

CHAPTER 5 THE ETIOLOGY OF SOCIOPEDAGOGICAL PROBLEM AREAS

5.1 Introduction

The etiology of a sociopedagogical problem areas is concerned with the question: what factors give rise to them, such as, e.g., problems of contemporary youth, drug addiction of youth, dropping out of school and juvenile delinquency. The fact that educative and youth problems have *many origins* must be emphasized. More than one factor, and even a multiple combination of factors usually is at work impeding an educative situation of a child or youth, e.g., the communication between a youth and his/her educator can be inadequate, but with this, a youth comes under the harmful influence of the mass communication media in a permissive society.

5.2 Educatively impeding factors

The following six groups of *educatively impeding factors* are distinguished:

a. Physical factors:

The physical disposition and problems of an educand can create problems for the parents regarding educating and handling their child and youth. Here one thinks of the physical conditions and problems of youths in puberty: rapid bodily growth and change; awakening sexuality; new experiences of one's own body; restlessness; self-consciousness—as well as a related emotional lability, over-sensitiveness, nervousness, conflict, embarrassment, irritability, withdrawal, need for intimacy, etc. which characterize the psychic life of a child in puberty. If these physical and psychological dispositions are not adequately assimilated by a youth, and if he/she also does not receive adequate pedagogical support, this can give rise to problems in educating, with a related disturbed psychic and expressive life.

b. Psychic-spiritual factors:

The psychic-spiritual state or disposition of a child also can mean that an educand has a role in the origin of child and/or youth problems. For example, the psychic life of a child can be disturbed because he/she cannot assimilate one or another situation in his/her life (educative distress, death of a close relative, a physical handicap or deficiency, failure in school, etc.). Or an educand can be responsible for inadequate communication with an educator. A third possibility is that a youth, even though his/her educators have educated him/her adequately for one or another reason, on his/her own initiative, he/she can decide to *choose* against the educating he/she has received and proceed to behave in ways which do not correspond with what has been presented to during his/her educating.

c. Factors in realizing relationships:

Here, the impediments to educating are found in the human and nonhuman *reality* with which a child is in *relationship*, i.e., people, animals, plants, things. Primarily, this has to do with the *human relationships* in which a child finds him/herself, and where there is a distinction between *pedagogical* (parents, teachers) and *non-pedagogical relationships* (brothers, sisters, friends, classmates, age cohorts). Of these, the first is by far the most meaningful (significant) for a child.

In this connection, the matters of *disturbed educative relationships* and *errors in educating*, as educatively impeding factors, are central for a sociopedagogue. Therefore, the matter of disturbed educative relationships (i.e., inadequate educative communication) is given detailed attention later in the present chapter.

d. Family factors (not belonging to group c):

Here, the focus is on the non-pedagogical relationships and dispositions in the family which can result in impeding educating. Here, one thinks of family incompleteness (death of one or both parents, divorce), individual mental disturbance of one or both parents (neuroticism, mental deficiency), marital tension, conflict between the parents and their adult children, family crises such as poverty, illness, inadequate housing, unemployment, separation (e.g., because of war), etc.

The modern family is characterized by a certain tragedy. The situation of the family which wrestles with stability amidst unstable social relationships is tragic. Family members rebuff each other by which, in our society, the family has become the area of social tension. Many family and educative difficulties can be directly related to the contemporary structure of society. The educative function of the family no longer is constant because educating (*to linking up with society*) continually is determined by changes in the social structure. It is an unavoidable dynamic in the modern family's function of educating. Properly linking up with new social situations continually must be brought about (Van der Geld).

e. Subcultural factors (not belong to groups c and d):

Disturbances in the life community and social situation within which the child and family find themselves can function as educative impeding factors. Possibly, a family finds itself in a criminal environment or socioeconomically less privileged circumstances. The value systems, attitudes, customs and lifestyle of the subculture can delay or disturb a child's personal becoming. A good example of this is the terrorized city life community in Ireland. Conflict and violence between religious and socioeconomic colliding groups result in children growing up with hate, aggression and anxiety.

f. Societal structural factors (not belonging to groups c, d and e):

The broad societal structure thoroughly influences (promotes or impedes) the family life and educating of a child and can impede educating him/her. This includes social and economic factors such as power, status, possessions, consumption, etc. in society. Societal structural determining factors, such as poverty, famine, epidemics and housing problems, directly influence the family and, thus, impede educating. There can be insufficient financial means for adequate teaching and preparation or for child medical services; city planning, and house building can occur without taking children into consideration.

In addition, the following societal structural factors are instances of forces which can have negative effects on family stability, and impede a child's education: the accelerated movement tempo of

society, neuroticizing factors (psychic pressure on family members), psychically unsatisfactory work, economic tension and uncertainty, the bisexuality of our time, uncertainty, and a fall from social status, population explosion, urbanization, heavy traffic, the multiple forms and complexity of cultural influences.

From the above divisions, especially factors c, d, e and f are important to a sociopedagogician. Next, some origins of sociopedagogical problem areas are dealt with in greater detail, and under the following themes:

- educative errors as leading to sociopedagogical problem areas;
- disturbed relationships as leading to sociopedagogical problem areas;
- family situations as leading to sociopedagogical problem areas.

5.2.1 Educative errors as leading to sociopedagogical problem areas

It is difficult to educate a child correctly. Because no one is perfect, it also is natural that an educator makes mistakes (compare the concept of *deficiencies in educating*). There are errors of carelessness and/or ignorance. The natural equipment of a child enables him/her to overcome the damage of the educative errors of his/her educators. However, there is the danger that an educator can fixate on the errors he/she makes. Therefore, an educator continually must strive to better know his/her child and educating him/her, and to improve him/herself as an educator. Prevention is always better than curing. The natural equipment of an educator enables him/her, without any knowledge of pedagogics (the science of educating), to successfully educate his/her child based on his/her *intuitive attunement to what, for his/her child is right or wrong*, good or bad, as well as out of his/her *love for his/her child*.

The matter of educative errors centers around the fact that an educator inadequately considers

- * the child's primary psychic-spiritual need (thus, neglect), and
- * the child's natural psychic-spiritual state (level) of becoming (thus, spoiling and interrogating, callousness and over-

protecting).

The following incorrect educative relationships and actions of parents are distinguished:

5.2.1.1 Neglecting

A child receives inadequate material caring for his/her becoming adult as well as too little support and help in the form of guiding, disciplining, establishing routines, etc. Often there is good material caring, but the parents are so involved with their vocational or social life that they don't have time to give attention to their child. Educative communication with the child, in which there is an opportunity for educating, is realized too little. An opportunity is missing where demands, norms, directions and prohibitions can be presented to the child. He/she is allowed to do whatever he/she desires. This leaves the child insecure because, now he/she feels uncertain about what he/she is to do in a strange, threatening reality. Then, his/her exploration of the world often is destructive, and his/her deeds occur at the expense of others. His/her attitudes and behaviors are uncontrolled and unrestrained. He/she does not take others and acceptable norms into account, and this deficiency can degenerate into criminality (inadequate socialization).

Even though there often is average or above average intellectual potentialities, at school the child is not disciplined enough to concentrate or to exert him/herself to achieve on an intellectually satisfactory level. In class, he/she is restless, obstinate and unrestrained, and he/she only directs him/herself to what is pleasurable. He/she is bored, and his/her attention fluctuates. His/her weak disposition to work leads him/her to rattle off any task, only to get ride of it. Also, there is no effort or discipline regarding acts of thinking.

5.2.1.2 Spoiling

This literally means that, with an overindulgent attitude, the parents "turn" their child wrong. It certainly is the most difficult educative error to avoid. If the parents cannot distance themselves from their child, or do not have the mental strength to say "no" to their child,

they become too soft and passive. They give in to everything their *child* wants, and not to what *ought* to be. This “everything-may and everything-can” educative climate creates chaos for the child. The parents try to avoid conflict and unpleasantness with their child by giving in to whatever he/she fancies. They try to buy him/her with kindness and favors, or they spare him/her of any immediate disappointments. However, this educative attitude is shortsighted—it results in the child demanding increasingly more from his/her educators.

Often, the reason for this spoiling attitude is that it is a sickly or handicapped child. A child is a physical invalid, but the parents also make him/her a mental invalid. Some parents will educate their child in a “modern” or “psychological” way, and he/she must be allowed to be “free” to do what he/she wants. Prohibitions and punishment would lead to “complexes” arising in the child. Often, because of loose family ties, in each case the child is “free” to follow his/her own course. Sometimes a parent compensates for his/her lack of love, genuine *personal* interest and discipline by smothering the child with material goods. He/she will buy off his/her conscience by spoiling. Grandparents are the natural spoilers of children. They are manipulated easily by a child. They demand nothing and only give because they do not have primary educative responsibility for the child.

A child who is pampered and indulged is a stranger to life in a hard reality. He/she remains on a *level of gratification*, while achievement on the *level of reality* is more desired. He/she does not learn to endure dislikes, difficulties, disappointments and frustrations; he/she does not learn to exert him/herself to meet the demands of reality. Especially in school, he/she accepts strictness and punishment from a teacher with difficulty. Here, he/she shows an underachievement because he/she is accustomed to being above and beyond demands, obligations, and prohibitions. A child who is spoiled materially does not learn the value of money and goods, and he/she never learns the joys of receiving because he/she is too accustomed to be getting excesses.

A spoiled child becomes egocentric. The world is made only for him/her. He/she tyrannizes his/her surroundings with his/her

obstinacy and overreacts if he/she does not get his/her way. He/she has no respect, is without norms and is in awe of nothing and nobody. Only his/her own interests reign on a volatile level, and he/she directs him/herself to gratifying him/herself. His/her behavior degenerates and is loud, offensive, trite and vulgar. Often, when he/she reaches puberty, he/she escapes into being a delightful teenager (inadequate socialization).

An overindulgent educator also is inclined to allow a child or youth to do things for which he/she is not yet ready, and which are not appropriate for his/her age, e.g., a girl who is allowed to go out with a boy at too early an age, or wear too much makeup, etc. (excessive exposure to societal influences).

5.2.1.3 Hardening (Making callous)

Hardening is the opposite of spoiling. Both parents overdo the view that it is good to make a child hard through educating so that he/she can maintain him/herself in a hard-handed world, and against the difficulties and problems of life. Especially, a father might detest a spiritless son and want to make him a “man”. His son may not then be allowed to cry for no reason, and he/she also may not run to his parents with each disappointment. Essentially, the child’s becoming independent is made absolute. Sometimes the attitude of the parent is one of a lack of love and a sadistic mentality, and then he deliberately creates situations where the child is uncomfortable (cold bathwater, anxious and he must learn to endure and bear disappointments. Sometimes the child is treated ruthlessly-- beaten and punished. Or he is rejected when he reconciles with his father. Such parents emphasize toys and games which must make the child rough and hard.

Overlooked is the fact that punishment is a symbolic activity with the exclusive aim of morally improving a child. Of prudence and gentle firmness, these parents know nothing, also not of forgiving and cherishing. Their manner of punishment results in making their child callous, and often is a personal discharge of emotion on the child, rather than punishment as an accountable means of educating. Even though anxiety and proneness to be anxious are central in the experiential world of a child educate to callousness,

he/she becomes blunted, unfeeling, degenerate, feels unworthy and is callous. For a child, a hardened educating means distorted psychic growth.

5.2.1.4 Over-protecting

An over-caring and over-protecting educative attitude essentially means that a child is underestimated in his/her growing up and, therefore, also under-challenged. Excessive physical pampering also usually occurs with this. A child is treated as if he/she were much younger, and only those demands are made of him/her which would be made of a younger child. Colloquially, it is said that such a child is “pampered up” rather than “brought up”. This educative mistake springs from a parent’s excessive fear that something will happen to his/her child. The parent sees danger in everything and tries to protect his/her child against the danger. Then, he/she may not be allowed to move in and near the street or play with any friends. At every opportunity, the parents keep him/her too little for his/her age (infantilize him/her). Often, it is the parents’ aim to keep him/her little so they can “possess” him/her longer. The child’s wanting-to-be-someone-him/herself, and his/her increasing independence are not sufficiently acknowledged. He/she is not recognized and acknowledged in his/her unique development. Mothers are especially disposed to over-protect, and it is said that the child becomes too “mothered”.

This attitude shows itself in a child being excessively bonded with his/her mother and excessively seeks her attention. Many parents allow their child to sleep in the same room with them until a late age. Ordinarily, he/she is helped too much with everything—with homework, going to school, eating, bathing and dressing. These parents forget the important principle of educating that, if one wants to help him/her become independent, one gradually must withdraw one’s help. Often a mother interferes when the child disagrees with the father, a teacher or playmate. He/she is sheltered from associating and competing with peers (over-protective, distance-less communication).

Levy* distinguishes two forms of motherly over-protection: the domineering and the submissive mother. The first demands of her child strict obedience and submissiveness. All aggressive inclinations are smothered. The child really is a love object which is possessed by his/her mother's complete will. He/she does everything his/her mother wants, and passively submits to her will. A submissive mother gives herself completely to her child who happily demands her complete attention and services. Yet, this mother is aggressive towards persons who dare to lift a finger to her child and to her child him/herself. If he/she acts submissively and exploits this submissiveness. He/she is too free and behaves rudely towards his/her mother. The more arrogant the child becomes, the more the mother's discipline fails. Then, she must increasingly endure the situation and agonize to the child. The child tyrannizes his/her mother and makes her life intolerable.

Such over-protected children are seriously restrained in their psychic becoming. With this child, there is no obedience, but only docility—a child must be able to be disobedient before he/she can be obedient. However, he/she cannot be disobedient; he/she is too afraid that a distance will come between him/her and his/her parents. He/she merely is docile, “sweet”, submissive, tractable, too polite, obliging and reserved. He/she will never take the lead in a group of peers. He/she maintains a waiting attitude. He/she doesn't take the initiative, is dependent, passive, irresolute—his/her life is led for him/her. He/she chooses younger playmates so he/she can maintain him/herself against them. He/she remains helpless and finds him/herself together with his/her mother, rather than among his/her playing age-mates. He/she drifts between the tenderness at home and the hardness at school and with playmates. For this, he/she endures the ridicule and teasing of others.

Following the example of his/her parents' excessive fear, he/she learns that everything he/she encounters means something extremely dangerous. Indeed, he/she remains “little” because he/she is restrained and disrupted in his/her growing up. He/she refuses to become big because then he/she must fulfill obligations and responsibilities appropriate for his/her age.

* Levy, D.: *Maternal Overprotection*, New York, 1947.

A child with a passive, over-protective mother continually treads on her love and willingness. He/she abuses his/her mother's weakness and is demanding, insubordinate and aggressive. At school, he/she cannot assimilate the teacher's demands and firmness, and he/she is restless, pstubborn and troublesome, he/she violates the rules of the school and shows minimal interest in the learning material.

5.2.1.5 Being too strict

An over-strict, unbending, and unaccommodating treatment of a child indicates that his/her level of becoming is over-estimated. He/she is educated as too grown up and judged as too adult. Demands made of him/her usually are those made of adults, and this amounts to an excessive educative attitude. He/she must be thorough, honest, orderly, level-headed, efficient, businesslike and always be on time. These demands are too high because the educator makes them from his/her adult world and not with an understanding of the child's world.

This mistake arises from a parent's over-ambitious and perfectionist attitude. The child must contribute to this to prove his/her status by showing him/herself to be a model of high achievement. The child is forced into this model because, often he/she merely is the object of his/her parents' educative plan.

This attitude leads to excessive control and over-intervention on the part of the parents (meddling instead of intervening). Their educative activities exist only in interfering and disapproving, and never in agreeing and approving. They are almost always dissatisfied with the child's achievements and behavior. A parent's disapproving and over-critical attitude makes his/her child anxious and frustrated. He/she fears the punishment, reproof and nonacceptance which he/she has to suffer if he/she does not meet certain demands. Rancor, resentment and aggression are awakened in him/her. This is extremely discouraging, also for an adult, when someone tries his/her utmost best, but continually is unable to meet the demands and expectations made. Subsequently, the child cannot assimilate disappointments and failures—because the parents are unable to assimilate them.

A child is so overwhelmed by the excessively high demands, and he/she becomes so emotionally strained that, in carrying out an achievement task, he/she becomes paralyzed and blocked. This prevents optimal achievement. Others then are blamed for his/her underachievement, e.g., an “unfair teacher”. He/she feels that he/she must first achieve before his/her parents will accept him/her. He/she suffers psychic damage under the severe and continuous strain of his/her parents’ future expectations, which he/she is unable to fulfill. He/she becomes sensitive, reserved and very touchy about criticism; also, a lack of self-confidence and feelings of inferiority are awakened in him/her because he/she is never able to meet the expected demands.

Over-strict parents are guilty of a *wishful educating*. They educate in terms of their *wishes* for their child, and not his/her *actual potentialities*. This attitude is vain, shortsighted, and ignorant. The parents usually turn a blind eye and are not too satisfied. The child must be an “improved version” of his/her parents. He/she must attain what his/her parents can’t, or he/she must, at least, equal their high achievement. The child is so pushed and shoved that his/her inner peace and carefree childhood are taken away.

A detrimental form of excess is when the parents unfavorably compare the child with a parent or younger brother or sister. If an older child is presented as an ideal image, then each time this is a discouraging experience for the younger child, since he/she is unable to fulfill the achievement-demands. The oldest child feels inferior when his/her achievements and behavior are unfavorably compared with a younger brother or sister. The parents forget that children clearly differ from each other with respect to the tempo, as well as the direction of their growing up. By making unfavorable comparisons, as, a form of excess, a child is not given an opportunity to develop in his/her own way, and as appropriately as possible.

5.2.1.6 Inconsistency*

* The author has labeled this section “instability” but the content clearly refers to inconsistency, irrespective of the personal instability of the educators (G.Y.).

There are parents who are neurotic (personally unstable), impulsive or pedagogically uncertain, and then their handling of their children and exercise of authority are not consistent. These “hedging parents” are on one day this and on another that. The behavior of their child is permitted on one day and is punished on the following day. Then, a child becomes uncertain because he/she doesn’t know where he/she stands. He/she doesn’t know whether his/her behavior in a particular situation will be approved or disapproved. There are no firm, consistent sets of rules and norms according to which he/she should make his/her choices.

A related confusing state is when the attitudes about educating of the father and mother do not agree. A father usually is inclined to be strict, and a mother indulgently concerned. Consequently, there are ambiguous expectations. Then, he/she feels wronged by the stricter parent, with related fear, aggression and avoidance, or he/she exploits the more indulgent parent. This conflict in educative influencing gives rise to unstable behaving by a child because firm lines of action require normative and affective confidence. In addition, the child’s behaving is characterized by anxiety, insecurity and hesitation in any new situation. From this, the child does not explore his/her world adequately.

5.2.1.7 Too much correcting

This mistake in educating is closely related to educating which is too strict. Blind obedience, punctuality and propriety are demanded of the child. Every moment of the day, he/she is trained until he/she fits the parents’ ideal image. Educating, indeed, means that a child continually must be corrected (approval, disapproval, punishment, censure, chastise). A child’s mistakes must be pointed out, and he/she should be given a chance to correct them; otherwise, he/she becomes unrestrained. But the parents’ perfectionist aim can degenerate into an educating which exists in a chain reaction of corrections where associating with the child merely exists through intervening and pointing out mistakes. This smothers the child’s initiative; rather, he/she does nothing, because then, he/she can’t make a mistake. Then, his/her behavior is :”sweet”, without initiative and alien to life; an overly corrected child is forced into a style of behaving which is alien to the life of a child; he/she is not

given the right to be a child, or to make mistakes, and this coercion overwhelms him/her.

5.2.1.8 “Neuroticizing”

Our modern society is demanding and encompassing, and this gives rise to neuroticizing factors affecting the adult educator. An adult often is neuroticized, with a correlated inability to communicate, emotional instability (anxiety) and aggressiveness. An adult who has become neurotic or disposed to neuroticism does not have the inner control, stability and mental strength to answer positively the challenges, problems and tensions he/she comes up against. He/she finds the tension of educating burdensome, along with other tensions of adult life, such as financial, occupational, social and marital. His/her neurosis and these tensions then are transferred to the child. Or, his/her child serves as a lightning rod, and the parent delivers his/her personal disintegration to him/her. His/her child becomes the victim of an educating which is neuroticizing, and his/her psychic life becomes unstable and disturbed. There is a vicious circle possible between a parent's neurotic outbursts and the alienation which arises between parent and child on this basis.

5.2.2 Disturbed relationships as leading to sociopedagogical problem areas

Several possible disturbances in pedagogical and non-pedagogical relationships in a family situation can be educatively obstructive. All relationships in a family are reciprocally related and influence each other. The relationship between the parents is a co-determinant of each parent's relationship with their children, and of the mutual relationships among the children; the relationships between parents and children mutually influence the relationship of understanding between the parents. Thus, there are multiple, interacting complexes of relationships which, when difficulties arise, easily can degenerate into confused, disturbed relationships.

5.2.2.1 Relationship of affective neglect

A child's experience of security is only *bestowed* in demonstrated love (Langeveld). However, often the parents are too busy to show

this love in spontaneous association with their child or, as cold, unloving individuals, they are not able to give their child love and personal warmth. In such a situation, a cozy family atmosphere is missing and the child's right to a sunny youth is ignored.

A child is affectively neglected in the sense of either a *deficient* or an *excessive* amount of love. Then, consequently, he/she is either unsatisfied or satiated. Regarding a deficient amount of love, Ter Horst* indicates: Love is a core category of educating. It makes the child's personal becoming and educating possible and secures his/her humanness. Withholding love is a contradiction. One who is loving doesn't withhold it, not even during a conflict or a scolding. *A young child has nothing more difficult to overcome than a deficiency in love.* If the parents are (emotionally) absent, unloving, preoccupied, contact-disturbing, a child's personal becoming is seriously endangered because being unloved makes the world gray and without perspective.

Being unloved usually shows itself in rejection and poor emotional contact. A child who lives in a defective loving attachment with his/her parents suffers affective hunger and remains relatively needy. Often, he/she responds with an adulation-seeking attitude—seeking love, warmth, attention, acceptance.

A child who receives too much love becomes egocentric. He/she does not cultivate a healthy, realistic sense of his/her place in the world. His/her world revolves around him/herself, and in later adult life he/she is disillusioned by the push and pull of a cold, businesslike world.

5.2.2.2 Relationship of rejection

Regarding a child's experience of this relationship, it is more serious than affective neglect. For one or another reason, a parent does not accept the child; he/she has an unwanted baby; the child is the opposite gender from what was desired; the child is not as ideal a child as the parent would want to have; or he/she is handicapped,

* Ter Horst, W.: *Proeve van een Orthopedagogisch Theorie Concept*, J. H. Kok, Kampen, 1973, p. 87.

of low intelligence, ill or troublesome. An unaccepted child then constantly suffers the criticism, aggression, rejection and irritation of the parent. He/she never experiences a good-natured wink, a pat on the shoulder, a listening ear, a sympathetic look, or an encouraging voice. He/she feels outcast, threatened and inferior, his/her whole child existence is assailed. He/she consciously or unconsciously reasons as follows: if they, the anchors in my life who were responsible for my birth, do not accept me, who in the world will?

The child becomes emotionally unstable, and his/her burdensome problem of acceptance makes him/her restless and overactive. He/she is hostile, unfeeling and indifferent toward his/her rejecters. As far as his/her own life is concerned, if he/she is not accepted, he/she sees no sense in his/her existence and achievements. Difficulties of contact arise because, in each human encounter, he/she wonders if and doubts that he/she will be accepted. On cognitive exercises, his/her concentration is faulty because he/she is consumed by the questions of whether his/her parents accept him/her, and whether he/she can rely on them. His/her behavior deteriorates into attention seeking to be noticed and accepted by others. However, his/her annoying behavior has the opposite effect because he/she repels others. Thus, a vicious cycle arises among attention seeking, repelling and being an outcast.

5.2.2.3 Excessive emotional relationship between parent and child

The possibility exists of an excessive emotional bonding between parent and child. Usually, this is between a parent and a child of the opposite gender. (Freud would view this relationship as evidence for his Oedipus theory). A boy who is excessively bonded with his mother manifests languor, passivity and underachievement. There is a faulty identification with his father. Effeminate, mother-bonded and non-masculinity characterize his later attitudes and behaviors. His effeminate looks and behavior suggest that his striving as a child can be, "Someday I gladly want to be like my mom". The son is not close enough to his father so that he gradually can usher him, in his growing up, into the world of boys and men. In too strong a father-daughter bonding, her father

worships his daughter for her beauty, while he excessively enjoys the youthful feminine attention he gets from her. The father makes such a fuss about his daughter that she views her beauty and being a daughter as sufficient achievement, and does not feel obliged to achieve elsewhere, e.g., at school or in behaving properly. Also, a father and a demanding mother are played off against each other and the daughter often ignores her mother's demands, i.e., for school achievement and acceptable behavior.

5.2.2.4 Ambivalent emotional relationship between parent and child (e.g., love-hate)

An impulsive parent, in relating to his/her child, will allow feelings of love and hate to alternate and, in doing so, he/she will, in turn, accept and reject his/her child, depending on how the situation influences him/her. The child is burdened with *uncertainty* about whether his/her parent(s) love(s) him/her or not. The parent often tries to compensate for his/her negative feelings about his/her child, or he/she tries to hide them by excessive concern and protection. Then, the child remains hesitant, waiting, and impulsive in his/her own emotional life. He/she is uncertain and anxious about what he/she can expect next from his/her parents in his/her unstable emotional relationship.

5.2.2.5 Sibling rivalry

Conflict and disturbance can characterize the relationships between the children of a family. This can occur among the children, between adult and offspring of a family, or between the children being educated and the adult offspring. These conflicts disturb the entire family life and, in doing so, work to impede the educative event in the family.

It is natural that a parent more easily interacts with one of his/her children than another. However, a child's anxiety for the "favor" of the other, clearly is understood.

Often brothers and sisters compete for the attention and favor of their parents. If the parents choose sides, then the child favored becomes spoiled and egocentric, and the one not favored feels

powerless, little, spiteful. For example, an older brother experiences powerlessness, resentment and frustration if his smaller little brother is “favored” and, under the threat of severe punishment, he dares not look askance at his little brother. The younger brother then can dare to taunt him and is free to get away with it. Whenever one child is “favored”, the other feels outcast and inferior. He/she responds to this with jealousy, quarreling and bullying. On the other hand, the socialization of the children fails when competition, rivalry and favoritism are too strong—each child learns to fight for his/her rights; he/she learns only to take and not to give. On the other hand, the child’s psychic development and his/her educating are damaged amidst a strained relationship of competition.

5.2.2.6 Disharmonious marital relationship

Where parents live together in love and harmony, an atmosphere is created within which a child can prosper according to his/her potentialities. The tension, hate, mistrust and spats of a marital quarrel create a disturbed domestic atmosphere, and this makes a child anxious, insecure and confused. Parents cannot hide disharmony in their marriage from a child because he/she is finely attuned to their relationship with each other. Often, a child is forced to choose sides in a marital conflict, and then he/she experiences guilt, fear, anxiety and a strained conscience toward the parent he/she chooses against. Thus, it is an injustice to make him/her a participant in the conflict. Sometimes the marital quarrel is about the child so that he/she finds him/herself to be a bone of contention in the middle of a disharmonious marital relationship.

A parent can try to fill a gap in his/her marital relationship by directing him/herself completely to a child. Then the child receives too much love, or the parent demands too much love from the child. This can worsen the estrangement between the parents because feelings of guilt follow about the mistakes in educating which are made. Beside the existing conflict, additional conflict arises concerning the child. In this way, the tension of the marriage worsens the parents’ relationship to their child.

5.2.3 Particular family situations as leading to

sociopedagogical problem areas

5.2.3.1 Incompleteness of family

Divorce, family abandonment by a parent, a second marriage, or the death or illness of any member means a disturbance of the family situation. Any such unnatural, incomplete situation functions as a precondition for impeding educating.

Each family knows conflict, problems and disappointments. However, a psychically healthy family is better able to deal with and work out family crises. Through quarrels and tensions, a child also acquires a healthy ability to defend him/herself which can serve him/her well outside of his/her family life and in his/her later adult life. Educatively, this means not avoiding conflicts, but teaching a child to work them through adequately. Such conflicts in a family can mean for the parent and child an overwhelming amount of stress and work to impede educating in a family situation.

Long-lasting, serious illnesses of a child and/or a parent needing home nursing care or even hospitalization mean a separation of family members, but also a disorganization of the entire family life. Especially the death or illness of a mother can bring about a serious disruption in family life.

A sick child becomes bored and frustrated when he/she cannot or may not participate in physical activities or may not associate with other children. A danger is that an ill child is spoiled or receives excessive attention, or his/her parents are not able to help him/her assimilate his/her sickness through an appropriate, reassuring focus on the illness. Often, a child is hospitalized without preparation. He/she is separated from the warm, personal, secure domestic atmosphere and placed in an often cold, impersonal, unfamiliar atmosphere of a hospital. This separation often is paired with painful medical treatment, as well as impatience from the hospital personnel.

With sickness and death come grief and anxiety of separation and a sense of lack. It severs the structure of the family. When a parent cannot handle this event, he/she cannot provide consolation and

assurance to a child who usually does not understand and is anxious about the crisis. Often a child must carry a burden of the death of a family member which now has become a reality.

A child sees his/her parents as an indivisible unity. With divorce comes duality—discord and dispute. During and after the divorce, a child oscillates between the clashing parties. For him/her, this means serious disruption, intolerable uncertainty and psychic uprooting. This is brought to a head because both parents (usually by spoiling) try to win him/her over, and because he/she is forced to make a choice between them. Often, he/she is used as a means by one parent to hurt the other.

Illness, death and divorce have one thing in common: a child misses the daily contact and love of at least one parent in his growing up, and he/she misses a relationship which can be of formative value for him/her.

In a stepchild situation, the problem of mutual acceptance prevails. All family relationships now have become more complicated: now, at least, it is a second marital undertaking for a parent, a stepparent, for a child and a stepchild with the possibility of tenseness, disappointment, affective neglect, and deficient security for all family members.

Other problems which arise in the case of family incompleteness are the fact that a mother, after the death of the father, must educate alone, and might be over-concerned or too lenient, or she cannot handle her growing up son. The father, as an authority-figure and identification-figure now has fallen away, and the son no longer has a direction-giving ideal.

5.2.3.2 Working mothers

Essentially, here there also is family incompleteness. When a mother earns money, a family can provide better for a child materially. However, the question is if the affective and pedagogical care is interfered with. A mother's first calling is to care for and educate her children, but after her day's work away from home, often she doesn't have the desire and still have time to give

adequate attention to her children. The possible result is insufficient attention. For example, here one thinks of the serious lack of a child who, after his/her day at school, eagerly wants to share with his/her mother his/her experiences and achievements, as well as his/her failures and disappointments. The expected interest and care which give a deeper sense and meaning to his/her life at home now must be done without. The concept *latchkey child* indicates that a child brings the key to the house to school because in the afternoon when school is out, he/she must unlock the front door alone and enter the cold, lonely atmosphere of the house. A child is not done, as far as love and care are concerned, and feels insecure, lonely and discontented. A mother who indeed is at home, but who on account of a home-based occupation or a busy social life, is present for a child but not available, also has an annoying effect on the child which leads to frustration. Circumstantial obligations make a mother flustered, too meddling, over-burdened, irritable and impatient.

Because of his/her need, a child experiences this negative attitude as indifference, insensitivity and non-acceptance. Or the mother tries to compensate for her lack of genuine pedagogical care by spoiling, indulging and materially showering her child, or she applies unpedagogical means to her child to reduce the inadequate particulars of the case, i.e., by commanding, making angry, calling names, giving unreasonable punishment.

5.2.3.3 Child's position in the family (e.g., birth order)

Some passing phenomena are noted with reference to the place a child occupies in the family.

Anxiety about personal development often characterizes an *only child*. The parents direct all their wishes and ideals to the only child by which he/she is excessively burdened, and he/she runs the risk of having to be a model child. He/she also misses the contact with brothers and sisters and receives little chance him/herself to practice living together with others. Also, there is a danger that the only child receives too much help and attention, or even is over-protected, spoiled and overindulged and, in doing so, is bound to be dependent. Then he/she feels inferior when he/she must hold

his/her own against a child who has more “life practice” than he/she does. Then, he/she loses heart too easily and seeks help too quickly. He/she is somewhat without initiative and easily stands apart, timid and lonesome in a group of age mates. His/her excessive contact with adult conversation can lead to “precocious understanding”. The other extreme is that he/she, as a spoiled only child, is bossy and stubborn when in a group and his/her desires cannot be controlled. Anxiety can block his/her will to self-development. His/her failing drives him/her precisely back to the easy security with his/her parents which he/she doesn’t need to share with anyone.

For a time, the *oldest child* exercised absolute power and received undivided love. Much attention is given to his/her progress. The parents also are more attentive to the first child than to the following children. His/her caring and growth are new to them and, therefore, often is accompanied with anxiety. When a following child arrives, the oldest is dethroned, as it were, which can be a painful and disappointing experience, especially if the oldest is not prepared for the arrival of the newcomer, or if now he/she suddenly receives noticeably less attention. Often, the parents have threatened to “buy” another child if he/she doesn’t behave him/herself and now, with the new baby, he/she experiences the actualization of this threat. With this, usually higher demands are made of the oldest. He/she must endure the pressure of additional tasks and responsibility (also for the younger ones).

The *youngest child* has too many family members who help and shelter him/her and he/she gravitates toward dependence, faulty becoming independent and lack of responsibility. His/her easy life leads to laziness, a lack of willingness and a deficient initiative. He/she continually is treated as younger than his/her age in comparison with other children. For example, at ten years of age, the oldest child is “our big child”; the youngest child at ten years still is “our baby”. The parents’ desire to keep him/her “little” and to possess him/her longer also prevail here.

A *boy in a family of sisters* (only son with several sisters) often is burdened with high ideals and expectations. He is the “progenitor”, and the parents and grandfather make a big fuss over him. He

carries the family name and apparently will inherit the most. He either is highly regarded because of his family position and not by anything achieved elsewhere or a high achievement-expectation is fostered in him as the only son. He has no other choice than to achieve better than his sisters and failure in this regard is difficult to assimilate. In each case, his chances are good that there will be unfavorable comparisons with his sisters because girls develop faster physically and psychically than boys. Often his extremely questionable position means for him feelings of guilt and anxiety.

5.3 Synthesis

The above mistakes in educating, disturbed relationships and unfavorable family situations mean the inadequate realization of sociopedagogical essences, namely:

- inadequate living together educatively
- inadequate socialization
- inadequate educative communication
- inadequate social-societal orientation
- inadequate identity acquisition
- unfavorable societal influencing of educating.

This gives rise to some sociopedagogical problem areas mentioned in the introduction to. In the remaining five chapters, five sociopedagogical problem areas are dealt with:

- of contemporary youth
- of drug use by youth
 - of dropping out of school
- of the environmentally impeded child
- of juvenile delinquency.