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Early Identification of Emotionally Handicapped Children in School

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Book Reviews

KNOWING THE EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHILD

EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN IN SCHOOL, by Eli M. Bower. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas Publishing Co., 1969. xiii, 261 pp.

Five to ten per cent of the children in the average classroom have emotional or adjustment problems. To be helped they have to be identified.

In 1960, Eli Bower, now Consultant to the National Institute for Mental Health, Maryland, brought a new perspective to the field when his long awaited book *Early Identification of Emotionally Handicapped Children* was published. Much hope was seen for the future.

This second edition, printed in 1969, is new in parts and slightly expanded, but there are only 114 pages which can be said to constitute the book proper. The remaining pages carry the main tools of Bower's study.

Marx is credited with the aphorism that he never had the time to write a short book. Bower obviously had. Briefly, the second edition can be divided into four parts: a sober presentation of the problems that are inherent in trying to define and identify emotionally handicapped children; a survey of related literature; the study, and the appendix.

Some of the related literature have already appeared in Bower's survey prepared for the White House Golden Anniversary Conference on Children and Youth. With, however, the addition of such notable contributions to the field as the work done by Goldfarb, Kahn, Kvaraceus, Zax et al., Lambert etc., the section has now been brought more up to date and Bower's work fortified. The new literature could have been more extensive but since writing seems to grate Bower's

patience, perhaps he may be forgiven, particularly since perhaps one of the greatest contributions during the last nine years has been made by Bower himself, in his work apropos a conceptual framework for the development of programs for emotionally disturbed children.

As far as the study is concerned, Bower based his work on the same lines as did Wickman in 1928. The purpose was to see how accurately teachers would identify emotionally handicapped children. Two hundred teachers were asked to rate the emotional adjustment of 5,500 fourth- and six-graders. Supposedly unknown to the teachers, 207 of the children had already been clinically ascertained to be disturbed children. To supplement the teachers' ratings some interesting sociometric techniques were also used among the pupils.

The findings of the study generally showed that the children were surprisingly accurate and predictive when judging other children's personality. Also the older the disturbed children, the greater were they differentiated from their peers. As far as the Wickmanian side of the study was concerned, the teachers "judged" almost as accurately as the clinicians (87%); they also "selected about the same number of children as being overly withdrawn or timid, as overly aggressive or defiant" (p. 79). The study still raises doubt about possible contamination, and the point "Would it be a good thing for teachers to judge like clinicians?" remains contentious, as does the fact that we can elicit little, if any, proof as to whether emotional disturbance has or has not been identified, or whether it was defined properly in the first place. The problem remains somewhat specious and circuitous.

This criticism, of course, could be applied to almost any study of a similar nature and therefore does not detract from Bower's imaginative and significant work. Many of the defects contained in earlier studies, including the classic ones accomplished by Hildreth (1928) and Wickman (1928), have been ironed out and Bower's technique of selecting pupils for a class play would appear less vulnerable and less disruptive of peer groups than those usually attempted in studies. The viability of the work seems to be amplified when we consider that there was only one finding that was inconsistent with previous studies—no significant socio-economic factor was found, but Bower readily covers this point by saying that: "This finding has no relevance to the relationships of socioeconomic status as it effects the values, motivations, and emotional conflicts of children." (p. 57).

The study is followed by results of follow-ups, most of which show Bower's work in a favourable light. Then comes a short, but sagacious chapter in which Bower elicits his own reactions to his investigations. A final chapter discusses screening and preventive measures.

Before dealing with the appendix it would be fair to say how easy it is to read this book. It would seem that the book was primarily written for school teachers, guidance staff and administrators. It carries none of the jargon used in long clinical diagnoses identifying emotionally disturbed children. The style is lucid and at times one or two of the puns, intentional or otherwise, border on the jocund.

The appendix contains parts of a California kit entitled "A Process for In-School Screening of Children with Emotional Handicap", based upon information easily elicited from the classroom; with proper application, the screening processes can easily be interpreted to a layman. The screening ranges from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

The main 'instruments' used are 1) Behavior Rating of Pupils—by teachers, 2) Class Pictures—a peer rating, 3) A Picture Game—a self rating, 4) A Screening—combination of the previous scores, 5) A Class Play—a peer rating, 6) Thinking About Yourself, 7) Screening, 8) Student Survey, 9) A Self Test, and 10) A Final Screening. Rating scales, instructions, and work sheets are also given.

The kit is just the sort of thing that the field has been waiting for—not a diagnostic instrument but a straight-forward method to screen-out emotionally handicapped children. Such a process—requiring little psychological 'know-how', but rather conscientiousness and prudence, — could be a teacher's Baedeker.

A 'Preventive Program', based upon Bower's tools, could forestall a 'Curative Program'.

DENNIS BRAMMER

ON RIZAL'S ROLE IN PHILIPPINE NATIONALISM

RIZAL: PHILIPPINE NATIONALIST AND MARTYR, by Austin Coates. London: Oxford University Press, 1968. xxxii, 378 pp.

The place of Jose Rizal in the formation of Filipino nationalism is secure. His propaganda activity in Europe, crystallized in his two novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* earned him the wrath of the Spanish government in Manila and the respect of his fellow-countrymen. Mr. Coates' biography of Rizal has laudably attempted to assess Rizal's role in the Propaganda Movement and his influence on the development of nationalism. The author has given us an