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STUDYING PERSONALITY DYSFUNCTIONS OF CHILDREN

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STUDYING PERSONALITY DYSFUNCTIONS OF CHILDREN

A Problem Submitted to the Department of Education in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Course in Research Problems 390b

By

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Pittsburg, Kansas

July, 1954

FOR THE LIBRARY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|---|------|
| I. INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| Statement of the Problem..... | 1 |
| Purpose of the Study..... | 2 |
| Design for the Study..... | 3 |
| Scope and Limitations..... | 4 |
| II. RESEARCH DATA ON FEELINGALITY DYSFUNCTIONS. | 5 |
| Definitions..... | 5 |
| Causes..... | 15 |
| Treatment..... | 20 |
| III. REPORT OF CASES STUDIED..... | 24 |
| Case A--Girl, Age 5, Shy Child..... | 24 |
| Case B--Girl, Age 3, Child with Temper. | 32 |
| IV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... | 39 |
| Summary and Conclusions..... | 39 |
| Recommendations..... | 40 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 41 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

The problem of this study was to acquire a knowledge of how teachers, in a school system where no guidance services are available, can give more competent counsel to pupils who have personality dysfunctions, through a knowledge and understanding of the data research offers in this field of study. This information was obtained through the collection and interpretation of (1) the data research offers on the causes and treatment of specific personality dysfunctions--especial attention having been given to the shy, withdrawn child and the aggressive child with temper--and (2) data obtained by, what is thought of by experts in the field of child study as "the most widely applicable method available for studying 'the whole child',"¹ and the most effective method to be used by classroom teachers in applying these data to the individual child with personality dysfunctions, case studies of a shy, withdrawn child and of an aggressive child with temper. It is hoped that the data contained in this study will be applied in a practical way by elementary classroom teachers in studying each student in the elementary school, especially those with personality dysfunctions, in order to determine and develop every child's resourcefulness.

¹Ruth Strang, An Introduction to Child Study, (1938 edition), p. 554.

Purpose of the Study

Since educators have realized the great importance of personality development in recent years, the modern teacher cannot escape some of the issues connected with problems of pupil adjustment. It is recognized that personality should maintain harmonious development with other aspects of the individual, thus problems in personality adjustment should be corrected when possible if we obtain our goal of developing 'the whole child'. Traxler¹ states that "teachers who have not had courses dealing with psychological and psychiatric problems will be much more competent to assist with the more obscure and difficult problems of adjustment if they will become acquainted with the writings of leaders in these fields, or with recent textbooks and studies dealing with various aspects of child and adolescent psychology." "It is not supposed, of course, that reading books and magazines will make one a competent counselor, much less a psychologist. However, for many of us . . . an intelligent reading of selected references in these newer principles of psychology will supply a fuller insight into the problems of guidance."²

Thus, it was the purpose of this study to help the classroom teacher bring about improvement in the personal adjustments of her pupils through a knowledge of the writings of

¹Arthur H. Traxler, Techniques of Guidance, p. 315.

²Philip W. L. Cox, and John Carr Duff, Guidance by the Classroom Teacher, p. 46.

experts in this field and an understanding of the technique which the writer thinks is most valuable in studying personality--the case study.

Design for the Study

Two research techniques were employed in the study of this problem. First was the use of the documentary procedure to find out what data research offers about the causes and treatment of personality dysfunctions. These data were obtained from the educational literature containing the writings of leading educators and psychologists in the field of child study.

After obtaining, summarizing and studying the data research offers on personality dysfunctions, the writer made case studies of two children with personality dysfunctions-- (1) a shy, withdrawn child and (2) an aggressive child with temper--obtaining all the available data about the development and behavior of these two cases and then assembling, organizing and studying these items in order that the nature and causes of difficulties might be discovered and that treatment designed to remove the difficulties might be planned and carried out.¹ The techniques used in gathering these data were: (1) interviews with parents, teachers and children, (2) observations on the part of the writer, and (3) study of school records. The aim of these two case

¹Traxler, op. cit., p. 285.

studies was to give a complete and colorful account of these children's personality and of the factors that seem to be influencing their personality dysfunctions.¹

Scope and Limitations

This study was concerned with establishing an understanding of how the classroom teacher can assist with the problems of adjustment found in her classroom through a broadened knowledge of personality and an illustration of the methods used in developing a case study on the elementary level.

The research material was confined to the Porter Library and no attempt was made by the writer to exhaust all of the data contained in this library on personality. Only a practicable knowledge and understanding in this field of study was attempted.

The writer did not attempt to effect treatment in the case studies but endeavored only to make limited diagnoses of the cases and suggest possible treatment. The inherent limitations of the case study--lack of experience in using the case study technique and limited time²--were limitations of the writer in making these case studies.

¹Florence L. Goodenough, Developmental Psychology, p. 453.

²Harry N. Rivlin, Educating for Adjustments, p. 111.

CHAPTER II

PERSONALITY DYSFUNCTIONS

Definitions

Personality is a term that we all use very frequently in describing others and to each of us it has a very real meaning. There seems to be no general agreement as to the exact meaning of the word "personality." Perhaps it covers so much ground that it is impossible to define it in one short definition. A survey of twenty books on the subject yields twenty different definitions.¹

Goodenough² states that there are at least two good reasons why personality is hard to define. First, personality is recognized or identified by the kind of impression an individual makes upon us and not by the immediate qualities of the individual himself as we stop to observe them. This is evident from the very terms we use when asked to describe someone's personality. We say that it is pleasing, magnetic, forceful, charming, or unpleasant, repulsive, annoying, etc. All these terms refer primarily to the way the person affects us and do not tell us what there is about him that produces the effect. In trying to describe the personality of somebody else we are continually hampered by the necessity of referring back to him the feelings, attitudes, and emotions that he arouses in us. Second, when

¹Roy Newton, How to Improve Your Personality, p. 16.

²Goodenough, op. cit., p. 435.

we attempt to analyze personality into smaller elements we lose the very thing that gives it its essential character. Personality is not a simple trait nor a lot of simple traits added together, it is more like a harmony or a melody. Simply enumerating the separate notes that go to make up a melody does not give us the melody itself. Personality, like melody, is made up of many simpler qualities combined into a new whole that is a good deal more than the sum of its parts. So if we wish to get some kind of measure of the total personality of any individual, whether child or adult, we shall be most successful if we observe how other people react to him.

If we ask a child what constitutes a person, the reply would probably be the enumeration of the most important features and limbs: head, nose, mouth, ears, hands, legs, etc.¹ As we grow older we begin to perceive that personality is more than external appearance, although many grown people still have this idea of personality. Sherman² believes that personality emerges when the individual begins to understand the meaning of his behavior as it affects him and as it is interpreted by others. As soon as others in his environment become personalities to him, that is, become other than objects, his own personality begins to emerge. Thereafter, personality begins to take form by modification of earlier characteristics and by the acquisition and reorientation of new traits.

¹A. A. Roback, Personality: The Crux of Social Intercourse, p. 26.

²Mandel Sherman, Basic Problems of Behavior, pp. 108, 109.

A person nearing middle age typically thinks of personality more in terms of good habits, a pleasant disposition, and an even temper. "Older persons frequently judge young people of high school and college age by their manners and thoughtfulness much more than by the traits considered so vital by the young people themselves. If you want to make a hit with the old folks, you should be conservative in your deportment, quiet in your manner, and always considerate and thoughtful."¹

Howard C. Warren's Dictionary of Psychology,² gives five different definitions:

1. the integrated organization of all the cognitive, affective, conative, and physical characteristics of an individual as it manifests itself in focal distinctness to others;
2. the general characterization, or pattern, of an individual's total behavior;
3. the field property or form of the individual's total behavior-pattern;
4. those characteristics of an individual most important in determining his social adjustments;
5. (pop.) the physical and affective qualities of an individual as they synthetically attract or impress others.

Commenting on these definitions, Newton³ says that, "Number 1 is too technical for the layman; numbers 2, 3, and 4 are pretty good. Number 5 is much better. The average young man or woman thinks of personality largely in terms of physical characteristics--stature, clothes, com-

¹Newton, op. cit., p. 18.

²Howard C. Warren, Dictionary of Psychology, p. 235.

³Newton, op. cit., p. 17.

plexion, beauty, nice white teeth, a pleasing smile, physical skill, etc."

Dr. Louis P. Thorpe,¹ author of many magazine articles and two books on this subject, says, "We can therefore regard personality as an elaborate pattern or combination of all of a person's characteristics."

Dr. Henry C. Link,² another outstanding authority in this field, says, ". . . I define personality as the extent to which the individual has developed habits and skills which interest and serve other people." This definition interprets personality in terms of qualities that some people develop and others neglect to develop, and places the responsibility for having a poor personality directly on the shoulders of the individual. Also, it interprets personality in terms of social relations. "Personality is not only something that we have, but is also what people think about us."³

Warren and Carmichael⁴ define personality as "the entire mental organization of a human being at any stage of his development. It embraces every phase of human character: intellect, temperament, skill, morality, and every attitude that has been built up in the course of one's life."

Prince⁵ gives a similar definition, "Personality is the

¹Louis P. Thorpe, Personality and Life, pp. 4-5.

²Henry C. Link, The Rediscovery of Man, pp. 60-61.

³Newton, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴H. C. Warren, & L. Carmichael, Elements of Human Psychology, p. 333.

⁵Morton Prince, The Unconscious, p. 532.

sum-total of all the biological innate disposition, impulses, tendencies, appetites, and instincts of the individual, and the acquired dispositions and tendencies--acquired by experience."

The writer agrees with Newton¹ that, "Perhaps a better understanding of personality can be reached by getting away from short definitions and attempting a more comprehensive analysis." He, Newton,² believes that personality is made up of the following physical traits, aptitudes, attitudes, and ways of behaving:

1. The way you look. This includes your stature, features, physique, color and texture of your hair, size of your hands and feet, your teeth, and perhaps a number of other physical traits. When a person is noticeably deficient in those physical characteristics commonly associated with attractiveness, he should compensate by developing himself along other lines. . . . He can improve himself as a conversationalist, develop poise, brush up on his manners, acquire some new skills, and in general so call attention to his good personality traits that people will overlook his weak ones.

2. The way you dress. This covers the neatness, appropriateness, cleanliness, and style of your clothes, as well as your hats, shoes, and accessories. . . . It is not necessary today to dress in the latest style or to wear expensive clothes in order to be attractive. American stenographers are the best-dressed working girls in the world, and they work under the handicap of extremely limited budgets. . . . Nevertheless, we are today held to strict accountability in matters of clothing and grooming. The world is style-conscious and neatness-conscious. There is little excuse for the average American to present a slovenly appearance. . . . We are judged today as never before in history by our clothing and appearance.

3. The way you talk. Here we consider first the tone, quality, and volume of your voice. How many

¹Newton, op. cit., pp. 19-33.

²Loc. cit.

attractive women, otherwise charming, spoil the picture by a high-pitched, unmusical voice! And how many men gurgled their words, through sheer laziness! . . . A too-limited vocabulary and an ignorance of proper grammatical usage are also dangerous barriers to an effective personality. It is not hard to learn to speak correctly. . . . Any effort that you may put forth along this line will repay you handsomely.

4. The way you walk. Consider here your physical grace and poise, your stride and carriage, the way you sit down and rise to your feet. . . . There is no good reason why everyone should not acquire a certain degree of gracefulness of movement. Good posture makes you literally feel better, more optimistic, more confident. It is hard to be grouchy and pessimistic when you are throwing out your chest, standing tall, and walking with a firm, springy step.

5. The way you act emotionally. This includes your ability to keep at all times a sane emotional balance, avoiding stolidity on the one hand and hysterical behavior on the other. . . . There is no reason why we should not express our emotions if the expression is socially acceptable, but our emotions should not rule us. They must always, especially in their grosser and more violent expression, be under the control of our will. Uncontrolled rage, fear, hatred, and lust countermand the dictates of reason and reduce us to the level of beasts. . . . The most helpful emotions, feelings, and moods in personality development are optimism, hopefulness, cheerfulness, happiness, sympathy, and reverence. A sulky, sullen person makes few friends. A cheerful, pleasant person will never lack admirers.

6. The way you act intellectually. Here we consider your ability to reason from facts to conclusions without allowing prejudice, tradition, or wishful thinking to influence you unduly. Many persons made the mistake of "thinking with their emotions" instead of their brains. . . . Intelligence should not be confused with education, because education is what you know--the knowledge you have acquired--whereas intelligence is your capacity for acquiring more knowledge and education. A person may have much intelligence and little education. . . . We are born with a certain possible or potential intelligence. The way we are raised will determine whether or not we ever utilize our potentialities. The brightest people do not necessarily have the best personalities. . . . There appears to be little relationship or correlation between a person's I. Q. and his personality integration, except perhaps at the extremes of the scale, because an idiot could hardly be said to have an attrac-

tive personality, no matter how much coaching he is given and sometimes geniuses become so preoccupied in intellectual pursuits beyond the comprehension of ordinary men and women that they are thought of as queer personalities, but this is not always true. . . . For most of us there is no close relationship between I. Q. and personality. Except for the lowest levels in the scale, people of any intelligence level can develop attractive personalities. Your "intellectual attractiveness" is influenced by the amount of education, formal and informal, that you have but regardless of the level of your education, you can acquire a pleasing personality.

7. Your philosophy of life. This includes your code of personal ethics and morality, your conception of the fundamental values in life, and, in the broader meaning of the term, your spiritual development. It is hard to imagine a really attractive personality without the element of character. People attach varying meanings to the word character, but we can agree on at least some of the fundamentals of good character: prudence, basic decency, temperance in everything, physical and moral courage, manliness, personal integrity, intellectual honesty, lawabidingness, intelligent unselfishness, and sensible modesty. We can't help liking people with these qualities. These are the qualities we try to develop in our children. These are the virtues the home, school, and church cooperate in stressing. These are the character traits toward which every rightminded person, every idealist, strives. . . . A new acquaintance may meet all your requirements of the ideal personality, but if you later discover that he is a petty thief, an embezzler, or a habitual liar, then your rating of him drops to zero. You want nothing else to do with him. . . . Good character is basic in an attractive personality.

8. The things you can do. Here is a factor in attractiveness usually overlooked in most analyses. Versatility--the number and variety of socially acceptable activities in which you can engage--is at once an index of potential attractiveness and a means of developing personality. . . . The more things you can do, such as swim, fish, play games like golf and tennis, make a speech, play a musical instrument, etc., the more acceptable you will find yourself to a wider circle of friends and acquaintances. . . . We should have hobbies that bring us into contact with other people, all types of personalities, and learn skills that make us do things in the company of other people.

If we wish to get some kind of measure of the total personality of any individual, whether child or adult, we shall

be most successful if we observe how other people react to him--how do other children behave toward Johnnie, what do they think of him, how well do they like him--and since Johnnie is important to himself as well as to others, we may follow something of the same procedure with him--how well does Johnnie like himself, is he satisfied with his own characteristics and accomplishments, how does he regard other people, how does he think they regard him, is he happy or unhappy--in this way we get some idea of Johnnie's total personality. If Johnnie himself is happy, if he is reasonably satisfied with himself without being conceited, if he likes other people and they like him and seek his companionship, we say he has a good personality, but if he is unhappy, unsure of himself, thinks the world is against him, or if he is shunned and disliked by his companions, then we say with equal confidence that there is something wrong with his personality, and it becomes our task to find out where the trouble lies and what can be done about it.¹

This was the chief purpose of this study, what causes these personality dysfunctions and what can we do about them?

¹Goodenough, op. cit., p. 436.

Causes

"A sound step toward cure is discovery of causes, . . . if the cure of a problem does not deal with causes, the cure may simply make the problem turn into another problem. Any problem eliminated without due regard to causes prophesies another problem."¹ Since we know that we must work to eliminate causes if we hope to eliminate the problem, our first step is to discover causes. Reasons for behavior problems or personality dysfunctions are always present. Usually these problems are an attempt made by the child to satisfy his wants. What are some of the wants and needs of a child? The child wants affection. He wants response. He wants sensory gratifications. He wants to feel that he belongs. He wants to feel secure. He wants to feel adequate. He wants to experience the zest of achievement and to obtain recognition for what he does.² When a child cannot obtain these satisfactions by straightforward, appropriate, and open methods, he will try indirect, inappropriate and hidden ones.

Educators have long since discarded the theory that a maladjusted child is inherently bad. They have learned that the unsocial tendencies or behavior traits are the results of unfortunate environmental forces in the home, in the community, and in the school. "The problem child has a problem that he has not been able to solve."³

¹Lee Edward Travis and Dorothy Walter Baruch, Personal Problems of Everyday Life, pp. 134, 135.

²Ibid., p. 132.

³Theodore L. Torgerson, Studying Children, p. 26.

"The youngster who troubles us most has a reason for acting as he does. It is a complicated reason; it is almost certainly a reason beyond the child's control. He is not deciding to be bad, and he cannot decide to be good. The reason is forceful enough to enmesh the youngster and to drag him into the troublesome deeds he does."¹ These youngsters have a need--they need our love, sympathy, understanding, respect and our awareness of the fact that they are in difficulty.

Whenever the attainment of a need is thwarted or progress toward a goal is blocked, the child is faced with an adjustment problem. This condition arouses tension in the individual and persists until an adequate response is made. The child is in a state of continual tension or imbalance since needs are continuously being blocked by various forces and conditions. However, this does not mean that personality disturbances are always present in the growing child. The extent to which such blocking will lead to maladjustment will depend upon a number of factors, such as (1) the dynamic nature of the need that is blocked, (2) the extent to which it is blocked, (3) the possibilities of providing a substitute goal, and (4) the extent to which the child is fortified by affection, security, and a feeling of personal worth.²

"An environment which denies the child the opportunity to succeed or to receive social approval produces conflicts

¹James L. Hymes, Jr., "The Old Order Changeth," National Education Association Journal, XLII (April, 1953), 205.

²Karl C. Garrison, The Psychology of Exceptional Children, pp. 401, 402.

which result in unsocial behavior traits and a crippled personality."¹ "The child who is unwanted or is apparently not loved by any particular person will reveal characteristics of instability and lack of sense of control."² Thus, if parents and teachers understand and realize the importance of these "needs" of children and endeavor to satisfy, in legitimate ways, these basic needs of childhood, many personality dysfunctions in children could be avoided. "Children who feel secure, achieve reasonable success, get the affection they crave, and who have something definite, interesting, suitable, and important to do are not likely to get into mischief."³

Since the basic needs of many children are not supplied, we must put forth every effort to discover the unsatisfied needs which have caused the child to develop personality dysfunctions and endeavor to meet these needs and to establish in the child a condition of security, comfort and well-being. However, extensive and prolonged study is necessary to discover causes. Travis and Baruch⁴ give some general leads to aid in discovery. Firstly, we know that problem behavior is an inappropriate way of obtaining emotional satisfactions, so, our first lead is to find what satisfactions are missing in the child's life as a whole, why these satisfactions are missing and who is failing to provide the opportunity for emotional expression. Secondly, we know that when

¹Torgerson, loc. cit.

²Garrison, op. cit., p. 402.

³Strang, op. cit., p. 381.

⁴Travis and Baruch, op. cit., pp. 135, 136.

emotional satisfactions are thwarted, the child hits out in anger, so, our second lead is to find out if the problem-behavior constitutes a weapon by which the child feels he is getting even. He may feel that he is punishing someone for depriving him of satisfactions. His behavior may be his way of wreaking vengeance. Thirdly, we know that when a person wants to wreak vengeance but dares not, he may turn his revenge onto himself. He may punish himself for not being able to punish others. He may punish himself as retribution for having felt the desire to punish others. Thus, our third lead is to discover whether the child is perhaps punishing himself by the sort of behavior he is evidencing. Fourthly, we know that when life becomes too hard, people seek escape; so we can ask, Is the child managing to escape through the behavior he is manifesting? Is his behavior a kind of self-protection whereby he avoids changes of circumstances and pain?

The "Detroit Scale for the Diagnosis of Behavior Problems"¹ consists of sixty-six items, or causes, which are known to be significant in the diagnosis of behavior maladjustments.

I. Health and physical factors.

1. Child's early health
2. Child's present health
3. Children's diseases
4. Serious infectious diseases
5. Accidents
6. Degree of speech defect
7. Degree of vision defect
8. Degree of hearing defect

¹Harry J. Baker and Virginia Traphagen, The Diagnosis and Treatment of Behavior-Problem Children, pp. 23, 24, 25.

9. Degree of orthopedic defect
10. Size for age
11. Motor control and muscular co-ordination
12. Convulsions, seizures
13. Nervousness

II. Personal habits and recreational factors.

14. Personal hygiene and clothing
15. Looks or appearance
16. Early self-care
17. Present self-care
18. Home duties
19. Conditions of eating
20. Eating habits
21. Time of sleeping
22. Sleeping conditions
23. Dreams
24. Early recreational facilities
25. Later recreational facilities
26. Playmates or companions

III. Personality and social factors.

27. Social type
28. Personality type
29. Anger, rage, revenge, etc.
30. Fear, dread, anxiety, etc.
31. Excitement, shock, uneasiness, etc.
32. Pity, sympathy, enthusiasm, etc.
33. Intelligence
34. Interests or hobbies
35. Initiative and ambition
36. Vocational interests
37. General behavior

IV. Parental and physical factors of the home.

38. Father's intelligence
39. Mother's intelligence
40. Father's education
41. Mother's education
42. Father's age at birth of child
43. Mother's age at birth of child
44. Father's health
45. Mother's health
46. Father's personality
47. Mother's personality
48. Occupation
49. Economic status
50. Home language
51. Other adults in home
52. Number of and position in siblings

- 53. Adjustments to siblings
- 54. Legal status
- 55. Broken home

V. Home atmosphere and school factors.

- 56. General home atmosphere
- 57. Ideals of home
- 58. Religion
- 59. Family recreation
- 60. Parents' social adjustment
- 61. Discipline
- 62. Attitude toward child
- 63. Child's attitude toward home
- 64. School attendance
- 65. Scholarship
- 66. Child's attitude toward school

The gathering of data for this scale takes at least two hours at a minimum and often more. Each item is scored in five possible categories as follows:¹

| Scoring a Behavior Item | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| <u>Category</u> | <u>Scale Value</u> |
| Very poor | 1 |
| Poor | 2 |
| Fair or average | 3 |
| Good | 4 |
| Very Good | 5 |

A multitude of factors--innate, acquired and environmental--operate continuously to facilitate or to inhibit behavior adjustment. "When teachers study children in order to understand them better, they discover these conflicts, frustrations, and disabilities that lead to failure, unsocial conduct, and maladjustment."² Many teachers are not aware of the pupil problems which exist and are not aware of the causes of these problems until they actually study children and endeavor to secure an understanding of child behavior.

¹Ibid., p. 26.

²Torgerson, op. cit., p. 27.

It is very important for the teacher to realize that the undesirable behavior of a child in her classroom has an underlying cause or causes--the behavior she observes is only a symptom. Usually problem behavior is identified and described in terms of symptoms, but correction or therapy must be based upon the causes which produce those symptoms.¹

Parents and teachers need to have an understanding of child behavior, a knowledge of modern methods of child study, skill in the use of techniques of measurement and evaluation, a keen ability to interpret behavior, and a sympathetic attitude in applying the proper therapy. Teachers, as well as parents, who assume responsibility for the growth and development of children recognize that "it is not what the child does but why he does it" that really matters.²

¹Ibid., p. 28.

²Ibid., p. 28, 30.

Treatment

"For cure, we must not only find what satisfactions are lacking, we must also supply them."¹ As Travis and Baruch² explain, this may mean simply reorientation of the child's management, or on the other hand it may mean a more complex reorientation--reorientation of the people close to him so that they become emotionally able to supply his needs. Secondly, for cure, we must remember that if the child had not been lacking satisfactions he would not have problems. In other words, the world has been harsh to him because of having deprived him of these satisfactions. Cure then must provide opportunities for him to get even with the harsh world.

"The troubled child has an accumulation of conflicts that must find an outlet at the expense of his own well being or that of his surroundings, or both. . . . Destructive pressures can be lessened through release media. These may include the use of plastic materials, paints, woodwork, blocks, puppetry, dramatics, the care of plants, or animals, or simply the opportunity to talk to the group and to the teacher."³ He must be permitted a certain amount of rebellion, of "naughtiness," of dirtiness, of messiness, of

¹Travis and Baruch, op. cit., p. 136.

²Loc. cit.

³Louis Hay, "How The Classroom Teacher Can Help The Troubled Child," The Nervous Child, X, (1954), 399.

hostile speech and action, all without loss of love. For a while his actions may be violent before he finally strikes a mid-point but in the end both the child and his environment will be better off.¹

One of the most successful ways in which parents can help a child release some of his anger is to take a time each day wherein parent and child reverse roles.² The parent becomes the child and the child becomes the parent.

Another way of working out hostilities in children is to give them a family of indestructible dolls representing the members of their own family group. Let them play roughly and they may get out, onto these dolls, some of their feelings.³ By being permitted to let off steam the child may work off some of the hostility and anger he has stored inside him. He may bring himself to a point where he can accept and use new opportunities granted to him for obtaining emotional satisfactions.⁴

Since some personality dysfunctions may be traced to poor physical condition of the child and a heightened sensibility to experiences, our first attention should be given to providing a healthful school program and to cooperating with the parents regarding food, sleep, and other health habits. The acquisition

¹Travis and Baruch, op. cit., p. 137.

²Doroth W. Baruch, "Therapeutic Procedures as Part of the Educative Process," Journal of Consulting Psychology, IV (September, 1940), 165-172.

³Travis and Baruch, op. cit., p. 190.

⁴Ibid., p. 191.

of certain motor skills, especially skill in the games and sports popular with the child's social group, may be largely responsible for improving personality adjustment.¹

"One of a teacher's most important jobs is to draw the line between behavior which is healthy--no matter how hard it may be to live with--and behavior which stems from the pressures of emotional and social illness. There is no simple solution to the troublesome behavior of disturbed children--the incredible complexity of the human's social and emotional being is one lesson all teachers must learn."²

Authorities in this field of study agree that physical punishment should be ruled out in dealing with disturbed children because, "aggression begets aggression."³

The following are three ideas on how to live successfully with today's youngsters: "First, earn the liking of your youngsters--the best aid to securing good class behavior is your smile, your friendliness, your sense of humor, your lack of tension. Second, keep your youngsters on their toes, keep them busy--absorbing activities are like magnets pulling them with tremendous force into the best behavior that their age lets them achieve. Third, as you look at your youngsters, be sure that your standards of promptness, of attention, of

¹Strang, op. cit., p. 391.

²Hymes, op. cit., p. 204-5.

³Dorothy Barclay, "The Bully Is An Unhappy Child," New York Times Magazine, (November 22, 1953), 56.

quiet, of courtesy, are realistically geared to children, not idealistically geared to angels."¹

"The most important guidance takes place through the teacher's friendly, understanding relation with each child. This beneficial teacher-pupil relation has its roots in a genuine, deep, psychological acceptance of each child--a belief that each child is valuable, no matter how he looks or acts, and that every child has unrealized potentialities."²

"Individual understanding is good, but it is not enough. We want to do still more, and there is one good thing all schools can do: Faculties can meet together. They can think together, plan together, building a school plan for treating these emotional and social sick children with understanding. A united faculty, with every single member operating on the basis of an agreed-upon plan, can begin to produce some changes even in the behavior of the most disturbed child."³

In treating all types of personality dysfunctions, "the old advice applies again--know the child, try to understand what he is saying through his misbehavior, help him to gain confidence by providing opportunities for success, and above all, let him know that he is loved--although his outbursts are not."⁴

¹Hymes, loc. cit.

²Ruth Strang, An Introduction to Child Study, (1951 edition), p. 466.

³Hymes, loc. cit.

⁴Barclay, loc. cit.

CHAPTER III

REPORT OF CASES STUDIED

Case A--Girl, Age 8, Shy Child

Case A was eight years of age when she entered the writer's classroom on September 6, 1953, accompanied by her mother. Since the writer had no previous experiences in the community, this was the first contact with A and her family.

Scholastically, A was near the head of her class, she was good natured, obedient, quiet and timid. From her appearance in the classroom, she might be considered a model child. However, after studying the child closer, the writer found that her development was quite one-sided, even if, judging by conventional standards of a good child, she was perfect. For this reason, A was chosen for study.

Family Background and History. The information in this area was obtained by interviews with the mother, child and fellow teachers, who had known the family several years.

A's father was born in a small town in southwest Missouri. He had one sister, two years older than he. They always lived on a farm and he followed that occupation. He has always had "very good" health and apparently has been a prosperous farmer. He has a high school education. He does not belong to any community organizations. His main interest is farming and "making good."

Her mother came from a larger family having two sisters

and one brother. She, too, has always lived on a farm. She has "pretty good" health, helps with work on the farm and enjoys it. She graduated from high school and worked as a stenographer until marriage. She met her husband after moving to the community where they now live. She belongs to no community organization except the Parent-Teacher Association. She shows great interest in the school, making frequent visits. Her greatest interest is in her home and raising her two girls "right."

Health and Physical History. The writer obtained information from A's school records and interviews with her mother.

A is four feet, four inches tall and weighs fifty-three pounds. According to the Baldwin-Wood Weight-Height-Age Table For Girls¹, she weighs eleven pounds less than she should for her age and height. She has had a "lot" of "bad" health. She has always been thin and anemic. When in the first grade, she had typhoid fever and was out of school eight weeks. She had whooping cough, chicken pox, and measles before entering school. Since entering school she has been inoculated for diphtheria and smallpox and is X-rayed each year for TB. She has frequent colds and has had considerable "trouble" with her tonsils. She had a tonsillectomy before entering the second grade, at which time a "stub" was left in. After taking a serious cold, this be-

¹Bird T. Baldwin and Thomas D. Wood, "Weight-Height-Age Table For Girls," as quoted in C. M. Louttit, Clinical Psychology. Revised Edition, p. 73.

came infected at the beginning of the second quarter of school this year, necessitating another operation. This was successful and she was planning to be back in school after four weeks absence but during the fourth week she took another cold which led to pneumonia. She was out of school seven more weeks making a total of eleven weeks. She was very weak and pale having little resistance. The doctor said she "must" wear long stockings or slacks at school during the winter months in order to keep warm. She is very sensitive about her health, frequently saying, "I feel wind, may I move?" At the last of the school year she seemed to have built up some resistance and was "feeling better than any time since entering school."

Educational Status. School records, former teachers, and the writer's observations, as the classroom teacher, provided the chief source of information in this area.

A began school at the age of six. Although she missed several weeks during her first year because of illness, she was able to "catch up" and has made normal advancement, being promoted each year. She has always "loved" school and wants to read constantly. She prefers reading a book at recess to playing. When encouraged to participate in play activities at recess, she often replied, "can't I work on what I missed?" She insisted on taking books home and "catching up" adding that her elder sister would help her. This pressure seems to have been brought on by her parents. Her mother frequently asked the writer, "Will A be promoted to Grade 4 if she makes up the work she has missed?"

She was given the Revised Stanford-Binet Test while in the first grade which yielded an intelligence quotient of 124. The school records showed she had received above average grades in all her school work. She excels in her reading ability but all her work is satisfactory.

Home Environment. Interviews and observations in the home supplied this information.

A has one sister who is four years older. She is quite fond of her older sister and relies on her a great deal for support. The older sister has become over-protective of A since she has had so much illness. She seemed to feel it was her obligation to help her younger sister with the work she missed at school. She frequently cautioned A about "being careful" not to take cold and "laying her head down" if she got tired. The older sister was in the seventh grade and her teacher described her as "a very good student."

It is quite obvious that A receives a lot of attention and sympathy from both her parents and sister. The mother has always given much attention to her daughters and has been quite strict. She has never "turned her daughters loose" but has always "watched them very close" and "goes with them when they go." If either of her daughters do "anything" at school she "sure" wants to know about it. She is very self-conscious about their health and "watches" them closely. The girls do not resent this protection but accept it as an ordinary thing. A especially seems to enjoy this protective and sympathetic treatment.

The parents own their farm home which is about five

miles from town. It is not elaborately furnished but is comfortable. Little contact was made with the father because he was always "busy" outside. He apparently had little time for anything but his farm work.

Both girls have taken piano lessons and have done "very good." A could play a piece over and then repeat it by ear which interfered with her learning to read music. It was a long time before the parents or music teacher knew she was "playing by ear" rather than "reading the notes." She enjoys her music but they have to "keep after her" to play by note rather than by ear. The older sister plays for the Junior High Glee Club.

The only current reading material in the home is a daily newspaper and the Farm Journal. They have not made provisions for the girls reading interests in the home since "they take the children's magazines at school and they can read them there." A takes numerous library books home to read. She would rather "read than eat" and would read continually if they would let her. She is especially fond of horses and reads all the books about them she can find.

Social Contacts. Observations furnished most of this information although some was obtained in parent interviews.

A preferred to spend her leisure time reading than associating with other children. She enjoyed playing "horse" if someone would play with her but if not she would rather read about horses. She spent much time drawing pictures of

various kinds of horses. When she was encouraged to play she was always a "follower" and often the other children would take advantage of her timidity. If the children became too domineering, she would give them up and retire to reading. For an explanation, she would always say "they don't want me to play."

She does not belong to the Brownie Scouts or any other organization because she always has to ride the school bus home immediately after school. The Brownies meet after school on Wednesday evenings. She said her mother would be "too busy" to come after her on those evenings. Also, her mother did not feel it was "worth the trouble."

She is very fond of pets and spends much time playing with them at home. During her long illness, she kept a doll in bed with her all of the time. She kept the get-well card she had received from the writer beside her and looked at it frequently. Her mother said that she "loves that card."

She seldom goes to Church or Sunday School because her father "always has to work" and her mother "is busy." She seemed a little sensitive about admitting that she did not go to Sunday School since almost all the other children went.

She is given a weekly allowance and usually buys ice cream or candy when she comes to town with her mother and sister on Saturdays.

There are no children her age living near her home so her only associates are at school. They usually do not go

any place at night because her father "works late" and the girls "need the rest."

Diagnosis and Suggested Treatment. A is a child with apparently superior mental ability who has made excellent school achievement but whose social adjustments are below normal.

A's poor health status has greatly increased her insecurity. The only asset of which she seems to be certain is her intellect and ability to succeed along scholastic lines. Also, her extensive absence from school, due to her ill health, has caused her to fear school retardation and she has attempted to compensate so completely in her academic success that she gained no sense of proportion or relative values.

She has been so overly-protected by her mother and older sister that she has assumed a helpless attitude. She has been warned so frequently against exerting too much physical energy that she gives up rather than put forth any effort for social standing among her associates. She has been sheltered from facing difficulties at home because of her physical weakness and thus cannot face social difficulties at school. She withdraws from normal play activities, as a way of avoiding failure or criticism, because she feels she is physically inadequate and inferior. She receives a satisfying response in reading because alone she does not feel inferior nor incapable. Her extreme interest in horses has enabled her to

be occupied without the necessity of sharing her interests with others. The nonsocial lives of both her parents also add to her nonsocial tendencies because the home does not provide many varying interests nor other social contacts.

The mother has good reason for being extremely cautious about A's physical condition and she should continue to have regular check-ups, however, the mother should not relieve her of her own responsibility for meeting her problems and making adjustments.

The home and the school should both endeavor to broaden her interests and furnish a chance for her to succeed in outside activities. She should be encouraged to read in many different fields. More social contacts could be provided in the home, such as a friend occasionally spending the night with A. Joining a group organization would help her to establish social standing with her peers. If her parents could see the need, perhaps arrangements could be made for her to join the Brownie Scouts. Encouragement to participate in play activities and opportunity to acquire skills in the games which are popular with her social group will provide additional interest and confidence in her ability to succeed. Teachers should endeavor to develop her interest in music, giving her the opportunity to accompany classroom music, play piano solos, etc., since the use of her music ability would give opportunity for her to feel acceptance among her peers.

Case B--Girl, Age 8, Child with Temper

The writer's first contact with B was when she entered her classroom at the beginning of the school year in 1953. She was eight years of age.

B possessed average mental ability, was slightly below average in school achievement, was affectionate, easily embarrassed and displayed temper toward any coercion. The latter was the reason she was chosen for this study.

Family Background and History. Interviews with the mother, child, and fellow teachers furnished the information in this area. The mother was not too co-operative in supplying information for any part of this study. She seemed to have the idea, "What's B done now?" Her solution to the problem was "beat it out of her."

B's father was born in a town about fifty miles from where he now resides. He was an only child. He lived in a medium sized town until he completed his high school education. He then moved to the small town where he now lives and began work in a milk plant located there. He has "good health" and "likes" the town. He continues to work in the milk plant.

B's mother was born, and has always lived, in the town where they now live. She has two sisters and a brother. She graduated from high school and was married shortly thereafter. She does not belong to community organizations because she has "too many kids to care for." She "sends" the children to

Sunday School but seldom goes herself since her husband does not go. She shows little interest in the school and never came to school for any type of gathering, day or night, during the entire year.

Health and Physical History. The writer obtained most of this information from the school records and from the child.

She is four feet, one inch tall and weighs fifty-three pounds. According to the Baldwin-Wood Weight-Height-Age Table For Girls¹, this is only two pounds less than the normal weight for her age and height.

She has always had excellent health. She had measles and whooping cough before entering school and has been innoculated for "everything they've innoculated for at school." She missed only five days of school her first year, two days her second and only one half a day during this entire year.

Educational Status. Information gained from former teachers, school records and the writer's observations in the classroom were the data gathering techniques used in this category.

B began school when she was six years old. She liked school each year but didn't like her teacher last year. A teacher in the system stated that B and her teacher last year had "clashing personalities."

She was given the Revised Stanford-Binet Test while in the first grade which yielded an intelligence quotient of 105. The school records showed she had received slightly

¹Loc. cit.

below average grades in her school work. Her first grade teacher said she was a "good" student but had a violent temper. Her second grade teacher was not teaching in the system this year so her opinion was not available. She has made normal advancement, being promoted each year.

Home Environment. The effective technique for this information was observations and interviews in the home and comments from teachers in the system who were well-acquainted with the family.

B has two sisters, one older and one younger, and two brothers, both younger than she. Her older sister is a sophomore in high school and has always been a "spit fire." One brother is in the first grade and the other brother and sister are preschool age.

The parents own their home. It is not elaborate but is adequate. The writer was unable to personally interview the father since he was always "at work" or "gone." He is apparently not too energetic and devotes little time to his home or children. He seems to have an unpleasant disposition and drinks to some extent. He does not like to be "bothered" with the children. If the children are troublesome in the evenings, he "flies off the handle." Upon arrival at school one morning B stated that "Daddy got so mad at my little sister last night that he hit her until her mouth bled and all she had done was cry." B always goes home for lunch because "Daddy won't give me lunch money." She usually is back in

fifteen minutes. When asked if she took time to eat a good lunch she often replied, "I wasn't very hungry." When the family is together at meal time there always seems to be an argument. B was always the last child to go home in the evening and always seemed to dread it. On leaving one evening she said, "I guess I'll go home and get my whipping." When the writer questioned this statement she replied, "I always get a whipping for something--they beat on me all the time." Her mother, as well as her father, seemed to be sharp-tongued and quick tempered. She, her mother, was quoted as saying to her younger son on one occasion that "When you get to school those teachers will beat you to death and I hope they beat 'it' out of you."

The father gave the three older children enough money to attend one show a week. No reading material was provided in the home for the children. They take "a couple of magazines" and the daily newspaper. The children frequently go to an aunt's house to watch television in the evenings.

The mother is very careful to keep the children neat and clean and "sometimes" sews for them. B takes pride in her clothes and is always well-dressed.

Social Contacts. Observations and interviews with the child and mother supplied the information.

B enjoys active play at recess and especially likes to play ball with the boys. She has skill in this sport and is accepted by the boys, however, if she is not on the winning side she is "not going to play" claiming that the

other side "is cheating." When playing with the girls she wants to play by her rules and if she does not get her way it is usually explained that "they don't play right." She seeks to be accepted among her peers and tries to associate with the more popular students. She is accepted by her social group but not popular. She usually is embarrassed after she displays a fit of temper and seems to be sorry for the act after it is over. Upon one occasion when she was asked to use a pencil instead of a ball-point pen, which she brought to school that day, she slammed it on her desk and loudly exclaimed, "I ain't going to do it." When the writer endeavored to talk to her outside the classroom, she said, "Go ahead and beat me, I'm used to it." Then she burst into tears. After her anger was released, she was willing to go back into the room but sorrowfully stated, "they'll think I got a whipping because they can tell I've been crying." She was regretful because of what "they will think." The writer endeavored to be calm and not to show alarm over her disagreeable behavior. She lingered after school that evening and related, "I don't know why I did that today, I just got mad." The writer tried always to emphasize the things she did well and minimize her difficulties. Her sorrowful attitude about her disagreeable behavior and the success she was able to attain seemed to help her maintain her social status and her temper outbursts at school had decreased by the end of the study.

She was a Brownie Scout and seemed to take pride in

being a member of that organization. However, one evening it was brought to the writer's attention that she was not going to the scout meeting. After questioning, she finally told the writer that her father would not give her a nickel for Brownies. (The Brownies brought a nickel each evening for materials, refreshments, etc.). When the writer offered to give her a nickel, she refused to accept it. The writer then ask if she would clean off a shelf for her and earn the nickel. B was willing to do this and seemed to take pride in doing something for the writer. This practice was continue, without the knowledge of the other children, as her father continued to refuse the nickel.

She goes to Sunday School regularly and "likes" it. This helps in her social adjustment since several of the other children in the classroom attend the same Sunday School. She seems to feel something "in common" with them.

Diagnosis and Suggested Treatment. B is a child of average intelligence who, unfortunately, has had emotionally unstable parents. The insecure and inferior feeling felt by the parents is now a felt need of the child. She has learned to imitate the tantrum techniques which are characteristic of her father and, to some extent, of her mother. B should be guided by a very calm, well-poised person. The wise teacher will help her make an all-round adjustment, help her realize her social needs and endeavor to satisfy those needs constructively and yet not over-compensate beyond necessity. B's impulses should be guided so that

they will become organized toward an interest rather than a complex. Participation in an elementary dramatics club, programs given for the public, classroom playlets, etc. would furnish a release for the tension B feels as well as guiding her impulses toward an interest. Her difficulties should be minimized and her opportunities to witness success broadened.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

A study was made of the educational literature containing the writings of leading educators and psychologists in the field of child study in order to acquire (1) a practicable knowledge of the causes and treatment of personality dysfunctions and (2) an understanding of the case study as an applicable method for studying children with these dysfunctions.

Two case studies have been presented of children with personality dysfunctions--(1) a shy, withdrawn child and (2) an aggressive child with temper.

From the limited experience which this study provided, the writer concluded that teachers who have a deeper insight into the problems of personality will be more competent to assist with personality dysfunctions found in the elementary classroom. The writer believes that a case study of these children who have personality dysfunctions would greatly benefit most teachers, although it is time-consuming, by presenting an understanding of the factors that seem to be influencing these dysfunctions. Also, teachers who have had experience in using this technique will have a better organized understanding and thus, can be more successful

in using available resources to bring better emotional well-being to many unhappy children. Making a case study may not indicate the particular source of the dysfunction to the average classroom teacher but it will give her an insight to the steps that may be taken to determine and develop the child's resourcefulness.

Recommendations

The writer recommends that every teacher make a study of the writings of educators and psychologists in the field of child study. She suggests that a study be made of the case method as a technique for studying children.

It is also recommended that teachers make a case study of a child whom, after making observations, they feel has a personality dysfunction. Assistance may be obtained from a qualified case worker in diagnosing the case study information and making recommendations. This information may also be shared with fellow teachers.

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