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## Social work practice with Latino Pentecostals : applying feminist family theory and object relations theory

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Recognition of spiritual identity in social work practice has, in theory, been a component of “culturally competent” practice delivery. Unearthing the subjugated story of the client within the social milieu has also been a part of this concept. This story is not always heard, as it is not a part of the dominant discourse that is heavily represented in contemporary culture – the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant perspective which tends to represent only one gender (male), one class (middle) and one sexual orientation (heterosexual).

Among social workers there is a commitment to challenging dominant discourse and providing space and voice to those who are silenced or subjugated. However, spiritual or religious concepts put social workers in a bit of a quandary. “The absence of known universal truth requires the clinician to pay careful attention to the ethics and values of the profession, particularly that of self-determination. The ambiguity of postmodernism does not make treatment a ‘free-for-all’ value system” (Northcut, 2000, p. 158). It is the ethical responsibility of social workers to “obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability” (NASW, 2006).

Latino Pentecostal religious practitioners are one subgroup that is rarely represented in dominant discourse. These individuals may intersect with the mental

health system through experiences of anxiety, panic, disassociation or moral conflict – however these individuals are not, in many cases, entering the mental health care system in search of religious intervention or as a precipice for conversion to non-fundamental beliefs. Therefore the context in which a Latino Pentecostal individual presents to providers of mental health treatment must be considered and space must be provided to allow the subjugated story to be.

This does not however give license to dismiss certain actions as “religious right.” Abuses of individuals, within the NASW Code of Ethics, are not to be unreported. There is of course the responsibility to provide appropriate and meaningful clinical services within the context of safety. As NASW states:

Social workers’ primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients. In general, clients’ interests are primary. However, social workers’ responsibility to the larger society or specific legal obligations may on limited occasions supersede the loyalty owed clients, and clients should be so advised (NASW, 2006).

Currently there is a small body of literature on the experience of Latino Pentecostals and minimal literature on the clinical processes specific to Latino Pentecostals. This dearth of academic or empirical knowledge provides an opportunity to explore the theoretical lenses through which treatment of Latino Pentecostals may be considered. In addition, a framing of the Pentecostal experience specific to Latinos will serve as a starting point for further understanding of spiritual nuances and spiritual identities as held by Latino Pentecostals.

To explore the phenomenon of Latino Pentecostals as they intersect with the mental health system, this thesis applies the theoretical lenses of Feminist Family Theory and Object Relations Theory. Feminist Family Theory allows for the exploration and

prioritization of the subjugated story of Latino Pentecostals. Religious fundamentalists are not the dominant group as providers of community mental health, nor has Latino culture been fully integrated into education of the larger culture. Therefore, the story of Latino Pentecostalism is not among the dominant discourse or within literature that evaluates the clinical needs of individuals with respect to or incorporation of their faith or spiritual contexts.

Within Feminist Family Theory is the integration of constructivism and pulling for the subjugated story, the client's truth versus the truth that the social worker interprets through his or her personal, but very different, lens. Investigating the meaning or truth of any concept for the family or individual creates room to explore the client's personal experience and unearth greater historical context. Particular to religious context Latino faith experience can be explored as a legacy.

The heart of spirituality touches not only the spiritual, as a mere interior and private event, but it is also one that affects their total lives...including moral and external behavior, including religious and social relationships. The social aspect brings people in touch with past spirituality of their ancestors. Thus, spirituality is about more than an isolated or private experience – it is also a legacy (Northcut, 2000, p. 162).

Delving further into clinical social work with Latino Pentecostals, it is appropriate to acknowledge the interaction of psychodynamic frameworks in working with clients. Object Relations Theory will be integrated into the theoretical framework of this thesis in order to explore some of the internalizations individuals may own when a Latino Pentecostalism framework exists in their lives.

A relationship with ambiguity is in a sense the organizing framework for the social work clinician working with Latino Pentecostal clients. The tolerance for

ambiguity is difficult; however “The toleration of ambiguity can be productive if it is taken not as a warrant for sloppy thinking, but as an invitation to deal responsibly with issues of great complexity” (Fuller & Strong, 2001, p. 210 ). Within the phenomenon of Latino Pentecostalism general ambiguity may be threatening. A commitment to understanding the truths the client has internalized is the essential factor of employing an object relations framework.

This thesis will first conceptualize the phenomenon of Latino Pentecostals as they intersect with the mental health treatment system, and set forth the methodology with which this phenomenon will be explored. Then, two theoretical frameworks will be applied to the understanding of the phenomenon: Feminist Family Theory and Object Relations Theory. Finally, conclusions will be drawn about the nature of the Latino Pentecostalism in mental health treatment, with a focus on ways to ensure cultural competence with this population within the therapeutic setting.

The following chapter will provide an understanding of why Feminist Family Theory and Object Relations Theory are appropriate in exploring treatment with Latino Pentecostals. The limitations and biases of the researcher as well as the limitations of the theories will be explored. Specific components to the selected theories will be identified.

## CHAPTER II

### CONCEPTUALIZATION AND METHODOLOGY

Dominant culture perspectives are the backdrop for much of the literature provided for clinical social work with any population. Specifically, the orientations provided for psychodynamic training are largely Eurocentric in nature. Exploration into ways of framing clinical social work and deconstruction of the context of psychodynamic literature are both necessary in the responsible and ethical treatment of clients of non-dominant culture representation. Latino Pentecostals are not representative of the dominant culture; therefore appropriate exploration of this population calls for the use of a non-dominant framework.

Feminist Family Theory is rooted in the notion of dismantling the dominant discourse in literature and conversation with concern to the gendered narrative. The lens of this particular theory is rooted in the conviction that shifting gendered conversation and challenging gender-prescribed roles are not solely applicable to the exploration of gender and power. Feminist Family Theory is a political stance that explores the narrative of the social worker in order to dismantle the personal biases or constructs that are held by the treatment provider.

Particularly significant to the application of a Feminist Family Theory lens onto working with Latino Pentecostals is opening the conversation to the clients so that they may share their own narrative and not be confined to treatment that assumes a shared dominant cultural construct. The opportunity to explore the non-dominant story and

provide space for the subjugated story are the benefits of working from a Feminist Family Theory perspective.

To compliment the Feminist Family Theory perspective, Object Relations Theory will be employed to explore the process through which the experience of Latino Pentecostals in relation to their interactions with external objects is internalized. In addition the concept of a “good enough holding environment” that is central to Object Relations Theory will complement the collectivistic frame that will be identified as the Latino Pentecostal experience.

Feminist Family Theory and Object Relations Theory will be applied to a discussion of the Latino Pentecostal experience. Within the discussion of the experience of Latino Pentecostals it is important to deconstruct the personal identity of the researcher. As a Latina Catholic, the general construction of an acculturated identity as shared with the population leads to the absence of fully explored concepts specific to Latinos. A shared ethnic identity allows much material to be appreciated as a shared cultural experience with that of the researcher and the population. The spiritual identity as Catholic provides a shared basis for Christian perspectives; however the nuances of Pentecostal tradition are not a shared experience.

The limitations of the discussion of Latino Pentecostals are that within the literature there were not empirical studies to either support or discount the theoretical frameworks in respect to the population. Lack of empirical literature is in fact the most significant limitation of providing a clear, well referenced discussion of the Latino Pentecostal experience within the field of social work. Also limiting the discussion is the personal bias of the researcher. An exploration of a Latino population by a non-Latino

researcher may provide a more detailed deconstruction of the culture. The shared experience limits the need for personal deconstruction. Subsequent exploration may benefit from a comparison and contrast with the Pentecostal experience of non-Latinos with that of Latinos.

The next chapter will provide a beginning frame for exploring the Latino Pentecostal experience. The history, social construction and growth of the Latino Pentecostal phenomenon will be outlined. In addition, this chapter will illuminate some of the Latino Pentecostal experiences that lead to the intersection of Latino Pentecostals with the mental health system.



## CHAPTER III

### LATINO PENTECOSTALISM

#### *Introduction*

Pentecostalism in the United States is a growing phenomenon. This thesis focuses on Latino Pentecostalism specifically, as it exists with the larger framework of Pentecostalism. The literature on Pentecostalism is mostly rooted in the White, American, Southern tradition. This does not accurately represent the experience of Latino Pentecostalism. There is in fact a distinction that is identified in Latino specific literature, but perhaps most profoundly distinct in experience. Despite the general framework of Pentecostalism there is the underlying notion that Pentecostalism is an experience, not a religion.

This chapter will explore the history of the Pentecostal Church in the United States and its global influence, as well as examine the Pentecostal experience in defining and describing common themes and practices in the experience. Further, this chapter will discuss the distinctions of the Latino experience in the Pentecostal faith and its intersection with community, social justice and mental health.

#### *History of Pentecostalism*

Pentecostals as a collective have a short, but growing history as an organized faith group. Their history, spanning just over a century, has developed the roots of a faith group that is community centered and collectivistic in structure. Holm (1991, p. 141) frames the Pentecostal movement as “based on Protestant (more specifically Methodist)

traditions. It has its background in American holiness movements with fundamentalist biblical views.”

According to Holm (1991, p. 142) the global impact of Pentecostalism is continuously spreading. Grounded in the biblical declarations of gospel writers Mark and Matthew, Pentecostals act upon the following lines in scripture: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19); “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15); and “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14).

The primary goal of the spread of Pentecostalism is following through with the commissions of the gospel to evangelize the nations of the world before the imminent return of Christ (Anderson, 2002). Through missionary groups fueled by what Anderson identified as the role of premillennial eschatology (the belief that Jesus Christ will return to set up a thousand year reign on earth), the implanting of Pentecostal churches that began in the United States has expanded into China, India, Africa and Latin America, converting Catholics, Anglicans, Protestants, Evangelicals and independent churches (Anderson, 2002). As Anderson (2002, p. 40) declared: “It (Pentecostalism) is probably the fastest expanding religious movement in the world ever, certainly the fastest within Christianity”.

The spread of global Pentecostalism is a testament to the passion and drive of the larger population of Pentecostals. The global impact is inspiring. Significantly impressive is the spread of Pentecostalism into Latin America. Anderson (2007, p. 10) commented: “Statistics are imprecise and vary enormously between the different sources – but it is quite possible that half of the classical Pentecostals in the world are found in

Latin America.” Anderson (2007) further notes the work of statisticians Barrett and Johnson that estimate in 2000 there were 141 million Pentecostals/Charismatics/New-Pentecostals in Latin America. Furthermore based on the growth patterns Pentecostals could be the majority in Latin America by 2010.

Immigration patterns as well as growth within the United States Latino-Pentecostal tradition have both impacted the perpetual spread of Pentecostalism among Latinos living in the United States. Five years ago, of the thirty-seven million Latinos in the United States, nearly five million declared themselves as Pentecostal. Seventy percent of Latinos in the United States identify as Roman Catholic and twenty-three percent identify as Pentecostal (Sanchez Walsh, 2003). The intersection of Latino Pentecostal identities and dominant United States culture present the formation of an identity held by Latino Pentecostals that is separate from the larger culture.

#### *The Latino Pentecostal Phenomenon*

The intersection of identities as Latino and Pentecostal is a bit nuanced. Research would support the notion that Latino Pentecostals are ambivalent to their ethnic identity. However, as Sanchez-Walsh (2003, p. 40) notes:

They tend to subsume their ethnic identity under the rubric of their religious identity for very specific reasons:

- (1) The feeling Pentecostals have that they are commanded to relinquish any identity that deters them from a religious one; and
- (2) Ethnic identity has little to do with the experiential nature of Pentecostalism, and therefore adherents are loosed from their ethnic moorings through a revitalized spiritual life.

On the other hand Latino Pentecostals/Charismatics bolster their ethnic identity by retaining their language, founding churches that cater to their constituencies, and teaching their children about their history.

Sufficient evidence from the historical and contemporary records indicates that Latino Pentecostals, if not overtly, subtly view their ethnicity as an important component to who they are as religious people.

In exploring Latino Pentecostalism in the United States it is not only important to understand the distinction of the Latino Pentecostal identity, but it is also important to understand the experiences within the Pentecostal tradition that present as potential clashes with the dominant United States culture. Perhaps the most distinct practice of traditional Pentecostals, and the most clinically discussed, is the experience of Spirit Baptism. Also called Glossolalia, the speaking of tongues is an experience for members of the Pentecostal faith that have been “Baptized” or “entered into by the Spirit”. McMahan (2002, p. 337) noted that the Spirit Baptism experience is “marked by a sense of being overwhelmed emotionally and at times physically. Persons may experience a flood of emotions. They may react physically, waving their arms, running, or jumping.” Biblical scripture found in Acts 2:15 notes the experience of the disciples as they were described at Pentecost as appearing drunk. McMahan (2002, p. 337) noted: “accompanying physical effects include those mentioned earlier as well as swooning, laughing, and crying. Recipients report a heightened awareness of the Holy Spirit. Other recipients may even report loss of awareness of their surroundings.” It is primarily through the Spirit Baptism experience that individuals then intersect with the mental health system. As Belcher and Casico (2001, p. 63) pointed out: “Social workers are likely to treat people after their deliverance experience (Spirit Baptism) and when problems from the past have resurfaced.” It is here where the opportunity for spiritual growth and the clash with the psychological process may occur, compromising an

individual's ability to maintain a "healthy" mental state. Belcher and Casico (2001, p. 64) assert, "The first temptation in addressing an individual who has undergone deliverance (Spirit Baptism) is to undo the process. But the client has come looking for treatment – not to have his or her theological position challenged."

The identity of the Latino Pentecostal is, as are all identities, in constant evolution. There are however, some general underpinnings that have shifted over the years, but remain as an organizing factor and element of cultural pride for Latinos. The formation of the Latino Pentecostal identity is strongly rooted in the spirit of social activism and a commitment to social justice for not only Latino Pentecostals, but all the disenfranchised. The formation of the Latino Pentecostal identity and its evolution requires an understanding of the social context of which these identities were bred. Arlene M. Sanchez Walsh (2003, p. 38) discusses the social context in which the Mexican Americans in Southern California began their identity formation as being contingent upon:

- (1) The conditions Mexican immigrants faced in turn-of-the-century Los Angeles
- (2) The prevailing religious atmosphere in the city
- (3) The origins of the Pentecostal movement in the United States; and the relationship between Pentecostal leaders and Mexican immigrants.

These circumstances are the backdrop for what became known as the Azusa Street revival in 1906, in relation to Latinos. The organizing principle in Pentecostalism of premillennial eschatology perpetuated the search for reaching those that needed to hear the message of God in order to prepare for the second coming. The atmosphere of impoverished, racially segregated Los Angeles presented an opportunity for Pentecostal leaders. Pentecostals were aware that racial segregation in the United States created not

only barriers to social advancement, but barriers to spiritual practice. Pentecostalism offered an opportunity for spiritual practice to occur in a multi-racial context. Unlike the dominant churches of Catholic and Protestant groups there was not a large institutionalized force behind Pentecostalism. Without the limitations of the declarations of the larger church bodies, Pentecostal leaders had the freedom and racial privilege to practice anywhere they chose. The Azusa Street revival was essentially a “mission” to bring the gospel to the spiritually suffocated in Los Angeles (Sanchez Walsh, 2003).

Within the revival Mexican female converts offered their services in translating scripture and sermons for Spanish speaking visitors. Sanchez Walsh (2003, p. 69) noted: “the essential role of Latinas as transmitters of faith and their traditional evangelical role as helpmates should not go unnoticed.” Significant in the Latino Pentecostal identity of the Azusa Street movement was an opportunity to come together and support each other, in their language and their cultural context while experiencing Pentecostalism. Community and collectivism emerge as themes in other Latino Pentecostal movements.

The suggestion of Sanchez Walsh to examine the cultural context within the beginning of a movement in the history of Latino Pentecostalism is very valuable in framing the social circumstances that are specific to not only minorities, but Latinos in particular. Elizabeth Rios documents the role of Latinas in the Pentecostal faith-based activism that has unfolded since the Azusa Street Revival. The growth of the Pentecostal movement spurred the quick recruitment of the marginalized members of society. Rios (2005, p. 199) notes: “It was no surprise that Latinos – feeling increasing subjugation from the California Anglo population – became part of the movement.” The theme of subjugation is also reoccurring in Latino Pentecostal movements currently taking place.

Responding to the social suffocation of subjugation, Latino Pentecostals use collectivism and community as organizing factors for providing services to their members and those in need in ways in which the larger community, essentially government, cannot or will not provide. Rios (2005, p. 209) shares the expression of Manoel de Mello, a Pentecostal pastor when he challenges:

What good does it do to convert a million people if at the same time the devil unconverts ten million through hunger, disease and military dictatorship? These sort(s) of things one can't overcome by holding wonderful religious services, but by organizing one's forces and joining with others who have similar interests. We must join now with other Protestants and even with Roman Catholics to help each other.

The tradition of activism in Latino Pentecostalism is rich. Rios (2005, p. 211) further documents the work of Gaston Espinosa and Daniel Ramirez for showing the “tradition of social service by providing housing, food, and medical services for migrants and immigrants. Latino Pentecostal ministers served as ad hoc social workers, taxi drivers, counselors and relief service providers.” Both Rios and Sanchez Walsh note the early generation of Latino Pentecostal identity was to transform a community through “Jesus and the Word.” Advocacy and policy change were not up to them. The second and third generations of Latino Pentecostals have internalized an identity of not waiting for the second coming, rather to become active in influencing structural change and not accept social injustice.

The Latino Pentecostal experience is heavily rooted in community and activism. As Holm (1991, p.149) writes: “It (Pentecostalism) has cemented groups together and helped to create conditions that promote social mobility, especially among the middle and lower middle class, which have thus strengthened their positions in society.” This has a

profound impact on the identity of the Latino Pentecostal. Furthermore the need to take care of each other and those with needs provides a very tight, supportive community that one may argue serves as a larger family network; essentially a collectivistic community within a greatly individualistic society. Collectivism and community with a large underpinning of social subjugation are essential components to the socialization experience of the Latino Pentecostal identity.

To appreciate the range of the Latino Pentecostal experiences, it is also essential to understand the spiritual expression of the Latino Pentecostal to grasp the range of identity and nuances. Holm (1991, p. 140) categorized the Pentecostal experiences as “fiery sermons, prophecy, speaking in tongues and faith healing.” A significant piece of the Pentecostal experience is transcendent communication. Holm (1991, p. 143) noted: “It (Pentecostalism) stresses that Christianity is an experience affecting individuals who must undergo a personal experience of God and His activity. This is most frequently manifest through enthusiastic and ecstatic experiences.” The enthusiastic and ecstatic experiences referenced by Holm are discussed widely in literature on the Pentecostal experience. Terms such as Glossolalia, Speaking in Tongues, Spirit Baptism, Filling of the Spirit and Gift of Tongues are most commonly used in discussions of the Pentecostal experience.

McMahan (2002, p. 341), in his writings on Spirit Baptism stated: “Traditional Pentecostals believe speaking in unknown tongues is the initial evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.” Speaking in unknown tongue is referenced in Acts 2, Acts 10 and I Corinthians 12-14 in the New Testament of the Bible. McMahan (2002, p. 342) explains:



The person speaks in a language that is unknown to her or him. The language may not be traceable to any known language. At exceptional times, some have spoken a language not known to them but identifiable as another known language. The language may be identified as the language of “heaven” (I Corinthians 13:1) and whether similar to an earthly language or heavenly, the full meaning of what is spoken is known only by God (I Corinthians 14:1-3).

Holm (1991, p. 137) discusses that there are two types of glossolalia, prayer and prophetic. He notes the distinctions as: “Prayer glossolalia occurs in the ejaculations of different individuals (alone and in groups), and prophetic glossolalia, which is pronounced loudly and clearly at a meeting, followed by an interpretation in the language of the participants.” While terms such as Glossolalia, Speaking in Tongues, Spirit Baptism, Filling of the Spirit and Gift of Tongues, appear to be used interchangeably in some literature there are some distinctions in the processes of the experience.

Baptism in the Pentecostal tradition is not similar to the “Baptismal” experience of other Christian faiths. There is not a relationship with water, oils or ashes, nor is there a ceremony that is anticipated or prepared for. Baptism in the Spirit or Spirit Baptism is the experience of the Holy Spirit entering an individual thus prompting the exaltation of glossolalia or speaking in tongues. Spirit Baptism often occurs within a group context where the community witnesses another’s expression of emotion and then interprets this as either prayer or prophetic. It is possible for one to experience Spirit Baptism while alone at night. It then becomes a function of the group to validate the individual’s Spirit Baptism as authentic as the gift of tongues comes from God (The Holy Spirit), which cannot be self-produced.

The Pentecostal experience provides a contained community in which Spirit Baptism can be socially revered. Holm (1991, p. 146) noted:

The opportunity for experiencing others' [Spirit Baptism] reinforces a readiness to act in someone who anticipates a Baptism in the Spirit. Not infrequently, there are also prayers, with the laying on of hands for those awaiting baptism in the spirit, so that social inhibitions against speaking in tongues are removed.

The event of Spirit Baptism also presents with physical manifestation of the individual's body being controlled or influenced by the Spirit. Dancing in the Spirit, trembling, convulsions, jumping, falling to the ground and other physical experiences have been reported. It is notable that it is not until an individual experiences the Spirit Baptism and speaking in tongues that one is permitted to authentically exalt glossolalia at will. The validation of the group as one having an authentic Spirit Baptism is essential. It is only after the communal affirmation that an individual is open to receive the Spirit at any time in the future and therefore is able to freely speak in tongues during a sermon or healing service. Glossolalia prior to Spirit Baptism is inauthentic and considered unacceptable. The experience of Pentecostals is unique in that emotive expression is highly revered and normalized by the Pentecostal community. The emphasis on community and collectivism often permits the Pentecostal community to seek help and resources from within its own structure. However, within the prioritization of social activism and obtaining the resources needed for the optimal success and health of an individual, outside professional assistance may be sought.

Gritzmacher, Bolton and Dana(1988, p. 235) discuss the intersection of Pentecostals with the professional mental health system:

The first psychological studies of Pentecostals sought to investigate the common belief that the religious 'excesses' and 'emotionalism' which speaking in tongues represented must be motivated by psychopathology...over the years glossolaliacs have been variously

labeled as schizophrenic, hysteric, cataleptic, regressed, emotionally unstable, immature, neurotic, excessively dependent, highly dogmatic.

The next chapter examines Feminist Family Theory as a way of expanding the lens through which the Latino Pentecostal experience is viewed. Feminist Family Theory calls for a challenge to shift the power dynamic in examining the Pentecostal experience and provide a new, expanded framework to explore the range of strengths and alternatives to psychopathology.

## CHAPTER IV

### FEMINIST FAMILY THEORY

Acknowledging the relative youth of the intersection of Latino Pentecostalism and the mental health system it seems fitting to look to a relatively youthful framework to begin the discussion of treatment and theoretical underpinning. The following chapter will explore the history and evolution of Feminist Family Theory as well as provide an understanding of the modalities in which Feminist Family Theory may be practiced. This chapter will also discuss the elements of Feminist Family Theory that are left to be explored as well as the benefits to working from a Feminist perspective.

#### *History and Evolution of Feminist Family Theory*

Family therapy debuted in the 1950's, when society shifted and forced the reintegration of women from the work place back into the home as men returned from the Second World War (Silverstein, 2003). Early family theory operated under several social certainties such as the notion that two parents, one male and one female, and their children, comprise a family. Men were viewed as focused on finances and discipline and women were viewed as focused on the caretaking roles and were often noted as the cause for most child pathology.

The opportunity to question gender roles or push the boundaries of the “normal family” was limited in Family Theory. Family therapy leaders into the early 1970's were mostly white, middle class men. The “cannon” was comprised of Nathan Ackerman, Gregory Bateson, Murray Bowen, Jay Haley and Salvador Minuchin. Complimenting the

men was Virginia Satir, who one may argue did attempt to push the “roles” of parents in her sessions, to look beyond the gendered norms, but Satir did not identify as a feminist, nor did she outwardly question the “normal family” as a professional priority (Silverstein, 2003, p. 26).

Silverstein (2003) maps the emergence of Feminist Theory into the realm of family therapy. Silverstein notes the initial steps of the feminist movement included a call to recognize the way acceptance of gender roles has been perpetuated by generations including the very feminists that were ready to shift the norm of gender identity. As Silverstein noted:

Michele Bograd (1986) acknowledged that, as she began to rethink her own practice, she realized that many of her interventions were unconsciously gender-biased, for example, asking the mother, rather than the father, about a child’s development history; asking the father, not the mother, about finances (Silverstein, 2003, p. 19).

Feminists then hoped to prioritize the conversation of gender being as much as an organizing factor as generations within a family dynamic. This is to say that the life cycle should not only consider the age and place in life, but the gender constructed roles that have been socially ascribed to member of the family. Several pioneers in the feminist movement were working separately from each other until the organizing of a meeting in Stonehenge, Connecticut in 1984. The convening of 50 prominent women in family therapy was organized by Monica McGoldrick, Carol Anderson and Froma Walsh (Silverstein, 2003). This meeting created a network for women to move forward in the introduction of the conversation of the feminist perspective with the support and solidarity of fellow professionals.

Silverstein notes The Women's Project in family therapy, organized by Marianne Walters, Betty Carter, Peggy Papp and Olga Silverstein as a contributing event to the feminist movement. Providing a forum to discuss women's issues in therapy, The Women's Project conducted workshops throughout the United States and England to present the opportunity to question the gendered roles and discuss issues such as "identifying how gender socialization constructs behavior, recognizing that women have limited access to financial resources, challenging the internalized sexism that inhibits many women, and acknowledging that now intervention is gender-neutral" (Silverstein, 2003, p. 32).

Thelma Jean Goodrich, Cheryl Ramage, Barbara Ellman, and Kris Halstead founded The Women's Institute for Life Studies to offer feminist programs. Collaboratively, they authored a book in which they declared that "family therapy had ignored the oppression of women within patriarchal culture and thereby had created a system of theory; practice and training that perpetuated this oppression" (Silverstein, 2003, p. 33). The *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* was founded by Lois Berman in 1988 to provide an arena for continuing the conversation of feminist theory in a scholarly, permanently published medium. The emergence of this journal provided the opportunity to broaden the lens of feminist theory to not only provide guidelines for shifting the gendered conversation, but acknowledged the socially constructed confines of culture biases. These cultural biases further subjugated the identities of women in non-heterosexual relationships, women of color and inauthentic identities that men have had to personify due to gendered socialization. The *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* further provided a framework to re-shape the works of "the canon" of male influences on

the field of family therapy, such as Marianne Ault-Riche's analysis on the clinical practices of Salvador Minuchin and Nathan Ackerman. Deborah Luepnitz' contribution challenged the work of Gregory Bateson that was so dominant in the family therapy field. Most explicit in the conversation of Feminist Theory was the critique of the level of misogyny that was inherently present in the work of family therapy.

Further examination into the gendered analysis of family therapy led to the emergence of the conversation of power. In deconstructing the power relationships in families, family therapy called for the acknowledgement of power as an invisible member of family systems. Power conversations could no longer be isolated to age, meaning power was acquired generationally through changes in the family life-cycle, rather power was inherent in terms of gender and the male perspective and assumption of "valuable power" in family systems.

Silverstein (2003) also acknowledged Harriet Lerner for noting the concept that change may occur within family systems; however for movement in shifting relationships and prescribed gender roles to take place a societal shift must occur. Significant in the conversation of power and encouraging a social shift of power was the engagement of men into the feminist family therapy movement. Michele Bograd (Silverstein, 2003) re-shaped feminist theory to be not only inclusive of, but appealing to male practitioners in the field. Feminist theory became not just a means of empowering women in challenging gender constructs, but a lens to evaluate and re-story socially ascribed gender roles.

The introduction of the exploration of the ethnic, cultural and racial dynamics in therapy was minimally introduced by Celia Falicov in 1982; however the movement was not largely embraced in terms of applying feminist principles to working with non-

dominant cultured clients (Silverstein, 2003). Elaine Pinderhughes in 1986 took the call to look at race and gender collaboratively to illustrate that gender differences were not the only opportunity for subjugation of women of color, rather their race or ethnorace was an equally if not more marginalizing factor in identity construction (Silverstein, 2003). The presentation of Pinderhughes' work was acknowledged, but not largely prioritized in the feminist therapy movement. The dismissal of the gender/cultural intersection was presented as a reflection of the field having a greater representation of women from the dominant white group. Race and gender did not become a focus or a greater discussion; however several women of color remained dedicated to the validation and acknowledgement of gender issues as they intersect with issues of race and culture. By the early to mid-1990's the gendered conversation included the intricacies of race and culture as they impact the family system (Silverstein, 2003). Nancy Boyd-Franklin, Nydia Garcia-Preto, Lillian Comas-Diaz complimented the work of Falicov and Pinderhughes as they opened the call for the feminist lens of re-examining the social ascription of gender roles to re-examine the socially ascribed roles of race and culture. Silverstein (2003) credits Green and Hall in 1994 for proposing the call for therapists to become more culturally competent. Green and Hall further assert that "cultural competence requires not simply a theoretical understanding of racism, but a personal awareness as well. They proposed that there is an ethical mandate for therapists to confront and understand their own racial identity and racism" (Silverstein, 2003, p.23).

It should be noted that there is no mention of "normal" religion or spirituality in Feminist Theory. Through the lens of feminist theory one could infer that the failure to mention religion or spirituality is a reflection of the notion that the dominant is assumed.



In this instance, Christianity, more specifically Protestantism is “normal” or dominant thus the assumed religion.

### *Theory in Action*

The application of Feminist Family Theory is ambiguous. The ambiguity is the main criticism, and the greatest asset of working from a feminist perspective. As Wallace, Miller, Myers-Avis and Wheeler (1989, p. 147) described:

Feminism is not a set of techniques or conclusions, but rather a lens through which one views and understands realities. Feminism is a process that begins with the recognition of the inferior status of women, proceeds to an analysis of the specific forms and causes of that inequality, makes recommendations for strategies of change, and eventually leads to a recognition and validation of women’s realities, women’s interpretations, and women’s contributions.

Wheeler et al. (1989) proposed the feminist approach to incorporate elements of family systems thinking. They outlined the approach to be:

- A. An emphasis on social context as a prime determinant of behavior
- B. The use of reframing and re-labeling to shift the conceptual or emotional perspective on a situation
- C. Modeling
- D. An emphasis on action and behavioral change
- E. Commitment to facilitating equality in personal power between women and men and in its support of clients’ rights to design their lives outside of culturally prescribed sex roles.

Wheeler et al. (1989) emphasized that the feminist approach is a response to the issues created for women by the socialization process of gender identity construction. They further asserted that “feminist family therapy demands a more political, institutional and gender-sensitive viewpoint, which confronts familial and societal barriers so that women can exercise their individual choices and participate as equals with men” (Wheeler et al., 1989, p. 142). It is important to note that feminist family therapy is distinguished from

general feminist therapy in that it operates to shift family structure and its process in an effort to re-balance or balance the power structures within families based on gender and questioning ascribed gender roles.

In the model for Feminist Family Therapy proposed by Wheeler et al. the therapeutic process is broken down into two task areas: perceptual/conceptual skills, executive skills. Perceptual/conceptual skills when taken from the lens of a feminist model do not solely consider the family as it relates to its own structure or its own family unit, rather the perception is now expanded to include the social structures that have contributed to the functioning of the family unit and how the social structures have shaped, benefited, hindered or maintained the family functioning. A perceptual/conceptual skill is the relationship forming of the family and therapist where the lens is large enough to hold all members of the family unit in their family and social contexts. In the executive skills it is the affective experience that becomes an area of great importance and movement in the family system. The affect as presented and experienced by members of the family system leads to the direction of the intervention. The executive area serves as the moment in the therapeutic alliance that defines the problem and action is taken to shift the affective experience in a way that is empowering and containing for the subjugated member of the family, more specifically the females. The model as proposed by Wheeler et al. is intended to provide a forum for shifting gender role stereotypes and supporting a family structure that is shifted and balanced in power.

Goodrich, Rampage, Ellman, and Halstead (1988) outlined the action of the feminist family theory as an examination of how stereotyping and socially prescribed gender roles impacts:

- A. Each individual in the family
- B. Relationships between individuals and the family
- C. Relationships between the family and society
- D. Relationships between the family and the therapist

Goodrich et al. proposed that with the exploration of the effects of all areas of impact and influence the family is presented with a broader range for which to frame its functioning and a broader range to explore a solution to the presenting problem. The goal of the feminist perspective is not adjustment, but social, structural, family, and individual change to establish balance and provide a frame for which the optimal range of a positive affective life experience is possible. By extension the change that occurs within the family unit is then reflected in the change of the individual in relation to the family, the individual in relation to society and the family in relation to society. The change as experienced by the individual and/or family is not an isolated change but is rather a change that impacts the larger social context in which the family/individual exist. The general framework as proposed by Goodrich et al. (1988) noted the following theoretical underpinnings of feminist family therapy:

- A. Both men and women are accountable for the quality of marital and family life.
- B. Rather than rigid role definition and difference, good relationships are marked by mutuality, reciprocity, and interdependency.
- C. Clients who learn about the source and implication of their beliefs have keys to liberation.
- D. All people responsible for fostering the growth of our children are charged both with nurturing them and with helping them be proficient in the world outside the home.

- E. Family structure does not need to be hierarchical to carry out family functions, rather let it be democratic, responsive consensual.
- F. The respect, love and safety required for the best of human growth and enjoyment are equally possible in a variety of constellations: lesbian relationships, single-parent families, dual career couples and other.
- G. Connection and autonomy are to be equally sought, and each is a necessary condition for the other.
- H. Power, as so far exercised by men, fathers, and husbands, is not to be more equally shared but banished altogether and replaced by giving one's skills and influence towards the well-being of others just as one also does for one's own well-being.

Goodrich et al. also acknowledged that while guiding principles may be created and held as a framework for the delivery of a feminist model of family therapy it is inherently an ambiguous process. "Feminist family therapy is not at set of techniques, but a political and philosophical viewpoint which produces a therapeutic methodology by informing the questions the therapist asks and the understanding the therapist develops" (Goodrich et al., 1988, p. 63). Goodrich et al. (1988) emphasized that the personal evaluation of the socialized self as a therapist is an integral part to the process of feminist therapy as the use of self is acknowledged as a modality in treatment. The self is gendered and therefore a contributing factor to the pre-supposed gendered dynamics in the room. The acknowledgement of one's own actions as reflection of socially prescribed roles is an equal element of the therapeutic process and, by extension, the social change process.

While generally discussed in terms of the gendered experience, the lens of feminist family therapy is not solely applicable to the empowerment of women. The feminist stance of re-evaluating the power dynamics and consideration of individuals and families takes place in the context of the greater society. The social construction of ascribed roles applies not only for gender, but also includes the ascribed roles of race, culture, immigration status, socio-economic states, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality

and ability. The insertion of any subjugated experience in relation to the culturally dominant experience is the adaptation of the feminist family theory that makes the theory open to application in various instances. Lillian Comas-Diaz (1994) acknowledged the incorporation of feminist theory into the empowerment process of the assisting the “LatiNegras” in dealing with and understanding the effects of racism, sexism, dislocation and other types of oppression. According to Comas-Diaz’s working model: “Feminist values are particularly relevant for LatiNegras. The feminist emphasis on the equalization of power can help LatiNegras to address their powerlessness by recognizing the need for and the development of more egalitarian relationships” (Comas-Diaz, 1994 p. 37).

Hardy and Laszloffy (1994) discuss the developments in family therapy that have been introduced by the feminist movement, but also acknowledge the failure of the feminist movement to explicitly discuss the realms of race and ethnicity to a well explored depth. The authors view the efforts to “consider ways in which socio-cultural variables contribute to differences between families” (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1994, p. 229), as beneficial, but not thorough, and they assert: “The failure to address the complex relationships between race and gender greatly minimizes the utility of the feminist dialogue for some women of color.”

### *Summary*

Feminist Family Theory was the first attempt to challenge the perpetuation of dominant ideas and discourse. The gendered experience was the organizing factor for women to engage in conversation and scholarly action surrounding the expansion of the definition of gender roles. The broadening of the lens thought which an individual and

family are viewed allows for the expansion and increase of the possibility for solution and shifting in dynamics. The flexibility of the theory to be able to hold social concepts beyond gender permits the opportunity to explore other subjugated identities in relation to their social prescriptions. The ability to see an identity in its full social breadth creates the opportunity to view areas of opportunity and empowerment in order to further shift the dominant discourse surrounding the subjugated story and validating the existence and desire for a positive affective experience in an individual. As the family relates to the positive experience, the family then relates to the social experience, creating space for social change.

The following chapter explores the theory of Object Relations. The exploration of the internalization of lived experience in the creation of meaning for individuals will provide a framework for discussing the way in which an individual finds meaning in subjective, spiritual experience. The history and evolution of Object Relations are provided, well as an understanding of the modalities in which Object Relations may be practiced. This chapter will also discuss the elements of Object Relations that are left to be explored as well as the benefits to working from an Object Relations perspective.

CHAPTER V  
OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY

*Introduction*

Object Relations is based on the belief that all people have within them an internal, often unconscious world of relationships that is different and in many ways more powerful and compelling than what is going on in their external world of interactions with ‘real and present people’ (Melano Flanagan, 2002, p. 124).

The theory of Object Relations explores the ways in which people have internalized their interactions with others, thus becoming a part of their unconscious process and a contribution to how each individual interacts in the world and with them. Object Relations Theory has been discussed by several theorists. William Ronald Dodds Fairbairn, Donald Woods Winnicott, Michael Balint, John Bowlby and Harry Guntirp all contributed to the development and discussions of Object Relations Theory. While contributions of all theorists will be outlined in this chapter, it is the theories of Winnicott that will be most discussed.

*Klein, Bowlby, and Winnicott*

The very nature of Object Relations Theory requires the interaction or interface of an individual with external objects. It is important to note that primarily “object” refers to another person, but does extend to include experiences as a way in which one may form an internalized, unconscious relationship. Discussions of Internal Object Relations were begun by Melanie Klein.

For Klein, internal objects were fantasized presences that were an accompaniment to all experience. In the primitive thinking of a child and the always primitive unconscious thought of an adult, projective and introjective fantasies based on infantile experiences of nursing, defecating and so on perpetually generated fantasies of good and bad internal objects, loving and hating, nurturing and destroying (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 110).

Theorists built upon the basic concept of the Internalized Object World and continued the discussion to examine relationship formation, maintenance and internalization. Given that interaction is key in Object Relations Theory, attachment is an absolute need for an individual. Discussions on attachment in terms of object relations were greatly explored by John Bowlby and D.W. Winnicott. Melano Flanagan (2002, p. 135) writes: “Bowlby (1969) was one of the first to conclude that attachment is a primary, biological, and absolute need in human beings, necessary for the survival of the species.”

Bowlby (1969) identified the mother as the first, instinctual attachment experience and the first opportunity for an infant's needs to be met or not met thus creating an attachment or lack of a positive attachment to an object. This is to say that it is instinctual for an infant to look to the mother as the one to meet the basic human needs of food, comfort, touch, and responsiveness to needs. If in fact the needs are met the child is able to experience a sense of safety and security with the world. If the needs are not met there is a mounding of the object and a survival response to meet one's own needs. In the meeting of needs by another the infant begins to develop positive soothing introjects. The feelings of frustration and anxiety are experienced when a need has arisen for an infant. Upon the meeting of the need the infant develops the ability to develop soothing introjects. Melano Flanagan (2002, p. 165) defines introjects as “the result of



what one has taken from others. They are the inner people we all carry within us”.

Introject can be a positive comforting and soothing experience or it can be a negative, unsatisfying experience. The distinction can only be drawn based on the individual’s subjective experience with the object and is categorized within the unconscious.

D.W. Winnicott supported Bowlby’s insistence for an attachment to be present in order for one to experience the development of introjects. Winnicott expanded the work to not only emphasize attachment, but to identify separation as a component of healthy development. In the realm of attachment Winnicott uses the term “holding environment”. His description of a “good enough holding environment” is the “capacity of a mother to create the world in such a way for the baby that she feels held, safe, and protected from dangers without and protected as well from the danger of emotions within” (Melano Flanagan, 2002, p. 46). Notable in the work of Winnicott is the notion that a mother does not need to be a perfect in terms of caregiving and responsiveness, rather the mother (caregiver) only needs to be “good enough”. The important distinction is the need to be responsive and soothing, not overly responsive and the model of perfect parenting, simply “good enough”.

As Winnicott discussed the separation of a child from the caregiver, he noted the use of “transitional objects”. Transitional objects are being defined as a physical object, or other sensory memory such as a song or a scent that holds the representation of another when the child is not yet able to hold the representation of an outside object in the psyche. Transitional object can be seen as the holders of a memory or person. Winnicott held much value in one’s capacity to be alone even in the presence of another. Aloneness is not in fact the same as loneliness, unless there is a usual sense of not having needs met

in which instance they are one in the same. Winnicott notes one's capacity to be alone and separate, but remain psychically connected as a sign of healthy and developmentally appropriate separation.

Mitchell and Black (1995, p. 163) discussed Winnicott's main area of interest as not the traditional psychopathology of symptoms and behaviors, rather "Winnicott was concerned with the quality of subjective experience: the sense of inner reality, the infusion of life with a feeling of personal meaning, the image of oneself as a distinct and creative center of one's own experience." In focusing on the individual's subjective experience Winnicott noted a distinction with the "True Self" and the "False Self".

Winnicott discussed that a healthy attachment bolstered by "good enough" caregivers and healthy separation, creates the genuine and flexible "holding environment" needed for an individual to permit their "True Self" to emerge. This is to say that a person may represent to the outside world an authentic identity that is true to their own subjective relationship with the world rather than a "False Self" – an identity that is shaped and shifted to accommodate the needs of another or to ensure the contentment of another. Melano Flanagan (2002, p. 136) writes: "Uniqueness, vibrancy, idiosyncrasy, difference are all submerged. In this debilitating, constricting process the energy, the power the "wildness" of the True Self is lost."

#### *Fairbairn & Guntrip*

W.R.D. Fairbairn (Mitchell & Black, 1995) contributed to the discussion of Object Relations Theory as well. Much like Winnicott, Fairbairn asserted that interaction with caregivers is a fundamental component to the development of self. Fairbairn challenged the notion of Freud that people or what Freud discussed as libido, was

pleasure seeking. He challenged that people/libido are object seeking. Mitchell and Black (1995, p. 65) noted: “The fundamental motivational push in human experience is not gratification and tension reduction, using others as a means toward that end, but connections with others as an end in itself”. Fairbairn explored the notion that if a child is provided with positive, connected experiences with the caregiver, the child then internalizes these experiences and later seeks out the same pleasurable experiences through positive interactions with others. If in fact the child receives negative experiences that do not “seemingly” provide pleasure the child internalized the non-pleasurable experience and continues to seek out the same thus perpetuating a cycle of internalized negative interactions.

In Fairbairn’s discussions of ego he categorized it in three distinct parts: the central ego, libidinal ego and the anti ego. Melano Flanagan (2002, p. 153) defined the three parts as follows:

The central ego is primarily conscious and assumes the responsibility of the ego functions. The primarily unconscious libidinal ego refers to the part of the self that is loving and expansive, and grows in relation to good, positive experiences with others. The even more unconscious antilibidinal ego is the repository of bad object experiences that have now been introjected to become part of the self.

Fairbairn noted internalized objects to be the result of inadequate parenting. As the infant/child longs for the positive object experience it makes up in the form of an internalized object the part that was lacking. Mitchell and Black (1995, p. 69) described “Internal objects are not essential and inevitable accompaniments of all experience, but rather compensatory substitutes for the real thing, actual people in the interpersonal world”. It is in this definition of object relations that one notes an abused child’s inability

to find fault in the inadequate caregiver. Rather an internalized ideal of parent is what is projected by the child.

Harry Guntrip (Mitchell & Black, 1995) built upon the concepts of Winnicott and Fairbairn, adding the terms “ego weakness” and “regressed ego”. The regressed ego is a manifestation of an individual’s great neglect by the external and internal object worlds in which the absence of positive interactions results in isolation and complete social cut off. Ego weakness is the result of a profound sense of helplessness or hopelessness in effect a depressive state of being.

Object Relations Theory was mainly developed by British Theorists working from individual psychodynamic theories of Freud and Klein. The continued study and understanding of human development was the goal of theorists. The concepts of attachment and separation are discussed only in terms of societies that in fact value individuation and do not operate from a collectivistic framework. American theorists’ contributions to Object Relations Theory continue to use the lens of individualism rather than collectivism. While Melanie Klein provided much of the foundation for Object Relations Theory, the work has primarily been done by male psychoanalysts. Inherent in the language of the theory is the identification of the mother as the primary caregiver and thus the main object for which responsibility of healthy infant development occurs. Theory does not discuss communal or paternal responsibility in the introjection of positive attachment experiences.

Object Relations Theory provides an understanding of the ways in which individuals develop in relation to attachment, separation and general interactions with caregivers and others. Most importantly Object Relations frames the way in which

relations are formed and maintained in the psyche and how those internalizations intersect with an individual's response to others and society. By extension, it then impacts the other and society as the interaction is reciprocated and internalizations are unconsciously acted upon and further developed.

In the next chapter, Feminist Family Theory, Object Relations and the Latino Pentecostal experience will be examined in relation to one another. The intersection of Pentecostals with the mental health system and the importance of maintaining a collectivistic lens will be discussed. Object Relations in terms of the Pentecostal experience will also be discussed as it relates to the Pentecostal experience with God and community.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

#### *Major Points of Theories*

Recapping Feminist Family Theory, the central organizing theme is that it is not a set of techniques or a psychoanalytic process that treatment providers much adhere to; rather it is a lens or a stance one commits to for viewing, understanding and working with others. The commitment to examine one's own construction is however, a significant process through which one must commit to in order to gain a full appreciation for the benefits of working from a Feminist Family Theory lens.

The tradition of Feminist Family Theory is rooted in the concept of creating an egalitarian structure within socially ascribed gender roles. While gender roles and ascription of gender roles does take place in the Latino Pentecostal tradition the purposes of this examination of Feminist Family Theory and Latino Pentecostalism is not a call to solely deconstruct gender, rather it is a call to expand the Feminist Family Theory lens to invite the examination of one's own experiences to religious/spiritually ascribed roles and traditions; thereby creating space and appreciation for the context in which Latino Pentecostals develop and construct their roles.

Similar to Feminist Family Theory, Object Relations acknowledges that identity is formed in the interaction with external objects. Appreciation for the interactions of an individual with various "objects" offers a frame to understanding

the way in which one has been able to negotiate attachment, frustrations, ability to develop and demonstrate true self and need to create or represent as a false self.

Winnicott's concept of the "good enough holding environment" is expandable not only to the interactions to child and caregiver, but to individual and social systems.

The internalization of experiences creates the basis for which one views the world and relates to the world. The internalized experiences of emotions, life circumstances and overall life events create the self equipped with internal objects. The understanding of where the experiences or individuals present in the internalized object formation of an individual provides a psychodynamic frame to the appreciation of an individual's contextual truth.

The Latino Pentecostal experience is rooted in fundamental Christian concepts. The theological basis for Pentecostals is a passionate and often literal interpretation of the gospels. More than the theological foundation the experience, Latino Pentecostalism is highly emotive and expressive in the experience of Spirit Baptism. The physical manifestations of a deeply spiritual and intimate experience are witnessed and shared within a community context. The community of Pentecostals is another significant component to the Latino Pentecostal experience. Collectivism presents as the frame for which Latino Pentecostals relate within the community. This is counter to the individualistic, Eurocentric foundation of the dominant United States culture.

Acknowledging the unfortunate reality that the dominant system is not equipped or shaped to serve collectivist cultures, Latino Pentecostals have a tradition of social action and drive to serve those in need. The limits of the social actions that

have been achieved by Latino Pentecostals demand the interface with dominant culture systems of support. It is in this interface that complications, misunderstandings and further subjugations of an already subjugated population occur.

### *Analysis*

The ambiguity of Feminist Family Theory presents an appropriate lens through which to discuss Latino Pentecostals. It is the nature of looking for the subjugated story and searching to understand an individual's experience in relation to that story which permits a workable relationship within the two dynamics. The employment of Feminist Family Theory is not an attempt to dismantle power dynamics within the Latino Pentecostal tradition specifically; rather it is a call to dismantle the power dynamics that exist in relation to the dominant perspective of the mental health system and the subjugated experience of Latino Pentecostals.

Reviewing the tradition and commitment to a collectivistic ideal and a social justice framework within the Latino Pentecostal experience provides an understanding for the larger social construction that Latino Pentecostals may have internalized. The internalization of collectivism and social justice is not the dominant story, in terms of psychodynamic thought or the current mental health system. However, it is the very dynamic of collectivism and social justice that is a perceivable strength in the Latino Pentecostal community.

The invitation by Feminist Family Theory to examine ones own construction in order to provide awareness and appreciation for the context from which one forms thought patterns and therefore informs the way in which one connects with others is



perhaps the most significant portion of working within a Feminist Family Theory framework. It is the deconstruction of one's own script that is inherently the prescribed script of the dominant white, Protestant male (within the context of the acculturation in the dominant culture of the United States). This deconstruction creates space for understanding and appreciating the differences in construction of those not acculturated in the same traditions or systems. It is notable that the invitation to understand and deconstruct is not an invitation to dismiss challenging material. In all cases there is a call to understand, which is accompanied by the call to protect and treat.

The use of Feminist Family Theory as a lens to deconstruct the experience of Latino Pentecostals complements the psychodynamic experience of Object Relations Theory in that it understands the individual's exposure to external objects that informs the understanding of the individual in relation to the world. Significant to explore in the internalization of Latino Pentecostals is the internalization of emotion and the expression of emotion. The experience of Spirit Baptism and the Latino Pentecostal response to Spirit Baptism is significant to the way in which one internalizes emotional expression. The permission of the community to deeply, passionately engage in the experience of Spirit Baptism defines a range of experiencing emotion that is not reflected in the dominant culture of the United States.

The lack of reflection of the emotional truth of Latino Pentecostals in the larger society creates a breeding ground for a false self to develop in order to walk within the social constructs of the dominant culture. The concept of internalizing a

range of emotional expression that differs from that of the larger societal context creates another layer of subjugation among the already racially subjugated Latinos and spiritually subjugated Pentecostals. The story is seldom heard and seldom invited into the dominant discourse; therefore the true self is largely encumbered.

### *Synthesis*

At the very crux of social work is the collaborative work to dismantle structures and circumstances that create discomfort, pain and persecution of others. As Fuller and Strong (2001, p. 210) stated: “Only in telling another the truths about ourselves do we discover the truth about ourselves. We can ‘tell’ only what we know, but we come to ‘know’ only in telling.”. Within the dominant culture frame we can only ‘tell’ what we have permission to ‘tell’. Within the context of examining the internalized object world of another and distinguishing our individual context from that of another there is room to allow the story of another to unfold. In the unfolding of another with the deconstructed scaffolding of another contextual truth there is the opportunity for understanding, meaning making and collaborative work that aligns with the collectivistic frame of Latino Pentecostals.

Perhaps most significant is the opportunity to appreciate rather than pathologize the emotive experience of Latino Pentecostals as they receive the gift of Spirit Baptism. The understanding and recognition of a non-traditional/non-dominant range of experiencing and emotive event is central to the appreciation of the Latino Pentecostal experience. In addition, the appreciation of the internalization of deep, uninhibited emotional experience is not an experience ideally experienced alone. It is

in the witnessing of the emotional, physical and spiritual catharsis that is validating, containing and syntonic to the Latino Pentecostal experience.

The reverence of the collectivistic structure of Latino Pentecostals is an opportunity for incorporating family members, community members and others that may assist in the movement to wellness for an individual. The one on one, confidential structure of dominant culture clinical work does not always translate. There is large potential for misunderstandings and rejection of services when the alienation of an imposed individualistic value system is sensed. The call to evaluate one's own understanding of emotion and emotive range is important in the assessment of the dissonance that may present when one's emotive range is different from another person's.

The ambiguity of Feminist Family Theory and the individual interpretation of Object Relations Theory provides an interesting intersection with the appreciation of Latino Pentecostalism as an experience. The nature of experience is that it is subjective, there is little objective truth or structure in the "experience" of Latino Pentecostalism. Themes and general concepts exist, but the desire to hold on to or create definitions from which to create a working model is not possible, rather it is the holding of the undefined in the both theory and phenomenon that is the organizing principle of the work.

#### *Strengths and weaknesses of methodology*

There is a challenge in concretizing and defining themes in the methodology of this work. Empirical study would find great difficulty in capturing the phenomenon. The fact that there is no central collection of rules and regulations or step by step

method of working creates a subject matter that is essentially undefined outside of theory. One can document the observations of the Latino Pentecostal services or impose a scale to measure the emotive “health” of those that live the Latino Pentecostal experience, however the observer is bound by personal subjectivity and the scales may not be created in the cultural context specific to Latino Pentecostals.

Paradoxically it is the ambiguity of the methodology that is the strength. There is a call to appreciate the indefinable permits for the range of experiences and flexibility needed to work with a system that is based on experience rather than structure. Understanding that Pentecostalism has no central office, no central administrative structure, no allocation of budget, and no general counsel shaping its tradition requires the appreciation for its ambiguous nature.

#### *Implications for Social Work Practice*

Current clinical social work practice in most settings operates from a medical model. The established system of pathology is challenged to hold ambiguity. As social work becomes increasingly aware of the need to assess spirituality in a client’s world there is the opportunity to appreciate and consider the experiential context of Latino Pentecostalism in assessment and treatment of mental health conditions.

The need to balance the individual determination of the client in the course of treatment and appreciation for the delivery of culturally appropriate practice is a challenging space to hold in clinical social work practice. Deciphering what is in fact a mental health issue and what is an emotive range that is not the dominant experience is a challenge that requires careful, thoughtful and appropriate assessment.

The ambiguity as well as the social context of Latino Pentecostals poses the question of what is culturally appropriate treatment. This calls for consideration of various treatment modalities such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy that are culturally appropriate given the theme of collectivism and a distinctive emotive range as experienced by Latino Pentecostals. In addition, given the collective nature of Latino Pentecostals and the appreciation of community witnessing and participation in emotive experiences is one on one clinical treatment the most effective way of delivering services?

#### *Conclusion*

In attempting to provide a framework for which to work with Latino Pentecostals the conclusion reveals that there isn't one; rather it is a lens through which one chooses to view the experience of Latino Pentecostals with consideration of the collectivistic, fundamentally Christian values, social justice orientation and emotive range that emerge as themes in reviewing the experience. The growth of the Latino Pentecostal community in the United States leads to the reality that the intersection of Latino Pentecostals and main-stream services will present more frequently. Preparation for the culturally appropriate delivery of services requires examination of efficacy of treatment and one's own relationship to the material presented. Northcut (2001, p. 165) discussed the need for self regulation when presented with the ambiguity of the indefinable:

The absence of known universal truth requires the clinician to pay careful attention to the ethics and values of the profession, particularly that of self-determination. The ambiguity of postmodernism does not make treatment a "free-for-all" value system.

The deconstructions of the social worker's own construction directly inform the way one approaches and sits with others. It is within the openness, appreciation, and respect for the process of another that authentic connections form and treatment flourishes.

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