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The Impact of Feminist Pastoral Counseling on the Self -Esteem of Female Christians
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Presented to
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Feminist therapy has risen correspondingly to feminism since 1960 (Israeli & Santor, 2000). Dutton-Douglas and Walker (1988) stated that over a decade feminist theory has greatly impacted the major therapy systems. Feminist therapy also has developed considerably and brought its unique contribution to the area of psychotherapy. This therapy addresses four important issues, which are: (a) the special problems that women bring into the therapeutic setting, such as motherhood, employment discrimination, marriages, rape, wife abuse, sexual harassment, etc.; (b) sex-role socialization in the development of women, for example, women are expected to maintain the body image of a certain thin figure and try their best to stay young because this society adores youth, especially for women, and other social sex-roles which keep women subordinate to the other gender and, therefore, causes women's unhealthy problems.; (c) the inadequacies of contemporary theory, research, and practice in addressing the lives of women; and (d) the development of alternative approaches to conceptualization and intervention with women (Worell & Remer,1992).

Feminist mainline theology claimed that women's experiences are the important base to reconstruct traditional theology (Greene-McCreight, 2000). Feminist theologians read the Bible as an authority in a different perspective from Christian traditional theology. According to the historical criticism, priests and prophets wrote the biblical texts; then, of course, it represents the religion norms of priest and prophets (Greene-McCreight, 2000). Fiorenza, (as cited in Green-McCreight, 2000) who took the suspicious attitude while reading the Bible, questioned that all traditional religious names, texts, rituals, laws, and interpretive metaphors all bear "our Father's names" (p. 37). She insisted that women's self-affirmation, survival, power, and self-determination are the central spiritual and religious feminist quests. Fiorenza defined the patriarchy in Green-McCreight's book as follows:

Just as feminism is not just a worldview or perspective but a women's movement for change, so patriarchy is in my understanding not just ideological dualism or androcentric world

construction in language but a social, economic, and political system of graded subjugations and oppressions. Therefore I do not speak simply about male oppressors and female oppressed, or see all men over and against all women. Patriarchy as a male pyramid specifies women's oppression in terms of the class, race, country, or religion of the men to whom they "belong." (Green-McCreight, 2000, p. 34)

In this sense, Christian women also live in a church context, which is patriarchal and hierarchal. Feminist theology shares the common belief of feminist therapy by challenging different areas of the patriarchy system.

In my research, two Taiwanese women were interviewed to tell their experiences of living in the Taiwanese Christian church context. Through their experiences, I found the vast literature supported the reality of the Taiwanese Christian women still living in a system with patriarchal values.

My research, which binds feminist therapy and feminist theology, seeks to investigate the level in self-esteem of Christian women in Taiwan and to provide Christian women in Taiwan an alternative way to increase their self-esteem levels.

Statement of the Problem

People in mental health professions and people who seek help from counseling believe that counseling is one of the alternative ways to enhance peoples' mental health and well-being. Applied psychology went through several developmental stages in its history. The psychoanalytical psychology came first in the mental health world, then behaviorism, which once dominated the therapy world, and later, the third force therapy known as humanistic therapy. Now, there are different counseling theories and different counseling models trying to find their contributions in promoting human beings' mental health. In this research, feminist counseling was introduced to be a very powerful alternative therapy to achieve the goal of helping and healing. What has made feminist therapy a special therapy is that it has recognized the unique experiences that women have been living in a context which is androcentric, distributes unbalanced power among men and women, and expected women and men to fulfill their given stereotypical roles. Feminist therapy considers this is the important source for a lot of women who suffer from depression and low self-esteem.

Thus, to challenge the patriarchal system and its values is an important task during the therapy sessions. Compared to the other therapies, this is what makes feminist therapy more special than others. This research also attempts to explore how Christianity made an important contribution to the patriarchy system and belief, and how the traditional patriarchal theology brought the negative influence on Christian women's low self-esteem.

The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to support the idea that androcentric patriarchal system does contribute to women's low self-esteem, depression, and their unhappiness.

Church also plays a significant role in this big patriarchal system, especially to Christian women. By being aware of it and taking efforts to change it through feminist pastoral therapy, a Christian female client can benefit from it, increase her self-esteem, and find the happiness and mental health she deserves.

The Research Questions

Since the patriarchal belief systems have brought negative impacts on women's self-esteem and their well-beings, to seek an approach to help women become aware of their situation and help them to fight against the patriarchal system is critical. How much the feminist theology and feminist therapy can be integrated

together to help increase self-esteem in Christian women is the research question. This research question focuses on investigating the impact of using feminist therapy and feminist theology on female Christians and to see if this will enhance their self-esteem.

The Theoretical Framework

This study attempted to use feminist therapy and feminist theology as the major tools to help Christian women establish high self-esteem and find happiness in their daily lives.

Feminist Therapy Defined

Feminist therapy has provided guidance for clients in analyzing the external and internal factors causing emotional distress, and to facilitate female clients growth toward mental health (Dutton-Douglas & Walker, 1988). Feminist therapists believe that women's problems are caused in a larger context by the society in which they live, which devalues them, limits their access to resources, and discriminates against them economically, legally, and socially (Worell & Remer, 1992). Feminist therapy also finds that sexism exists in all areas of human beings' life: families, religion, education, recreation, the work place, and laws. Therefore, sexism is institutionalized and perpetuated by the enterprise of society. Rawling and Carter (1977) pointed out that the inferior status of women is due to their having less political and economic power than men. In light of all these findings and beliefs, feminist therapy searches for the models which can truly foster women's well being. Thus, some strategies may often be considered subversive.

Traditional Therapies Defined

Worell and Remer (1992) defined traditional therapies as therapies that emphasize on therapist's objectivity: analytical thinking, therapist expertise and control of procedures, emotional distance from clients, and intrapsychic dynamics. They suggested that therapists could be sexist in many ways, such as involving gender-biased stereotyping and diagnostic labeling, androcentric interpretations, and intrapsychic assumptions. For example, feminist therapists criticize the Freudian concepts of women having "penis envy," which is rooted in the androcentric psychoanalyst perspectives that having a penis is superior to having a vagina and uterus (Worell & Remer, 1992). As indicated in Figure 1, Worell and Remer (1992) compared the feminist therapy and traditional therapy.

Core Components and Values of Feminist Therapy

Feminist therapy contains rich diversity, both theoretically and therapeutically (Israeli & Santor, 2000). Cammaert and Larsen (1988) clearly summarized the feminist therapy's values in the book titled *Feminist psychotherapies: Integration of therapeutic and feminist systems*. It briefly acclaimed that the personal is political and it asserted women's choice, equalization of power, therapist as a role model, and androgyny. In addition, it introduced the ideas of consciousness-raising, social and gender role analysis, resocialization, and social activism.

Consciousness Raising Group.

The consciousness-raising group began with choosing a group work approach. The group gathers women together to discuss women's devalued status in society. It helps women realize that they are not the sole cause of their distress and that others share their problems (Israeli & Santor, 2000). Several quantitative studies have been made to prove that women who joined in the consciousness raising group gained higher self-esteem and their depression level decreased (Eastman, 1973; Weitz, 1982). Consciousness raising groups encourage women to believe that their needs are just as valid as their husbands or boyfriends' needs. Feminist consciousness-raising groups encourage women to transform the traditional roles they receive from society by promoting assertion, emotional independence, financial independence, and a sense of control or

competence. By doing this, these changes will also result in increased self-esteem and decreased depression (Weitz, 1982).

Social and Gender Role Analysis

Clients learn how their gender roles are shaped by society and how the cultural different norms affect women and men differently (Laidlaw & Malmo, 1991). Whalen (1996) indicated that false beliefs and self-doubts are the sources of women's problems. False beliefs are formed through women's early learning and social experiences, and they can be resocialized by new information and learning. Self-doubts come from the experiences of being abused or living a life controlled by someone else. It includes women's many faces, like a lack of belief in self-efficacy, and pervasive self-deprecation (Whalen, 1996). In brief, psychologists have learned since Gilligan (1982), that the characteristics and behavior of the development of women are different but not less than that of males. Feminists give their critiques to show women and men are limited by their sex roles. The emphasis of society on the differences in characteristics and skills between men and women, which are developed artificially and are perpetuated by the socialization process, is a false stereotype (Dutton-Douglas & Walker, 1988). Unfortunately, sex-roles stereotype women on their whole lifespan development. Sex-role conceptions affect how people evaluate and consider themselves (Worell & Remer, 1992). For example, in the survey of Sauer and Robles-Piña (2003), the major topic in the magazines that young girls often read is dieting. Society creates a "thin ideal" phenomenon and norms. It contributes to women suffering from eating disorders because society, media, and even family and peers reinforce these messages and values constantly.

Resocialization

In essence, resocialization has a goal to restructure a client's belief system and provides an experience in which women can build a positive self-image that is broader in scope than the prescribed image by patriarchal society (Israeli & Santor, 2000). Naumburg and Hepworth (2004) found a shift from the traditional view of divorce related to shame and pity to a normative occurrence that may provide an opportunity for growth. In the framework of feminist therapy, language forms are used in a more gender-sensitive and inclusive attitude. Feminist therapists reframe the language forms that devalue women from weakness to strength. For example, terms such as "enmeshed and fused" may be reframed as "caring, concerned, and nurturing" (Worell & Remer, 1992, p. 22).

Regarding the relation between sex-role orientation and psychological well-being, the traditional congruence model stresses that psychological well-being is maximized when one's sex-role orientation is congruent with one's gender. Now feminist therapy has proposed the androgyny model as more beneficial to the individual well-being. In other words, when one's sex-role orientation incorporates a high degree of both masculinity and femininity, regardless of one's gender, his or her well-being is enhanced (Whitley Jr., 1983).

Social Activism

Social activism is embedded in the feminist movement motto "the personal is political" (Dutton-Douglas & Walker, 1988; Enns, 1993; Laidlaw & Malmo, 1991; Parvin & Biaggio, 1991; Sturdivant, 1980). Some feminist counselors believe that since women's problems are created by the patriarchy, therefore, the patriarchy must be overturned (Whalen, 1996). For instance, battered women were often considered to have low self-esteem and needed to have treatment of building self-esteem. Feminist counselors would respond to their clients in different ways. Counselors would respond and probe more on the area in terms of social changes. They reflected feminist political analyses of the problems in society (Whalen, 1996). Therefore, an expected outcome of therapy has been that the clients would take some actions to change the public or private system, which contribute to their problems (Dutton-Douglas & Walker, 1988). However, not every feminist therapist is in favor of encouraging their clients to make a real change of society either for the

client's own good or for other women's welfare. Feminist therapists would debate about whether social activism is beneficial or necessary since it combines therapy with political advocacy (Dambrot & Reep, 1993).

Therapist as a Role Model

Cammaert and Larsen (1988) claimed that a feminist therapist presents herself as a woman and as a therapist at the same time in the therapy. William (1976), long before Cammaert and Larsen, indicated that a feminist therapist is a "living proof that a woman can be supportive and helpful, involved with the growth and development of others and yet at the same time involved with her own intellectual and professional growth, with political issues, and with her economic self-interest" (p.21). Research also indicates that clients benefit more from therapy when the relationship of therapist and client is built on the equalitarian rather than authoritarian base (Lorr, 1965). Feminist therapy adopts this belief to carry out their application. For many female clients, therapists who make appropriate self-disclosure develop the potential bond that arises out of the communality of women's experiences in our society. These efforts would facilitate the positive aspects of modeling by the therapist.

Sexism in Christian Tradition

If one studies Christianity well, he or she would know the essence of Christianity is to bring liberation to the world. In history, however, people frequently use God and religion to justify their killing and violence, and use the texts of the Bible to allow different forms of oppression to exist (Nelson-Pallmeyer, 2003). Since the ancient Hebrew world, one country would invade another country because of the monotheism belief; God here was a warrior God. Also, the Hebrew Bible often portrays God as a male deity who only plots with male priests. With such ideology, the predictable result is violence against women. Also, the Israelites took women as property like cattle, flocks, and all other goods (Nelson-Pallmeyer, 2003). All of these are now comprehended that an alliance between religion hierarchy and patriarchy is seen clearly.

The Arise of Feminist Theology

In the Greene-McCreight (2000) study, she found Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) to be one of the closest intellectual and theological forebears of feminist theology. Green-McCreight (2000) quoted from Feuerbach as evidence of his tenet of modern theology, " Since we moderns are committed to the full equality of the sexes, our theology must express that commitment; therefore, we should not speak of God in masculine terms (at least unless they are balanced by feminine terms)" (p.30).

Feminist theologians read the Bible as an authority in a different perspective from Christian traditional theology. According to the historical criticism, priests and prophets wrote the biblical texts, then, of course, it represents the religion norms of priest and prophets. Any religious activities outside this circle are viewed heterodox and rejected as deviant (Greene-McCreight, 2000). Feminist theology denoted that biblical texts were shaped by historical, social, and political factors (Greene-McCreight, 2000). Feminist theologians take varied approaches toward Bible authority and its interpretation. Some feminist theologians, like Fiorenza who took the suspicious attitude while reading the Bible, questioned that all traditional religious names, texts, rituals, laws, and interpretive metaphors all bear "our Father's names" (p. 37). She insisted that women's self-affirmation, survival, power, and self-determination are the central spiritual and religious feminist quests (Greene-McCreight, 2000). Like Fiorenza, Lerner (1986) also claimed the attitude of being skeptical toward every known system of thought, and being critical of all assumptions or ordering values and definitions. She insisted that women should trust their own experience and use such experience to test one's statement. She said,

Since women's experience has usually been trivialized or ignored, it means overcoming the

deep-seated resistance within ourselves toward accepting ourselves and our knowledge as valid. It means getting rid of the great men in our heads and substituting for them ourselves, our sisters, our anonymous foremothers. (Lerner, 1986, p.228)

Feminist Theology Emphasizes Women's Experience

Feminist mainline theology claimed that women's experiences are the important base to reconstruct traditional theology (Greene-McCreight, 2000). Berliner wrote from her background as a sister of St. Joseph of Brentwood and as a psychologist in private practice. She emphasizes the significance of women's experiences. She shared her experience of conducting a psychospiritual workshop:

Because we are all living examples of women in today's world and church, I decided to draw on our own life experiences. Rather than lecturing, I created a reflective environment, structuring sessions around three themes: life thread (Who am I when I am most true to myself?), demons (What keeps me from being that self?) and an angel (What helps me to be that self?). I located each theme within a psychological and spiritual context, introduced questions reflection and time for discussion. (Berliner, 1992, p.3)

In her practice, she empirically collected data from all of the participants and found representing growth to be a continuum of change from self-hatred to self-esteem. She identified four marker points of women's transition:

The self-less woman, who has no sense of self and sacrifices herself, the self-ish woman, whose validity counts on her adherence to rules and roles, the self-centered woman, who has moved toward finding her own personal identity, and the centered self, who has the acceptance of herself as an unique and valuable individual, in both her inner and outer world. (Berliner, 1992, p.3)

Feminist Spirituality

Berliner (1992) stated that a feminist psychospiritual model of therapy can be used and be effective to people who value the spiritual dimension in their daily life. Riddle (1975) gave a brief description of feminist spirituality: "Our revolution is about how we relate to our love and power, and about finally realizing that they are the same" (p.16). Slee (2002) made distinctions with four descriptions of feminist spirituality. First, feminist spirituality strongly emphasize desire, eros, and passion. Second, it emphasizes relationality, connectedness, and community. Third, it is passionately committed to the liberation of the earth. Feminist spirituality considers the earth as the "body of the God," therefore it stresses the immanence of the divine presence within the world rather than beyond it (p. 182). Fourth, it highlights the holism, integration, and intrusivity, which reject the dualism of the dominant belief system that separate super-nature and nature, spirit and matter, humanity and nature, mind and body, spirituality and sexuality.

The Impact of Feminist Theology on Christian World and Christian Women

It is important to consider feminist theology because theology shapes the identity of men and women. The significance of feminist theology is evident. If one person's God is a male God and is a God who is against women, of course this person would also live his or her life with the same attitude. On the other hand, if such an ideology and system can be challenged and overturned, it would also change people's daily lives. Christian women would be able to accept themselves more and to refuse sacrificing all the time. They can ultimately feel that they are living a fulfilled life. All the struggles, all of the searching for meaning in life, and all of the pain and joys are in relation to the Divine.

The Significance of the Research

The significance of this research was to integrate feminist therapy with feminist theology in order to bring practical help and a real change to Christian women's lives. Due to the dissatisfaction with the traditional theories of female and male development and behavior that adopted male-typed traits as the norm and females often as deficient by comparison, thus, it causes frustration with the continuing omission of women from the knowledge base of psychology (Grady, 1981). Within this context, feminist therapy challenges sex-role stereotypes that define the *femininity* for women and *masculinity* for men as the best desirable mental health adjustments (Bern, 1975). The contributions of feminist therapy are to enhance clients' sensitivity and awareness of gender roles as factors that affect personal mental health. They criticize that the traditional psychotherapies are often non-supportive of women and even damaging to them. Friedan (2001) criticized Freudian theory as a bad influence to the modern world. She thought women today, though resourceful enough and independent, are still told to live a life under Victorian prejudice and not to question authority and feminine mystique. Feminist theology has been addressed in the Christian world, yet, how to apply and practice it is another question. To bridge feminist theology with feminist therapy is a step towards finding a way to apply its theory to the real people in the real world, the Christian women, and maybe even Christian men.

Method and Data Collection

Two research participants were recruited from Tainan Theological College & Seminary (TTCS) in Taiwan. Permissions were both obtained from the individual students and the seminary. The procedures to conduct this research were as following:

- a. Two seminary female students, who used feminist pastoral counseling in the seminary, were selected to participate in this research.
- b. Interviews were given to two participants via the Internet software, Skype. The interviews were recorded from MP3 recorder. The language used in interviews was Taiwanese since the participants were Taiwanese.
- c. The interviews were transcribed to English.
- d. The researcher e-mailed the transcripts to each of the participants to confirm the accuracy of the transcriptions.
- e. The participants gave their feedback to the researcher.
- f. The researcher analyzed and inducted the rich data.
- g. The researcher drew certain conclusions and gave critiques.

The interview protocol was designed based on the knowledge and experiences of feminist therapy and feminist theology: The draft of the protocol was discussed and edited with the professor of the course of qualitative research and the other researcher in the counseling Ph.D. program of Sam Houston State University. The interview questions basically searched the meanings and lived experiences of the participants as Christian women, how and what the Christian traditions have impacted to their lives in terms of their self-esteems, and how the feminist pastoral counseling ever assisted them on their self-esteems. The interview protocol was as follows:

1. How much does the feminist pastoral counseling help your self-esteem as a Christian woman? How does it happen?
2. As a Christian woman, what kind of difficulty related to gender have you ever experienced?
3. What kind of self-image you possess /possessed is/was related to Christian's traditional teaching?
4. Compare your experiences between traditional counseling and feminist counseling.
5. As a female pastor/female church leader to be, what would be the barriers existing in your inner and outer world to overcome?
6. How would God's image affect your self-image related to gender?

7. What kind of support would you wish to get in the future?

8. What kind of change would you wish to see in the church system, including rules related to genders and institutional belief?

Ethical Issues

The two selected female seminary students were given a consent form to read and sign. The consent form clearly claimed participants' right to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. The consent form also documented clearly the time duration, which the interviews would take. The consent form also mentioned each of the interviews would be recorded and transcribed. Knowledge derived from this research provided useful information regarding the true effect of the feminist perspective on female Christians with high need for cognition. The participants were provided an opportunity to recall their memory of their feminist pastoral counseling. They then shared and told their experiences as storytellers. The narrating experience was to conceptualize their past experience and benefit from it.

In terms of the ethics of feminist therapy, the American Psychological Association Task Force Report on Sex Bias and Sex Role Stereotyping in Psychotherapeutic Practice (1975) presented four categories of therapist behaviors, which are considered sexist: 1.) Fostering traditional sex roles; 2.) Bias in expectations and devaluation of women; 3.) Sexist use of psychoanalytic concepts; and 4.) Responding to women as sex objects, including seduction of female clients. This guideline is used and expended due to women's special needs, especially when it becomes evident that sex bias and stereotyping in therapy with women mounted (Dutton-Douglas & Walker, 1988).

Limitation and Delimitation

In this research, only to Taiwanese Christian women were interviewed. Of course it is hard to generalize its result, however, generalizing the result is not the purpose of this research. Seeking a deeper understanding of Taiwanese Christian women's voice was the main task of this research. The similar expressions and themes found in the research gave the readers a chance to understand the Taiwanese women's phenomenological world.

Credibility

In this research, the experiences of Taiwanese Christian women were addressed and valued. They were able to tell their stories and contribute from telling their life stories. Also, I also drew on my own counseling experience with women and my own experience as a woman to imply the credibility of this research. In the past eight years, I taught in a Presbyterian Bible College and Tainan Theological Seminary and College. At the same time, I also provided counseling to the students. Many of them were females. Harding and Hintikka (1983) addressed the credibility issue;

"What counts as knowledge must be grounded on experience. Human experience differs according to the kinds of activities and social relations in which human engage. Women's experiences systematically differ from the experiences upon which knowledge claims have been grounded." (p. x)

Results

After making the efforts to give interviews to two Christian women in Taiwan who has used feminist therapy, which combines feminist theology perspective, I analyzed the data qualitatively. Several findings are listed as follows:

(a) Feminist Pastoral Counseling as the Powerful Tool to Increase Christian Women's Low Self-Esteem

Participant A and Participant B both stated that they experienced the gradual changes through the whole feminist pastoral counseling. Also, through content analysis, it showed their self-esteem was increased through the feminist pastoral counseling. Participant B said, "After receiving counseling, I found that I was better than what I gave myself credit for and I found the ability to do different things nicely. I am happy now. The whole counseling process brought me gradual changes in the way I used to think and the attitudes with which I did things." Participant A's experience was similar. She said,

The feminist pastoral counseling provided a different perspective, which allowed me to change the way I looked at myself. I saw myself in a better way because I often did not see my strengths like the other people saw in me. Those people saw my strengths, better than I did.

Another example from Participant A to evidence her self-esteem increase through the help of feminist pastoral counseling is "It (feminist pastoral counseling) has helped me to feel that I am good and capable to control more things. This happened because the counselor strengthened my confidence and gave me a space to express myself." Through all of her self-description, the proof of her self-esteem increase appeared in a form of seeing the strengths in herself, which she did not acknowledge before.

Both women mentioned the same experiences that happened to them in their feminist pastoral counseling. I conclude they are the contributors of a successful feminist pastoral counseling. Participant A said,

In my experience of feminist counseling, I felt the atmosphere was warmer and I could tell more about my feelings deep down. I know that the counselor approached this counseling with feminist ideas, and the counselor understood more my situation.

Participant B stated, "Gender sensitive counseling let me feel more comfortable to talk about certain things that happened in my life." To create the comfortable and safe environment in counseling is considered to be the first significant factor for the counseling to be effective. Feminist pastoral therapy creates a comfort space for its clients to articulate their unique feelings and experiences as women.

(b) The Factors that Contribute to the Christian Woman's Low Self-Esteem

Both women I interviewed used to suffer from low self-esteem in their lives without being aware of it. Participant B said in the interview, "I hoped to be liked by people and I was frightened that people might dislike me." It represented low self-esteem of women in a form of seeking validation from others.

(c) The Difficulties that Christian Women Experienced

The major difficulties that Christian women experienced were grounded down to the theme of stereotypes for women. Participant B said, "I was taught that being a woman I should act very feminine: being lovely, gentle and dress myself the best I could. I thought I would only be accepted if I fulfilled these requirements." Participant A also described her experience very similarly:

The image of women in church is like housekeepers, who have to clean up the mess, arrange the flowers, cook for all, take care of naughty children, teach the Sunday school, and move chairs...etc. When it comes to decisions, women's statements are less powerful than men's.

A statement from Participant A vividly described the fixed roles that Taiwanese Christian women shared in their church:

I also see that when the congregation gathers for a church annual meeting to decide and vote for certain important issues in the church or when the elders and deacons meetings are held, it is usually men's opinions are more powerful than women's. If there are some female elders who

voice out their opinions and if their attitudes are assertive and powerful, they usually get criticized and resisted by the congregation. People just do not appreciate that women have their own opinions. They prefer seeing quiet women.

(d) The Difference between Feminist Pastoral Counseling and Traditional Counseling

Gender sensitive counseling, compared to the traditional counseling, is able to explore deeper feelings more as women. This was supported by the research of Participant B: "The traditional counseling tends to resolve the superficial level of problems. Gender sensitive counseling, compared to the traditional counseling, meant being able to explore the depth more. The traditional counseling tends to only resolve the superficial levels of problems." Participant A also compared the two similarly and added one more factor about counselor's gender:

Gender sensitive therapy makes me feel more understood than traditional counseling does. It might have to do with the counselors' gender, too. When I had counseling with you, I felt warmer, securer, more empathized and understood. I did not worry that you would not understand.

The two participants also described the difference with traditional counseling and feminist counseling. Participant B felt her feelings and her experiences as a woman were more valued in the feminist counseling. She compared the traditional counseling with feminist pastoral counseling: "The traditional counseling may ask me to accommodate myself and endure the unfairness. Also, the traditional counseling might consider me overreactive in certain matters" (Participant B).

(e) Use the Product of Feminist Theology as a Tool to Do Feminist Pastoral Counseling

From the interviews, the result was found that to perceive God's image is beyond gender helps women confront the contested idea of women being inferior. Participant A said

I believe that human beings share God's image; it gives me a strong motive that I can pursue a better life. We also have great potentials and gifts given by God, we of course can do greater things. I would also be proud of being a woman because gender is a gift from God.

The perception that God is not a male God helps Christian women to challenge the controversial idea that man is the first sex and woman is the second sex. Since the feminist theology has addressed the issue of God's gender, it is powerful to use it as a tool to do feminist pastoral counseling. To de-emphasize God's masculine image in traditional theology and emphasize God's feminine image or emphasize God is actually beyond the gender helps Christian women to value themselves. The old belief of God as a male God is reframed into the new one in which women share God's image in creation like men. This would be a powerful force to lift up Christian women's self-esteem.

The other finding is to use Jesus' image as another approach to increase Christian women's self-esteem. Participant B stated in the interview

The image of Jesus affects me a lot. He was with the poor, women, and the oppressed. He lived to uphold the justice, loved and helped people. Jesus was not welcomed when he lived in his time because of what he did. We need to learn from him to be strong, to fight against the injustice between men and women.

Jesus' image brings the opposite message from the traditional patriarchal message. Jesus' image is a role model to Christian women to confront the sexism of the church.

(f) The Needs of Christian Women

Through the data analysis, the researcher found that Christian women need their support system, such as feminist pastoral counseling, which provides a safe space to talk and get some advice on a continual base. Participant A said, "I wish to get counseling help and advice of pastoral work. I wish I can always find a safe place to talk and to get some advice so that I will know what to do better in the daily life." Participant B implied the need of forming a network to fight for women's rights and equality. She said, "I wish that more women could stand up and fight for their own freedom and equality. For example, if there is a person talking down to women, we could all question that person."

(g) The Suggestions from Christian Women

Participants A and B both suggested that gender equality education needs to be designed and practiced. Participant A commented,

I hope that we can develop curriculums and series of educational materials. Then we can apply them to people who are still wondering and confused about gender issues, people who still wonder that if women are inferior to men. We can start to educate children when they attend Sunday school. I think the earlier and we start, the better and the more successful outcome it can make.

Both participants shared the same voice: women should take more leadership in the church system. Participant A said: "Men in the church do not comprise over half of population, yet, men in the church system hold most of the power in their hands. Women's population is over fifty percent." She also said: "I wish that one day women would have rules that regulate half or more than half of the members participating in General Assembly and Synod should be female. Right now it is only one-fourth." Participant B also had a similar description: "I hope to see more female ordained pastors, 50 percent of female elders and deaconesses."

Participant B made another insightful suggestion for the church system that the translation, edition, and the interpretation of the Bible should be taken into account. I shared this insight because the different ways to interpret Bible would bring different enlightening.

Discussions

Beulter, Crago, & Avizmendi (1986) suggested that therapists having more flexible attitudes toward gender roles and are more important than the gender of the therapist in determining influence on psychotherapy. One study found that self-labeled feminist counselors actually perform more feminist behaviors than did nonfeminists (Moradi, Fisher, Hill, Jome, & Blum, 2000). The significance of this finding was that feminist therapy is one of the few systems of therapy, compared to other therapies like person-centered therapy which also stresses on empowerment like feminist therapy and cognitive-behavioral therapy which also emphasizes on the assertiveness and autonomy like feminist therapy, that emphasizes analysis of relations between the personal and the political in light of the tenet that the personal is political (Moradi, et al., 2000). Whalen (1996) said that less than half of the counselors she interviewed used feminist sociopolitical analysis that spoke to the pathology of society to state women's problems. Instead, women's problems were often stated as individual pathology. It is interesting to explore the meaning and the cause of this percentage since feminist therapy is a powerful therapy, yet less than half of the counselors used it.

Suggestions for Future Research

Weitz (1982) designed a research using a consciousness-raising group to explore how this approach helps participants increase their self-esteems and decrease their depressions. She conducted this research by

issuing questionnaires, interviews, and the Janis-Field Self-Esteem Scale to 73 women who had registered for feminist consciousness-raising groups in the state of Connecticut . These women were from two places in opposite extreme corners of the state so to decrease the sampling error. The goal of her study was to use consciousness-raising groups as an alternative therapy to support that the participants' self-esteems are increased and the depression decreased. The finding of this study was, after the consciousness-raising group finished, the increase in feminism was significantly related to the increase in self-esteem ($t(71) = 2.25$, $p < .05$). Also, 43% of the women who did not initially label themselves feminists were willing to do so by the time of the follow-up interviews, and two-thirds of these participants believed that having a role model increased their self-esteem. For example, one participant said "I feel more positive towards myself, more capable of achieving my goals, because she can achieve hers" (Weitz, 1982).

Follingstad, Robinson, and Pugh (1977) previously had an experiment to study the relationship between feminism and self-esteem. They designed this research by adopting a feminist therapy approach on raising women's self-esteem. They randomly assigned 22 female undergraduates to either a 16-hour marathon group or a 2-hour, 8-week time-spaced group. Twelve additional females who took objective measures at the same time as one of the two groups acted as no-treatment control subjects. The result showed that all the experimental participants had obvious and significant increases in their profeminist behavioral changes and attitudes. When compared with control participants, time-spaced participants reported significantly more profeminist behavioral changes and an increase in self-esteem. The significance of this study is the fact that they designed two groups with different time formats and compared them with no-treatment control groups. This is a strong point in its favor, and the basic function of control groups did support the changes in subjects' attitudes and behaviors toward a more profeminist direction (Follingstad, et al., 1977).

According to these prior researches, the researcher suggests for further research to use the feminist therapy's approach, to form focus groups for Christian women, to access the collective experience of participants. Individually, continuing to interview more Christian women to look for their diverse experiences and voices is another suggestion for the further study.

Conclusions

The environment shapes the individual's inner value system. When a system holds the patriarchal values that are against women, women living within in this system easily internalize those values. That is a main factor for many women. Despite not wanting to, they view themselves as inferior to men. Participant A's experience corresponded to this perspective:

Even in my generation, which is quite a young generation, you can still find people who are hostile to women. If they dare to speak it out in a descending way, I would argue and respond to them as best as I can. However, I sometimes still feel women are inferior because the whole environment emphasizes it. I feel pulled into two directions. One direction is that you know some people out there who expect you to pursue and to promote the gender equality; yet, some other people may expect you to remain in the traditional gender roles. These two forces would make me wonder and feel confused sometimes.

From her voice, an understanding came across that women feel torn from the changing and informing society. They feel torn by two sets of values. Therefore, to provide a support system and resources for them to go through their struggles is critically important. Feminist pastoral counseling can function as an effective approach while Christian women in Taiwan still struggle with their identities and self-values.

Traditional Therapy	Feminist Therapy

Androcentric	Gender-free
Gender centric	Gender- free
Ethnocentric	Flexible
Heterosexist	Flexible
Intrapsychic	Interactionist
Deterministic	Lifespan

Figure 1. Characteristics of Theories (Worell & Remer, 1992)

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