

The Lancaster Theological Seminary

DESCRIPTION OF EFFECTIVE PASTORAL COUNSELING
WITH LOW-INCOME BLACK AMERICAN CLIENTS

by

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effective with these clients.

Procedure or Abstract of Dissertation this client brings

A DESCRIPTION OF EFFECTIVE PASTORAL COUNSELING

approach WITH LOW-INCOME BLACK AMERICAN CLIENTS with that way

"street people" is an urban soup kitchen, parishoners in psycho-

a local Baptist Barry L. Hopkins, D. Min. urban pastoral

counseling Lancaster Theological Seminary

Results

The Problem

Effective pastoral psychotherapists must be able to provide quality spiritual and psychological therapy to clients from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds. At present, there is very little clinically relevant data available to instruct pastoral psychotherapists or pastoral counselors who have occasion to treat these clients. As the number of urban pastoral counseling centers increases, it will be more and more important to have competent pastoral psychotherapists who understand the cultural, spiritual and psychological dynamics of these clients.

The purpose of this study is to describe the salient aspects of counseling with low-income black Americans in order to help the pastoral psychotherapist or pastoral counselor be better able to treat effectively the clients of this ethnicity and economic level.

This study describes who the clients are, the special problems that are unique to them, and sorts out the several therapeutic approaches that have been discovered to be

effective with these clients.

Procedure or Methods

This study employed the descriptive case study approach. Counseling sessions are described with "street people" in an urban soup kitchen, parishoners in a local Baptist church, and clients of an urban pastoral counseling center.

Results

The significant results indicated that:

1. the low-income black American client benefitted from an extended intake
2. the therapist needs to understand "colored people's time"
3. the black extended family is usually a resource for better therapy
4. setting a fee early and clearly aids therapy
5. very often low-income black clients tend to be cautious and suspicious in therapy
6. these clients value spirituality and religion.

Both can be used effectively by the client in therapy.

Conclusions

From the results three main conclusions were drawn:

1. Effective pastoral psychotherapy can be done with low-income black American clients when the therapist understands who the clients are.

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black American clients who will increasingly frequent these
centers.

This study will identify the low-income black
American, highlight the special problems the low-income
black American client brings to the pastoral psychotherapist,
and suggest effective means for doing pastoral psychotherapy
with these clients.

The purpose of this study is to describe salient
aspects of interaction with low-income black Americans in order
to help the pastoral psychotherapist to be better able to
provide effective therapy. The study will help
the pastoral psychotherapist to identify the special problems that may
be encountered and the several therapeutic
techniques that have been shown to be most effective in
working with low-income black American clients.

PREFACE

Main Idea

Effective pastoral psychotherapists must be able to provide quality spiritual and psychological therapy to low-income black American clients.

As the number of urban counseling centers increases, there is a need for trained, culturally sensitive pastoral psychotherapists to be able to treat competently low-income black American clients who will increasingly frequent these centers.

This study will identify the low-income black American, highlight the special problems the low-income black American client brings to the pastoral psychotherapist, and suggest effective means for doing pastoral psychotherapy with these clients.

The purpose of this study is to describe salient aspects of working with low-income black Americans in order to help the pastoral psychotherapist to be better able to treat effectively the clients of this ethnicity and economic level who need pastoral psychotherapy. This study will help identify who these clients are, the special problems that may be unique to them, and will sort out the several therapeutic approaches that I have discovered to be most effective in the treatment of low-income black American clients.

This paper describes how the client's cultural, ethnic, and economic "world view" has a great deal to do with the way in which therapy takes place, the management of the therapy, and the interventions of the therapist.

CHAPTER I

Acosta, Yanamoto and Evans, in their book, Effective Psychotherapy for Low Income Minority Patients, cite

INTRODUCTION

the following:

Purpose Statement

Effective pastoral psychotherapists must be able to provide quality spiritual and psychological therapy to clients from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds. At present, there is very little clinically relevant data available to instruct pastoral psychotherapists who have occasion to treat these clients. As the number of urban counseling centers increases, it will be more and more important to have competent pastoral psychotherapists who understand the spiritual and psychological dynamics of minority clients who bring with them to these centers the baggage of their own cultural and socio-economic experiences and backgrounds.

The purpose of this study is to describe salient aspects of counseling with low-income black Americans in order to help the pastoral psychotherapist to be better able to treat effectively the clients of this ethnicity and economic level who need pastoral psychotherapy. This study will help identify who these clients are, the special problems that may be unique to them, and will sort out the several therapeutic approaches that I have discovered to be most effective in the treatment of low-income black American clients.

This paper describes how the client's cultural, ethnic, and economic "world view" has a great deal to do with the way in which therapy takes place, the management of the therapy, and the interventions of the therapist.

Acosta, Yamamoto and Evans, in their book, Effective Psychotherapy for Low Income and Minority Patients, cite the following:

It's critical for therapists to be aware of their patients' socio-cultural backgrounds, their ethnicity, social class, race, religion and age, and how these factors influence both patients' psychological state and their degree of comfort in relation to the therapist.

Members of minority or low-income groups face the special stress of discrimination and/or economic hardship that create problems that are not felt by non-minority or more affluent individuals. The extent to which the patients' values and perspectives coincide or conflict with the therapist's values may also be critical to effective patient-therapist interaction. Typically, the educational process for psychotherapists does not include discussion of these variables.

The characteristics of the therapist can also interfere with effective psychotherapy. In fact, one recent study involving low-income, Hispanic, black and white out-patients, found the reason most frequently given for prematurely terminating therapy was a negative reaction to the therapist. The well-known YAVIS patient described first by Schofield (1964) is young, attractive, verbal, intelligent and successful. For the most part, present urban clients seen by pastoral psychotherapists who come from the working class and belong to minority groups, or who are black, so not belong to this YAVIS stereotype.¹

This paper raises the question of what is the best, most effective way for the pastoral psychotherapist

¹Acosta, Yamamoto and Evans, Effective Psychotherapy for Low Income and Minority Patients (New York: Plenum, 1982), p. 2.

to use his or her identity, similarities and differences, in the treatment of low-income black American clients.

Pastoral psychotherapists may not be readily accepting of the poor, working-class, or minority client. The pastoral psychotherapist, by making this choice, may be communicating a strong message to low-income black American clients that he or she is really not interested in working with them.

Improper stereotyping of the poor by the pastoral psychotherapist can lead to bias and error in diagnostic evaluation and psychotherapy (Goldstein, 1971). Misinformation or bias about a group's standard for normal and abnormal behavior may lead to error in diagnosis and judgment. Much remains to be learned about error in diagnosis and treatment resulting from therapists' incorrect stereotypes of the low-income black American client.

This paper is designed to assist in helping the pastoral psychotherapist to know how to do more effective psychotherapy with the low-income black American client, to identify his or her own stereotypes and their probable effects on the client, and to help develop a plan for therapy well suited to the low-income black American client.

Theology of Pastoral Psychotherapy

U.S. Anderson sees the pastoral psychotherapist as a healer. He also sees Jesus as the Great Healer. I learn from U.S. Anderson's analysis in Three Magic Words:

When Jesus met with the leper, lame, halt or blind, He knew at once that some buried pain, remembrance within the mind of the unfortunate man had manifested itself in the man's condition. Jesus knew that He and the afflicted man were

using the same mind [I believe it to be the power of the Holy Spirit] and through the use of the Holy Spirit, the healer and the healed were very close in unity.

So close was this unity between Jesus and the afflicted, that healing was instantaneous, because all negative thinking was removed. 'Dost thou believe?' He asked, thus removing the concept of limitations from patients' conscious mind. 'Lord I believe,' His patient answered, and receptivity was established. 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' said Jesus. 'Take up thy bed and walk.' The healing was effected.

What Jesus was saying was, 'The real you is great and good and perfect. Acknowledge this perfection and your body will be perfect also. . . . Thus a healthy body is always a result of a healthy mind, and a sickly body is always the result of a blocked and unhappy mind. If we would heal our bodies we must first heal our minds with [God's Grace], with love, with true recognition of our true being, and with meditation at the center of consciousness.²

As pastoral psychotherapists function, I believe there is integration between a person's spiritual and psychological dimensions. I see myself in a therapy session as a healer, as being able, with the help of God, to help the client shed his "negative promoters," his negative thinking to the extent that he begins to think of himself as being "good and perfect." Once the mind and spirit are "unblocked," healing may more easily take place.

This perspective is important as pastoral psychotherapists work with low-income, minority clients who come "blocked" with cultural, socio-economic, racial, and class distinctions. As a healer, "using the same mind" as the client and with the assistance "of the Power of the Holy Spirit," pastoral psychotherapists may be equipped to help

²U.S. Anderson, Three Magic Words (North Hollywood, California: Wilshire Books, 1978), p. 34.

Specialty of Black Psychology, lecture presented at the University-Wide Lecture, A&M College, Black Psychology, Prairie View, Texas, February 1978.

facilitate healing.

When we heal the body by mental and spiritual treatment, we do not treat the body; we treat the mind. One cannot get rid of the result without first getting rid of the cause. Cause is always in the mind; bodily ailments are the results. 'Hold out thy hand,' said Jesus to the man with a withered limb. The man did; Jesus saw a whole hand; the hand became whole.³

The pastoral psychotherapist, I believe, is in the business of seeing clients as being "whole" and helping clients see themselves as "whole." This perception brings together the best of the spiritual and the psychological and is a guideline for the journey to healing with the low-income black American client.

Survey of Literature

The literature survey reviews writings on the subject of doing therapy with low-income black Americans and related issues. Doris Mosby, in her article, "Towards a New Specialty of Black Psychology," states:

There are qualitative differences in people. Therefore, it is predicted that psychology will have to evolve a separate specialty area broadly labeled, 'Black Psychology' (to assimilate the distinction in child, adolescent, and adult psychology). Black psychology will have to reexamine personality development, family functioning, social relationships, interracial relationships, intellectual achievement functioning, education, and general development areas (i.e., physical, motor, genetic, etc.).⁴

Mosby shares the reason for her work on the need for a new specialty, black psychology. She states:

³Ibid.

⁴Doris P. Mosby, "Towards a New Specialty of Black Psychology," lecture presented at the University-Wide Lecture, A&M College, Black Psychology, Prairie View, Texas, February 1970.

I noticed that the bulk of psychological inquiry generalized from the white middle-class situation. It was known all too painfully that this 'average' situation was a rarity for blacks. And I 'felt' that there were peculiar differences in blacks. Besides, black talking among themselves verbalized that their experiences were 'different.' Therefore, it was logically reasoned that twenty million blacks cannot be all wrong.⁵

Mosby continues in her study:

A distinct specialty of scientific inquiry will evolve. . . . This new field will be gorged by black psychologists themselves. This discipline should be properly labeled Black Psychology, not the Psychology of Minority Groups, because blacks are distinctly different from both whites and other minority groups. Although other minority groups (e.g., Jews and Catholics) have been subjected to cultural restrictions, it is only for blacks that the restrictions have been all-pervasive, with no alternatives of escape. For other minority groups, avenues to ascend and to assimilate within the 'melting pot' tradition of American have been open.⁶

Mosby, in another lecture presented at the Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas in February 1970 said that black Americans face conflict, chaos, and condemnation.

Mosby began her statement:

The black person of the minority culture is not free to mold his life within the limits set by his innate resources to actualize himself. Instead because the black man is either grossly subjected or reduced to an inferior position, he is forced to be enveloped by a complex pattern of depersonalization and conflict in values, goals, affect, intellectual experiences, home rearing, and social situations. The ultimate result is unavoidable conflict, chaos, and condemnation. His struggle for a satisfying identity or self-image is doomed to 'conflict without resolution' until death ultimately determines the end of the course and leaves the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

problem as a legacy for the next generation. Such a life-long struggle is unique to the black Americans.⁷

Mosby's comments help me to understand the situation of blacks. One of the key functions of the pastoral psychotherapist working with low-income black Americans is to help the client to be in touch with self-image issues. One of the dividends derived from the therapeutic encounter should be a better self-image. With a new "self-image," the black man, says Mosby, is able to "come of age." She says further,

As the black man perceives himself to have 'come of age,' he feels that new maturity commands new leadership. The black man then is able to speak up, stand tall and think big. The new black man, is then able to break the shackles of his past dependency and to embrace a too-long delayed state of viability.⁸

Edward P. Wimberly, writing in his book, Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Values, underscores the notion that there is a place in pastoral counseling for the spiritual, the religious and for the Soul. Wimberly states:

In the mind of the slave and the ex-slave . . . the spiritual world and the physical world interacted continually, and the vehicle for this continued feedback was the soul. The soul, which was closely akin to God, was not confined to the body and the material realm, but was mobile and often left at night while the sleeper slept. In fact the soul often frequented the spiritual realm, replenishing the psyche and the personality while the person was resting. In this sense, the soul

⁷Doris P. Mosby, "Towards a Theory of the Unique Personality of Blacks," lecture presented at the University-Wide Lectures, Texas Southern University, Houston, Texas, February, 1970.

⁸Ibid., p. 24.

and its work took place on the unconscious level.

Pastoral counseling in the black context must take very seriously the unity of all experience and not neglect the spiritual yearnings of the soul. In unity the soul cannot be viewed as separate from other dimensions, except for the purpose of academic analysis.⁹

Throughout Wimberly's treatment, the soul is considered a purposive entity that pushes the person towards self-transcendence and toward unity with the ultimate source of the soul's activity. The understanding of the soul grows out of and is consistent with the black Christian understanding of the soul.

Some pastoral counselors have abandoned the idea of soul. Many are still guilty of scientific reductionism and the secularization of pastoral perspectives and practices. If these counselors recognize spiritual stirrings within their clients, they are reluctant to attach transcendent labels to these stirrings for fear of the implications such recognition might have for their own spiritual pilgrimages. Dealings with transcendent dimensions of pastoral counseling is a threat to many pastoral counselors. Sometimes it is easier to deal with personality growth towards wholeness and self-actualization than with the soul in relationship with the ultimate.¹⁰

⁹Edward P. Wimberly, Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Values: A Black Point of View (Nashville, Tn.: Abingdon Press, 1982).

¹⁰Ibid.

William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs echo the statement of Doris Mosby that black Americans live in conflict, chaos and condemnation. Grier and Cobbs' term is desperation. They tell a story of desperation, "The Negro Man of Eighty Told a Story."

He was twelve and a playmate was tied in a cage waiting to be taken away and lunched. The shackled boy stood accused of raping a white woman.

The old man recalled the fright which caused him to run away the next day. From that time on he never knew a home. His years were spent roaming around the country. He became an itinerant preacher, forever invoking God, but always too terrified to return to his place of birth. When asked why, he would reply, 'The white folks down there are just too mean.'

For most of his life he was tormented by memories. Every place he went, he soon became frightened and moved on. Sometimes in the middle of a sermon he would cry out: 'How could they do that to a boy?'¹¹

This old man, said the authors, is now living in one of our cities . . . his memoirs are real and his hatred, however masked, is a burning fire.

I expect that any pastoral counselor in the urban setting will see many persons like this eighty-year-old man. He is in the city and in our churches. This "angry" man will come to a pastoral counseling center to make sense out of his life that is filled with anger and rage.

Grier and Cobbs tell of a case of a low-income black American client, a case that speaks of the pride and beauty

¹¹William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs, Black Rage (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968), p. 21.

of these clients in the American context.

She told her psychiatrist of the various crises. The younger children were sick, two older boys had disappeared the previous evening. A riot had broken out on that same evening, and she feared for the safety of her sons.

She talked bitterly of the welfare system, the caseworker, on and on she went, of her life and her burdens. Hidden in her despair was a distinctive vitality. It came out when she told of her church work or a meeting with a friend.

At the end of her hour, she dried her eyes, rearranged her wig, and strode out. As she moved, a particular style came through. She was depressed, upset, angry, and had her share of problems. She moved slowly, but her head was high. She disappeared down the hall. One knew that in the agony of her life was the beauty and torment of the black experience in this country.¹²

Edward J. Barnes helps therapists to work through the misery that low-income black Americans bring to counselors and mental health professionals. In his paper, "The Black Community as the Source of the Positive Self-Concept," Barnes states:

Blacks are threatened with the specter of racism from the cradle to the grave. Yet many escape the worst features of oppression, and many have shown an incredible capacity to survive, achieve and conform in the face of impossible odds. Nevertheless, all blacks are members of a color caste system in this society and are subject to ruthless oppression. We need to study the process by which white racism is absorbed, deflected, denied, combatted, succumbed to and overcome by particular black families and individuals. One of the strategies to save black children is the power to define and determine one's group, roles and values. He who has the power to define is the master of the situation.¹³

¹² Ibid., p. 35.

¹³ Edward J. Barnes, "The Black Community as the Source of the Positive Self-Concept," Black Psychology (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 166.

Edward Barnes quotes Louis Carroll (1947) to help make his point that power to make words mean what you want them to mean is important.

Carroll, in Through the Looking Glass said:

'When I use the word,' Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more or less.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'Whether you can make words mean as many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'Which is to be the master--that's all.'¹⁴

I think this consideration is very important for the low income black American. The counseling room may be a rare place where the low-income black American client has the power to make words mean what he wants them to mean.

Edward Barnes sees power in therapists knowing of the best assessment techniques for low-income black American clients. In a paper entitled, "Cultural Retardation or Shortcomings of Assessment Techniques," Barnes states that when the disadvantaged individual is required to solve problems with unfamiliar tools, or with tools too advanced, his primary objective typically became escaping an uncomfortable situation. When the assessment instruments were "developed in a less middle class oriented way, and then administered to disadvantaged youngsters, there was a significant increase

¹⁴ Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1947), p. 196.

Edward J. Barnes, "Cultural Retardation or Shortcomings of Assessment Techniques." Paper presented at the Annual Convention on Exceptional Children, Denver, CO, April, 1969.

in performance."¹⁵

The therapist in that case attempted to motivate his client by offering a tangible award for doing well, having the questions presented verbally as well as in writing.

This result raises many possibilities for designing instruments that might be used with low-income black American clients in ways that will yield better results and hence a more accurate assessment of the low-income black American client. This is also possible within the context of an extended intake.

Barnes' paper was focused on selected shortcomings of assessment techniques. Even though primary emphasis is placed on tests of mental ability, much of the analysis and conclusions are relevant to other assessment techniques, projective techniques, values, attitude and the like.

It is important for pastoral psychotherapists to have the correct assessment tools to make an accurate assessment of the needs of the low-income black American client. Some experimentation is in order. Low-income black Americans seems to generate towards the oral tradition. The oral tradition is very helpful in therapy. This fact will be helpful in determining the right tools and strategies for the assessment of the low-income black American client (70).p.2.

¹⁵ Wade Nobles, "African Philosophies: Foundation for Black Psychology" (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1970), p. 2.

¹⁵ Edward J. Barnes, "Cultural Retardation or Shortcomings of Assessment Techniques." Paper presented at the Annual Convention on Exceptional Children, Denver, CO, April, 1969.

who seeks therapy from the pastoral psychotherapist.

values. Low-income black American clients have African roots.

John Mbiti, in his book, African Religions and Philosophies,

states: as the "painful" in his experience.

To understand the essence of black peoples, with African roots, you must examine their religion, proverbs, oral traditions, ethics and morals, keeping clear in mind that the underlying differences in detail is a general philosophical system that prevailed in Africa. Religion, however, is the most observable phenomenon and, as such, it permeated every aspect of the African's life. It was, in a real sense, not something for the betterment of the individual, but rather something for the community of which the individual was an integral part. For the traditional African to be human was to belong to the whole community.¹⁶

Wade Nobles, in his article, "African Philosophy: Foundation for Black Psychology," picks up the theme of

John Mbiti:

Black Americans derive their most fundamental self-definition from several cultural and philosophical premises which they share with most West African tribes. Black psychology is more than the psychology of the so-called underprivileged peoples, more than the experience of living in ghettos, or having been forced into the dehumanizing conditions of slavery. It is more than the darker dimension of general psychology. Its unique status is derived not from the negative aspects of being black in white America, but rather from the positive features of basic African philosophy which dictate the values, customs, attitudes and behavior of Africans in Africa and the New World.¹⁷

Will be shared in a later chapter.

¹⁶ John Mbiti, African Religion and Philosophies (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1970), p.2.

¹⁷ Wade Nobles, "African Philosophies: Foundation for Black Psychology," Black Psychology (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 18.

Low-income black Americans enjoy many positive values. One of the roles of the pastoral psychotherapist is to help the client to get in touch with the "positive" as well as the "painful" in his experience.

One of the contributions of our African heritage is the understanding of the concept of Time. Mbiti states:

Time was reckoned by phenomena. Actual time was what [events] was present or past and because time essentially moved backwards rather than forward, the traditional African set his mind not on future but chiefly on what had taken place. Thus the West African's understanding of all things--that is, the individual the tribe or the community, and the five characters of the universe--was governed or dominated by these two dimensions [past and present] of time. In order to make sense, or be real, to the West African, time had to be experienced; that one partly experienced time through one's own individual life and partly through the life of the tribe which went back many generations before one's birth. Time was reckoned by phenomenon, instead of a numerical calendar, there were what one would call phenomena calendars, in which the events or phenomena, which constituted "time" were considered in relationship with other events as they had taken place.¹⁸

This African notion of time is very important for low-income black Americans who come for therapy. They help us to understand that therapy does not begin until they "arrive." Their minds, heart and soul must "be there" before effective therapy can begin. More detail on this principle will be shared in a later chapter.

Edward Wimberly, in his book, Pastoral Care in the Black Church, underscores the fact that the sermon in the

¹⁸Mbiti, p. 19. Edward P. Wimberly, Pastoral Care in the Black Church (Abingdon Press, 1979), p. 62.

black context is therapeutic. He states, with reference to a pastor who preaches an appropriate sermon that helps a family to grieve:

One would have to be in the congregation to appreciate what was going on. What my friend [the pastor] was doing was setting an example for the congregation to follow in handling grief. He was putting his own sorrow into words. He was talking about the fear he had in his own heart of death. He was guiding the congregation and the bereaved persons through their grief by talking frankly about his own feelings. He was saying to them, 'Follow me; I will show you how to grieve.'¹⁹

It is important to note the positive effects of the sermon in the black church context. Low-income black American clients very often attend church. A few of my low-income black American clients attend local urban black Baptist churches. One client often shares with me "what happened" at her church on the preceding Sunday, and often the sermon which was preached by her pastor.

The integration between the sacred and the psychological is easier with this client. She is oriented to see the "hand" of God in her life and talks often about the "power of prayer." When she can "go" no other place with her anger, or hurt, she takes her pain, as she reports to me, "to Jesus."

Edward Wimberly helps me to understand the power of the black pulpit and the fact that it is often helpful to low-

¹⁹Edward P. Wimberly, Pastoral Care in the Black Church (Nashville, Tn.: Abingdon Press, 1979), p. 62.
 from "The Rhetoric of Soul," Transaction and the Institute of Race Relations, July-August, 1978, pp. 57-61.

income black American clients who take their faith commitment seriously.

Ulf Hannerz, in his article, "The Rhetoric of Soul," defines the term "soul." "Soul stands for the essence of Negroness."²⁰ The choice of the term, "soul" for this Negroness is in itself noteworthy. First of all, it shows the influence of religion on lower-class Negroes, when those who are not themselves active church members. Expressions of religious derivation, such as "Lord, have mercy" are frequent in everyday speech among all lower-class Negroes, in all contexts. A very great number of people, of course, have been regular churchgoers at some point--at least at the time they attend Sunday School--and many more are involved in church activities, perhaps in one of the large Baptist churches, but more often in small spiritualist storefront churches. Although the people who use the soul vocabulary are seldom regular churchgoers themselves, they have certainly been fully exposed to the religious idiom of "soul stirring" revival meetings.

Soul-stirring churches have a profound effect on the lives of low-income black American clients. Edward J. Wimberly suggests that pastors in the urban context often have a model of pastoral care. Wimberly states:

From a diagnostic point of view, the minister must be able to be aware of all of the systems that have

²⁰Ulf Hannerz, "Significance of 'Soul,'" reprinted from "The Rhetoric of Soul," Transaction and the Institute of Race Relations, July-August, 1978, pp. 57-61.

influence upon persons in crisis. Therefore the minister must be aware of:

1. The nature of the crisis.
2. The personal resources of the persons and the family responding to the crisis.
3. The resources within the social network to support the persons in crisis.
4. The resources within the community to support the persons in crisis.
5. The resources within the local church to support the persons in crisis.²¹

Assessing the nature of the resources is important because the pastor must choose how he or she will intervene in the lives of persons to sustain and guide them through the crisis.

A pastoral psychotherapist would probably not intervene and not guide the client except that the movement was to be mutual and a joint effort of the client and the pastoral psychotherapist. The local black pastor would probably intervene more aggressively than the pastoral psychotherapist.

Low-income black Americans often utilize the extended family as a resource for better mental health and as a very viable cultural support system. Elmer P. Martin and Joanne M. Martin describe the black extended family as:

1. Independent. Relatives depend on one another for emotional, social, and, most important, material support.
2. Multigenerational, often consisting of four generations of relatives.

²¹Wimberly, p. 86.

²²Elmer P. Martin and Joanne Mitchell Martin, *The Black Extended Family* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 1-16.

3. Headed by a dominant family figure.
4. Always having a family base household, which is always the residence of the dominant family figure. The extended family base is the center of extended family activity. Family reunions, outings, vacations, celebrations, weddings, and other family activities take place there. It is the most stable unit of the extended family network.
5. Extended in other geographic centers beside the home base. Modified extended families, removed geographically from the home base, provide significant and continued aid from relatives while at the same time feeling a sense of obligation to and responsibility for relatives. They are not as constituting nuclear families but as subsystems of an extended family base.²²

Extended families, according to these authors, serve two basic functions. The first is leadership, which gives family members a sense of security, family, group direction and identity.

The second function is to promote the welfare of dependent family members; to deal with crisis situations, to provide family members with the basic necessities of life, and to give them the feeling of economic security.

Low-income black Americans understand the importance of the extended family as a resource in therapy. It is important also that the pastoral psychotherapist doing therapy with low-income black American clients understand the dynamic quality of the extended family.

Linda C. Jolly helps me understand the choices low-income black Americans make for psychotherapy. In

²² Elmer P. Martin and Joanne Mitchell Martin, The Black Extended Family (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 1-16.

her recent study of cultural and formal psychotherapeutic support systems utilized by black Americans asserts that:

1. The formal psychotherapeutic support systems were more likely preferred by the older members of the sample (100 black males and females in her study). These older members were persons who had attended one to four years of college, and those subjects representing the highest income level.
2. The younger members of the sample were more likely to refer to a friend or relative or counselor.
3. The majority of the respondents at every educational level were more likely to believe that black mental health professionals would deal with their problems first; however, a substantial majority of the group who had attended four or more years of college believed that the black professional would notice their race first.
4. Respondents who had attended 9 to 12 years of school were more likely to prefer counseling sessions accompanied by a friend or family member.
5. "Keep it to yourself and try to work it out" was the first place choice prior to the ranking of either support systems for solving problems of perceived social or psychological stress. The only exception was for the 45-65 old age group.²³

Jolly found in her study,

In general, the urban black American prefers individual psychotherapeutic sessions. It has been asserted that due to racism and the ineffectiveness of the existing mental health systems, when the black does receive therapy, he/she is usually relegated to group sessions. The preference in this study is that blacks usually prefer the more intimate, interpersonal

²³Linda C. Jolly, "A Description of Cultural and Formal Psychotherapeutic Support Systems Utilized by Urban Black Americans," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Faculty of the School of Human Behavior, United States International University, San Diego, 1981, pp. 71-72.

type of session that individual therapy affords. However, blacks in the lowest educational category preferred therapy sessions which include friends and family members.²⁴

Jolly also found that approximately half of the sample felt that whites would be acceptable as therapists. Clearly, if half of the black population prefers to see black therapists, the number of black therapists must be dramatically increased to accomodate them. When Jolly talked with one respondent about self resolution of his problems, he said:

Why go pay money or worry your old man or mother or even your buddies because you and your old lady are having problems? I can deal with it myself. If we fight too much about things, I just get myself another old lady.

When Jolly talked with others about their preferences for support systems, answers ranged from "deal with it," and "take it one day at a time," to "serve my time" (in the case of a pending jail sentence).

Jolly reports, in summary, the conclusions of her study are:

1. The urban black American prefers self-resolution of problems prior to the utilization of both the formal and cultural support system.
2. Religion is waning as a cultural support system for solving individual problems of urban black Americans.
3. The urban black American is aware of, and does acknowledge the formal psychotherapeutic support system as a resource. However, in most instances, utilization of the formal system

²⁴Ibid., p. 82

a last resort following self-resolution, the family, peers, and in some instances, religion.

4. Consideration should be made of the black's preference for black mental health professionals.²⁵

Literature Survey Summary

The survey of literature has helped me understand better the low-income black American client. Mosby's article underscores the fact that there is a qualitative difference in people which necessitates a new specialty called black psychology. Mosby puts into focus the fact that black Americans daily face conflict, chaos and condemnation. This is a constant reality for the therapist to understand when doing therapy with low income black American clients.

Wimberly underscores the importance of the spiritual and religious. The place of the soul is also a core factor when doing therapy with low income black American clients. Grier and Cobb add to Mosby's conflict, chaos, and condemnation. Grier and Cobbs' word is desperation. To desperation, Barnes adds the specter of racism. The therapist needs to understand the stress of racism on the low income black American. Barnes helps me understand the importance of the best assessment techniques when doing therapy with low income black American clients.

The survey of literature continues with the place of "African Roots" for the low income black American client. Time, religion, the oral tradition, family and the community are important core concepts reviewed by Barnes, Nobles and Mbiti.

Wimberly stresses the integration of the sacred and the

²⁵Ibid., p. 85.

psychological. This is a basic understanding of pastoral counseling. All effective pastoral counselors must understand the authentic integration of the two.

Extended families are basic for the black community. Martin and Martin catalog the definitions and meanings of the black extended family.

The final work referred to in this chapter is the Jolly conclusion on the cultural and formal psychotherapeutic support systems that are chosen by low-income black American clients and other black American clients. Her work gives me great insight on the choices black Americans make when they need therapy or more informal support.

I have concluded from the above readings that my study will add some practical strategies for doing therapy with low income black American clients.

Definition of Terms

The following terms or definitions have been helpful to me in the preparation of this paper. The list of definitions is not exhaustive, but is a necessary catalog of definitions that have been helpful to me as I have treated low-income black American clients.

Black Dialect

This is the language used when a patient attempts to resist interaction with the therapist. The client is attempting to "jive" his or her way through the session, trying not to be "up front" with the therapist. The client will "jive" or clown his or her way through the session and get "in touch with one's more accurate thoughts or feelings. This

black dialect is often used in the client's peer group.

Therapeutic Freedom

With low-income black American clients, it is important for the therapist to have an attitude which is characterized by a freedom and lack of authoritarian and judgmental thought. The therapist must be ready to say, "you can discuss anything here without the fear of judgment." Hence, with low-income black American clients, the therapist is neither offended nor shocked. He or she allows the client to be free, to be oneself, and to grow.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is a special form of human relationship. With respect to this project, psychotherapy is operative when the low-income black American client in emotional distress comes for help to the trained psychotherapist, and the client and the psychotherapist go through a rather structured series of meetings in which the therapist tries to help the client to change his or her feelings, behaviors, or thoughts and to regain a state of emotional health. In some forms of therapy the client is helped to understand the root causes of the distress. The psychotherapist always works through verbal means, by listening, asking questions, and making comments and suggestions. The therapist makes his or her interventions on a tested body of knowledge, methods, and theories. Furthermore, the therapist takes a degree of responsibility for the outcome of the therapy and can be held ethically, or even legally responsible for certain damages which might occur as a result of it.

The client and the therapist usually reach an agreement at the beginning of the process as to what they will do together. They also set their goals and a timetable for their work together. The therapist is expected to use his or her professional skills and stipulate to the client what can and cannot be accomplished. The agreement is usually verbal and informal, but in some settings it is written out and signed by both parties.

The therapist also agrees to maintain confidentiality. The therapist will not reveal anything said or done by the client during the course of the therapy without the client's permission. Only with the promise of confidentiality can the process of psychotherapy be effective.

Psychotherapy cannot relieve psychotic illnesses or severe depression. When combined with medication, it can be quite helpful in these conditions. Psychotherapy cannot change an individual into a completely new individual. It cannot alleviate great social problems which are rooted in social or economic realities. Psychotherapy cannot take away the pain of major life traumas and grief reactions, although it helps people cope more effectively. Psychotherapy cannot remove all conflicts and provide a state of constant happiness.

Acceptance

Acceptance in this context is the therapist receiving the client with openness. It is questionable how much attitudes in clients change by the therapist giving advice, or being persuasive, or issuing threats. Clients' attitudes change most

effectively in the presence of being accepted by the therapist. This is confirmed by Fromm, Montague and May.

Skin Color

Skin color affects the experience of the low-income black American. In a cultural and psychological sense, it is important for pastoral psychotherapists to discuss with the client one's meaning for his or her particular skin color. It is important that the client is jet black, cream or chocolate brown.

Resistance

Resistance is a characteristic of the client's defense system which opposes the purposes of counseling or therapy. Resistance is, according to Brammer and Shostrom, the product either of the outer defense system, protecting the client from situational threats, or of the inner defense system, protecting the client from unconscious core-system impulses.

Transference

Transference is a largely irrational part of the therapy process wherein the client projects to the therapist self-regarding attitudes and unresolved feelings from earlier human relationships. In therapy, the development and working through of transferences are considered to be a significant part of personality change.

Low-Income Black American

This client is a black American whose income falls within the poverty index of the United States government. This index is constantly changing. For the purposes of this

black American clients need to see the extended family of

study, the average income for a family of four is \$8,000 to \$12,000 annually.

Authority

Low-income black American clients see the pastoral psychotherapist often as an authority figure. They believe that the pastoral psychotherapist knows more than they and will guide them to make the correct steps necessary to get their lives in order, to function in appropriate ways, and to relate in a positive and productive way with other men and women. Some clients come to be told what to do. They see the authority of the pastoral psychotherapist as being very important.

Short-Term Pastoral Psychotherapy

Many low-income black American clients initially do not see the value of long-term psychotherapy. They do not want to waste time talking about "potty training" and what their mothers and fathers did when they were babies. They want to come, get "fixed" and then return to making a living and being a responsible individual. When, however, they are oriented to what insight-oriented therapy is, feel a level of trust in the therapist, and see therapy as having a positive effect, they are willing to continue to come as long as it seems to be helpful and they feel a sense of growth. An extended intake usually means a longer term of therapy.

Black Family Support

Pastoral psychotherapists working with low-income black American clients need to see the extended family of

the client as a possible resource. Many black families offer natural therapy, support, and affirmation for other family members who are in trouble or are struggling with deep personal problems. It is often accurate to call in family members to find ways for the healing process to be operative in the family setting. Often a grandfather, or a grandmother has great rapport and influence over a teenager. In the black context, there is always a "place" for the uncle who "acts a little crazy." Pastoral psychotherapists ought to be in touch, when appropriate, with the extended family; it is a resource for natural healing.

Transference of Blame

Racism, among other things, is a chronic blaming process; a process which requires self-fulfillment. Transference is a defense mechanism by which an individual evades responsibility for his own acts by placing blame elsewhere.

Dissociation

The process of dissociation is far more sweeping than that of denial. In dissociation, large segments of one's actions are treated as though they have never existed.

The Advantages of the Black Treatment Relationship

The advantages of black treatment relationship (i.e., blacks counseling blacks) are greater than the hindrances. Indeed, the working out of conflicts about one's racial identity is of the utmost importance. It is rewarding to achieve the feeling of kinship in therapy. The establishment of the foundation depends very much on the effective

²⁶Lloyd T. Delany, "The Other Bodies in the River," *Psychology Today*, June, 1968, pp. 339-340.

handling of the inner struggle regarding blackness on both the therapist's and client's side.²⁶

Limitations of the Paper

This paper is written with the following limitations in mind:

The paper will focus on the low-income black American client and suggest effective ways to work with this client.

The paper will highlight the importance of the extended black American family as a resource for the low income black American client. This paper will not be concerned with giving a detailed treatment of the extended family.

My counseling experience has been in three locales: The Counseling Center of Greater Germantown in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Saints Memorial Baptist Church of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, where I pastor; and the Tindley Temple United Methodist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This paper will deal with clients in general who I have seen in the three locations but will focus on an individual client whom I have seen and am still seeing at the Counseling Center of Greater Germantown.

Low-income black American clients often are found to be in poverty. This paper will not address the economic plight of low-income black Americans. Economics will be mentioned only if the client's situation is clearly and strongly affected by poor economics.

The paper will be written from a "faith" dimension, but the paper will fashion no theology or system of beliefs.

²⁶Lloyd T. Delany, "The Other Bodies in the River," Psychology Today, June, 1968, pp. 339-340.

A person's faith can be a real resource at times, and a detriment to healing at others. The therapist assists clients in finding and claiming their faith in order that they may use their "faith" as a real and ever-present resource.

Finally, this paper will be focused primarily on individual therapy, not family, group, or any other mode of therapy.

It is crucial that the pastoral psychotherapist know the client. Bass, Acosta, and Evans state:
My identity is an ordained, clinically trained, and nationally accredited pastoral psychotherapist. Important sociocultural factors in the psychological are overworked or misinterpreted by psychotherapists. This situation stems from two primary sources: the therapist's paucity of information regarding similarities and differences between the dominant culture and that of the black American, and myths about black Americans that result from misinformation obtained from scientific inquiries of questionable validity as reported in literature.

It is therefore my intention in this chapter to identify clearly the low-income black American client.

A comprehensive identification of the low-income black American client must detail the dynamics of the black home, family, hero, role models, language systems, work, and time management, and the nature of suspiciousness. Many other items could be included in this investigation, but these seem to be key. Religion orientation of the client will be mentioned later in this chapter.

Joseph White's article in Ebony magazine, in September, 1970, presents who the black American is. White's

²⁹Bass, Acosta and Evans, Effective Psychotherapy with Low-Income Black American Clients (New York: Plenum Publishing Corporation, 1982).

CHAPTER II

WHO IS THE LOW-INCOME BLACK AMERICAN?

It is crucial that the pastoral psychotherapist know the client. Bass, Acosta, and Evans state:

Important sociocultural factors in the psychological evaluation and treatment of black American patients are overworked or misinterpreted by psychotherapists. This situation stems from two primary sources: the therapist's paucity of information regarding similarities and differences between the dominant culture and that of the black American, and myths about black Americans that result from misinformation obtained from scientific inquiries of questionable validity as reported in literature.¹

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²⁹ Bass, Acosta and Evans, Effective Psychotherapy with Low-Income Black American Clients (New York: Plenum Publishing Corporation, 1982).

³ Ibid., p. 44.

treatment counters the general point of view of many psychologists and social scientists that black people are culturally deprived and psychologically maladjusted because the environment in which they were reared as children and had many experiences failed and fails to prepare them for excellence in school, appropriate sex role behavior, and, generally speaking, achievement within an Anglo middle-class frame of reference.²

White, in a very clever way, takes us on a simple journey through the black person's frame of reference.

During our visit in a black home, we may not see familiar aspects of the white cultural such as Book of the Month selections, records of Broadway plays, classics, magazines such as Harper's and the Atlantic. There might be a high noise level continuously reinforced by inputs from the local black radio station, T.V. programs, and several sets of conversations going on at the same time. This type of observation may lead one to believe that the homes of black people are very weak in intellectual content, uninteresting and generally confusing places to grow up.³

The intellectual stimulation may come from black media: Jet, Ebony, Sepia, or by activities sponsored by the local community center or the black church. Children in these homes whom the school seems to feel are unintelligent are able to sing several rock and blues tunes from memory. One also might hear "nonstandard, black speech" and assume it to be an example of bad grammar without recognizing the possibility that blacks have a valid, legitimate, alternate dialect.

Her hostile attitude was a way to deal with a com-

²Joseph White, Ebony, September, 1970, pp. 44.

³Ibid., p. 44.

⁴Ibid., p. 45.

Many of the so-called culturally deprived youngsters have developed the kind of mental toughness and survival skills needed to cope with life. These black youngsters know how to deal with bill collectors, building superintendents, corner grocery stores owners, hypes, pimps, whores, sickness and death. They know how to jive school counselors, principals, teachers, welfare workers, and juvenile authorities and, in so doing, display a lot of psychological cleverness and originality. These children recognize early that they exist in an environment which is sometimes both complicated and hostile. They may not be able to verbalize it but they have already mastered what existential psychologists state to be the basic human condition, namely; that in this life, pain and struggle are unavoidable and that a complete sense of one's identity can only be achieved by directly confronting an unkind alien existence.⁴

I met with a fifteen year old teenager who was very hostile. Her hostility was related to the fact that her mother had remarried, and the man who was now her stepfather was "street-wise" and not easily approachable. She had therefore decided never to speak to him again, and at best would nod or murmur hello, when he came into the room.

He, being "street-wise," was very hurt, feeling that he was not "good enough to take the place of this lady's first husband," this fifteen-year-old's father.

Her hostile attitude was a way to deal with a complicated and unkind alien situation. She was not able to talk

⁴Ibid., p. 45.