PERSONALITY PROBLEMS IN SOCIAL CASE WORK
AMONG NEGROES

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

One clear principle which emerges from anthropological study of the life of different peoples is that in certain respects all human beings are more alike than they are different. For that reason, varying cultures, though superficially different, have very much the same elements. It has been said that one outward attribute commonly possessed by cultures is stability.

Fundamentally, cultures proceed in much the same manner as they always have unless some new and sudden change in the socio-economic order takes place. Just such a change took place in this country during the early part of the seventeenth century, which was destined to alter the course of the rising American culture and set the stage for many of the
the same reasons, the social case worker among Negroes has often been unable to treat her cases with the same facility as social case workers with white clients.

A vast amount of literature has been written to explain the Negro's problem of adjustment to American life. Some of the writers have set forth ideas which were entirely unfounded and erroneous, others have made half-hearted stabs at the roots of the problems, and still others have honestly endeavored to fully understand. The great majority unfortunately have seemed to fall far short of their objectives.

The object of this study is not to solve the so-called "Negro problem" but rather to attempt to find and to explain some of the personality problems which handicap persons attempting to integrate the Negro into the main stream of culture through social case work. The term "main stream of culture" as used herein means all the institutions, habits, concepts, folkways, mores that go to make up life in this country, and which when viewed as a whole, establish the degree of civilization attained by the United States.

This study also attempts to give social case workers some insight into the reasons for the Negro's frequent inability to accept or carry through treatment programs, and to suggest ways in which the case worker may better understand and treat the social situation facing her client.

Scope

This study deals with some of the personality problems which confront the Negro client and possibly the case worker, thereby hampering treatment plans. It will include only those personality problems encountered in social case work.

It must be borne in mind that many of the personality problems
discussed may also be found in other groups besides the Negro, but the discussion will be centered around the fact that the problems as presented here were precipitated because the client or the case worker was a Negro.

Method

The bulk of the material for this thesis was accumulated by means of letters which were sent by the author to graduates of the Atlanta University School of Social Work. The author requested cases of personality difficulties which are encountered in doing case work with Negroes. The letters requested particularly material on personality difficulties which arose because the client is a Negro.

The cases presented here were chosen on the basis of the clarity of the problem and the frequency of occurrence of the defensive mechanisms which are built-up as a result of these problems.

The letters received came mainly from the eastern part of the United States although northern and southern, urban and rural sections were also represented.

Other material was taken from various periodicals and books dealing with the fields of psychiatry, psychology, social work, and sociology.
CHAPTER II

PERSONALITY PROBLEMS AMONG NEGROES

Before discussing the personality problems in social case work as faced by an individual because he is a Negro, it would be well to clarify what is meant by personality problems in social case work in general.

Personality problems in social case work are those problems of inner emotional conflict which are connected with some social situation, and are not too deep-seated to respond to treatment in a case work relationship. Accordingly, feelings of anxiety, hostility, guilt, ambivalence, identification, dependence, and rejection are some examples of such problems. These problems have often had their origin in cultural maladjustments, and they have eventually so affected the individual's personality that they have caused him to behave atypically or abnormally. Thus they have created a personality problem. "Abnormally" here does not mean highly specialized types of atypical behavior such as dementia praecox, manic-depression, or paranoia in the medical sense, but only that behavior which while irregular does not require the services of an expert in mental disease.

Proof of the Contention that Negroes Have Variations of Personality Problems which Do not Confront Other Groups

As has already been suggested, it is not to be supposed that the Negro has underlying personality problems peculiar to him alone. The
distinction between personality problems faced by the Negro and those faced by other groups is that the Negro's personality problems are often caused by the racial factor plus those causes which may be common in other groups.

The problem of regression, for instance, is the process of reverting or turning back to childish behavior for a solution of personality difficulties. This process is clearly seen in the instance where a young wife who is having difficulties with her husband returns to her mother's home. It is obvious that this is not only a problem in the Negro group, but in other groups as well. However, we must note the very common practice of Negroes of all classes, particularly in the South, to turn to some white person for aid when they face serious difficulties. Here we have a type of regression that is peculiar to the Negro.

The instance cited above concerning the Negro's problem of regression began during the slave era when the Negro had to depend upon his white master for his very life. The pattern has persisted because of the widespread denial to the Negro of the means of social control and the tendency of the white man to carry over the paternalistic attitude of the slave master.

Repression, another personality problem, is the attempt to keep the recollection of unpleasant acts and experiences in the area of the unconscious. It is a conscious effort to forget. These unpleasant memories may seem to have disappeared, but any new or unexpected emotional strain may bring the old ideas into the foreground. This problem may be found in any group of people. It is significant here only in the manner in which the fact of race may precipitate it among Negroes.

Let us consider an instance where a Negro girl, caucasion in appearance,
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is reared by a white family as a member of the white race. She suddenly finds out that she is not white, but colored. This is definitely a shock to her, but she decides to do all in her power to keep the knowledge from her friends and consciously tries to forget it herself so that she will not betray herself by any peculiar words or deeds when anything pertaining to a Negro is suggested.

Somewhat similar in effect is the Negro who is "passing" for white and marries into the white group. The thought recurs to him often that he might be discovered, but he consciously tries to repress it.

In the last two cases cited above of instances of emotional disturbances such as regression and repression, it can readily be seen that such situations did come about because the person in question was a Negro. There are other defensive mechanisms common to all groups which are built-up by people for meeting conflicts within themselves such as projection, compensation, identification, depression, and ambivalence and may be brought about or aggravated in the case of the Negro by inter or intra-racial conflict.

Personality Problems Found Most Often
Within the Negro Group

The African brought to America involuntarily as a slave suddenly came into contact with a culture utterly different from the one to which he had become accustomed. There were conflicts he met because he was a slave and an immigrant as well. As a slave, he was inclined to believe that his master's culture was superior to his own; moreover, when necessary the master did not fail to impress him with this idea. Like all immigrant groups, he eventually began to accept the superiority of
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the dominant culture and took what he could for his own. The white man's language and many of his concepts became a crystallized part of the Negro's thinking.

Among other concepts, the Negro took over the white man's theory of the superiority of persons with white skin and straight hair, over those with black skin and kinky hair. Because of this prevailing attitude toward the black man in America, and because of the fact that as a rule those of fairer skin complexion are able to obtain the better opportunities for advancement, Negroes themselves have made distinctions within the group. During the early days after slavery and until recently, most of the Negro professional men were mulattoes. This was due to the fact that very often mulatto children, through their white fathers, received education far in advance of other Negro children. Wilberforce University in Xenia, Ohio, was founded for the education of mulatto Negro children.

Distinctions on the basis of skin color are frequently a source of conflict among Negroes. For instance, there are cities where the membership of certain churches is composed chiefly of mulattoes, while those whose skins are dark brown or black constitute the bulk of attendance at others. A church attended only by mulattoes in one small town in Virginia, upon the death of its pastor, let it be known that none need apply for the vacant position unless his skin coloring was such that he could "pass" for white.

Not only is this pattern in evidence in some of the larger Negro groups, but also in some family groups. In certain families where there is extreme difference between the skin color of one member and that of the rest of family, the "odd" member may be rejected by the others. This situation may arise in either predominantly fair-complexioned families or
dark-complexioned ones. The personality problems found in many of these cases range among the feelings of inferiority, overambition or overcompensation, and insecurity.

In one family of six, all of the members were fair enough to "pass" for white, except one of the girls who was definitely Negroid in appearance. Although her sisters had certain household duties to perform, it fell to her lot to do the hardest tasks. As a young lady, Mrs. J. was seldom allowed to attend the same social functions as her sisters. Visitors often remarked about how different she was in appearance from the rest of the family. The treatment she received was seldom harsh or openly announced, but the whole attitude of the family toward her was an attitude of silent rejection. Today, Mrs. J. is very sensitive on any subject pertaining to skin color and tends to shy away from large groups of people. This case shows how feelings of insecurity and insecurity can grow out of distinctions between fair and dark members of family groups. These feelings are not peculiar to Negroes, but the problem of skin coloring which brought about these feelings is not common in other groups. As a result, we may say that these personality problems came to light because the individual was a Negro.

On the other hand, there is the case of a Negro child who is extremely fair while the rest of the family is unmistakably Negroid in appearance and she has often been heard to remark that "Joey is Mother and Daddy's favorite because he looks more like them than I do." This case emphasizes the desirability of being brown-skinned or typically Negro, but it is obvious that such color distinctions do have a definite detrimental effect upon the personality and emotional life of those concerned.
An expression heard occasionally in the Negro group is that dark or black Negroes are "evil" and consequently it is desirable to have a "fair" complexion. This idea had its origin in the fact that some inadequate dark Negroes project their faults and shortcomings on their color as do some who possess extremely fair skins. Persons of this type are often difficult "to get along with." Other Negroes may attempt to compensate for not having a "fair" skin by trying to achieve great success thereby focusing attention not on color, but on success. Still others may compensate by marrying a fair person in the hope that their children will also be fair. Thus they hope to show that in spite of their own swarthiness, their children will be saved from insult.

On the general basis it is much easier for a dark boy to fight his way to success than it is for a girl. "The girl without family background, low in economic status, and dark in pigmentation may possibly secure recognition and status through outstripping her schoolmates in her studies during school time or in athletics on the playground, but such "success stories" are not common. Usually, such a girl, in spite of her individual merit, will be excluded from intimate association with girls who have higher social and economic position, more secure family background, and lighter pigmentation."¹

Difference in Treatment of Negroes by Whites

The source of many of the personality problems which Negroes face in this country grows out of the concept of the inferiority of the black man.

Because of this feeling, Negroes must undergo many insults from whites and therefore even Negro children must be faced sooner or later by the realization that because of their color they will be treated differently than white children of the same age and capacities. Not only is this difference in treatment true of the southern communities, but also the northern communities where it is generally least expected.

One very clear example of this difference in treatment is seen in the case of a child whose parents as well as herself had been born and reared in a white community. These people had never had any difficulty with whites on the basis of color until their ten year old daughter came upon such a problem at the mixed school. After a lesson in citizenship, the Jewish teacher asked all Americans to rise. When this particular child stood with Americans of all extractions, she was asked to be seated because she was not an American—she was a Negro. There can be no doubt that this was a humiliating experience. We have no positive way of knowing what damage this experience did to this child's personality, but Plant says that "when the child meets the situation of belonging to a minority race, he responds with a lack of surefootedness." Lack of "surefootedness" is nothing less than a feeling of inferiority which is definitely a personality problem.

Another instance of this difference in the treatment of Negroes and whites by the majority group can be seen in the case where two Negro boys and a white boy attempted to take advantage of a swimming pool in a

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northern community which was operated in an amusement park. The white boy ran on ahead and entered the pool first. When the Negro boys started to enter, they were told that they could not swim there because it was a privately owned pool and the owner refused to permit Negroes to swim there. Psychiatrists feel that from such denials in the environment, frustrations do develop. In treating such cases they seek to help the parent provide the child with proper relationships. The Negro parent is still somewhat at a loss here because he also must face denial in the environment.

In southern communities, the separation of Negroes and whites is usually clear-cut. However, the two groups must contact one another in certain areas such as business, industry, transportation, and often theatres. The differences in the treatment of Negroes are often more overt and insulting in the South than in the North. Any deviation on the Negro's part from the segregated path that whites have said he must follow often brings unhappy results. Dr. Frazier in his book, Negro Youth at the Crossways, relates the experience of one Negro boy who made the horrible mistake of starting into a theatre on one of the days reserved for whites. The white woman at the box office loudly declared that he ought to know they don't mix whites and "Niggers" in anything in that particular southern city. The experience might not have been so painful to the boy if the woman had not spoken so loudly that others on the street turned to listen and laugh at his embarrassment and humiliation.

The cases cited above will give some idea of the types of situations Negroes meet as a result of the treatment accorded them by whites in this country. These are the kinds of situations which are responsible for the more serious personality problems.
Personality Problems Growing Out of
The Cultural Pattern

As a minority group which is a part of the greater American economic system, the Negro is dependent upon the majority group to a large extent for employment and consequently the means of obtaining a livelihood. However, since the slave era, the Negro has been excluded from the areas of skilled and well-paid employment. Until the time of the depression of 1929, there were many menial occupations which had become unofficially designated as "Negro jobs." However, soon after the beginning of this economic upheaval, even these jobs were taken over by whites to a large extent.

There is no more illustrative example of the Negro's exclusion from lucrative fields of employment than that found in the majority of defense industries which are operating today at top speed minus Negro employees.

There are all sorts of arguments set forth by white industrialists and businessmen against the employment of Negroes. Some say Negroes are unreliable; others say they would lose trade if Negroes and whites were known to be working side by side; still others don't bother to offer reasons, they're "just sorry" because after all they can do nothing about it.

The denial of economic opportunity to the Negro has become a pattern in our culture and as such has become practically institutionalized. As time goes on, solutions to this problem will probably gradually evolve, but in the meantime such a pattern is doing great damage to individual personality.

Constant denial produces frustration and frustration causes bitterness, despondence, or an urge to escape reality.
The bitter individual Negro feels that all the world is against him. Consequently, he decides to hurt others as much as he has been hurt and to obtain what he desires regardless of what it may cost to others. "He becomes 'mean' in the sense that to hurt and to thwart others provides some satisfaction for his own hurts and frustrations."\(^1\)

The despondent individual has lost faith in life and either temporarily or permanently ceases to make any effort at earning a living. One reaction to utter discouragement is to halt all personal efforts for achieving independence and depend on others for support. This reaction may be either temporary or permanent, and is seen frequently in Negroes. A youth of twenty years who had completed high school made the statement, "our chances aren't as good by any means as the white man's and never will be.... It's a situation like that makes a fellow like me not want to waste years studying to do what?"\(^2\) Although this individual may not have spent a great deal of time trying to find work, it can be seen that the idea of the uselessness of trying was conveyed to him by others. The idea that there is nothing ahead for the Negro but denial had become a part of this young man's thinking, and is a part of the thinking of a great many Negro youth and adults today.

Suicide is another manifestation of despondence and presents itself as a permanent way out of all difficulties. Previous to 1929, suicide rates among Negroes were said to be lower than those for whites, but during the depression, Negroes committed suicide in large numbers. At one apartment building in Harlem, the elevator was never carried to the

\(^1\)E. Franklin Frazier, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 52.

\(^2\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 136.
top floor because so many Negroes had gone there to commit suicide in
a leap from the roof.

The despondent person who does not attempt the complete escape by
means of the suicide method may use various other methods. Hysterical
religion is an escape mechanism which is seen frequently among this
class of mentally disturbed Negroes. In churches where this type of
religion is advocated, the congregation sings hysterically, shouts, and
becomes otherwise emotionally stirred-up. This has often been called a
psychotherapeutic treatment for "frayed-out nerves." Many of the women
who make up the congregation in such churches are those who work in
domestic service by the day. Because they must work hard physically and
have little outlet for their emotions, they take recourse in the type of
religious meetings which give sanction to up-rushes of religious passions.
In this way, they may escape for a time from the reality of their diffi-
cult struggle for existence. The evaluation of this means of escape is
that the person who gives away to up-rushes of religious passion loses
his inhibitions in the face of uprushes of sexual passion or passion to
steal and the like. The church is everything to such an individual—
everything except an emotional stabilizer.

These reactions to the processes of every day living are not based
upon organic disturbances but on functional disturbances. Such mental
agitation is seen in the white group as well as the Negro, but constant
denial of social and economic opportunity in America is peculiar to the
latter group and is part of our cultural pattern. Therefore, although
the manifestations of mental disturbance are the same for both groups,
the conditions which caused them are different.
Cultural Conflicts Within the Negro Group

Contrary to the beliefs of many who feel that all Negroes are alike, there is a great diversity of cultures within the Negro group. This results from the emigration of many Negroes from the island possessions of Spain, England, and France to the United States. The impact of this old world culture upon the culture of the native-born American Negro has caused many conflicts.

West Indian.--The foreign-born Negro group, made up largely of West Indian Negroes, represents the immigrant group within the larger native Negro population in the United States. The Negro immigrant group of itself presents no special problem to the white group, but it does present difficulties within the larger Negro group. The native Negro in many instances has been able to achieve at least partial accommodation to the majority group, but the foreign-born Negro comes bringing with him the customs and ideas of his former environment. The meeting of the two bring about certain conflicts on the basis of different cultures. "These problems are not of race, except in their nomenclature. Rather they are problems of complete social readjustment in terms of diversified and unreconciled mores, that include the acceptance of a permanent badge of race to which the immigrant is even less adjusted than his native-born brother."¹

The greatest source of conflict between the native Negro group and the foreign-born Negro is to be found in the problem of segregation and discrimination based on race. The foreign-born Negro very greatly resents discriminatory practices on the basis of race, because in many instances,

he belonged to the majority group at home and was often not the object of discrimination. The foreign-born Negro seeks to fight these prejudices by using his foreign citizenship status more or less as a threat. For instance, the British West Indian many times refuses naturalization here in order that he might use his status as a British subject to bring pressure to bear upon those who would segregate him. The immigrant Negro's use of such a technique as a buffer against discrimination, gives him the appearance of at least assuming an exaggerated idea of superiority which the native-born Negro resents.

Marriages between foreign-born Negro men and native-born Negro women are looked upon with a certain degree of doubt and misgiving, although they are not uncommon. The popular idea is that West Indian men feel that they are very much superior to women and should exercise all the authority in the family; the woman is put in the position of servant more or less. American women resent this authority greatly, because the idea runs counter to their conception of the woman's role in the family. Another explanation for the rejection of this idea of male superiority is that "the Negro woman's role as breadwinner has made her the dominant and more important figure in the family."¹

Running through all the various conflicts between the native-born Negro and the immigrant Negro are the various stereotyped ideas held by the former regarding the latter. We often hear that the West Indian is not to be trusted in money matters; he has a high temper; he treats women like animals; he feels he is superior to other Negroes; he is

¹Ira De A. Reid, op. cit., p. 144.
over-sensitive; he is clamorous. There are numerous other biased epithets used by the native-born Negro to characterize all West Indians.

Mr. Reid has summed up these conflicts by saying that if in the immigrant Negro's search for economic, social, and political freedom "he steps on the heels of the native Negro population it is only because both groups hear the same drummer and are aligning in a common cause."

Emotional upsets growing out of these cultural conflicts between the native-born Negro and the immigrant Negro are often more noticeable in West Indian youth than in matured adults. The use of the slang terms "monkey-chaser" and "spic," and other epithets in reference to Negro immigrants gives the West Indian youngster a feeling of inferiority in relation to his group and often develops extreme sensitivity and hostility toward the native-born Negro. On the other hand, because of his inferior feelings, he may attempt to show his superiority in such exaggerated ways as to further antagonize those with whom he would wish to associate.

Portugese.—The greatest source from which the Portuguese-speaking Negro immigrants were drawn was the Azores and Cape Verde Islands. This group became concentrated to a great extent in such New England coastal cities as New Bedford, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island, where they had answered the call for workers in the whaling and fishing industries. There is little if any social intercourse between the Cape Verdeans who are dark of complexion, and the Azoreans possessing olive complexions. The Azoreans consider themselves superior to the Cape Verdeans and neither group considers itself Negro. On the other hand, there is almost no social intermingling between either of these immigrant

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1Ira De A. Reid, op. cit., p. 252.
18.
groups and the native-born Negro group, because the latter feels itself far superior to the Portuguese.

There is very little intermarriage between this immigrant group and the native-born Negro group, but when such is the case, conflicts are witnessed on many sides. For instance, there is the case of the Azorean woman who is married to a native-born Negro man. The woman had been raised in an atmosphere where women remained in the home much of the time and daughters were under very strict discipline, especially with reference to the opposite sex. The husband, who was raised in the United States, is much less given to strict discipline, and therefore feels that the children ought to be raised accordingly. He is a very popular man in his community, but is seldom seen out with his wife. The children, on the other hand, are unable to reconcile the mother's disciplinary methods with the father's and the prevailing community's attitude toward freedom to a certain extent and carefree participation in activities with other American youngsters. This conflict in the home environment causes feelings of insecurity, rejection of the mother and resulting guilt feelings concerning the rejection, and a kind of identification with the outside community.

Other Groups.—Much has been written concerning certain conflicts which accrue from marriages between Negro and white, between Jew and Gentile, and between Catholic and protestant. Perhaps it is timely to mention here a few of the conflicts which take place as a result of marriage between white and Negro.

It is very true that there are marriages between Negroes and whites which seem to turn out satisfactorily, but because of the opposition to such unions in our culture, there are many of such persons who suffer from emotional conflict almost from the very beginning. The child
is usually the one who must experience the most emotional strain as a result of such a union. Because neither the whites nor the Negroes are willing to accept the partner of the opposite race, the child is at a loss to know in which group he belongs. Because of his Negro parent, the white group may warn their children to stay away from the child and the Negro group often accepts him, but constantly keeps before him the fact that he is "part of one thing and part of another."

Let us take the case of a young Italian girl who married a Negro man very much against the wishes of her parents. A very beautiful daughter was born to this union. During her years in elementary school most of her associates were the white children in her neighborhood. Now at thirteen years of age the girl finds herself torn between two sets of circumstances. Because she is dark olive in complexion with thick black wavy hair, she is not accepted in the white group, while on the other hand, she has never formed any friendships among the Negroes in her neighborhood. This girl is faced with feelings of insecurity and the knowledge that she has been rejected by the friends of her choice. She feels hostile toward the white group as a result of its rejection and toward her father because he is a symbol of her lack of status in the white group.

Such forms of mental disorders as rejection, repression, inferiority, insecurity are found among the maladjusted personalities of all races. Along with the ability to recognize manifestations of mental maladjustment in Negroes, the case worker must keep her mind ever open to the fact that such problems might have been aggravated by some situation growing out of the fact that the client was a Negro. It is only a part of the case worker's job to help the client in gaining insight into his problems, for she must also be on the alert
to recognize personality breakdowns which have progressed to such a stage that the client requires referral to a psychiatrist. On the basis of her investigation into the possible racial source of her client's trouble, she may better understand the meaning of the total situation; this will give her more facility in carrying out the psychiatrist's recommendations for case work treatment.
CHAPTER III

INSTANCES OF PERSONALITY PROBLEMS
IN CASE WORK WITH NEGROES

Cultural differences and conflicts are significant in themselves, but it is the way they affect individual personality which makes them particularly significant in social case work. It is only when these cultural factors block constructive thought or action that we have a personality problem.

Although the Negro has been exposed to American culture for over three hundred years, he has been rejected on the basis of race, more than any other single group. Therefore, while he may experience personality difficulties in common with other groups, the situations which cause and aggravate them are peculiar to the Negro.

It is in this area of case work with Negroes that social workers of the majority group are inclined to err in treatment because they do not thoroughly understand the problems of a minority group subjected to racial discrimination, nor the methods used by this group in attempting to solve these problems.

Slavery, the immediate cultural background of the Negro, forced him into complete dependence and subordination. The attitude that the Negro is inferior has become a part of the thinking of most white Americans, and to a certain extent, Negroes themselves. In order to render themselves acceptable to the majority group, many Negroes have built up certain accommodation patterns which are really adjustments to
an inferior racial status.

Two broad basic types of accommodation can be seen in the fawning "Uncle Tom" type and the self-ridiculing or clown Negro. The "Uncle Tom" Negro seeks to please the white man by remaining the servant who not only treats his master with the utmost respect and reverence, but humbles himself almost to the point of self-effacement. He removes his hat when in the white man's presence, addresses him as "Mr. Jim," and consults him in case of any trouble or stress. The clown type of Negro is the willing butt of all the jokes and seems to be insensitive to the fact that he is obtaining his objectives at the expense of his own self-respect.

Both of these broad methods of accommodation tend to weaken and destroy both personality and character. Throughout such broad types of accommodation, we notice numerous defense mechanisms which have been observed particularly in case work with Negroes.

The mechanism of rejection appeared more frequently than others in the cases studied. Negro clients seem to have two main sources for rejection; they may either reject Negroes or whites. The following case illustrates rejection of whites:

Miss T., an unmarried mother twenty-five years of age, who had been receiving help from a family agency during her period of unemployment, hesitated repeatedly to go to the clinic for an examination in preparation for a certain job. Her past work history showed that she had always been very adequate in caring for herself and her eight year old daughter. There were numerous discussions concerning the reasons for her inability to carry through treatment plans. Her excuses were plentiful, but inadequate. The white worker realizing that Miss T. might be having some conflict about her, took the case to her supervisor who referred Miss T. to a colored worker in the agency. After several preliminary interviews with Miss T., who continued to offer excuses for not receiving
service at the clinic, the worker began to concentrate on Miss T.'s hesitation. Miss T. brought out that she dreaded and feared contact with whites. She had been born and reared in the South where her father had met an untimely, but accidental death, at the hands of a white man. After moving to this border city, she had taken a job as dishwasher in an Episcopal hospital. While there she heard persons refer to the Negro employees as "niggers." She had thought that this did not happen "up north." Later, she overheard a conversation between the employment manager and another white man in which he remarked that the "nigger" who washes dishes here now is too thin for the uniforms, anyhow, and for all I know she could have T.B." Soon after this incident, Miss T. was discharged. During the interview she mentioned that her mother has always told her that the only way to get along with "white folks" is to keep away from them unless you're working.

Treatment plans for Miss T. were definitely blocked by her own rejection of white people and her fear of being rejected by them. She was no more able to accept the friendliness of the white worker than she was the services of the clinic which was manned by whites. She had feelings of hostility toward white people because she still blamed the white man for her father's death. Her past work experiences with whites only served to deepen her hostility and rejection of whites. Miss T.'s work history gave validity to the fact that she was willing to work, but anxiety, fear of denial, and hostility blocked all efforts at taking the step which would help her in finding employment. Thus, it was the case worker's job to help Miss T. bring out her feelings and thereby gain some insight into her own personality problems.

Negro clients themselves very often tend to reject Negro professional workers. This is a personality difficulty which frequently grows out of a cultural pattern which has sanctioned white superiority and Negro inferiority. The case of a Negro World War Veteran will serve to illustrate this type of problem.

Mr. H. became ill while working on a W.P.A. assignment. He went to the United States Marine hospital where he was advised that recovery would be more certain and rapid if they
transferred him to the Veteran's Hospital at Tuskegee, Alabama. Mr. H. refused to go there, because the physicians are Negroes. He expressed the feeling that "the poor colored doctors" know little or nothing about treatment. He had understood and believed that the doctors give every patient a spinal puncture. "If the doctor misses the vein, you are paralyzed for life. The government pays the doctor so much for each spinal puncture." Mr. H. decided to take his treatments at a white clinic in lieu of receiving institutionalized care at the colored Veteran's Hospital.

In spite of the fact that Mr. H. was suffering from an illness which required institutional care for thorough recovery, he refused such care because of his rejection of and lack of faith in the ability of Negro physicians to give proper service and care. In this case, we can also see the problem of regression. Mr. H. had all faith in the abilities of white doctors and depended upon their knowledge and technical ability to the exclusion of the Negro doctors.

Very often in doing case work with a Negro client we find that when he rejects the Negro worker, he also projects upon her any difficulty he might have in carrying out his wishes.

Mr. D. had been receiving relief from the public agency for seven years. In the last year, the white worker was replaced by a colored worker. Mr. D. had often expressed his resentment concerning this change. From time to time, Mr. D. failed to use the relief money in accordance with the plans, and it was found that he was spending it for liquor. Finally, the worker arranged with Mr. D. to put the money in charge of his sister-in-law. Mr. D. resented this greatly and began to blame the colored case worker for the humiliating change. His indignation became so strong that he sent a letter to President Roosevelt stating that the colored workers were unfair to him as well as inefficient at their jobs. The letter never reached the President and was referred back to the Department of Public Welfare.

Mr. D.'s past experiences with white case workers had been particularly satisfying to him, because they had acquiesced in most of his wishes. When the white worker was replaced by a colored worker, Mr. D. feared that
the latter would not comply with his wishes and had feelings of hostility toward the person who he believed was threatening his security. Mr. D.'s hostility was increased when the colored worker gave the keeping of his money into the hands of someone else. However, he had feelings of guilt concerning this, because he knew that his own actions had brought about the introduction of such a procedure. In order to resolve his guilt, he projected his misfortune upon the worker and attempted to punish her by writing to the President of the United States.

The problem of regression is one which occurs repeatedly in case work with Negroes. It is a very serious personality problem because if it is not recognized and treated by the case worker, it may become a deep-seated psychiatric problem which responds only to psychiatric treatment.

During Slavery, Negroes took all of their problems to their masters, because they had few if any resources for working out their own solutions. Even after slavery and until today many white people continue to retain a paternalistic attitude toward Negroes which encourages regression. A case illustration of regression can be seen in the following case of an old Negro woman about seventy years of age.

The woman, known to the community as "Blind Mary" was daily found roaming the business sections of the city, often narrowly escaping injury as she attempted to cross the streets regardless of traffic. Usually, she refused aid from passers-by. The Negro public welfare worker, summoned by the police department, found the woman living alone in an old shack. In the worker's attempt to establish rapport, she mentioned the fact that she was a Negro. The woman replied by asking, "Who are you, what's wrong with you that you want to help me? Get away from me. I am afraid of you. The white folks and the Lord helps me." A few days later the same worker met the woman attempting to cross the street at a very busy intersection. When she offered to help, the woman asked "Is you a white lady?" The worker, feeling justified in telling the lie to save the woman from danger, replied in the affirmative. At that, the woman took the worker's arm and commented that "I thank you to help me across, 'cause I only have white folks and the Lord to help me."
This woman presented a serious personality problem because first of all she had regressed so far that she was almost completely dependent upon white people for help. She was so confident in their ability to help her that she identified them with God. Blind Mary's feelings of hostility toward Negroes was so intense that she actually feared them in spite of the fact that she herself was a Negro. There is a question as to whether or not a solution to such a problem could be found in a case work relationship. However, it is one which case workers do meet, and it is their job to know whether or not the solution to such a personality problem can best be affected in this area or in the area of psychiatry. This illustration reveals a problem which is found in other groups, but it was precipitated by the fact that the woman was a Negro.

The type of regression as seen in the following case illustration was very definitely an outgrowth of the cultural pattern.

Mrs. J., a resident of a home for the aged, sold her farm after the death of her husband, and left the proceeds from the farm in charge of a white man with whom she had recently become acquainted. The worker suggested that Mrs. J. use some of the money for her immediate personal use. It was also suggested that she hire a Negro lawyer and draw up a will. Mrs. J. pointed out that she had implicit confidence in the white man's ability to manage her money, because he had already helped her transfer her account from one bank to another. He was someone on whom she could depend. She brought out her feelings that Negroes make too much "fuss" over handling and inheriting money and she did not intend to have this happen over her dead body. To support her argument, she pointed out certain Negro insurance companies that did not live up to their promises when the insured parties died. "The white race is the race that knows how to handle business." Finally Mrs. J. explained that all her life she had known certain white people on whom she could always depend and carry her troubles to.

Mrs. J. was unable to give up her habit of depending upon white people to help her in working out her problems. Her preference for
having white people handle her personal affairs had become so much a part of her behavior pattern that she was unable to see the necessity for protecting herself and her relatives by making a will.

The Negro's idea of the shame which is connected with tuberculosis is one of the causes of the problem of repression. An illustration of just such a problem is the case of an eleven year old Negro boy.

John was a playground problem; he disrupted any of the playgroups and was extremely nervous. He was undernourished, nervous, and generally irritable. All of the techniques for maintaining order were useless in John's case. An investigation of John's home revealed that his mother who was thirty years of age, was suffering from tuberculosis. John's matern grandmother, aunt, and two cousins composed the rest of the family. The grandmother regarded tuberculosis as a dreaded, shameful disease and kept the mother confined to one room. Close friends and neighbors were seldom allowed to see her. The case worker's suggestion that John's mother be placed in an institution met with instant opposition from the grandmother. She maintained that she "didn't want it to get out, what her daughter had." There was constant bickering between the child's mother and aunt. John had a deep affection for his mother. The public health officer took no steps to alleviate the poor health conditions existing in the home. After the death of his grandmother and mother, John made his home with his aunt and cousins and began to make what seems to be a satisfactory adjustment.

John's grandmother and aunt were so ashamed by the fact that his mother had tuberculosis that they more or less blamed her as the cause of their humiliation. John, on the other hand, because of his affection for his mother had hostile feelings toward his grandmother and aunt which he found it necessary to repress. However, the hostile feelings were projected upon his playmates on the playground which made him a problem there, according to the theory that "the individual 'projects' his hostile impulses to the outside world."1

The circumstances which were causing John's personality problems were relieved only after the death of his mother and grandmother.

There are numerous other personality difficulties with which case workers must contend when doing case work with Negroes, but which because of their complexity do not lend themselves to placement in any one category.

There is one case in which the death of an eight year old child came as the result of the mother's rejection of medical care and her involvement in a questionable religious sect.

The services of the family agency were requested by a neighbor of Mrs. F. Mrs. F.'s eight year old daughter had been seriously ill for two weeks with a high fever, and had received no medical attention. When the worker visited and explained her mission, Mrs. F. became very insulting and told the worker that her daughter needed no help from any kind of relief agency or hospital. She refused the services of a physician on the grounds that doctors and medicine were no good, because anything can be done through faith. One needs only to "ask God's help and wait on him," because he will do whatever is necessary. She felt that if "God takes her home, no one else has anything to do with it." Mrs. F. had left her husband in Virginia and had taken her daughter to a small town in Maryland where a certain group of people devoutly held to the religion of "faith cure." A few days after the first visit was made Mrs. F. phoned the agency asking the worker to visit. She found the child in a state of delirium and the mother praying in a hysterical fashion. A physician was called and it was found that the child was very ill with pneumonia. Two days later the child died. Mrs. F. was very much upset over the child's death, and blamed the case worker and the doctor stating that "if he had not come in with all his medicine, her child would have lived." The Lord was punishing her for doubting his word.

The personality problems involved in this case were particularly complex. Mrs. F. refused to face the reality of the illness of her child, because her feelings had become so entangled in a fanatical religious denomination. On the one hand, she was devoted to her child as was seen when she phoned for the case worker, but on the other hand, she
had a fear that if she did accept the services of a physician, she would be going counter to her religion; she was torn between conflicting desires. To cling to one was to reject the other. Mrs. F.'s upset condition after her child's death was the result of her feelings of guilt. She really felt that she had caused the child's death, but she projected these feelings upon the doctor. This case brings out a combination of personality problems namely, rejection, ambivalence, projection.

We are cognizant of the fact that certain groups of whites do hold to certain extreme religious faiths, but the social worker who deals with Negroes seems to come into contact with situations which make for such personality difficulties more frequently than in case work with white clients.

Another instance of the difficulties which may be encountered as a result of a belief in fanatical religion will be seen in the case of a Negro woman of about sixty-five years of age.

Mrs. M. lived in a very unwholesome neighborhood and was responsible for the care of her mute, feebleminded, and deformed sixteen year old granddaughter. Mrs. M. belonged to a religious sect which called for her presence at all church services. These meetings kept her away from the home at least three or four evenings a week. The granddaughter was the mother of three illegitimate children none of whom was normal. The oldest child, aged three had never walked, the second child, aged two, was clubfooted; and the youngest, aged one month, was blind. The mother of the children was unable to make it known who the father or fathers of these children were. Mrs. M. refused boarding home care for her granddaughter, because she felt that people would think she was trying to get rid of the girl. The worker tried to help her talk through the situation and suggested that she make arrangements to remain at home more often to care for her granddaughter in order to guard against an increase in the family. Mrs. M. felt that it was no sin to have these children and that "the Lord would not suffer the children to be born if it was not his will."
Mrs. M. had no conflict within herself concerning her granddaughter and her illegitimate children, because she had no feeling about it except when the worker suggested that something be done about the granddaughter. Mrs. M., however, rejected any outside aid for the girl and anything that seemed to encroach upon her religious beliefs. Because Mrs. M. was receiving relief from a social agency, it was the worker's job to help reeducate Mrs. M. and to help her see that these children were destined to be dependent all their lives, and an increase in their number would only increase the misery of all concerned. Mrs. M.'s religious obsession hindered the progress of treatment plans and added to the complexity of their situation.

The following case illustrates a problem which is peculiar to the Negro group although the outward manifestations are seen in other groups as well as the Negro.

Mary T., a girl of fourteen was referred to the family agency by the juvenile court for help in securing part-time work after school. She had been brought into court because of truancy and immoral conduct. In the beginning, the worker was unable to establish rapport with the girl. Juvenile court records were extremely inadequate. When the worker visited the girl's home, Mrs. T. expressed her dissatisfaction with Mary and her inability to demand obedience from her. She mentioned that of her four children, Mary was the worst. She never does "any work around the house, runs around with a rough crowd, plays hockey from school, and stays out late at night." Mrs. T. remarked with much feeling that "she's yellow and no good just like her father." After sometime, the worker succeeded in gaining the girl's confidence through her interest in secretarial work. Later, in a discussion of her difficulties at home, Mary brought out her hostile feelings toward her mother by saying, "Mother hates me because I am fair like my father. She always blames me for everything that is done at home and tells me that she always know yellow Negroes were no good anyway." I don't blame him for going away and staying a long time. I feel like doing that myself sometimes." The girl and her father were very much devoted to one another. He had deserted his wife at intervals all during
their married life. Whenever he returned home, he always had a present for Mary. She brought out her feelings that her father was the only one who loved her. She wished that her mother was the one who would go away instead of her father.

Mary T.'s personality problems were numerous, because the conflicts in her feelings were many. First of all, Mary had feelings of inferiority because she had been definitely rejected by her mother and was given no sense of belongingness in her home life. Her need for affection was answered in the home only at short intervals when her father returned from his wandering. For that reason, she sought and found the attention of other youngsters who answered her desire for affection. Mrs. T., on the other hand, felt that Mary had taken the place of herself in the affections of Mr. T. For that reason and because of the fact that Mr. T. and Mary were both of fair complexion, Mrs. T. tended to identify Mary with her father. Mrs. T. constantly brought out her feelings of hostility concerning a fair complexion which were really based upon her idea that Mr. T. had rejected her. Mary, however, bore the brunt of her mother's hostility when she remained at home, and constantly reminded her that having a fair complexion was nothing to be proud of.

The personality problems which present themselves in this case are basically not peculiar to the Negro group, but the fact that they were brought into being and nurtured because of a conflict growing out of a difference in skin coloring gives them the distinction of being types met frequently in social work among Negroes.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Formerly, it was taken for granted that the personality of the Negro is conditioned by the same factors in American culture which condition personality growth in other groups, but the fact has been overlooked that the growth of the Negro's personality is determined to a great degree by the organization of this country along caste lines. Although the Negro has attempted to assimilate the culture of the majority group, he is still set apart by the customs and mores in this society made easier by his more or less different physical appearance.

From the information gathered and presented in the preceding chapters, it can be seen that there are innumerable factors which figure prominently in the breakdown and disintegration of Negro personality.

First of all, the consistent exclusion of the Negro from the equal benefits to be derived from a system of Democracy is the most potent factor in hindering the normal development of Negro personality. The influence of the idea of the inferiority of black people has manifested itself in the thinking of Negroes themselves. Class and color distinctions have served to set off certain groups of Negroes from others within the Negro group itself.

Second, the migration of the Negro from rural or urban southern areas to the urban areas of the North and East has had a tremendous influence on personality disorganization because of the conflicts
encountered after the clash of the simple, agricultural culture and the complex, urban culture.

Third, the conflicts between the Negro and other ethnic groups within the American culture also contribute to the personality problems of Negroes.

The personality problems of Negroes are chiefly an outgrowth of their exclusion from the main stream of culture and find their origin in the American cultural pattern.

Social case work provides the ideal setting for the recognition of the Negro's personality problems on the basis of individual contact. Personality problems are dealt with in segments and give clear indication of the larger problems faced by the Negro group as a whole.

The cases presented in the foregoing chapter are significant because they show the defense mechanisms growing out of underlying personality problems which have been precipitated or aggravated by the factor of race and which hinder treatment plans.

The case worker in the area of social case work with Negroes must ever be on the lookout for those personality problems which have special meaning for Negroes. However, she must guard against placing undue emphasis upon the search for such problems in order not to make the mistake of seeing special problems which are not present. It must always be remembered that the pressures placed upon Negroes by society do not have the same effect on every Negro. While some permit themselves to become personally involved because of the pressures, others develop methods of substitution and compensation which offset the deteriorating effects of the various restrictions and conflicts.
Social work in general, and case work in particular, if it is
to do its duty in aiding the Negro client in his own rehabilitation
and adjustment to his social situation by helping him to solve his
personality problem, must accept the challenge of endeavoring to inte-
grate the Negro as a group into the main stream of American culture.
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