in legal matters, than other racial groups (Harris, 1993; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2009; McIntosh, 1990). Whiteness can be seen as the ultimate value to leverage and perpetuate their system of advantages and privileges as defined by Harris' (1993) rights of property: "rights of disposition, rights to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property, and the absolute right to exclude" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 59). CRT can be used to show how culturally based property rights help to explain how privileges associated with Whiteness contribute to objectification and subordination of minority groups in all aspects of life, including education, the law, and medical services. CRT "refutes dominant ideology and white privilege while validating and focusing on the experiences of people of color" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69).

Also, due to the limitations of this study, we will only be looking at what role race and culture play in regards to DV among Latino immigrants in heterosexual partnerships. It should be noted, however, that heterosexuality is a point of privilege within society and future research is urgently needed to understand how identifying as something other than heterosexual affects the understanding of object relations theory.

## **Conclusion**

Critical race theory is a helpful lens for understanding how any social issue may impact people of color in the U.S. The following chapter will examine how both critical race theory and Klein's object relations theory can come together to provide a deeper explanation for DV in Latino men.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **Discussion**

This chapter combines the theories presented in earlier chapters with the purpose of granting a more complex understanding of how racism affects the manifestation of IT among Latinos living in the US. To begin, the application of CRT will be woven into the understanding of how Kleinian theory applies to large groups as well as to individual Latino males. This application of theory will reject color-blindness, as color-blindness devalues the experience of people of color and ignores the structural racism that is built in to all major U.S. systems, political and otherwise. Kleinian theory will be used to understand the social construction of racism and how the group reinforces the paranoid-schizoid position (Alford, 1989). Finally the voice of color thesis comes into play in the writing of this theoretical study, as the author is a Latina American woman and the daughter of an undocumented Latino Mexican immigrant. The ideas expressed in this thesis are the culmination of not only my academic studies on but also my personal lived experiences.

#### **Klein's Paranoid-Schizoid Position in Social Groups.**

In 1926, Klein moved to England and became a leading voice in the British Psychoanalytic Society (Segal, 2004). It was during this time Klein began to distinguish herself from Freud by writing about the inner world of children that took a critical look at guilt, anxiety, love, and hatred. She created a theory that argued that from birth, people struggle to cope with conflicting feelings targeted toward their caregivers. Though Klein's theories were originally

developed for the purpose of understanding the individual psyche, her theories have been expanded to explain group and societal processes.

Klein spoke very little about how social groups effect an individual's emotional development. However, this has not stopped critical social theorist from applying her theories of individual psyche to the collective psyche of social groups. Alford (1989), argued that groups can both help and hinder the individuals journey through the two Kleinian positions by defending against paranoid-schizoid anxiety.

To say that the group defends against anxiety of a paranoid-schizoid character could mean at least two different things: (1) the group helps the individual defend against his own paranoid-schizoid fears, much as the mother helps a child defend against its paranoid-schizoid fears through her love and concern; and (2) there are anxieties of a paranoid-schizoid nature that the individual has only as a member of a group, such as persecutory anxieties about the welfare of his group vis-a-vis other groups (Alford, 1989, p. 59).

The holding environment of the group is somewhat of a paradox because not only is it responsible for creating the holding environment for the individual, much like the primary caregiver of a child, it is also functioning as its own holding environment (Alford, 1989; Clarke, 2003). The group must therefore find a way to self soothe their own fear and anxiety or fall deeper into the paranoid-schizoid position. If they are unable to do so, then the defenses of splitting, projection, and projection identification can become maladaptive, causing the collective group to be overcome by feelings of greed and jealousy and eventually succumb to the destructive nature of envy. Much like in individual cases, when fear and anxiety become a threat to the group, it must be projected onto an object, in this case the racialized other group. Most of the time this fear is centered in collective phantasy. Phantasy, as it relates to the individual psyche, is “an activity of the mind that occurs at a deeply unconscious level – the mental expression of the life and death instincts as they relate to the object” (Clarke, 2003, p. 144). This

phantasy, which occurs in the paranoid-schizoid position, is based on the internal understanding of good and bad and is not necessarily representative of what is occurring in reality. These phantasies lead to xenophobia, which is caused by an imagined threat that must be projected in order to ease fear anxiety for both the group and the individual. *Xenophobia* is the result of projection upon the other group, which is now viewed as a threat and something to be feared. In reinforcing paranoid-schizoid defenses, the group offers the individuals relief from anxiety but at the cost of emotional development for both the individual and group. It also calls into question their collective sense of morality (Alford, 1989; Ruiz, Gallardo, & Delgado-Ramer, 2013).

This thesis is based on an understanding that morality is subjective and not universal. To use Kleinian terminology, morality is a collective understanding of good and bad that is rooted in individual phantasy, and it is the cultural group that organizes the meaning of individual phantasy into a moral understanding (Alford, 1989; Clarke, 2003). As part of this organization, the group also determines who is and is not a member of the collective group. The problem with morality is that the psyche of the groups remained fixed, and is not as fluid as the individual psyche, so changing a group's understanding of morality is difficult. Groups will almost always choose to protect notions of morality over changing it, even when that moral understanding leads to racism and other forms of oppression.

Those who have held privilege and power both historically and currently have held "a fundamentally radicalized pathologizing conceptualization of immigrants" (Park & Kemp, 2006, p. 708). This pathologizing conceptualization is the dominant group's attempt to protect their own idea of morality. By utilizing the defense of splitting, one rationalizes that if their own group is morally good, intelligent, and just, then the other group must be immoral, unintelligent, and corrupt. Instead of being able to see both good and bad in both groups, the group projects all

badness onto the racialized other group. In their projection of badness, they are unwilling to see in themselves anything that challenges the collective idea of morality. This also allows for the justification of oppression because they morally justify actions by saying it is all for the protection of the group.

When the group is unable to create the holding environment that will ease fears of anxiety, projection develops into projective identification. Projective identification is at the tool that allows phantasy to become reality (Clarke, 2003). Projective identification is group processes that can either be normalizing or pathologizing. For projective identification to become pathological, an extreme amount of hate and violence, splitting, loss of ego function, omnipotent control, and envy must occur. When pathological projective identification is at an extreme, it provides a moral defense that allows the dominant group to impose complete control, or enslavement, over the group labeled as racially other. This form of projective identification is the root of racism in that it creates "a violent explosion of affect which renders the recipient in a state of both terror and self-hatred" (Clarke, 2003, p 156-157). Racism in the United States is the result of the White dominant group projecting their phantasy about the bad and hated object onto a group that they have labeled the "racially other", turning their collective phantasy into reality.

The psychology of oppression is that inferiority is the outcome of a double process in which projective identification operates at different levels and forms but produces the same outcome: to induce fear, inferiority, and feelings of exclusion. It places racism on a continuum where at one end it is something felt but rarely seen, and on the other end it is a violent explosion of hatred (Clarke, 2003). The recipients, or objects, of these projections become containers that allow the group to detoxify their own sense of self (Clarke, 2003). The outcome of this detoxification is a sense of self-hatred felt on the part of the bad object as they began to

internalize the fear, hate, and anxiety that have been projected on to them by the dominant group (Leary, 2000). Clarke (2003) summed up this process by saying, “ethnic tensions arise from the possession of a ‘thing’ produced in fantasy that others may steal, and this thing is a manifestation of our own paranoid or schizoid anxieties” (p. 162).

Acculturation can be seen as an attempt to ease paranoid-schizoid anxieties, in which the racialized ‘other’ tries to function as the caregiving object to ease the fears of the dominant group. As it is commonly understood, acculturation is in many ways a myth, because it is often thought of in a way in which the outside group is attempting to change or take on the cultural norms of the dominant group. I would like to argue that, in order for full acculturation to take place, both groups need to make a shift in cultural norms. This common understanding of acculturation is one that is perpetuated by the dominant group and leads to those outside the group believing that, if they take on the moral ideals of the group they will be accepted. However, because ‘otherness’ is a concept based on an abstract idea of racial difference, a member of a racialized ‘other’ group may attempt to culturally align their moral and cultural understanding to that of the dominant group, yet still find themselves being marked as other. This is because the dominant group has the power to say who is a member of the group and who is not. By keeping the race as an abstract social construct they are able to change the definition to always keep individuals as racially ‘other’.

Race is a social contrast riddled in ambiguity, all for the purpose of keeping out that which is anxiety provoking to the dominant group. Full acculturation occurs when the ‘other’ group moves into Klein’s depressive position as they integrate the object and are able to accept both good and bad in the other as well as the self. However, if the dominant group is unable to acculturate along with the racialized ‘other’ group, then they interpret the acculturation process

of the other group as taking something from them. This triggers feelings of envy and a need to destroy the object, which is, in this case, the racialized 'other' group.

### **Application to Latino Batterers**

Looking back at the IT literature, the theme of incorporating machismo into treatment for Latino batterers is an example of projection identification. By labeling this incorporation as resulting in culturally competent treatment, IT authors are using the racialized other as a container that allows the dominant group to detoxify. By failing to link machismo with misogyny, the dominant group is able to purge a quality that they have defined as immoral. Though IT happens at the same rate among White Americans as Latino Americans, there are differences in ways they are discussed. When a White male is labeled a batterer, the language used to explain his acts is that "he is a misogynist." However, when talking about Latino batterers, their behavior is justified and explained as part of their identity, such as "machismo is a part of Latino culture." This language is a product of splitting that pardons the dominant group from any responsibility of misogyny that happens within their culture. When an individual who is also a member of the dominant group conducts himself in a way that goes against the collective idea of morality, it is the individual that is labeled immoral. However, when an individual outside the dominant group conducts themselves in a way that the dominant group labels immoral, the individual behavior is a reflection of the group and the dominant group labels the entire group as immoral. This splitting creates an imagined form of reality that allows the dominant group to remain righteous and just, while all racialized other groups are labeled as violent and corrupt.

Over time, the protective identification that causes racism will begin to instill a level of self-hatred in the racialized other (Clarke, 2003). Self-hatred is a feeling brought on by others,



and over time, this feeling can begin to overwhelm the individual, producing fear and anxiety that must eventually be projected outwards in order to protect the fragile ego. Here is where the phenomenon of Latino American men having a higher likelihood of IT than Latino immigrant counterparts occurs. As Latino men attempt to acculturate, they find themselves coming face-to-face with an institutional level of racism that is more than a set of discriminatory administration processes, but the result of complex interactions between structures and affect (Clarke, 2003). The dominant group needs to protect their power and privilege in order to limit to their jealousy and greed. To do this, they must strip the agency from the racialized 'other,' or Latino men, rendering them helpless. It is only in the helplessness of Latino men that the dominant culture can ease their paranoid-schizoid fears. This analysis can provide insight into the Sugihara and Warner (1999) study that found that Mexican-American men have a higher need for desirability. This need to be desired could stem from the struggle of trying to acculturate to a social structure that is constantly changing in order to keep Latinos out.

These feelings of hopelessness are detrimental to the emotional development of Latino American men. The lack of agency and the self-hatred that are created through racism and internalized racism catapult the ego back into a fragile state where it begins to employ paranoid-schizoid defenses. As a result, Latino American men begin to internalize the narrative that they are violent and begin to hold stronger ideals of masculinity in response to the projective identification of the dominant group. Eventually, the Latino American man will not be able to hold all the bad that is being projected onto him by the dominant group and will need to find his own container onto which he can project these feelings. The container or object in this instance is his intimate partner. Projective identification is utilized in the controlling manner that batterers often use. It is better understood through the lens of Kleinian theory, in which the man has

projected the bad parts of himself onto his partner and is now attempting to exercise a sense of control through projective identification. The Latino man who feels unwanted and powerless by outside society is attempting to experience power and control in at least one aspect of his life.

### **Application to the Case of Lorenzo**

Looking back at the case of Lorenzo presented earlier, we see these concepts play out through the course of his therapy. The frustration he has towards his wife that eventually leads to violence can be understood on two levels. The first has to do with his inability to find work that allows him to generate enough income to support his family. Here, Lorenzo is trapped in the disorganized nature of the dominant group's paranoid-schizoid position where greed, jealousy, and envy manifest themselves. Greed comes into play when Lorenzo is able to purchase a house through questionable lending practices that exploit his desire to be a part of the dominant group (Welland, 2011). Within the structurally racist system, Lorenzo would only be able to purchase a home that would eventually be taken away from him, thereby increasing the wealth of those in power. It is also through this type of practice that the dominant group gives the illusion that acculturation is possible. However, by allowing minimal access to certain privileges, such as owning a home, the phantasy that something is being stolen from the dominant group leads to feelings of jealousy. This jealousy then turns into envy, leading those in power to want to destroy the racialized other through racist acts, all in an attempt to protect what they feel is being taken away.

Lorenzo is a victim of the system and it is this victimization that pushes Lorenzo into his own paranoid-schizoid position, causing him to have the same aggressive and violent outbursts against his wife that are being perpetrated onto him. This is the second level of understanding the violence in their relationship. By demanding that his wife find work outside of the home,

Lorenzo is attempting to control her in the same way he is being controlled by the dominant group. Her perceived defiance is intolerable because of Lorenzo's paranoid-schizoid anxiety. As a result, he utilizes splitting to justify the violence he perpetrates against his wife by interpreting her unwillingness to work outside the home as detrimental to the family success. Because of the systematic nature of racism, it is unrecognizable to Lorenzo that it is not his wife's choice not to work and keep them financially unstable, but the dominant group attempting to control something they have labeled as dangerous. This inability to recognize the force of systematic oppression pushes Lorenzo from the role of victim to the role of batterer.

Here I make my final argument that the increase of domestic violence that occurs when Latinos attempt to acculturate to U.S. norms is the result of a cycle of projection and protective identification. The dominant group attempts to control the racialized other that they have labeled as a danger through their own paranoid-schizoid phantasies. This leads to feelings of self-hatred and oppression by those found to be in the racialized other group, which must in turn be projected away from the self. Here we see the basis for IT that happens within Latino partnerships: as men attempt to navigate through their paranoid-schizoid anxieties, they begin to treat their partner as the bad hated object, which is expressed through aggression and violence.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

As mentioned in Chapter II, CRT and object relations theory combine to provide a strong and comprehensive discussion of DV in Latino men. CRT addressed the limitations of object relations theory by providing a social analysis of factors that may influence the individual's internal process. Additionally, the theoretical framework presented in this thesis is consistent with the social justice perspective valued by the field of social work. Finally, the author's

identity as a Latina woman is a major strength, since people of color are able to see and understand racial dynamics that White people often do not.

However, this study also has certain limitations. In addition to being a strength, the author's racial identification could also be a source of bias in this study, since objectively analyzing communities and cultures we belong to is difficult. It is also important to keep in mind that many different cultures are classified as Latino. Though there are similarities across Latino cultures, the conceptualization of DV presented in this thesis may be more applicable to men who emigrated from certain countries than from others. Finally, the lack of research about the motivation and experiences of men who perpetrate DV, particularly Latino men who perpetrate DV, is a major limitation of this study. A greater foundation of empirical research on this topic would lend credibility to the theoretical application introduced in this thesis.

### **Applications for Social Work Practice and Research**

This study has important implications for how social workers and therapists can conceptualize their cases. When working with clients of color, in particular, clinicians should apply CRT or other critical theories that examine social structures to individualistic theories of behavior, personality, and mental health. Specifically, clinicians should pay careful attention to how race and racism may impact their clients' presenting concerns. White clinicians working with clients of color should be especially careful to approach their work with cultural humility and not make assumptions about the client's experience.

Additional research could strengthen the body of literature addressing Latino men and DV. First, researchers should examine the history of DV in the U.S. and in Latin countries to provide a greater foundation for theoretical explorations of this issue. Researchers should also consider how intersectionality might impact DV in this population. For example, researchers

could examine how social class or sexual orientation impact DV rates in Latino men. Finally, future theorists may want to consider how object relations theory can be applied forms of DV other than IT, which was explored in this thesis.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this theoretical thesis was to develop a complex understanding of why Latino men choose to become aggressive that goes beyond the tenants the Duluth model of treating DV. The inspiration for this thesis arose from the NASW generic methods of social work practice that challenge social workers to examine how individuals and social environments interact (Mizrahi & Davis, 2008). Johnson's (2005) topology of DV accomplishes this by acknowledging that domestic violence is a broad term that incorporates multiple types of violence that happen within intimate partnerships (Johnson, 2008, 2009). By utilizing a topology that recognizes the various nuances that occur within intimate partnerships, it opens the argument to also allow nuances among different social groups to come to light. This is critical when talking about IT among people of color. People of color not only experience racism that sets them apart from White people, but also experience racism differently amongst themselves.

Though this thesis has many limitations, my wish is that it serves as a call to action for the social work profession to think critically about theory and practice models and how they accept social norms that support structural racism. Through the combination of classic psychoanalytic theory and post-modern critical race theory, we can reach a new understanding of psychoanalytic practice that is better suited for people who struggle with racism as a dominant form of oppression. Racism has real and dangerous consequences in the lives of people of color that are only made worse when ignored by the social work profession. To begin dismantling racism, we must first acknowledge that racism is part of the structural foundation of U.S. society

that permeates all systems and social interactions. I challenge the social work profession to assume the responsibility of not only acknowledging these structures, but also taking conscious steps toward racial justice by developing new methods of macro and micro practice that combat these structures.

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