

CHAPTER 2 THE FAMILY IN SOCIOPEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 The family as center of educating and living together

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is wellpleasing unto the Lord.

Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged.

Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.”

(Letter from the apostle Paul to the Colossians 3:18-22).

Compare this with the following detestable opinion of Communism that the family must be abolished:

The existence of the present family, the bourgeois family, is based on the foundation of private capital gain. In its completely developed form, this family exists only among the bourgeoisie.

Among the proletarians the family is practically absent.

(Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*).

These two citations illustrate the widely divergent opinions underlying the views of the family as well as of the relationships among people in society. On the one hand, the apostle describes an ideal model of the family worth striving for, with the emphasis on stability and mutuality (e.g., mutual love). On the other hand, the family is proposed in a revolutionary view as part of social class struggle that thus reflects conflict, hostility and strife.

The following statements illustrate the fact that the family is the center of educating and living together: The family is

- the center of educating
- the community core
- the primordial cell of the community

- the basic life of the community
- the central and foundational educative milieu of a child
- the basic building block of life in the state and society
- the primary situation of educating and living together.

In describing the family as the center of educating, the school is seen as a peripheral or border area. Family and school each have their own task. Even though there also is teaching in the family and also educating in school, “educating-in-its-real-sense” is realized in the family.

In the family the most intimate relationship of being lovingly bonded, or a pedagogical we-ness between parent and child, is realized, and the parents have the *first responsibility* for the physical, psychic, spiritual and social wellbeing of their child.

In no single milieu other than the family does a person (child) have a better guarantee that he can realize his potentialities, and the quality of the conjugal love makes the family the most ideal milieu for educating.¹

Family educating is the basis for all later educating, and family relationships are the basis for all subsequent social relationships. Also in family life there is the first acquaintance with a particular culture. Hence, the family is the basis for the social aspect of educating. A child learns to know the possibilities of an ordered structure of social life. And he acquires the basic customs of order in time, space and association. In the family a child is brought up from I-opinions to our-opinions.

Through *educating in family living together* a child especially learns to know his human environment, he learns what is approvable and objectionable--concerning behaviors, attitudes, opinions, etc. with respect to fellow persons. In this connection, the parents’ image [example] of living together is extremely important and they consciously and unconsciously convey their social attitudes, opinions, likes and dislikes, etc. to their child. A child learns to take

¹ Realizing the sociopedagogical essence of *educating in society* in the family as a form of living together (society).

the social role in life that he ought to, and also the demands his particular culture places on him. With respect to different social groups (minority groups, racial groups, vocational groups, etc.), he acquires particular social attitudes and distinctions, e.g., regarding the diction, language, clothing, behavior, dwelling place of particular groups (compare snobs, scholars, politicians, workers, civil servants, businessmen, etc.).

The word *family* means *traveling party*. A normal family consists of a father, mother and child(ren), and is an intimately interactive or group event that is known as *family life*. It is a complex of relationships that are mutually connected and influencing. We simply can say that all relationships in the family mutually cohere and influence each other. The marital relationship influences the relationship of each parent to their children and also the mutual relationship of the children; in its turn, the relationship parent/child influences the marital relationship. Thus, a complex and multiple interaction arises that easily can degenerate into confusion when there are difficulties.

A useful distinction is between pedagogical and non-pedagogical relationships in the family. Each parent finds him/herself in an educative relationship with each of the children. Examples of non-pedagogical relationships are that between the parents (bonded as educators and in marriage), the mutual relationships among the children, and the relationships between the parents and their already adult children.

In the marital relationship a husband and a wife must deal with questions of living together sexually, spiritually, of marital rights and morality. Obviously, a harmonious marriage is at the root of an adequate family life (living together as family) as well as adequate educating.

In this situation of *educating in society*, learning to *live together* and *educating to society* are realized and a child is prepared for his later social life. Love, friendship, generosity, sense of duty, loyalty, tolerance, cooperation, etc. are first realized, but so are aggression, isolation, antipathy, conflict, resentment, clashing, friction, etc.

Even so, the family remains an oasis of love, trust and tranquility in the bizarre human desert that our modern social life now is, according to Knoop².

2.2 Family dynamic

There is the inclination to think of the family as a stable unity or static quantity. It must be stressed that the family is a dynamic form of living together – especially a family with children becoming adult. This change occurs continually because the members pass through different periods of life and also because of external influences from a quickly changing society. The size, structure, patterns of communication and activities of the family change as each member goes through his personal lifecycle (compare, e.g.: educating is a vertical and horizontal unfolding of interpersonal communication). Take the example of a family that at a particular period of time includes two toddlers and one school child aged 3, 5 and 8. In ten years such a family is a “teenager family” with youths who respectively are 13, 15 and 18 years old who carry out other activities and communicate differently (on a higher level) with their parents than they did 10 years earlier. And, as each of the children eventually leaves home, the family structure changes.

Internal factors that can radically change the living together of husband and wife are the following: changes in lifestyle because of the birth and care of a baby(ies); the growing up of the child(ren); moving, death, etc. The educative relationship and educative communication are continually modified as a child goes through the suckling, toddler, school child, puberty, adolescent phase and this changing relationship means a continual modification of the entire family life as far as pedagogical and non-pedagogical relationships influencing each other in the family. The parents’ share in this relationship is continually obstructed: their intense intervention with their child who continually changes physically, psychically, spiritually and socially forces them to the high demand of continually reinterpreting their own realization of educative relationships. A parent continually has a differing share in educating a toddler than in educating a youth in puberty.

External factors that influence the family dynamic are, e.g., socio-economic factors, industrialization, migration, urbanization, changes in societal relationships, alienation from the church, inadequate social mobility, changes in the nature of social control, the expansion of education, etc.

2.3 Shifts in family functions

There is a distinction between the *core functions* and the *peripheral functions* of the family. The core functions are those functions that, if they could be affected, would also affect the essences of the family. They are the following:

- the biological function
- the educative function
- the religious function
- the protective function
- the social function
- the cherishing or affective function (the feelings of security and community in the family).

If these functions in a modern family become threatened, family life can degenerate into a parking place for the night (or the so-called cafeteria family).

The peripheral functions of the family are:

- the economic-productive function
- the recreational function
- the status-awarding function.

The current view that, in the modern industrialized and urbanized society, the family has undergone a loss in function is too negative. Rather, there is mention of a shift in function.

Indeed, the importance of particular core functions has decreased, such as, e.g., the biological function, because family size has decreased. Societal factors have so influenced family size that in many cases married couples no longer have more than two or three children.

As far as the economic-productive function is concerned, the center of production has shifted from the home to the factory so that now a family has become an income-unit. Also it is the individual worker rather than the whole family that is engaged in the productive-unit (e.g., the factory). Further, industrialization has insured that goods and services are produced outside of the home, but consumed within the home (family life). Thus, the family still functions as an economic unit but its economic function has shifted; the family has become the basic consumer unit but not the basic production- or distribution-unit.

In this connection, Botha³ indicates the following: In the past (70 to 100 years) the family was a self-supporting unit of work and production that mainly provided it own means of living. Its productive function (of food, clothing and other means of living) has shifted to the society and the family now increasingly consumes more.

With respect to the educative function of the family, educational institutions such as the school have taken over a great deal of the educating and teaching of the child, and the school is inclined to greater expansion in this area. "The nature of society has become so complex that educative teaching ... no longer can be managed by the parents. One of the demands placed on society by vocational practitioners is that the child must perform specialized work for which he must be specifically trained. It is impossible for the parent to unlock reality for his child such that, without further training and teaching, he can sufficiently take his placed in society," according to Botha⁴.

Also, the free time of the family members (recreational function) is increasingly spent outside of the family. The earlier singing, playing and relaxing together in the family are replaced by the activities of youth organizations, sport clubs, discotheques, friendship clubs, etc.

It must be emphasized that through the so-called loss or shift of many family functions, the most important task of the family is to do its best to realize adequate marital communication between

husband and wife and adequate educative communication between parents and children.

In the course of time, the emphasis increasingly has fallen on the cherishing or affective function. This function, in essence, is the function of the modern family. Where earlier the emphasis had fallen on the triad *propagating-educating-caring for daily bread*, now the emphasis is on the satisfaction of *each other's individual psychic-spiritual needs* (Kooy, G. A.: *Het veranderde gezin in Nederland [The changed family in the Netherlands]*).

Even though there is a shift in family functions, the realization of certain functions today have become difficult and here one especially thinks of *educating*: it now lasts longer; it has become a massive task; it progresses less obviously because of external influences—in this light it can be asked if the family has less to do with educating, or might do less than before.

Further, there is reference to the increasing inability of parents to educate their children because of the following factors: the early marriage of girls (the child-bride), the strongly changed mentality of youth, the quick succession of generations, the entirely new circumstances within which one must be educated, etc.⁵

Also, in modern times the family has undergone a particular *democratizing*. The strong, domineering father figure (the patriarchal family in the authoritarian sense) has declined and husband, wife and youngsters realize a more democratic association in family life and in educating. Authority has made room for comradeship. Even the young child more easily lives out of doors, and a child and youths in general strive for early independence. The father's influence has decreased and the youthful family members have more to say. Also the wife has been emancipated to the same dignity as the husband.

Paired with this, shifts have occurred regarding the function of the different family members, e.g., a shift from fatherly to motherly authority, although this is limited by the needs of the wife to support her husband. By the emancipation of the wife, the position of the mother has changed most clearly. By the father's absence

(because of economic reasons) she assumes the central position in the family (from a patriarchal to a matriarchal family). The work of the mother is perceived and appreciated—that of the father is not. In family educating there is more room for freedom, openness, spontaneity and permissiveness. From an early age on, the children are allowed more independence as is evident, e.g., in their use of free time, their free choice of playmates, free use of their self-earned money and free choice of life partners, political parties and also with respect to a church or religion. This greater accessibility of the parents (and especially the father), along with the greater respect for the child's human dignity, the adequate realization of sociopedagogical essences, such as especially *educative communication*, are favorably implemented such that in this “century of the child” a condition is created in family life that definitely is beneficial to a child. However, education-impeding changes also have occurred. Early in his life a child comes into contact with a negligent society and must revise his social experiences in this respect. Within the framework of a complex societal structure, the contemporary family, in addition to other core functions, must still fulfill an indispensable and demanding educative function.

2.4 Family types in sociopedagogical perspective

We too easily refer to “the family” but in reality no two families are the same. Family sociologists describe particular corresponding characteristics of families by which a division into a particular family typology is possible. By viewing these sociological family types, in sociopedagogics the question asked is: what is the educative significance of the different family types as a social phenomenon? (See 1.7.9).

J. A. Ponsioen⁶ designed such a typology and distinguishes among the following six types of family:

- (i) The patriarchal family that still is found here and there in rural areas. The husband is absolute lord and master. The family is a productive unity and remains entirely closed in itself.

- (ii) The open family within a closed circle, town or neighborhood. It is found in a closed town milieu and in the back streets of cities. Community members control each other's proper behavior. The town or neighborhood thus fulfills part of the function of the larger family. This closed circle often is hostile to "the greater society".
- (iii) The closed family: it appears in all kinds of places. It is concentrated on its own companionableness and an escape from the noisy everyday life. The family is the heart of religious sense and traditional morality.
- (iv) The seeming family: Intense tension arises between husband and wife or between parents and children. There is conflict about acceptable norms and only the appearance of an ideal family is maintained.
- (v) The boarding house family: Everyone goes his/her own way. Family life is abolished. Family members live away from the house. At home there often is someone who wears herself out (mother or daughter). There is no intimacy in this family.
- (vi) The open family in an open society: The family is involved in integrating new societal facts and demands and realize an optimal family life. There is openness to society; the family members take part in the different institutions (church, school, clubs, work milieu, social work, etc.). Husband and wife are equal. Family tasks are done together.

Interesting is the typology of the "dis-socializing family" (J. Koekebakker⁷), i.e., of families that form a favorable breeding ground for misbehavior. As types, the following are distinguished:

- (i) The neglectful family: Here there is inadequate care regarding housing, bodily hygiene, clothing, preparing meals. More serious is the lack of order and regularity. Equally chaotic is the family life, and especially the relationships among the family members. Emotions continually get out of hand. There is only a "primitive" family bond.

- (ii) The aroused family: The household can be well looked after. Physical care and habit forming can leave much to be desired. The children are protected from outsiders. Consequently there is inadequate social engagement. The exercise of authority is degenerate. Critical phases in the life of a child are the transition to school with its obligations and demands for independence and separation during puberty and adolescence.
- (iii) The tense family: From the outside, the family is favorably familiar. It is a “neat” family. Everyone knows his place: fixed principles reign. The danger of a schema-educating threatens. There is no room for individual development. It is a family with a patriarchal, old-fashioned character.
- (iv) The modern large city family: Without defense it is delivered to the changes in societal circumstances. The family easily gives up its functions to the community. Vocation and work have no positive meaning. Everyone seeks his own recreation. The family is characterized by a defect in character—the so-called open family in an unfavorable sense. In addition, there is no consciously directed educating; no norms are brought forth via educating.
- (v) The disharmonious family: The inner conflict of the family members can play out openly or be concealed. Personal contrasts are demonstrated. The family members can be restless in their quest for equilibrium. This can lead to unforeseen outbursts.

As far as the question of the educative significance of the types of family described, it can be explained that the fact of family types includes the possibility that sociopedagogical essences can be realized in different ways (adequately or not) in different types of families:

- (i) *Educating in society*: Because of its emphasis on authority, a patriarchal family can offer firmness, control and certainty with respect to educating in society; in a boarding house family there is mention of an inadequate living together; the seeming family shows

a family dynamic that is unfavorable to educating; a neglectful family shows serious defects in educating, caring and living together; in an aroused family the pedagogical relationship of authority is inadequate; intentional educating in a modern large city family is especially inadequate regarding normative educating; in a disharmonious family neither educating nor living together are adequately realized.

(ii) *Educating to society:* The closed nature of the patriarchal family, of the closed family and of the closed community as well as the protection of the children from the outside by an aroused family, the obstruction of adequate educating to society (i.e., socialization of the child), as well as their gradual social engagement such that it can be explained that these types of families do not adequately realize their socialization task. Further, the possibility is scant that positive interhuman attitudes and learning to live together can be adequately realized in family lives and types such as an apparent family or a boarding house family, a neglectful family and a disharmonious one. One also gets the feeling that in a tense family a child's becoming socially-societally mobile is damaged. On the other hand, there is the favorable possibility that in an open family in an open community can optimally realize educating to society since family members participate in societal institutions and the family functions outside. In doing so the children of the family have the opportunity to meaningfully exercise participating in (the) society, being mobile in (the) society and realizing changes in (the) society.

(iii) *Educating as evolving interpersonal communication:* In a number of family types educating is impeded by a disharmonious marital relationship and inadequate educative communication. In a patriarchal family the possibility of autocratic, unbending and one-sided communication in educating is strong. The apparent family can communicate inadequately educatively if there is tension and negative contact. In a boarding house educative communication mostly is absent because everyone goes his own way. Here there is

inadequate association and intimate communication. The open family, the optimal family life, with the acknowledgement, understanding and encounter of others, and living and doing things together create the possibility for genuine, intimate educative communicating that can exercise a strongly educative-promoting influence. In contrast, a neglectful family also means neglect in communicating and chaotic relationships among family members, especially in the sense of negative, unbending, denying and meaningless communication. The aroused family realizes educative communication without authority or distance in the sense that a child is excessively protected by and bound to the educator. In a tense family a pedagogical encounter can be inadequate and the child inadequately acquires social-communicative mobility. In a modern large city family, e.g., there can be meaningless communication (the transfer of values and norms is inadequate and unacceptable). The conflict, unrest and outbursts in a disharmonious family can lead to almost any form of inadequate educative communication.

- (iv) *Interaction between educating and society:* The patriarchal family, closed families and communities can be skeptical of, negative towards and even hostile to the wider society and also against the influences from society that can affect family life and educating. Also the aroused family excessively protects a child from outside influences. In contrast, a boarding house family with its outside life, an open family with its outside participation and a large city family with its lack of resistance and character are strongly subjected to societal influences—especially unfavorably in the first and last mentioned family types such that societal factors readily can have and educatively impeding results in these cases.
- (v) *Educating as social-societal orientation:* Educating in closed families and communities, in a boarding house family and also in all five types of “dis-socializing” families mean for the children and youths an inadequate accompaniment with their social-societal orientation—in

the sense of inadequate opportunities in these families for social exploring, emancipating, experiencing, position-choosing and acquiring social norms.

- (vi) *Educating as accompanying to identity acquisition:* In the apparent, boarding house, neglectful and disharmonious families where the essences of identify acquisition such as fundamental trust, genuine educative communication and educator identification are not realized adequately, there is a strong possibility that the youths will go through an identity crisis at one time or another.

Botha⁸ and also Gresse⁹ provide a sociopedagogical perspective of the following family types and describe the actualization of educating in each:

- (i) the authoritarian family
 - * the protective authoritarian family
 - * the aggressive authoritarian family
- (ii) the permissive family
- (iii) the democratic family

(i) The authoritarian family:

* *The protective authoritarian family:* In this family type, the view that the family situation must be a safe haven is exaggerated, often because the parents themselves feel unsafe in the wider society. The parents are attuned to isolating their child(ren) from the influence of the wider society in meticulous ways since the norms of society are not acceptable to them. Consequently, an over-protective educative attitude is maintained. An “inner-directed” sociopedagogical essence such as *educative communication* (participation in pedagogical we-ness) then becomes over emphasized at the expense of adequately realizing “externally-directed” sociopedagogical essences such as *educating to society*, *socio-societal orientation* and *identity acquisition*. The sense of educative communication always is in the opportunity that it offers the social-communicative potentialities of a child to develop for the benefit of his inter-human contact outside of the family. However, the parents do not risk this with their child in the wider society, e.g., a child or youth in using his free time is establishing bonds in

secondary groups. In this case, the societal situation is bypassed instead of societal influences being selected and elaborated for the child. In doing this, the child does not have an adequate opportunity for orienting to the broader community life, and sometimes even to the school. Regarding identity acquisition, such a youth stagnates in an identity-less, conformist docility, and he does not learn to maintain himself in the unfamiliarity of the wider society. The parents' unwillingness to increasingly allot freedom and responsibility to him means for him that he remains socially-societally inflexible.

* *The aggressive-authoritarian family:* The parents are aggressive and authoritarian on the basis of their social ambitions to impel their child to the high position in society that they have attained or never could reach. This occurs at the expense of an adequate educative communication and is characterized by autocratic communication with the additional possibility of negative, denying and meaningless communication that leads to conflict and tension between parent and child as well as to behavioral problems in the child.

“The aggressive-ambitious position of the parents toward the wider society puts their children in the position of continually being prodded to realize the improbable in the sense that they must realize ideals that are beyond their given personal potentialities,” according to Botha.¹⁰

With respect to determining one's social-societal place, it is demanded of a child that he must socially-societally *conquer* instead of orient. He is compelled to take an ambitious position and this forced educating leads to a choice-in-opposition by the child and the related unfavorable possibility of an identity crisis.

(ii) The permissive family:

A deficient sympathetic, authoritative guidance, a permissive, *laissez-faire* attitude and the unrestrained freedom of a child thwart the realization of genuine educative communication, especially regarding the pedagogical relationship of trust. The selfishness, laziness and pedagogical unaccountability of the parents prevent a strong directedness in communicating affectively with their child. This affability and inadequate educative communication means a neglect of the child's educating to society and a lack of the

normative and to obstinacy and egocentricity in the child's volitional life.

He experiences freedom *from* authority and rules (negative freedom) and freedom *from* social responsibility instead of freedom *to* (social) responsibility (being bound by norms and values). The child is not accompanied adequately in his going out to social reality (e.g., by selecting and elaborating societal influences). The norms of his social group are not transferred to him and he easily becomes derailed in the choices that he should make.

Unaccountable choices of friends, groups and activities can lead to social-societal disorientation. Then a youth is "awash" without life-view principles for determining his position in the wider society. Undesirable groups and activities often mean for him an inordinate search for temporary experiences of pleasure. In addition to this, excessive peer group identification can plunge a youth into an identity crisis.

(iii) The democratic family:

Here the parents' democratic and pedagogical balance comes into play and they accompany their child to independent choices (self choices and decisions). "The parents in this type of family do not *exert* authority as such; they do not *have* authority but *are* the authority: they are the *carriers* of authority themselves and give evidence that they also are *accepters* of authority," according to Gresse.¹¹ The genuine, intimate educative communication in the family is characterized by flexibility, trust, understanding, acknowledgment of the child with his own nature and personality, encounter, conversation – but also sympathetic, authoritative guidance and value-conveyance (meaningful interaction). There is adequate pedagogical "we-ness" without the family isolating itself from the wider society in which they are situated. There is a balance between the poles of accompaniment of protect-expose, accompany-withdraw, etc., as well as the selection and elaboration of societal influences. In this way a youth is educated to social-societal flexibility and responsible choices in terms of acquired norms and values, also regarding secondary groupings, businesslike groups and tertiary influences. In this way fundamental trust, communication, identification, etc. are realized adequately and these are the preconditions for undisturbed identity formation.

2.5 The meaning of the family as an educative milieu

From a sociopedagogical perspective the family can be described as an educative milieu because there are lasting factors that have a more or less stable influence on forming a youth. The family, by virtue of its essential nature, is directed to educating a child.

Here the question is about the *educative meaning* of the family as a societal form, i.e., how is educating realized in a family society? In response to this question the following six facets of the family as an educative milieu are dealt with in terms of the expositions by Perquin:¹²

2.5.1 *The family milieu is life-space:*

The family lives “somewhere”, it has a place “somewhere”, not merely spatially but also as it is experienced emotionally by the parents and children. There is a house or home that is experienced as their own and in terms of which meaning is given to their mutual being-together. Especially a child has a need for a fixed *life-space* whose being is and whose being he experiences in which he can be himself and in which he can move freely and without concern. From this space he explores his world and makes his acquisitions. If he does not have this space he feels threatened. The homey milieu is the child’s own space, it is a structured area for him, “a sanctuary and a base for dropping out, and the child is its subjective center” (Calon).

2.5.2 *The family milieu is a response to experiences:*

A child needs loving *guidance* on his journeys of discovery, to always be able to ask questions and receive answers. He must gradually learn to know the things and people in his environment. He must receive answers to his questions about how things stand with things and people or might or might not be. He also seeks his way in religion and morality. The family is the natural milieu where he must find loving guidance on his journeys of discovery. The answers to the many problems he runs across “outside” he expects to find at home. Thus the family essentially is *a response*. “Home”,

as it were, means problem solving and a return to a base of safety and security. If a child does not find answers to his problems the result can be intense emotional disturbance. Then it no longer is a home.

2.5.3 The family milieu is a world of personally directed love:

For adequate psychic becoming a child has a need for loving, caring direction from his parents that is expressed in concrete deeds and in tangible ways. If this does not occur a child's psychic life and expressive life become disturbed. The family indeed is the milieu of *fulfilled needs*. To be a family member is to experience being loved. *Preconditions for a personally directed love between parents and children are:*

- *The homey mealtime:* This is the deepest experience of family being-together. In many households mealtime often is disturbed by disagreement (often the father's disputing). With this one of the most important values of family life is undermined. Mealtime must progress peacefully and care must be devoted to an expression of mutual love.
- *Association:* After mealtime parents and children must associate with each other and discuss matters (educative communication). Family members must not be so involved with matters and social activities, homework, watching television, etc. that this discussion becomes impossible. If there is not time for this association the parents are not able to answer their children's questions and the result is misunderstanding and dis-communication.
- *Going to bed* is an all-important experience in a child's life that never must be disturbed by unpleasantness. It must, so to speak, be a ceremony by which a child experiences intense feelings of protection, caring and security. When a youth goes out in the evening at least one parent must remain up to emotionally welcome him again back in the family circle (and not play a policeman!0. It is important that the youth experience himself at home again, otherwise he can become a boarder.
- *School activities, play and sports* of the children must receive the attention of the parents such that the children

can experience their guidance in these matters. It must be clear to the children that their parents still are responsible for their educating even though others have a role in it.

- *The religious life* of the child ought to be actualized in the most intimate communication with his parents. If this does not occur then in religious matters the bond with the family is broken by which the natural medium for religion withers. Practicing religious values occurs best and most fruitfully in the trusting milieu of the family. The significance of communal prayer cannot be overestimated: “The family that prays together stays together.”

2.5.4 *The family milieu is a social given:*

The family is a community in which a child learns *social virtues* – respect, a spirit of solidarity, of community and cooperation. By practicing social virtues a child becomes prepared to participate in the larger community. From this it is evident how socially valuable a child-rich family is. The natural educating to a social being is a linking up with other children. The fundamental law of “give and take” then is experienced practically. In family life a child also learns the value of *tradition*, and the parents also are protected against a rigid adherence to the old.

2.5.5 *The family milieu is dynamic:*

A family must link up with a continually changing world and changing temporal circumstances to make it possible for an undisturbed entry of the youths into social life and not to lose contact with reality. Thus, family life must be dynamic and not static. (Compare here the matters of *open and closed families* as well as the so-called *loss of family functions*, both of which have been considered).

2.5.6 *The family milieu is enduring:*

The family milieu is an *enduring*, intimate circle of personal relationships that in a world of impersonal social relationships must help the youths to discover themselves and others as *persons* and in order to give personal meaning to norms and values.

2.6 The vulnerability of the contemporary family

It has been emphasized that fast changes and new developments characterize our times not only in the areas of science and technology but also in community life. If we compare the contemporary family with the preindustrial family it becomes clear how radical the structure of the family has changed as a result of the Industrial Revolution. As a consequence of intrusive changes, the contemporary family has become *vulnerable* such that in countless cases family life has degenerated. The following description of the occurrence of this event is based on the analysis of Steyn,¹³ but once again, sociopedagogically, our concern is with the *educative significance* of a changed society and family structure.

In a preindustrial society, approximately 90% of the population resided in smaller communities with self-supporting economies (e.g., in Western Europe and in South Africa). The societal structure was simple and undifferentiated and the *extended family* or *larger family* was the most important form of living together and was a basic economic unit within which the various family functions were realized. The extended family existed in a number of families. For example, sons, with wife and children, had moved in with their parents so that different generations settled together into one household—a genuine primary communal connection with strictly prescribed patterns of relationship, rights and obligations. The *core families* (husband, wife and their own children) were linked up with this larger family and were strictly under the influence of the decisions of the larger group whose basic authority was the patriarch. This contributed to the security of the core family and to the individual.

Because of this collective economy the members of the larger family had *economic security*. Also, the members of the extended family, in times of financial need, supported each other economically. The orphan child, the deficient, the sick and the aged, e.g., were cared for within the larger family context.

Because emotional bonds in the larger family are more extensive than intensive, there also was a high degree of *emotional security*.

Indeed, an individual was in continual contact with a large number of persons and here the problem of loneliness did not arise. Interpersonal relationships were well defined – people were “visible” for each other. The marital relationship and the parent-child relationship of the core family were subjected to the influence and control of the larger family so a great deal of *community control was exercised*. This contributed to the stability of the family, also regarding educating and *socializing* the child. Various adults could discipline a child and the parents could be under pressure from the larger family not to be over-possessive, over-protective or over-anxious. Finally, the distribution and differentiation of roles in the larger family were specific and clearly delimited (role confidence instead of role conflict)

The extended family of preindustrial times thus is characterized by:

- economic security
- emotional security
- social security
- role security
- pedagogical security and
- family stability.¹⁴

The Industrial Revolution, with the industrial work and urbanization it brought about, radically changed the structure of society as well as of the stable family. Especially, the individual began to work outside of the influence of the family and family life became detached from economic activities. The *individual* became the basic unit of work and for the sake of work opportunities, he had to move with his core family to large industrial cities. In doing so, the structure of the family was modified.¹⁵

Thus, the core family was removed and isolated from the extended family, it began to function as a separate unit and in doing so it became particularly vulnerable. The contemporary core family is:

- *economically vulnerable*: In times of need (unemployment, illness, death of the husband) family members are dependent on themselves. The family is dependent only on one or two persons for its economic support.

- *socially vulnerable*: In the smaller, isolated families there no longer was community control and the family became unstable. In the closed family with its intimate, personal relationships, family members are committed only to each other and they have relationship problems unassociated with whom they can support. Thus the contemporary family communicates from a non-supportive social position.
- *emotionally vulnerable*: The core family has undergone a particular emotionalizing. Family members are much more committed to each other for emotional support (needs). The marital relationship and educative relationships are very intimate and are characterized by intense emotionality. There is enormous pressure on the family members who then experience problems much more intensely—thus family stability is threatened in this respect.
- *pedagogical vulnerability*: The family also is vulnerable with respect to the parent-child relationship and the help with the child growing up. Especially the social and emotional vulnerability, the family instability and outside influences also make the family pedagogically vulnerable since educating by the family clearly is influenced by the family's sense of community. Because of the strong emotional bond between parent and child, their loosening and distancing from him is obstructed such that his socialization is impeded by this. In this regard, youths undergo a drastic emancipation as never before. Emphasizing the strong emotional bond occurs with the relationship of authority: also a child can become egocentric if the world of the parents becomes excessively close to him.¹⁶
- *vulnerability of role differentiation*: If the *father* is absent too often because of vocational obligations, his son's socialization can be impeded by not have adequate contact with him as an identification figure. Consequently, too strong a bond with the mother can give rise to homosexual tendencies in her son. Also with a *wife* there is role uncertainty because of the emancipation of women, her entry into the labor market and the decrease in the number of children. The variety of roles from which a wife can choose (housewife, career woman, social woman) and her

actual position in one of these roles can lead to conflict and tension that can impede a marriage and healthy family life, e.g., a double responsibility can make a wife weary and irritable and can lead to the occurrence of educational neglect.¹⁷

In what follows the educative significance of the vulnerability of the contemporary family is stated in terms of the inadequate realization of sociopedagogical essences:

- Inadequate *educating in society* because of a vulnerable, unstable, unsupported family;
- Obstructed *socializing*, loosening and distancing from the youths;
- Insufficient *educative communicating* because of social and emotional vulnerability, threatened family stability and a possibly too strong emotional pedagogical bond (communicating without distance);
- Education-impeding *influence from a changing societal structure*;
- Obstructed *social-societal orienting*, e.g., drastic social emancipation, role-uncertainty, life-in-multiplicity, social lability, contact inflation;
- *Identity crisis* of youths because identity figure is absent or role conflict is experienced.

This family vulnerability has given rise to a general deterioration of family life in contemporary society. According to Hoffman¹⁸ this deterioration has occurred especially regarding the following facets:

(i) Influence of the liberal view of life:

Youths and adults continually are confronted, conditioned and affected in contemporary society by a pernicious liberal influence. By means of communication media this liberal culture and view of life of a permissive society is even carried into each house with its correlated harmful secularizing, permissive and leveling influence on old and young. An increasing number of parents, under the banner of nature and freedom, take a *laissez-faire* attitude with respect to their child's commissions and omissions.

(ii) Incorrect exercise of discipline:

In the family a spirit of exaggerated “treating as equals” and “comradery” prevails in contrast to the former healthy family relationships within the family. These changed attitudes sometimes can be attributed to their reaction against the strong, unsympathetic and autocratic actions of their parents during their own youthful years. However, more often this accommodating attitude is the result, on the one hand, of an easy going-ness and a deficient awareness of norms and sense of responsibility under the influence of the liberal spirit of the times. On the other hand, it stems from the inability of the parents to manage and to discipline their children as well as to neutralizing liberal influences by equipping their child with principles for living. Parents also are influenced by the propagation of “free schools” by liberally inclined educators and psychologists. In addition, as parents’ influence as identity figures and norm examples for a child dwindles—as the personification of adulthood—this leads the youth to a derailment and a loss of confidence in life.

(iii) Deficient maternal care and the emancipation of women: Deficient maternal care can result from a wrongfully directed striving for emancipation by a wife and naturally will exercise a very detrimental influence on a child’s becoming adult. A wife is granted her rightful place next to her husband; also the full opportunity to realize her potentialities. Also it is not wrong if a wife works professionally. In emancipating the wife one must be vigilant against her losing her refinement and femininity. However, the worst of it is that a number of women, for the sake of their work, no longer have an interest in being a true mother. Also the wife’s independence (because of her professional work and emancipation) gives rise to a marriage that is continued for purely practical reasons or also dissolved. In such a family children often do not experience the safety, security and acceptance that a preparatory home can offer.

(iv) The influence of friendships and hero-worship: Youths have a need for someone they can use as an identification model and an ideal normative example. If however that person is what in general is the personification of a liberal and profligate attitude toward life, the child will be influenced very detrimentally. Many youths’ ideal rises no higher than the “sophisticated” life attitude of the uprooted city dweller, the loose actress or the impudent ruggedness of a slum dweller. A large number of youths

identify themselves with one or another pop singer, film star, sport hero(ine), race car champion or character from the world of film or romantic novels. Hence the enormous influence of the communication media with their extreme preoccupation and overemphasis on sexuality and aggressiveness (“sex and violence”).

(v) *Use of free time* :

Briefly today’s youths select free time activities that are:

- generally passive rather than active;
- time wasting instead of useful;
- harmful instead of wholesome. (Also see 3.2.5).

(vi) *Need for a world- and life-view*:

Because of inadequate family living together and family educating often a child is left to himself to determine the norms and values for his life. Youths experiment with values and come into opposition from the limiting measures of their parents. With difficulty they discover the sense and meaning of their own lives.

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