

about her pain, sadness and fear. Her decision to withdraw was her clever and original way to work through what seemed to her to be an impossible situation.

She was mainly fearful, for her stepfather would fight with her mother; so the fifteen-year-old decided that she would completely cross him off her screen. The situation was just too scary for her to deal with.

My feeling is that it took courage for her to make this decision to cross her stepfather off, but in doing so, she, in fact, was confronting the situation with her survival instincts intact.

The Black Extended Family

Pastoral psychotherapists need to understand the dynamics of the black extended family. The traditional white, middle-class view is that healthy families contain two parents, one male and one female, who remain with the child until he or she becomes an adult. That a black male so often grows up in a matriarchal family structure is seen by those outside of the black community as not as good a family as the traditional white family.

It is important for the pastoral psychotherapist to understand that the black family is often an extended family.

There are a number of uncles, aunts, big mamas, boy friends, older brothers and sisters, deacons, preachers, and others who operate in and out of the black home. A valid observation might be that a variety of adults participate in the rearing of any one black child.⁵

⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

black It may be that an extended family model proves to be a more accurate description of the black family than the matriarchal conception does.

I regularly see a mother and sometimes one of her children, a daughter. The mother is a single parent, and the father lives in nearby Chester, Pennsylvania. When the mother is at work, the aunts, uncles and grandparents are always on call. The children know who they are to call in relationship to the kind of emergency at hand.

When their house was broken into late one night, two uncles were first on the scene. This response, a demonstration of the clearly defined network of this family, is the extended family at its best. Each member knows what his or her responsibility is for the family and all are quick to respond when there is a need.

Joseph White further illustrates what might help the black American be better able to handle contradictions. His example is as follows:

A white psychology student became thoroughly confused when he observed a particular black on a Sunday. He watched 'the brother' participate in a 1968-style black nationalist rally and "enjoy" all of the anti-honkey rhetoric and immediately after the rally, walk across the street to a black store-front type revival, grab a tambourine, rock with the sisters, call on the Holy Ghost, and sing a solo, unsolicited. "Where Shall I be When the First Trumpet Sounds," and then the brother walked across the street and drank more than a little gin and began to hum and keep time with the lyrics of "Chain of Fools," by Aretha Franklin.⁶

The white psychologist saw great contradiction in the

⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

black man's involvement in the nationalist rally, the storefront revival, and the gin-drinking spree; but it seems that there are clients who are black and poor who see all three sets as being part of the same experience at the "feeling level." The "brother" had felt equally at home during all three activities.

Maybe black American clients have a greater tolerance for seeming contradiction, and a greater tolerance for handling conflict, stress, ambiguity and ambivalence. Some white psychologists tend to overlook this strength and say that therefore black Americans are more impulsive, emotionally immature, and have less tolerance for stress.

The Role of The Hero

With regard to the role of the hero, it may be that the white culture is steeped in the tradition of the hero who is infallible, scores his triumph with godlike skill, follows all the rules, and finally retires undefeated.

In the black culture, the hero is the brother who messes with the system and gets away with it. Black people on the whole could care less about a politician who parties in the West Indies at the Man's expense. They can dig it and identify with it.⁷

Heroes are important because they serve as role models for children. The pastoral psychologist must consider that the whole psychology of the hero in black and white culture is different.

⁷Ibid., p. 45 .

I sometimes wonder how the client feels about pastors or pastoral psychotherapists who, like myself, have been heard preaching in the community or whose pictures have appeared in the local newspaper, or who have been seen on local television.

It is important for the pastoral psychotherapist to be aware that he or she may be already known in a different context and to attempt to understand what impact this knowledge has on the low-income black American client.

Language of the Black American

With regard to language, "the oral tradition"--with its heavy rap, folk tales, blues, spirituals, and "down home" sermons--has a vital impact on the black experience. Any discussion of the black experience with language is further complicated by the fact that words are used to express and conceal at the same time. Certain ideas have to be communicated to the "brother" while others have to be hidden from the white man.⁸

When the slaves talked about "stealing away," white slave owners thought they were talking about heaven. They, however, were referring to the necessity of stealing away, by way of the Underground Railroad, to the North.

There is also the notion that so-called illiterate "brothers," who may not be able to read or write, intuitively know when the power structure is being dishonest, jiving, or otherwise engaging in trickery. This intuition is an important item for the pastoral psychotherapist to know about; in light of it, the psychotherapist has to be extremely honest

⁸Ibid., p. 49 .

in his or her therapy with the low-income black American client.

Another dynamic of black American language and culture is "playing the dozens." This oral tradition is a game in which clever remarks are made about the mamas, aunts and grandmothers of the contestants. Black Americans use this game to learn how to keep cool and think under pressure without saying what is really on their mind.⁹

"Playing the dozens," for me, has important meaning in the context of the black community. When I worked with the street people project at Tindley Temple United Methodist Church, there were person who would "bait" others in the group to see who was most skilled in defending himself or herself from the other. They were able to think under pressure and "jab" at others without being vulnerable themselves.

Understanding the black client means an understanding of the black work ethic. White American culture seems to suggest that work is supposed to cleanse us, move us ahead economically, and allow us to advance to positions of higher prestige and authority. In a sense, the notion is that hard work pays off.

Stokely Carmichael has repeatedly stated that:

If hard work was the key to advancement, black people would be the richest people in the world. We have worked in the field from sun-up to sun-down, laid rails, picked cotton, scrubbed floors, messed with chain gangs, reared other people's children, and at the end of three

⁹ Ibid. p. 49 .50

centuries, have very little to show for this monumental effort at hard work.¹⁰

Black Americans of low income most often believe that what happens to a person is more related to luck or chance than it is to hard work. To plan with the belief in the future is to plan for disappointment and heartbreak. Therefore, black people do their best to deal with the concrete realities, with what they can see and feel. What this means is that the benefits of the white dream of hard work have not paid off for poor and black people.

"Paranoid Condition" of Black Americans

In light of the above, I need to talk a little about the "paranoid" condition of black Americans. There has been unwarranted, systematic persecution and exploitation of black people as a group. Therefore, the pastoral psychotherapist must realize that a black person who is not suspicious of the white culture, of persons in authority, indeed of the therapist who is urging him to be open, is pathologically denying certain objective and basic realities of the black experience.

If a white "dude" were to tell a white therapist that people from those next door clear to those in the White House, were systematically picking on him, the psychiatrist would diagnose him as a psychotic, paranoid and hospitalize him. However, using a black frame of reference with a black client

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 50. Wade W. Nobles, "African Philosophies: Foundations for Psychology" (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 21.

should not result in the same diagnosis.

Black Americans and Their African Roots

Wade W. Nobles, in his article "African Philosophies: Foundations for Black Psychology," enlarges our perspectives as we identify the black and poor client. He posits that black Americans derive their most fundamental self-definition from several cultural and philosophical premises which are shared with most West African tribes.

The identity of black Americans is more than being underprivileged peoples, more than [having the] experience of living in a ghetto or having been forced into the dehumanizing conditions of slavery...it is "looking at the positive features of basic African philosophy which dictates the values, customs, attitudes and behavior of Africans in Africa and the New World.¹¹

In the very brief way, I want to touch on two or three concepts that help illustrate cultural and philosophical premises that come from African roots.

Concept of Time

African philosophy concerned itself with two dimensions of time, the present and the past. The direction of one's life system was from the present dimension backward to the past dimension. Very little consideration was given to time itself. It existed, but the African time concept was very elastic. It encompassed events that had already occurred, those that are taking place and those that will occur immediately (Mbiti 1970). What had no possibility of occurring immediately or had not taken place fell into the category of "no time." 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 things but chiefly on what had taken place... because time was reckoned by phenomena instead of

¹¹Wade W. Nobles, "African Philosophies: Foundations for Psychology," in Black Psychology (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 21.

numerical calendars.¹²

This sense of time has some relevance for the pastoral psychotherapist. The attitude that time is phenomenal rather than mathematical can be demonstrated to persist to this day with black Americans. Black Americans have a notion of CPT (colored peoples' time), i.e., some thirty minutes to an hour later than the scheduled meeting time. The notion that a person has is that the event doesn't begin "until I arrive." The implication is that therapists must teach black American clients about the importance of being "on time" for weekly sessions and being present for the therapy at the same time each session in the same room and sitting in the same chair. This may be more difficult for one who operates on a CPT schedule.

The black American often has to be taught the importance of being on time; such has been the case for clients that I have seen. Some black clients get to the therapy room "around" the appointed hour. In the black community, events, programs, and religious services tend to begin "around" the scheduled hour. Similarly, black clients, of mine, running to get home from work, get the kids fed, get to the center often on public transportation, tend to arrive on "CPT."

Oral Tradition

Parables were widely prevalent during slavery. Slaves

¹²John Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophies (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1970), p. 17.

¹⁴Ibid.

fresh from African soil taught morality in animal tales, such as those of Brier Rabbit and Brier Fox. In contemporary black communities, women and men are referred to as "foxes," "cows," "bears," "buzzards," "dogs," and so forth. The style of talking (dramatic pauses, intonations and the like), are reminiscent of a people in tune with the natural rhythm of nature.

Survival of the Tribe

Studies of African beliefs and practices demonstrate that among the so-called distinct tribes there were many similarities. Mbiti contends that all tribes shared a basic belief in the "survival of the tribe."¹³

They believed that the tribe was an integral and indispensable part of nature. Belief in the survival of the tribe was reflected in and sustained by a deep sense of kinship. Kinship controlled all relationships in the community, including animals, plants, and non-living things. In effect, kinship bound together the entire system of the tribe.¹⁴

In traditional tribal life, the individual owed his or her very existence to other members of the tribe, and not only to those who conceived and nourished him but also to those long dead and still unborn. The individual did not exist unless he or she was corporate or communal; he or she was simply an integral part of the collective unity. Africans believed that the community (tribe) created, made, or produced the

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

individual; thus, the existence of the community was not imagined to be dependent on individual ingression. There are

African philosophical systems may have some effect upon black Americans with respect to the heavy emphasis on the community rather than the individual. The extended family is one outgrowth. The notion is that "I am because we are and because we are, there I am."¹⁵ The importance of community will be considered in depth in this paper.

Death and Immortality

Death and immortality are the final concept I would like to raise in this chapter. In many African tribes a person was not considered a full human being until he or she had gone through the whole rhythmic process of a physical birth, naming ceremony, puberty, initiation rites, and finally marriage and procreation. Then and only then was that person considered fully "born."

Similarly, death initiated the systematic rhythmic process through which a person gradually was removed from Asas (present) to the Zamani (past) periods. The departed person was remembered by name and called the "living dead." He was considered to be in a state of personal immortality; hence, he was given food, drink, in the form of libations, and listened to and obeyed. At the point when there was no longer anyone alive who would recognize and give respect to the (living-dead) person, then the process of dying was completed. He did not vanish out of existence, but lived in the company of spirits. At this point, the person became a part of the nameless spirits who had no personal communications with human families.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

This understanding of what being fully born means for blacks is key for the pastoral psychotherapist. There are black Americans who do not see themselves human until they have gone through procreation. Many black American women need to have children as a sign that they are fully "born." The therapist needs to look and understand these dynamics in their historical and positive realms before prematurely passing judgment.

Allow me to close this chapter by observing that black Americans cannot be meaningfully treated and understood by pastoral psychotherapists if blacks' philosophical assumptions are not taken into account. This observation may be more true of low-income black American clients than others.

The low-income black American is one to whom time, community, heroes, family, oral tradition and death and immortality are very important. They, the low-income black Americans, bring these items and other cultural traditions to the therapy room. The therapist must have some understanding of the meaning of black American culture and the world of the low-income black American to be effective.

I approach the therapy room with mixed feelings. Certainly I know much of black culture and come to the therapy room as a product of the ghetto, the public housing unit, and knowing that my family was "scrapping all things together to be able to make it."

sophistication.¹

Collective Identity and the Notion of Kinship

CHAPTER III

THE SIGNIFICANT FACTORS LOW-INCOME BLACK CLIENTS BRING TO THE PASTORAL PSYCHOTHERAPIST

For the past two and one-half years, I have been doing regular pastoral psychotherapy with low-income black American clients. I have seen individuals, married couples, couples in relationship, and a number of persons in various groups and relations. As I mentioned earlier, I have learned much from the experience of doing pastor psychotherapy with low-income black American clients.

The low-income black American clients have brought to me some of the problems and difficulties that are faced by many of my caucasian clients, but the blacks also present cultural adaptations that are different from the majority group.

A statement from Sedlacek and Brooks serves to introduce the low-income, black American client who comes seeking therapy.

Blacks tend to be more concerned with race than whites. They are more concerned with what it means to be black in this society. Their daily lives are affected because of their lifestyles which is based partly on the limitations and sanctions placed upon them by whites. . . the consequences of saying the "wrong thing" to whites has often been tragic. Unfortunately, whites have not had to understand blacks in the same way in order to 'get by' in society. . . so when doing multicultural or ethnotherapy, now is called to a new level of cultural

sophistication.¹

Collective Identity and the Notion of Kinship

With my clients one of my biases is that "black life" can be functional, beneficial, enriching, and powerful. It is important to me to model that various forms of black life do contain many ingredients from which black persons can draw strength and support. Vergel L. Lattimore presents this case effectively in his article "The Positive Contribution of Black Cultural Values to Pastoral Counseling."

I also counsel with the understanding that collective identity, the notion of kinship, the survival of the tribe, is most important to most of my clients.

The Value of Family

A second learning I have received from most low-income black American clients is the value of family. Very often I want to hear about the strengths of the black mother and the black father and how the family relates and cares for each other.

Lattimore cites that "black families have flexibility between male and female roles, strong kinship bonds, high achievement orientation, strong work orientation and strong religious orientation." He also notes that there is usually good cooperation between generations of black family members, for example, black family siblings care for younger siblings.

¹Vergel L. Lattimore, "The Positive Contribution of Black Cultural Values to Pastoral Counseling," in The Journal of Pastoral Care, vol. 36, no. 2 (1982), pp. 208-2100.

"In like manner, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles and cousins compliment family maintenance and development."²

When I see clients, more time is spent on the family history taking in the first few sessions because the history becomes a great resource for effective pastoral psychotherapy.

In my work with "soup kitchen street people," I learned from one, "Eric," that his father, now dead, had been a preacher of whom he was proud. He liked him and looked up to him. His pride about his father gets in the way of Eric's asking for help from his brothers and sisters who are "all around" Philadelphia. Eric's welfare check is about to run out and he may be thrown out of his apartment, but he doesn't want to resort to living permanently on the street. Eric gestures to another street person and says, "To live like that old man, old before his time, looking sleepy all day long and looking dirty."

Eric, even though down and out and about to lose all income, is able to reflect with some sense of lightness and joy upon his family background, the fact that his father was somebody, and the fact that, he infers, he needs to link up also with the pride that he experiences in relationship to this deceased father.

With the twinkle in his eye, and with my nudging, Eric "enjoyed" the memory of an important figure in his life, and probably, because of his father's stature, Eric will

²Ibid., p.

find a way of not having to spend a life of living on the street.

Some black clients seem to understand that the genius of the black family is that personhood and personal integrity can be fostered in spite of what appears to be negative environmental circumstances.

Work Orientation

A third learning is work orientation. Work orientation comes up often when I do therapy with low-income black American clients.

When I saw the group at the soup kitchen, most of all were unemployed, and most of them talked about feeling the miserable, lousy, sad, and suffering through feelings of being depressed.

Black Language

A fourth learning is black language. The place given to language by low-income black clients is an important factor when doing pastoral psychotherapy with low income blacks. For many clients who come to therapy, language is spoken but not written. They hesitate to fill out forms, write histories, do life lines, and provide in writing the resource material that is necessary for good diagnostic work.

Low-income black American clients seem to feel that they do better if they have an opportunity to talk with the therapist. Urias H. Beverly, in his article in the Journal of Pastoral Care, entitled "Blacks in Clinical

Pastoral Education," cites:

Blacks rarely separate feelings from speech. If there is not some feeling included in the words, the communication is not complete. Again, open communication is done only at certain times and with certain people. The reason for or against a time or person may not be consciously known. This may be a hunch. This has to do with black culture.³

In my soup kitchen experiences, my exchanges with the men and women there were mostly verbal. They tested me at first; they cursed and then excused themselves. They attempted to "loud talk" me to see if I would maintain control of the group. They shared feelings about themselves, their needs, fears, and their joys.

Eric even talked with great feeling about God and the meaning of God in his life. He referred to his Roman Catholic education.

Secrecy

A fifth learning from doing therapy with low-income black clients is the life-saving norm of secrecy. I, as a therapist for this group of men and women realize that secrecy, as Beverly suggests, is one of black culture's most widely used tools.

It is not the same as silence. It is best achieved by double messages, playing dumb, and reacting or more often not reacting as might be considered appropriate for most situations. Blacks are seldom at rest, but are about the business of sending the hunter up the wrong tree. This game has become unconscious for

³Urias H. Beverly, "Blacks in Clinical Pastoral Education," Journal of Pastoral Care, 1980, p. 110.

This holding of "secrets" creates an issue for the pastoral psychotherapist doing therapy with low-income black American clients. Does the psychotherapist call the client on his or her secrets or give the client this defense mechanism of secrecy to hold onto, for the sake of therapy that will ultimately "work its way through"? With one client, who is low-income and black, I know she is very secretive about relationships with males. Some days I nudge her and other days I steer clear of this issue. She said to me one time, "I just am not going to tell you about my relationship and what it means to me."

For some blacks, secrecy and the use of feeling-laden language is a problem for the therapist. But for "tuned in" therapists, the use of secrets and language becomes an opportunity to understand the client better.

"Reading" the Situation

The sixth learning is blacks tend not to move as quickly as some whites. For some, change seems to come a little slower. This is, as Beverly states, not a sign of passivity, but a sign

of caution, some blacks have to think a long time before action. . . many blacks have to think of the outcome of one action beforehand. When they are faced with a difficult move, individually, or with respect to a mate or family, they tend to adopt the safest stand, 'to present non-verbal communication that

⁴Ibid., p. 110.

will elicit certain behaviors from other person(s) first. When one finds himself working hard to reach a black, it is probably a situation where the black is afraid to move until more input is given. Spontaneity is not a black word.⁵

Spontaneous black people are seen as crazy in the black world.⁶

My experience has been that low-income black American clients "must see" the wisdom of change. Before they move toward change, they must be clear that any shifts in the system must be a step forward. This has especially been the case in any experience with black men in this income category.

One client came to do marital therapy with me whose wife had a long list of allegations and who complained about his having an affair, the possibility that he fathered a child out of wedlock, and many additional charges. He wanted to improve his marital situation, but weighed all of the changes, and the shifts in the system that would be required if he were to continue. Not being able to "see" what the end might be, he terminated.⁷

Beverly states: "It is much easier for blacks to have trust in someone who is not so 'goody-goody.' Raw love is hardly a part of the black experience. Love is often sensed in the black context through the rough, angry tones of truth."⁸

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p. 111.

⁷ Ibid., p. 112.

⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 112.

With "street people" in the "soup kitchen group," I tried not to be so "goody-goody." My attempt was to be real, believable and honest. Once when a local reporter and a local newspaper photographer came, I shared who the visitors were, so that the group participants could decide on their level of participation. Some participants wanted their pictures taken and their words recorded on the pad by the reporter. Others did not. I gained some respect and some trust from being up-front with the group participants. Likewise, I did not preach to them or "over-promise" what I could offer them.

One indication that trust was established was the fact that they returned on their own to succeeding sessions.

Beverly continues, "Trust will not happen fast, nor without many tests and retests, but every little bit gained is responded to in an obvious manner."⁹

Fairness

An eighth learning has to do with fairness. Beverly raised this important issue, "How hard should the therapist be on blacks? Is it unfair to be too hard on blacks?"¹⁰

One response he gives is that "many blacks will not respond to anything less than earth-shaking. Anyone who can shake the earth under a black, gains that black's

⁹ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 112.

respect."¹¹

My work with low-income black American clients has allowed me some flexibility in approach. One model for pastoral psychotherapy is to be somewhat distant and allow the client "space" to do his or her own work. Another model, suggested by the above quote, is to "shake the earth" under the client by being more aggressive and more assertive. Take some authority to set forth options and in a "behavioral way" nudge a client towards coming to grips with the option of moving now.¹²

One client has been reluctant to move to develop or change in therapy. She is a forty-year old black woman, a single parent, who talks about being behind the "economic eight ball" and even cites her way of increasing her income. She has been a successful supervisor and team leader for a number of Amway salespersons. She has repeatedly referred to getting started again in that endeavor but then fills her schedule with obligations and commitments which ultimately make it impossible for her to begin promoting her Amway business.

In my last session with her, I "shook the earth" under her, gave her assignments, and secured a promise that she would report on her progress at the next session. This will be a test to see if she really is motivated to change the system and move ahead towards the goals she has set for

¹¹Ibid., p. 113.

¹²Lattimore, p. 210.

herself.

The Client "Reading" the Situation

A ninth learning has to do with a "reading of the situation by the client." Doing pastoral psychotherapy with low-income black Americans has alerted me to the fact that

blacks have the ability to make quick, sophisticated readings of the environment and therefore are able to improvise on the spot. There is for many, the ability to handle stressful situations by being able to adapt to the situation in short order.

Lattimore comments that "Clients are forced to develop creative strategies in their bid for survival."¹³

One strategy may be for the client to present himself as dependent and helpless, reasoning that he or she is more likely to enlist the assistance of the clinician or helper if the client in this manner than if he or she presents themselves as capable of coping.¹⁴

My work with the "soup kitchen" helps me understand that there were many dependent personality types there.

Some presented themselves as being very needy, with a hope that I would rescue them and save them from their difficult situation.

As a necessary response to their needs, I did contact social service people who are scheduled to come and talk about the services of the city to meet their needs. But

¹³Ibid., p. 211.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 212.

more importantly, I designed the program around our group to be a resource for its own members to help each other, and to give the opportunity for each member to resonate with the concerns of the others.

We even celebrated a success story of one man who came and talked and then interviewed for a job the same day. He was hired and credits the group for giving him the good attitude to be able to get a job.

So for the helpless and the dependent persons, I had to be careful that I was not functioning as a rescuer or as one who had the "power" to save them from themselves and from their situations. This always is the challenge when one does therapy with poor and black people who have primarily come through the welfare system or related systems that catered to them rather than forced them to work through to their own growth and development.

The Place of Religion

Religion and the importance of the faith of low-income black Americans is curcial for the pastoral therapist working with them. For many blacks, cites Lattimore, "the sacramental nature of the black religious life, such as worship, prayer, singing, shouting, conversion and socializing are, in effect, therapeutic and redemptive."¹⁵

Lattimore continues:

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 211.

Black religious orientation serves the function of boundary management. When the larger social culture frustrates and impedes the participation of blacks in social activities, the black cultures and many times the black church, comeprnsates with emotional and spiritual support.¹⁶

I agree fully with this statement.

The "Soup Kitchen Street People" had a high regard for faith, religion, the church, the church-sponsored soup kitchen, and I would dare say, the pastoral psychotherapist who met with them for six weeks.

From the first contact with the persons, week one, I felt some receptivity. I began by asking them about ten questions, very general in nature. How had they heard about the center, how often they came, what were their other needs beside food, clothing, etc.?

I chose to use my title, Reverend, and found that there was no great resistance to answering the questions or talking with me. In fact, one man felt that he had been left out and came to ask me why.

From week one until week six I talked with more than 60 perons at least once and many returned to meet with me.

I had opportunities to have extended conversations with about 18 persons and met with others to discuss the purpose and goal of the group.

At mealtime I visited with the men, and while we ate our soup together, they referred to me as "Rev." When we raised the question of their feelings about God, many

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

responded with great statements of faith: "I believe in God." "God has been good to me." "God is testing me." "God is getting back at me because of my turning my back on him."

It seems to me that pastoral psychotherapists who work with low-income black Americans should hold high their Christian faith and use their title if it seems appropriate.

There is a good chance that clients will have a positive transference to the use of the clerical title and the fact that a minister, or a therapist who is a minister, is doing therapy with them. Those who react negatively will with feeling, talk about their negative transference, and this may be a benefit to the therapy.

One ought to hear that many blacks see great value in their faith and will look negatively upon the therapist who puts his or her faith down or acts as if that faith is leading them away from realistic dealing with any meaningful change in their lives.

Conclusion

I agree with the conclusion of Lattimore in his article:

The pastoral psychotherapist or helper who is aware of the dynamics of religious behavior... social and cultural differences, will have a tremendous advantage in identifying and enhancing cultural values with clients, especially low-income black American clients. Pastoral psychotherapy within the black American context, demands a commitment to understanding

and sharing the struggle of individuals within the context of their culture and community.

The understanding of cultural values, I would suggest, comes before the application of effective pastoral psychotherapy.

My experience bears out Lattimore's conclusion. Before the client is expected to trust, he or she must feel that the therapist has some level of understanding about his/her particular situation.

Many persons who call the Germantown Center specifically ask for a black pastoral psychotherapist because they perceive that the black psychotherapist will have greater insight into his or her situation and that the therapist will be able to be freer with the "secrets" the person may have.

Being black does not automatically "inform" the therapist but the therapist has to work hard to "bone up" on cultural issues, and the language of blacks, interpretations of dreams, and the meaning of God, the church and the soul, and what death means to the low-income black American before he can feel comfortable in sitting down in the therapist's chair. Without this "sensitivity" it will be difficult to establish the rapport or to keep the client long enough for him or her to begin to teach the therapist of other important symbols in the black world view.

The danger is that the therapist will think that he or she knows all, and can relax with this client before anticipating what will be coming forth. This is a fatal mistake. One ought to know and be open to the low-income

black American client to change the rules suddenly, to be creative, to be spontaneous, and to surprise the therapist. This is the nature of doing therapy with black Americans. As soon as you think you have gotten it down, you are surprised and made to look foolish and unprepared.

Urias Beverly says it best:

Blacks doing counseling require basically two things to grow: acceptance as they are with some space to experiment with new growth patterns, and the ability to be able to work with a supervisor who is able to be confronted.¹⁷

Confronting my supervisor often has helped me be a more effective psychotherapist.

This chapter specifically discusses the pastoral psychotherapist-client dyad with respect to the issues of transference, counter-transference, resistance, and some techniques I have used to aid in therapy.

Following are some learnings that I have acquired in working with low-income black American clients who were part of my congregation, the Tindley Temple Soup Kitchen Project, and those who made up my client load at the Greater Germantown Counseling Center.

The pastoral psychotherapist is defined as one who "is grounded in a reverence for creation and human potential; and one who has professional clinical training."¹

¹⁷Beverly, p. 111.

Greater Germantown Counseling Center Promotional Brochure. The Greater Germantown Counseling Center is a service of the Foundation of Pastoral Counseling Centers, Inc., Warrenton, Pa.

Many pastoral psychotherapists are ordained clergypersons.

Transference

Lawrence Brammer CHAPTER IV: Shostrom define

transference as a largely irrational part of the counseling process wherein the client projects to the counselor a self-rewarding process and unresolved feelings from earlier human

This chapter focuses on the pastoral psychotherapist client dyad. The aim is to discuss what happens between the pastoral psychotherapist and client and in this chapter I am talking about myself and the low-income black American client. creates counseling problems. In psychotherapy, however,

This chapter specifically discusses the pastoral psychotherapist-client dyad with respect to the issues of transference, counter-transference, resistance, and some techniques I have used to aid in therapy. maintains an

Following are some learnings that I have acquired in working with low-income black American clients who were part of my congregation, the Tindley Temple Soup Kitchen Project, and those who made up my client load at the Greater Germantown Counseling Center. ing at what was

The pastoral psychotherapist is defined as one who "is grounded in a reverence for creation and human potential; and one who has professional clinical training."¹

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Many pastoral psychotherapists are ordained clergypersons.

Transference

Lawrence Brammer and Everett Shostrom define transference as a largely irrational part of the counseling process wherein the client projects to the counselor a self-rewarding process and unresolved feelings from earlier human relationships.²

Although the expression and working through of transference feelings have therapeutic value, it is the intense feeling or involved relationship of transference that creates counseling problems. In psychotherapy, however, the development and working through of transferences are considered to be a significant part of long-term personality change. The resolution or working through of transference feelings is accomplished if the counselor maintains an attitude of acceptance and understanding. This also happens if he or she applies the methods of reflection, questioning and interpretive techniques as the counseling becomes more psychotherapeutic in nature.³

I was especially open to looking at what was going on with my "Soup Kitchen group." With respect to transference, some ambivalent authority feelings were transferred to me.

The men and women in the group, I believe, saw me in the role of minister and pastoral psychotherapist.

² Lawrence M. Brammer and Everett L. Shostrom, Therapeutic Psychology (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 232.

In light of their perception, they answered questions when I approached them in my first contact with them. I then had to make it clear that their receiving their soup and meal was not conditional on their talking to me.

Some may have been transferring father feelings to me. I, in their perception, was functioning in the parent role. They had no job and I was to help them come to grips with what they needed to do to get a job.

Some of them had no accommodations and they perceived that I would be able to help them secure good decent housing.

They had lost, for the most part, contact with their respective families and they hoped that I would help them reconnect with their families. This role could be construed as a parenting one and thus fed their parenting transference.

The other main source of their transference had to do with dependency. Many of the persons had been or were presently addicted to alcohol. Having dependent personalities, they very easily could have been dependent on me to solve their problems.

Working with negative transference is a delicate operation. It must be done without the client feeling that he or she is not being heard. When working with negative transference is done sloppily, it may evoke aggressive and negative transference from the client to the pastoral psychotherapist.

With this group I had to continually "frame" my

role and talk about the very limited goals that would be focused on for the six weeks of our meeting together. I also defined my role as one who would primarily hear their personal and interpersonal issues and would refer to the more social needs to the city's social service office.

Another danger in dependency transference is that the client's desire to solve his or her problem may be outweighed by his or her wishes to prolong the counseling. Other findings seem to indicate that dependency transference happens more during the early stages rather than the later stages of therapy.

In counseling I feel that resolving transference feelings comes about by increased client awareness of previously acceptable distorted or known experiences.

Counter-transference

Counter-transference refers to the emotional reactions and projections of the counselor towards the client. Counter-transference includes conscious and unconscious attitudes of the counselor towards the client's real or imagined attitudes or overt behavior. It is an expression of the counselor's humanness. It may be simply a feeling of the moment which is in general response between two human beings; it also may be a form of therapist projection.

Some sources of the counselor's counter-transference are his or her own unresolved personal problems and situational pressures in the sense that the counselor feels that it is his or her responsibility to see that the client improves

or else one's reputation is at stake. A third source is communication of client feelings to the therapist. Other sources are the therapist's value structure and his or her response to the client.⁴

With respect to my group and counter-transference feelings, I did feel some sympathy for some of the persons at first, which might have led to my being more emotional about their plight than I needed to be.

I have missed only one session, so being absent from the sessions was not a way that I expressed my counter transference.

I did run over the hour with some sessions. Extended sessions are listed as a sign or example of counter transference. Persons, at the close of the sessions, would come over and mention personal difficulties that they were experiencing, making it difficult to be adamant about the predetermined closing time.

With low-income black American clients, the pastoral psychotherapist must evaluate what is going on with respect to transference and counter transference.

Some of the operative questions are raised by Brammer and Shostrom. I have adapted some questions to be raised with low-income black American clients.

Why do I become so emotionally involved with this client who seems to be so deprived?

⁴Urias H. Beverly, "Blacks in Clinical Pastoral Education," Journal of Pastoral Care, 1982, p. 110.

Am I trying to save this client from hsi or her own culture and urban setting?

What do I say that raises the issue of racism with this client?

Have I over-identified with the client?

Am I using his or her language?

Do I have to impress the client that I really know what I am doing?

Am I talking down to the client?

Am I using clinical language with him or her?

Why does it upset me when the client comes late?

How do I understand CPT (colored people's time)?

Why do I feel compelled to give the client advice?

Are there special considerations that I need to take when I do therapy with black females?

These are some of my ongoing concerns as I do therapy with the soup kitchen people.

I feel accepted and trusted. This experience was short and transference was limited but real as I met with this group for six weeks.

I was clearly identified as a minister, and those who came for help resonated positively with this identification. One man, however, wanted to challenge my authority and did not want to give me his name. I accepted that fact; but with the use of a little humor and a handshake, the man decided to share his name and began to tell his story.

A pastoral psychotherapist cannot be intimidated by the low-income black American client. He must use authority appropriately, but also remain in appropriate

One common source of resistance is internal

control of the group. They must know that he must be free to intervene, to interrupt, to ask questions, and to shape the give-and-take of the group process.

There was some cursing, and I responded to this without judgment, in fact, those in the group set the limits (no cursing within the church) without me having to make a comment. I had not wanted to impose my religious standards in a way that would block real communication.

Mixed Sources of Resistance

The other major concern of mine was with the concept of resistance. Resistance, according to Brammer and Shostrom, is a special defensive form of transference. It is characteristic of the client's defense system which opposes the purposes of therapy or counseling. In general, counselors see resistance as something which opposes progress in problem solving. The aim of psychotherapy is to understand the client's unique form of resistance and have the client understand so he or she might make the choice as to what, if anything, he or she wants to do to reduce the resistance. Resistance may be saying that the client does not want to become well.

Resistance is seldom recognized by the client. Hence, resistance exists largely as an unconscious phenomenon and is manifested by an ambivalent attitude towards counseling. The client wants help, yet resists the help he or she seeks.

One common source of resistance is internal

resistance, which is

the tendency of anxious clients to retreat from usually painful attempts to explore patterns of behavior or of personality structure. It represents a fear of growing or of not wishing to be self-supporting.⁵

Another type of resistance is external resistance.

When the counselor gets too far ahead of the client, or the therapist attempts to accelerate or cut therapy short, or has bad technique, these are examples of external resistance. When the client misunderstands the role of the therapist, this again represents external resistance.⁶

Mixed Sources of Resistance

Conditions such as fatigue, disease, mental deficiency or foreign language barriers are considered the mixed sources of resistance.

Neurotic persons may manifest resistance through rigidity, concern over details, irritation, argumentation or playing stupid. When the client blocks therapeutic intervention by one of the above ways, it is important for the therapist to identify the resistance.

Resistance Among Low-Income Black American Clients

Low-income black American clients show their resistance through the use of language, talking in secretive ways, coming late to appointments, not understanding the process, forgetting to pay their fee, questioning the credentials of the pastoral psychotherapist, being always on the verge of cancelling, having relatives or neighbors

⁵Ibid., p. 243.

⁶Ibid., p. 259.

"tell them" that the therapist must be wrong or crazy, missing meetings for understandable reasons, or simply by bringing young children or babies in when they come for a therapy session. Low-income black American clients also fail at times to do assignments that have been given, refuse to fill out appropriate forms, and allow emergencies or "crisis situations" to continue to get in the way of therapy.

Adaptive Techniques for Resistance

Having experienced much resistance from low-income black American clients in the church setting, at the Tindley Temple site, and at the Greater Germantown Counseling Center, I have attempted to work out some adaptive techniques for dealing with resisting clients. These techniques follow.

The first technique is that in working with low-income black American clients I have taken considerably more time to interpret what pastoral psychotherapy is and how it operates.

The traditional intake takes one session. I usually do an extended intake of three to four sessions to make sure that we are moving slowly but progressively towards a sound therapist-client relationship.

A second technique is for me early on to make sure that the economic contract is sound. Rather than just rely on the sliding scale as the determinant of the fee, I help the client to look carefully at all contingencies;

graduation, Christmas, need for grandmother's bridgework that may come up in the present and next season. Knowing this information helps me to set a fee, with the collaboration of the client, which is easy to handle. As a result, I have had very few black low-income American clients who have terminated solely for economic reasons.

A third technique is to be available to clients during the day. Clients have called me, and do call my office for changes in schedules and for emergencies. The turn-around time for messages is short and they feel that if something comes up, they are being heard and responded to.

A fourth technique is the use of humor with my low-income black American clients. This must be done delicately and with great tact. This often reduces the tension of the client and helps him or her see me as a human being.

I try to interpret resistance when it erupts, attempting to talk to the client about what he or she is doing to resist. This is effective when strong responses are called for with a client.

All these ways of working with resistance have been helpful when I have worked with low-income black American clients.

My experience has helped me to see that the proper use of language by the pastoral psychotherapist tends to reduce the resistance of the low-income black American client.

The following are techniques I have developed for use with the low-income black American clients whom I see on a regular basis. These techniques have been helpful in reducing resistance.

I urge members of the group to be able to express their feelings. Low income black Americans include many of their feelings in their speech.

I do not correct mistakes in grammar, nor do I fill in empty spaces for persons as they were struggling to get their thoughts out.

I try to talk directly to members of the group and use eye-to-eye contact.

I also attempt to be aware of my body language. This is important to the clients, for they can read the situation and know if my body language says I am uncomfortable about being there with them.

It is too obvious to say, but I try to listen to what is being said, which is difficult in the large hall set aside for our meetings by the church.

I use non-technical, adult language with the street group persons. I ask their names and try to remember to use their first names whenever I address them.

I do not outlaw cursing. The group, on its own, for its own reasons, sets the boundaries for the language in the session.

We do not say prayers or approach worship in any way. We do unapologetically talk about God and just

about each had his say. Persons doing therapy with black American clients must be ready to talk about the meaning of faith and of God and Church. No low-income black person is totally divorced from this notion. There is a great relevance to this concern in most black person's lives.

All pastoral therapists who do work with low-income black Americans need to be super-sensitive to what they are feeling and what happens in the session with their client in this group.

The pastoral psychotherapist may feel better and more involved if he or she engages in some limited study of black culture, the black family, and some materials written to interpret the importance of racism upon black Americans in this society.

There is a danger that the therapist doing therapy with low-income black Americans will become sympathetic and feel sorry for the client, which will block the therapist's ability to be decisive and to maintain control in the session.

This happens to me from time to time: though it's good that the pastoral psychotherapist stick to therapy in order to be continually challenged about what is doing on in his or her life, there is a danger of attempting to rescue the low-income black American client from the multiplicity of problems that beset him or her.

My experience has been that I have to "stop the

bleeding" often by getting some immediate help for the client before pastoral psychotherapy can begin to be effective. This may mean helping a person to get a job or to get benefits. Once the emergency is eased, good therapy may begin.

This is a way that I work through my feelings of sympathy and my need to "save" the client from his situation of serious need.

One must blend well one's abilities, sensitivities, and power into an effective channel for doing effective psychotherapy with low-income black American clients. These theological assumptions will be limited to beliefs that help me do pastoral psychotherapy with the low-income black American client.

My theological assumptions provide a foundation for me in understanding myself, the client, and the work of pastoral psychotherapy.

Many of My Clients Resonate With an Understanding of God

as Love

Love in the Old Testament is the basic character of the relationship between persons, a relationship with the qualities of devotion, loyalty, intimate relationship and responsibility. In all cases love is the force which both initiates and maintains relationships, be it among persons or between God and man."

Consonant with the personal and active character of human love is the view of divine love in the Old Testament. God's love is not the emotional or intellectual imposition of favorable viewpoint upon the object of love but is His redeeming activity in human history.

In the New Testament, divine love is an active benevolence that will go to any length to do good to the beloved object and to secure its well-being. Jesus, however, does not analyze the nature of love; his mind was

CHAPTER V

THIS PASTORAL PSYCHOTHERAPIST'S THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS WHEN DOING THERAPY WITH LOW-INCOME BLACK AMERICAN CLIENTS

This chapter is devoted to a summary of my theological assumptions about God as contained in both the Old and New Testaments.

These theological assumptions will be limited to beliefs that help me do pastoral psychotherapy with the low-income black American client.

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Love in the Old Testament is the basic character of the relationship between persons, a relationship with the qualities of devotion, loyalty, intimate relationship and responsibility. In all cases love is the force which both initiates and maintains relationships, be it among persons or between God and man."

I attempt to communicate the Love of God to my clients. Consonant with the personal and active character of human love is the view of divine love in the Old Testament. God's love is not the emotional or intellectual imposition of favorable viewpoint upon the object of love but is His redeeming activity in human history.

George Buttrick, ed. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 165.