

CHAPTER 5 THE ETIOLOGY OF SOCIOPEDAGOGICAL PROBLEM AREAS

5.1 Introduction

The etiology of 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 youths, 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 are at work in impeding an educative situation of a child or youth, e.g., the communication between a youth and his 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 a 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, oversensitiveness, nervousness, conflict, embarrassment, irritability, withdrawal, need for intimacy, etc. that 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 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 cannot assimilate one or another situation in his 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, in spite of the fact that his educators have educated him adequately, for one or another reason on his own initiative he can decide to *choose* against the educating he has received and proceed to behave in ways that do not correspond with what has been presented to him during his education.

c. Factors in realizing relationships:

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

In this connection, the matters of *disturbed educative relationships* and *errors in educating*, as education impeding factors, are central for a sociopedagogician. Therefore, the matter of disturbed educative relationships (i.e., inadequate educative communication) is given particular and 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 that 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 that wrestles with stability in the midst of unstable social relationships is tragic. Family members rebuff each other by which in our society the family indeed has become the area of social tension. Many family and educative difficulties directly can be related to the contemporary structure of society. The family 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 the 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 education impeding factors. Possibly a family finds itself in a criminal environment or socio-economically 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 socio-economic 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. 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 education. 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 account.

In addition, the following societal structural factors are instances of forces that 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 bi-sexuality 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 sociopedagogue. Next a number of origins of sociopedagogical problem areas are dealt with in somewhat greater detail and under the following themes:

- educative errors as leading to sociopedagogical problem areas;
- disturbed relationships as leading to sociopedagogical problem areas;
- particular 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 either on the basis of carelessness or on the basis of ignorance. The natural equipment of a child enables him to overcome the damage of the educative errors of his educators. However, there is the danger that an educator can fixate on the errors he makes. Therefore, an educator continually must strive to better know his child and educating him and to improve himself as an educator. Prevention is always better than curing. The natural equipment of an educator enables him without particular knowledge of pedagogics (the science of educating) to make a success of educating his child on the basis of his *intuitive attunement to what for his child is right or wrong* or good or bad, as well as his *love for his child*.

The matter of educative errors centers around the fact that an educator inadequately takes into account

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

protecting).

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

5.2.1.1 Neglecting

A child receives inadequate material caring for his 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 the opportunity for educating, is realized too little. The opportunity is missing where demands, norms, directions and prohibitions can be presented to the child. He is allowed to do whatever he desires. This leaves the child insecure because now he feels uncertain about what he is to do in a strange, threatening reality. Then his exploration of the world often is destructive and his deeds occur at the expense of others. His attitudes and behaviors are uncontrolled and unrestrained. He does not take others and acceptable norms into account and this deficiency can degenerate into criminality (inadequate socialization).

Even though there often is mention of average or above average intellectual potentialities, at school the child is not disciplined enough to concentrate or to exert himself to achieve on an intellectually satisfactory level. In class he is restless, obstinate and unrestrained and he only directs himself to what is pleasurable. He is bored and his attention fluctuates. His weak disposition to work leads him 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 fancies. They try to buy him with kindness and favors, or they spare him of any immediate disappointments. However, this educative attitude is shortsighted—it results in the child demanding increasingly more from his 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 a mental invalid. Some parents will educate their child in a “modern” or “psychological” way and he must be allowed to be “free” to do what he 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 own course. Sometimes a parent compensates for his lack of love, genuine *personal* interest and discipline by smothering the child with material goods. He will buy off his 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 remains on a *level of gratification* while achievement on the *level of reality* is more desired. He does not learn to endure dislikes, difficulties, disappointments and frustrations; he does not learn to exert himself to meet the demands of reality. Especially in school he accepts strictness and punishment from a teacher with difficulty. Here he shows an underachievement because he is accustomed to being above and beyond demands, obligations and also prohibitions. A child who is spoiled materially does not learn the value of money and goods and he never learns the joys of because he is too accustomed to getting excesses.

A spoiled child becomes egocentric. The world is made only for him. He tyrannizes his surroundings with his obstinacy and over-reacts if he does not get his way. He has no respect, is without norms and is in awe of nothing and nobody. Only his own interests reign on a volatile level, and he directs himself to gratifying himself.

His behavior degenerates and is loud, offensive, trite and vulgar. Often, when he attains puberty he escapes into being an inanely delightful teenager (inadequate socialization).

An overindulgent educator also is inclined to allow a child or youth to do things for which he is not yet ready and are not appropriate for his 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 really is the opposite of spoiling. Both parents overdo the view that it is good to make a child hard through educating so that he can maintain himself 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 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 that must make the child rough and hard.

Overlooked is the fact is 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 becomes blunted, unfeeling, degenerate, feels unworthy and indeed is callous. For a child, a hardened educating means distorted psychic growth.

5.2.1.4 Over protecting

An over-caring and overprotecting educative attitude essentially means that a child is underestimated in his growing up and therefore also under-challenged. Excessive physical pampering usually is connected with this. A child is treated as if he were much younger and only those demands are made of him that 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 child. The parent sees danger in everything and tries to protect his child against the danger. Then, he may not be allowed to move in and near the street or play with any friends. At every opportunity, the parents keep him too little for his age (infantilize him). Often it is the parents’ aim to keep him little so they can “possess” him longer. The child’s wanting-to-be-someone-himself and his increasing independence are not sufficiently taken into account. He is not recognized and acknowledged in his 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 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 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 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 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 mentioned demands of her child strict obedience and submissiveness. All aggressive inclinations are smothered. The child really is a love object that is possessed by his mother’s complete will. He does

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

everything his 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 the child himself if he acts submissively and exploits this submissiveness. He is too free and behaves rudely towards his mother. The more arrogant the child becomes, the more the mother's discipline fails. Then she has to increasingly endure the situation and agonize to the child. The child tyrannizes his 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 can be obedient. However, he cannot be disobedient; he is too afraid that a distance will come between him and his parents. He merely is docile, “sweet”, submissive, tractable, too polite, obliging and reserved. He will never take the lead in a group of peers. He maintains a waiting attitude. He doesn't take the initiative, is dependent, passive, irresolute—his life is led for him. He chooses younger playmates so he can maintain himself against them. He remains helpless and finds himself hand-in-hand with his mother rather than among his playing age-mates. He drifts between the tenderness as home and the hardness at school and with playmates. For this he endures the ridicule and teasing of others.

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

A child with a passive, over-protective mother continually treads on her love and willingness. He abuses his mother's weakness and is demanding, insubordinate and aggressive. At school he cannot assimilate the teacher's demands and firmness and he is restless, pig-headed and troublesome, he 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 level of becoming is over-estimated. He is educated as too grown up and judged as too adult. Demands made of him usually are those made of adults and this amounts to an excessive educative attitude. He must be thorough, honest, orderly, level headed, efficient, business-like and always be on time. These demands are too high because the educator makes them from his 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 in order to prove his status by showing himself to be a model of high achievement. The child is forced into this model because often he merely is the object of his 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 child anxious and frustrated. He fears the punishment, reproof and non-acceptance that he has to suffer if he does not meet certain demands. Rancor, resentment and aggression are awakened in him. This is extremely discouraging, also for an adult, when someone tries his 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 becomes so emotionally strained that in carrying out an achievement task he becomes paralyzed and blocked. This prevents optimal achievement. Others then are blamed for his under-achievement, e.g., an "unfair teacher". He feels that he must first achieve before his parents will accept him. He suffers psychic damage under the severe and continuous strain of his parents' future expectations that he is unable to fulfill. He becomes sensitive, reserved and very touchy about criticism; also a lack of

self-confidence and feelings of inferiority are awakened in him because he never is 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 *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 parents. He must attain what his parents can’t or he must at least equal their high achievement. The child is so pushed and shoved that his 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 is unable to fulfill the achievement-demands. The oldest child feels inferior when his 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 the opportunity to develop in his own way and as appropriately as possible.

5.2.1.6 Inconsistency

Frequently parents 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 the child permitted on one day is punished on the following day. Then a child becomes uncertain because he doesn’t know where he stands. He doesn’t know whether his behavior in a particular situation will be approved or disapproved. There are no firm, consistent sets of rules and norms according to which he should make his choices.

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

A related confusing state of affairs 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 feels wronged by the stricter parent, with related fear, aggression and avoidance, or he 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. On this basis the child does not explore his world adequately.

5.2.1.7 Too much correcting

This mistake in educating is closely related to educating that is too strict. Blind obedience, punctuality and propriety are demanded of the child. Every moment of the day, he is trained until he 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 should be given the chance to correct them; otherwise he becomes unrestrained. But the parents' perfectionist aim can degenerate into an educating that 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 does nothing because then he can't make a mistake. His behavior then is :”sweet”, without initiative and alien to life; an overly corrected child is forced into a style of behaving that is alien to the life of a child; he is not given the right to be a child or to make mistakes and this coercion overwhelms him.

5.2.1.8 “Neuroticizing”

Our modern society is demanding and encompassing and this give s rise to a number of 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 that he comes up

against. He finds the tension of educating burdensome along with other tensions of adult life such as financial, occupational, social and marital. His neurosis and these tensions then are transferred to the child. Or his child serves as a lightning rod and the parent delivers his personal disintegration to him. His child becomes the victim of an educating that is neuroticizing and his psychic life becomes unstable and disturbed. There is a vicious circle possible between a parent's neurotic outbursts and the alienation that arises between parent and child on this basis.

5.2.2 Disturbed relationships as leading to sociopedagogical problem areas

Several possible disturbances in pedagogical as well as 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 also 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 that, when difficulties arise, easily can degenerate into confused, disturbed relationships.

5.2.2.1 Relationship of affective neglect

A child's experience of security only is *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, as a consequence, he is either unsatisfied or satiated. Regarding a deficient amount of love, Ter Horst says the following: Love is a core category of educating. It

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

makes the child's personal becoming and educating possible and secures his 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 parents suffers affective hunger and remains relatively needy. Often he responds with an adulation-seeking attitude—seeking love, warmth, attention, acceptance.

A child who receives too much love becomes egocentric. He does not cultivate a healthy, realistic sense of his place in the world. His world revolves around himself and in later adult life he 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 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 is handicapped, of low intelligence, ill or troublesome. An unaccepted child then has to suffer constantly the criticism, aggression, rejection and irritation of the parent. He never experiences a good-natured wink, a pat on the shoulder, a listening ear, a sympathetic look or an encouraging voice. He feels outcast, threatened and inferior, his whole child existence is assailed. He 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 burdensome problem of acceptance makes him restless and overactive. He is

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hostile, unfeeling and indifferent towards his rejecters. As far as his own life is concerned, if he is not accepted, he sees no sense in his existence and achievements. Difficulties of contact arise because in each human encounter he wonders if and doubts that he will be accepted. On cognitive exercises, his concentration is faulty because he is consumed by the questions of whether his parents accept him and whether he can rely on them. His behavior deteriorates into attention seeking in an effort to be noticed and accepted by others. However, his annoying behavior has the opposite effect because he repels others. Thus, a vicious circle 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. Effeminateness, 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, the father worships his daughter for her beauty, while he excessively enjoys the particular 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 child, will allow feelings of love and hate to alternate and in doing so he will, in turn, accept and reject his child, depending on how the particular situation influences him. The child is burdened with *uncertainty* about whether his parent(s) love(s) him or not. The parent often tries to compensate for his negative feelings about his child, or he tries to hide them by excessive concern and protection. Then, the child remains hesitant, waiting and impulsive in his own emotional life. He is uncertain and anxious about what he can expect next from his parents in his 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 makes contact with one of his 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 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 rights; he learns only to take and not to give. On the other hand, the child's psychic development and his educating are damaged in the midst of 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 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 is finely attuned to their relationship with each other. Often a child is forced to choose sides in a marital conflict and then he experiences guilt, fear, anxiety and a strained conscience toward the parent he chooses against. Thus, it is a great injustice to make him a participant in the conflict. Sometimes the marital quarrel is about the child so that he finds himself to be a bone of contention in the middle of a disharmonious marital relationship.

A parent can try to fill a gap in his marital relationship by directing himself 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 that are made. Besides 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 in a better position to deal with and work out family crises. Through quarrels and tensions a child also acquires a healthy ability to defend himself that can serve him well outside of his family life and in his 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 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 parents are not in a position to help him assimilate his sickness through an appropriate, reassuring focus on the illness. Often a child is hospitalized without preparation. He 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 work through this event, he cannot provide consolation and assurance to a child who usually does not understand and is anxious about the crisis. Often a child has to carry a burden of the death of a family member that now has become a reality.

A child sees his 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 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 over and because he is forced to make a choice between them. Often, he 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 misses a relationship that can be of formative value for him.

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 that 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 day at school eagerly wants to share his experiences and achievements as well as his failures and disappointments with his mother. The expected interest and care that give a deeper sense and meaning to his 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 has to 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 that leads to frustration. Circumstantial obligations make a mother flustered, too meddling, over-burdened, irritable and impatient.

In light of his 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 in order 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 of their wishes and ideals to the only child by which he is excessively burdened, and he runs the risk of having to be a model child. He also misses then contact with brothers and sisters and receives little chance himself to practice living together with others. Also there is a danger that the only child receives too much help and attention or even is overprotected, spoiled and overindulged and in doing so is bound to be dependent. Then he feels inferior when he has to hold his own against a child who has more "life practice" than he does. Then he loses heart too easily and seeks help too quickly. He is somewhat without initiative and easily stands apart, timid and lonesome in a group of age mates. His excessive contact with adult conversation can lead to "precocious understanding". The other extreme is that he, as a spoiled only child, is bossy and stubborn when in a group and his desires cannot be controlled. Anxiety can block his will to self development. His failing drives him precisely back to the easy security with his parents that he 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 progress. The parents also are more attentive to the first child than to the following children. His 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 suddenly

receives noticeably less attention. Often the parents have threatened to “buy” another child if he doesn’t behave himself and now with the new baby, he experiences the actualization of this threat. With this, usually higher demands are made of the oldest. He has to 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 and he gravitates toward dependence, faulty becoming independent and lack of responsibility. His easy life leads to laziness, a lack of willingness and a deficient initiative. He continually is treated as younger than his 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 “little” and to possess him 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 on the basis 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 abovementioned 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 a number of sociopedagogical problem areas as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. In the remaining five chapters, five sociopedagogical problem areas are dealt with, namely:

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