Learning is as vital to the child as any other basic process of survival; in fact, it is his natural means of survival. Only through knowledge and awareness is he able to master his environment. It is through knowledge that he seeks power and influence, not only over his fellows, but also over the elements in the universe. How the child learns, and what he deems most important in the myriad of things that confront him, will vary with his capacity, his attitudes and interests, his maturational level, and his cultural milieu. Despite individual variation in these factors, learning is a universal human phenomenon and the core of man's efforts to achieve satisfaction.

Basic to the development of this paper is the assumption that man is a satisfaction seeker and problem solver. The authors consider the desire to achieve satisfaction as the fundamental motivating force in human behavior. Satisfaction is conceived of as a psychological state in which the individual experiences a sense of unity and mastery over his environment. To accomplish this the individual brings his own needs and aspirations into balance with the expectations of the environment. This balance is the strived for ideal. Barriers to the achievement of this ideal exist both within the individual and within the social structure. Individuals are frequently faced with the necessity of resolving psychological and value conflicts which may impede the taking of effective action. Learning is important, therefore, as the process through which one acquires the necessary tools for overcoming the barriers in achieving desired goals and, concomitantly, satisfaction.

The school, as the social institution devoted to learning, contributes to the mastery of the child's environment at successive stages in his life. It affords the child opportunities to explore worlds heretofore not available to him. He begins to utilize symbols that permit an ever increasing sense of satisfaction and is able to relate more closely to the activities of those around him. He may now start to share more fully in a world that continues to offer one learning experience after another. For many children this process is a pleasurable one. For others the attempts at learning lead to conflict and dissatisfaction.

The integral relationship between learning and satisfaction is indispensable to the understanding of any child's behavior. Assuming such a relationship, how can we account for some children who do not learn, who are not cooperative, and who learn certain subjects and "block" on others? What accounts for the negative attitudes of some children in and towards school? If children are problem solvers and satisfaction seekers, why are some children hostile and distrustful in the learning situation? Why do some children withdraw into a sullen silence or acquiesce to learning in a parroting way which may allow for little real satisfaction? Why do some children act out aggressive or submissive feelings in the classroom in such a way as to destroy learning opportunities for themselves and those around them?

These questions cannot be answered categorically. Answers that offer some potential for planning and implementation in the school situation must take into account the fact that behavior is not a static phenomenon that can be encompassed by any classificatory system. What is required is a conceptual...
framework for understanding and dealing with behavior deviations such as emotional disturbance.

The framework proposed in this paper focuses on the relationship between the emotionally disturbed child and his environmental milieu. The authors conceive of emotional disturbance as behavior which is unsatisfactory to the individual and inappropriate to the situation. As such, any separation between the internal components of behavior within an individual and the external situation is seen as arbitrary. The determination of emotional disturbance must be relative to the circumstances in which such behavior occurs.

The structure most appropriate for understanding the emotionally disturbed child in the school situation is the classroom. Within this setting the principal interacting forces will be delineated and examined in terms of the nature of the problems with which such a child is faced as well as the effectiveness of his efforts at resolving his problems. The three principal interacting factors are the teacher, the peer group, and the disturbed child.

An understanding of the roles and expectations of the teacher and the peer group in relation to learning is vital to examining the problems presented by the disturbed child in the classroom. The teacher and the peer group represent the primary elements in the classroom structure and thereby provide the framework for evaluating the emotionally disturbed child's behavior. The authors will examine, therefore, the elements of the teacher, the peer group, and the emotionally disturbed child in that order.

The Teacher

The teacher assumes various roles designed to meet expectations of differing magnitude. He is a parent surrogate and a representative of the adult world; he is a socializer and a disciplinarian; he is an idol and a scapegoat; and, simultaneously, he exists as a human being with aspirations, feelings, and problems. All of these roles, and the problems which accompany them, will impinge on the relationship the teacher forms with any child.

As a member of a profession, the teacher is faced with circumscribed and formalized demands and expectations. Under his tutelage his pupils are expected to move, within a specific period of time, from one point to another in learning, development, and maturity. If the pupils accomplish this, he considers himself, and is considered by his colleagues and his superiors, to be a good teacher. His self concept and feeling of self-worth are enhanced. In the absence of appreciable monetary gain, this need for obvious achievement may take on even greater proportions. These accomplishments must be brought about, not only by specific curricula and methods, but by the expression of certain prescribed attitudes as well. Modern psychological understanding has, paradoxically, added to the teacher's pressures. Unfortunately, demands for psychological understanding too frequently become manifest by the application of prescribed formulas or routinized procedures. Concepts such as acceptance, understanding, affection, and even flexibility are incongruously beginning to take on a rigidity and stereotype of their own.

The Disturbed Child as a Challenge

The increasing emphasis on the teacher's role in facilitating the development of the child as a competent, reliable individual, has tended to complicate his relationships with the emotionally disturbed child. The development of such growth in a "normal" child is a source of recognition and gratification for the teacher. Comparable results with an emotionally disturbed child might well be considered an even greater accomplishment. Here is a somewhat different area of expectation for the teacher. It is another demand, as well as a possible source of prestige and recognition. The disturbed child, therefore, represents a challenge to the teacher and a means for enhancing his esteem, sense of accomplishment, and possible advancement.

It is in the area of dealing with the emotionally disturbed child that the teacher's role becomes confused with that of the psychotherapist. The need of the disturbed child for close personal attention and for an intensive relationship may come into conflict with the necessity for getting across a prescribed body of knowledge to the entire class. If the teacher over-emphasizes his one-to-one relationship with the disturbed child, it may be detrimental to his relationship with the group. The classroom structure, in general, is established for the purpose of group learning and the children may be confused and distracted by an intensive relationship between the teacher and one child. This is not to imply that the teacher-learner relationship...
is not therapeutic but, rather, that it is therapeutic only as long as it remains teaching. The authors concur with Hirschberg (4, p. 687) that:

The teacher-pupil relationship allows the educational process to let the child grow, but it remains structured around the purposes of education, and not treatment of the child. In both teaching and treatment there is a common goal of achieving sufficient emotional growth in the child so that more effective functioning will be possible from the child, but the methods and structure differ.

It would be wishful thinking to contend that all the teacher need do is hold to his proper functions and the problems produced by the disturbed child's presence in a classroom will disappear. Even the teacher who is clear about his professional roles and the structure in which he is operating, is faced with daily and momentary decisions which cannot be completely resolved by broad generalizations.

There are constant pressures which may tend to distort the classroom situation for the welfare of one child or another. One such pressure is the expectation on the part of the teacher's superiors and the community that the teacher be master of all situations. The teacher's desire to help all children under his care combined with the prestige of succeeding with a "problem" child, represent an additional pressure. The teacher's choice of action cannot help but give consideration to all of these factors.

The Child as a Threat to the Teacher's Success

Frequently the disturbed child manifests his disturbance by an inhibition of his wish to learn. This often interferes with the learning process and slows down the group's progress. In this sense the disturbed child's behavior is directly contrary to the teacher's goals and aspirations and is, therefore, a threat to the teacher's success and self-esteem. It is probable that some of the feelings aroused in the teacher by such a child are anger, a sense of helplessness, and resentment. The teacher may not be aware of his anger or he may try to deny it, as it is not acceptable in the professional code to allow oneself to become angry. He may simultaneously have feelings toward the child that are more respectable such as sympathy, pity, or empathy. However, these do not deny the existence of emotional reactions which are considered more negative and intolerable. The teacher's recognition of his anger and resentment will contribute toward clarifying the difficulties created by the child's behavior in the classroom. In other words, the tensions created by certain experiences cannot be resolved if they are not recognized. The failure to recognize feelings will interfere with the teacher's capacity to utilize his energies effectively.

The desire to relieve tensions created by unacknowledged feelings may lead to subtle and devious means of expression on the part of the teacher. He may, for example, withdraw from the child or seek means of avoiding contact. On the other hand, the teacher may respond by using the group to bring pressure on the child to conform. At times the teacher may be dismayed at the disturbed child's adeptness in selecting the most inappropriate times for "acting up." The teacher may, in a very intentional way, increase the social distance between himself and the child as a means of defending against such instances. For example, assume that the teacher is expecting a visit from the principal or a parent. Rather than jeopardize his classroom plans the teacher may arrange for the disturbed child to be sent to the library or perhaps go on an extended errand. In treating the child in these ways two factors have been neglected: first, the teacher's feelings toward the child have not been conveyed; and secondly, the teacher's response is not immediately related to the child's behavior. It is this lack of directness and decisiveness that can leave the issue unsettled and everyone involved confused. In the extreme, this may have the effect of depriving all of the children of certain learning experiences.

Social Distance and the Teacher

The greater the threat the emotionally disturbed child poses to the teacher's success and feeling of well-being the less he will be accepted. This lack of acceptance creates distance between the child and the teacher and peers that is social-psychological in nature. The psychological reality of this "distance" is aptly described by Newland (6, p. 150):

Some people are psychologically "close" to others, and quite "distant" from still others. Physical distance is not necessarily the determining factor, since some physically-near persons may be psychologically distant and some physically-distant persons may be psychologically near. Contrast, for instance, the distance between two strangers seated very close together in a subway with that between a mother and (Continued on page 118)
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a son who may be on active duty in a foreign country. Psychological distance can be both a generality as in the case of one's overall attitude toward another, and a highly situational phenomenon, as in the case of reacting to a fellow committee member, or to members in a social pressure group, or to a friend on a picnic. Psychological distance may involve empathy, identification, tolerance, or rejection. An employer may see certain kinds of handicapped persons as "impossible" to have around (great distance), or as definite assets to his organization (less distance), whereas he may see his child as "very dear to him" (very close). Attitudes, tempered in terms of certain value systems, may be regarded as indicative of such distance.

This distance, which will be referred to throughout as social distance, will have profound effects on the emotionally disturbed child's amenability to classroom procedures.

The elements that create social distance between the teacher and the disturbed child and between the peer group and the disturbed child are not basically different. There will be differences, however, in how this social distance is used and interpreted. Previously, the ways in which the teacher may respond to an emotionally disturbed child have been discussed. The concern, at this point, will be factors that the teacher must consider in his effort to mediate feelings toward the emotionally disturbed child and arrive at some appropriate action.

Generally speaking, the more deviant the child's behavior the greater will be the social distance. Conversely, the better the teacher understands the child's actions and motivations the less social distance is created between him and the child. Social distance will depend not only on the degree of disturbance but the relevancy of the child's behavior to the situation. The teacher makes judgments as to whether the child is attempting to meet the demands of the classroom situation and the pertinence of his behavior to that situation.

The child's achievement in subject matter areas is directly related to his general acceptability within the classroom. That is, deviant behavior among high achievers will not, in all probability, create the same degree of social distance as will similar behavior among poor achievers. The child's progress is interpreted in terms of his adequacy to meet one of the most important criteria of the school, academic achievement. If he is able to maintain an acceptable academic record the teacher's sense of adequacy will be enhanced as an important area of progress will have been satisfied.

The encouragement and support that a teacher receives from colleagues, the administration, and from parents will partly determine the degree to which disturbed behavior will create social distance between the child and the teacher. The teacher who is insecure in his relationship with adults and professionals will be less likely to accept non-conformist behavior on the part of his students. The factors contributing to social distance in the classroom, therefore, are not solely created by the disturbed child's behavior but, likewise, relate to the fears, threats, and anxieties felt by the teacher.

The Peer Group

Characteristics

Unlike many of the peer groups formed by children of school age, the classroom group is involuntary. Whatever their wishes and desires or those of their families, children are in school primarily because the law states that they shall be. In this situation members of a school group are faced with a new kind of social demand placed upon them by their parents, neighbors, or peers. A child may have no prior experience to relate to the school's structure and demands, and he may be required to make a drastic shift from his usual patterns of relating to situations. These relationships will depend on the group's socio-cultural attitudes towards school, the child-rearing practices of the parents, and on the philosophy of the school administration as well as the practices of the particular teacher. The classroom peer group, then, is in the process of working out individually and as a group, its responses to this new situation.

Another significant difference in the classroom peer group is its heterogeneity. Not being a voluntary group, its existence is not determined by common interests, values and goals. It is nonetheless a group which quickly develops certain standards. It establishes expectations for achievement and rules of conduct, and it can proffer and withhold status and acceptance. It is a group which does not include, and in fact, excludes the teacher.

Berenda (1, p. 45-46) concludes from her experi-
ments on peer influences on children's judgments that:

... the position of the teacher really is one of an outsider who, although part of the school situation, is never judged as a member of the group. In the world of a child, she indeed plays an important part, but the rules that apply to the child's group do not apply to her nor to any other adult. Toward an outsider one can afford to be tolerant and even indifferent, but not so toward a member of one's own group. The child's membership in the group is not threatened by the disagreement of the teacher.

The need for peer acceptance increases as the child progresses through school. Initially, in kindergarten, his relationship with the teacher is needful and demanding. Rather quickly, however, the child's concern for peer group recognition becomes of prime importance. He strives to accomplish those things that the group prizes and which are rewarded, usually by recognition and status. He ambivalently struggles for independence from his parents and from all adults. Realistically, however, he remains a child and it is only through identification with his peers that he is able to feel some of the strength he desires. He will, therefore, wish to be an integral part of the group.

The very process of seeking solutions to problems by group means as opposed to individual means places the child in a conflict situation. There are certain situations where mutual endeavors are required or at least extremely beneficial. For example, a playhouse can be built more efficiently by a group of children than by an individual child. There are other situations where mastery would depend upon independent work: reading or writing a composition, for instance, primarily calls for the child's working in isolation. The tendencies of groups to establish norms of production in activity and to seek conformity among its members may have a depressive effect on some children's decisions relevant to independent learning (5). Although a child may be more efficient by working independently, in so doing he may run the risk of being ostracized from the group. Even in those situations where group activity is singularly more effective than independent action the child must weigh the personal consequences of affiliation with the group. The child will be dependent upon the group to the extent that he cannot achieve his ends without its assistance. This adds to his vulnerability for, as

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Thibaut and Kelley (8) point out, the more reliance a person must place upon another individual or group, the more power over the person is vested in that individual or group.

The decisions the child must make are numerous and important; however, for most children, they are made quietly and routinely on a day-to-day basis. The emotionally disturbed child is not so fortunate in this respect.

Social Distance and the Peer Group

What is the effect of an emotionally disturbed child on the peer group? Behavior which is different from the norms and expectations of the group creates considerable tension within the group. Such tension is unlike the usual heightened states of anticipation, concern, or fear which frequently accompany interactions between children. Rather, this tension is related to the contagious quality of the disturbed child's anxiety, which is characterized by diffuse and vague yet intense fearfulness. This fearfulness is frequently difficult to understand in terms of the situational stimuli. The anxiety will tend to frighten children (and adults) because of the confusion surrounding its source. However, it should be recognized that feelings transmitted by the disturbed child are perceived by others.

The presence of an emotionally disturbed child will raise the tension level of the group and the tendency will be for the group to avoid such a child. When anxiety appears in a chronic state it pervades the individual's functioning in all situations. The effect of this anxiety is to leave the individual isolated, no matter what the physical proximity of those around him happens to be. Such isolation is synonymous with social distance, and can be discerned in the interactions between the disturbed child and those in his environment. Interchanges which offer evidence of social distance may be characterized by terseness, formality, hostility, degradation, extreme politeness, over-familiarity, or failure to maintain visual contact. These are some of the ways by which children and adults communicate to others that they do not belong or that they are outsiders.

Social distance is not equivalent to overt rejection. The group may, depending upon the manner by which the disturbed youngster expresses his difficulties, invest in him properties of leadership. A
disturbed child may manifest a daring, despite his underlying fearfulness, which ignores the usual cautions inherent in certain activities. Thus, under the leadership of the emotionally disturbed child, the group can identify this daring with their own aggressive and hostile tendencies. This sort of recognition, however, does not imply acceptance. The child may be admired for his daring and may be followed, but he is recognized as different.

The more common situation, however, is for the disturbed child to be overtly rejected by the group. Characteristically, the peer group will exclude those individuals who deviate from its established behavioral and attitudinal norms. The group, in attempting to establish an identity which is unique and independent, tends to seek uniformity and conformity among its members (7).

Whether the disturbed child is elevated to leadership or used as a scapegoat, the constant characteristic is the group's acknowledgement of the child as different and its attempt to protect itself against the child's anxiety. The group may pity the child, or totally ignore him, or watch over him in a protective way. Any such behavior is an acknowledgement of the group's feeling of difference toward the child and contributes to the child's feeling of isolation.

It is true that these phenomena occur to some degree with any child. The crucial question to the professional observer, however, is the duration and intensity, and quality of the interaction which takes place.

The Emotionally Disturbed Child

The generalizations made concerning the peer group's reaction to the school situation are applicable to the disturbed child. This child, like his peers, reacts to the involuntary aspects of school as well as to the pleasurable aspects held out by learning and potential mastery. The emotionally disturbed child, like his peers, wishes to be accepted and to be given recognition by the peer group. Through mastery over his environment he hopes to achieve greater degrees of independence and self-reliance. Generally speaking, the hopes of the disturbed child are not too different from those of other children.

What distinguishes the disturbed child from his peers is not so much what he wants but how he goes about seeking these goals and how he feels about the results of his actions. The effect of a child's emotional disturbance may distort his efforts at achievement and destroy their satisfying elements. Satisfaction itself may be a thing to be feared. It is the paradoxical plight of such a child that the things he may most wish for are the things about which he may be most fearful.

The fear and distrust of pleasure and satisfaction is a learned response. The child's natural inclination to seek satisfaction has been inhibited by his life experiences. For example, a child whose parents have demanded that he perform beyond his level of development and maturation may never have been allowed to acknowledge and recognize what he has successfully achieved. He has learned that what he has accomplished is not sufficient and, therefore, to express satisfaction is only to invite renewed criticism and a reaffirmation of his own limitations. If this kind of experience is sufficiently pervasive, the youngster may develop an inner conviction as to his total inadequacy. He may try to avoid situations demanding achievement or he may attempt to bluff through such situations. Another source of such inhibition may result from negative sanctions imposed upon a child as a result of his verbally or actively expressing his curiosity about such universally important and interesting topics as sex, death, aggression, sadism, love, or bodily functions. Persistent restrictive or retaliatory actions toward a child who is deemed to have transgressed in some taboo areas may lead him to interpret any experience of satisfaction as bad and as such to be avoided. Despite the fact that such conflicts are internalized and not easily identified, they are directly related to the child's behavior and his interaction with the world around him. The source of these conflicts lie in interactions with other persons rather than in interpersonal conditions.

Elements of Integrated Behavior

Assuming the basic desire in each individual for achievement and satisfaction, the crucial question is: What are the available methods which can be employed to accomplish these aims? The individual, dependent as he is on interpersonal relationships, cannot obtain satisfaction in isolation. He learns early in life the reality of his dependence on people who constitute his environment. Experiences during the years of infancy and early childhood give ample evidence that he will not
obtain every satisfaction he seeks. Moreover, as mentioned previously, his attempts to seek gratification in certain areas or by certain means can bring unfortunate retaliation from the environment. As a satisfaction seeker, he is faced with the problem of keeping his behavior appropriate to the expectations and proprieties of the environment, while at the same time adhering to his personal goals. This process is vital to effective behavior. The ability to take into account both the personal and environmental elements in a situation and to act accordingly is, in a general sense, what the authors term integrated behavior.

It is important to re-emphasize that no precise line can be drawn between integrated behavior and behavior which is not integrated. On the basis of his studies of maladjusted children Burt and Howard (2, p. 49-50) conclude:

The term (maladjustment) plainly designates no uniform psychological category or type; and to ask for a clear cut picture of “the maladjusted child” as such is likely to lead to misconception.

The cases put forward as cases of maladjustment form a decidedly heterogeneous collection. Children who are maladjusted in one respect are not necessarily maladjusted in others; and no matter what the primary cause may be, the fact of maladjustment, so far as it is revealed by the child’s behavior, may manifest itself by a number of alternative reactions, differing from case to case.

The description of integrated behavior which follows represents an ideal state, one which few obtain for any length of time. The determination as to what constitutes disturbed behavior can only be considered in terms of the degree or extent to which it deviates from the ideal. No norms have been established as to what represents well-adjusted behavior. To talk of the “normal child” is in some ways as ambiguous as talking of the disturbed child.

There are three primary intra-personal elements which are a necessary pre-requisite for integrated behavior. First, an individual experiences feelings, or internal emotional reactions; second, these may be translated into wishes in the sense that they represent an awareness on the person’s part of a desire for gratification or relief of the feeling experienced; and, third, as a result of this awareness the individual must decide upon and take a particular action for the purpose of satisfying his wish. Such a process, to be effective, requires an ability to recognize what one is experiencing and to translate the feelings into wishes which are meaningful and achievable. The individual must then accurately appraise the opportunities and paths available to him in his environment, and choose from a variety of possible actions one which would appear to be suitable. Finally, on the basis of these perceptions he must take the indicated action. The interacting character of human relations demands, further, an ability to evaluate the action taken and to alter not only his perception of the situation, but subsequent actions.

Manifestations of Non-Integrated Behavior

Integrated behavior is synonymous with problem solving. A breakdown in the integrated behavior constitutes a breakdown in the problem solving process. The effectiveness of this process can be destroyed at a number of crucial points. The emotionally disturbed child, in his life experiences, may have learned that the wish to satisfy certain needs will bring about reprisals, possibly in the form of excessive criticism, humiliation, or further deprivation. These reprisals may be interpreted as, or in fact take the form of, criticisms for thinking the thought or wishing the wish. As a result the child may not allow himself to recognize or admit to the wish because it is interpreted by him as verification that he is bad or unworthy. Overtly, this child’s behavior may not appear too different from that of the better integrated child. However, on closer observation certain differences may be noticed. The disturbed child may make a fetish of certain approved behaviors. He may, on the other hand, approach situations which appear dangerous in a tense, silent manner. Possibly he will stay rigidly with a particular pattern of action. Should circumstances change he will become confused and perhaps frightened. Observers have frequently noticed the rigidity with which certain children maintain behavioral patterns even under strong and persistent pressure to change. Such inflexibility lies, the authors believe, in the fear of re-awakening negative and depreciatory feelings. The possibility of the feared wish seeking fruition represents a constant danger and can be a more formidable threat than any apparent retaliation in the immediate situation. In general,
such a child will be more tense and this tension will be a source of confusion to him. Thus we see a circular process developing where the confusion itself becomes a source of anxiety and discomfort.

The disturbed child will operate in the same self-defeating way in the classroom. For example, if a child were brought up in an environment where the need to be noticed was drastically curbed, and where children were to be seen and not heard in a literal sense, he may gradually have learned that seeking gratification by virtue of attention from a group could involve recrimination and/or punishment. As a result the child may deny his desire for attention and defend against it by withdrawing or seeking less direct forms of gratification. The experiences which may produce inhibitions of feelings or wishes are myriad. Of interest here is the paradox that such inhibition apparently does not reduce the strength of the underlying desire; it only serves to distort it.

The emotionally disturbed child will evidence considerable difficulty in problem solving. The energy normally available for problem solving will be utilized by the disturbed child to defend himself against his anxieties in the classroom learning situation. Gaier (3, p. 11) hypothesizes that:

If the anxiety is above the individual threshold, it leads to an impairment in the ability to improvise in an unstructured and/or new situation. This results in stereotyped, habitual, and familiar approaches that may be maladaptive in the situation. Secondly, excessive tension may so interfere with the perceptual process as to considerably reduce problem-solving efficiency. This inability to be problem-oriented may thus arouse concern for one's own psychological well-being, with increasing concern about self-adequacy for meeting the situation.

Learning through the problem solving process will be seen as threatening due to its speculative and perhaps even indeterminate nature. The emotionally disturbed child will act as though he needs greater assurance as to "where he's going" than the above process seems to offer. According to Towle (9, p. 14):

Learning becomes a precarious quest fraught with hostility, guilt, and anxiety. With so much at stake in his goal-striving he is often unable to contain the anxiety and tension, so that defenses are erected
which interrupt learning. These children experience much failure in social situations, and sometimes they fail in school, and notably they are prone to do so at the stage of adolescent revolt against parent. Often, however, they become constricted, task-centered achievers, who shut out experiences which would contribute to their emotional development, and their relationships notably become constricted and distorted. As education proceeds, deprived and frustrated, they do not feel successful, nor do they anticipate success.

The disturbed child, then, may be overly concerned with the results of his work. His efforts will not be personally satisfying and therefore, he may be excessively “other directed,” seeking gratification mainly through the approval of others. Such gratification is external to the child and requires constant reinforcement. Such a child will not risk criticism and will not venture into the realm of new ideas. He is therefore unable to contribute to the group in terms of any continuous development of mutually derived goals. Furthermore, any decisions on the part of the group which enhance classroom opportunities will be interpreted by him merely as new expectations and demands.

In sum, the emotionally disturbed child has considerable difficulties in the planning, execution, and reconstruction of learning experiences.

The integrated personality, on the other hand, will be as concerned with the process of learning as with the sense of completion. To the well-integrated child, the process of learning itself is a source of satisfaction. This satisfaction occurs in part because the child has experienced sufficient success in previous problem solving endeavors. He learns that each aspect of the process is a contributor to greater mastery and achievement. As the child becomes more aware of the pleasurable aspects of the process itself, the end results diminish as a primary and sole motive for participating in a learning endeavor. Learning takes on increased significance enabling the child to enjoy the process and to involve himself in tasks that require long range goals, perhaps with unknown or unknowable aspects. The well-integrated child, then, is freer to become involved in the exploration of new and diversified subject areas and to allow himself to be creative in his pursuits. Creativity is, at least
in part, dependent upon the freedom to explore and become involved in new learning situations.

The Determination of Emotional Disturbance

The classroom behavior of the disturbed child will be characteristically exaggerated, extreme, or stereotyped. The child will not react just to the situation, but to his history of frustration and disappointment as well. His behavior may become an end in itself as he destructively goes about verifying his own sense of inadequacy. Excessive gratification may be the obvious goal for a child who continually seeks attention by any means. However, any teacher who has attempted to meet these demands soon learns that they are insatiable. Such a child’s longings are not met by the giving of attention or recognition because of the youngster’s built-in assurance as to his lack of worth. Reassurance may be continually sought but it becomes only a temporary substitute for the child’s lack of self-assurance. The child who pictures himself as inadequate, unworthy, or bad believes that others will feel toward him as he does about himself. Usually his life experiences have reinforced this conception for he behaves in such a way as to elicit rejection, ridicule, or some other manifestation of social distance. If he comes into contact with an accepting, understanding teacher, he is faced with a new situation which he may find equally difficult to tolerate. Such a situation may stimulate feelings within himself which he doesn’t want to recognize or acknowledge. For instance, his desire for affection or acceptance may have such painful connotations in terms of ultimate loss or rejection that he may react with increasing anxiety and an intensification of provocative, annoying, repetitive or withdrawing behavior. The probability is that he will be painfully confused as to what he is doing and he may either rationalize his behavior or he may become increasingly upset. The child’s desire for recognition and acceptance and the satisfaction of achievement cannot be fulfilled because of his confused and ambivalent behavior.

The disturbed child can be seen as his worst enemy. His needs and aspirations are probably not too different from his peers. He wants acceptance; however, expects rejection. Social distance is feared, yet anticipated and its anticipation is in itself a source of anxiety. The child sees himself as different from his peers and he can only surmise as to how long it will take before others recognize the difference.

There are essentially three questions which the teacher should attempt to answer in evaluating the existence and extent of a child’s emotional disturbance. They are: Is the child’s behavior appropriate in terms of his goals and aspirations? Does the child have the ability to live with some tolerance and respect for himself? Finally, does the child deal with his environment in an effective manner? The summation of these judgments contain the essential components of a definition of emotional disturbance. The emotionally disturbed child can be defined as follows: (a) A child who is unable to function in a purposeful or goal-directed manner; (b) A child whose inner world is in turmoil and conflict and whose personal preoccupations distort or impede his experiencing effective and meaningful gratifications; (c) A child whose view of the situation he is faced with varies markedly from others around him and whose adaptations to this situation are unrealistic, ineffective, inappropriate or self-destructive.

Summary

The emotionally disturbed child represents a unique problem in the field of education. There is considerable difficulty in defining such a child or delineating the precise factors which lead to such a conclusion. This difficulty exists because of two primary conditions pertaining to the study of emotional factors in behavior. First, because we cannot define precisely what constitutes the emotional life of a normal child, we are unable to establish appropriate norms from which we can determine deviant behavior. We are forced, therefore, to examine behavior in terms of an ideal, and must, as a consequence, determine disturbed behavior by its persistent and pervasive deviancy from this projected ideal. Secondly, behavior is a dynamic, interacting process and any static, dichotomized, or checklist attempt at definition or description falls short of being either effective or accurate as a means of determining emotional disturbance or, for that matter, normality in a child.

This article presents several propositions which
are intended to provide the reader with a framework for understanding behavior in general and the disturbed child in particular. Behavior is conceived of as having two fundamental motives: satisfaction seeking and problem solving. In addition, the writers propose that behavior can best be evaluated along an integrative-non-integrative continuum and within the context of a situation.

The crucial elements that need to be considered in evaluating emotional disturbance in the classroom are: the teacher, with his values, goals, pressures and problems; the peer group, with its basic need for unity, group acceptance, and a fundamental desire to learn; and lastly, the disturbed child who shares with his peers common goals and aspirations.

The disturbed child, because of unfortunate life experiences, is not able to function in an integrated way. His behavior may be characterized by: (a) Rigid, stereotyped, vacillating or inconsistent attitudes and actions which lack purposefulness and goal direction; (b) Indications of anxiety manifested by tension, withdrawal, nervousness, and irascibility which interfere with the child’s experiencing personal satisfaction; (c) Indications that the child sees his situation somewhat differently than others around him, so that he is not able to recognize what is expected of him in his immediate environment.

The result of the disturbed child’s inability to deal with situations effectively is that the child isolates himself from the group. Although the emotionally disturbed child is the largest contributor to social distance, he is not solely responsible for this phenomenon. The peer group and the teacher usually share in maintaining this state of isolation through a number of reciprocal acts ranging from outright rejection to oversolicitousness.

The teacher who is faced with one or more disturbed children in his classroom is in a situation that is both challenging and threatening. Such a situation can threaten the very operation of the classroom and destroy the opportunity of all members of the group to learn and achieve. On the other hand, it offers a possibility for increasing the teacher’s self-esteem, and, more important perhaps, it offers an opportunity for providing a fundamental service to an unhappy human being, which can be of undeniable value to the community.

References