

1-1-1984

## Connections: Understanding Social Relationships

John F. Glass

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/csr>

 Part of the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Glass, John F. ( ) "Connections: Understanding Social Relationships," *Clinical Sociology Review*: Vol. 2: Iss. 1, Article 21.  
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/csr/vol2/iss1/21>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@WayneState. It has been accepted for inclusion in Clinical Sociology Review by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@WayneState.

minant of behavior than ethnicity. An upper-class person in Mexico may have more in common with an upper-class person in the United States than he or she has with a poor Mexican. While several authors mention the importance of social class, the only article that deals with it in depth is that on the Iranian family, which alone focuses on upper-class people and their needs. The article on black families by Hines and Boyd-Franklin could have been strengthened by a fuller discussion of the black bourgeoisie as compared to poor blacks.

I would not want my criticisms to discourage people from reading this book. *Ethnicity and Family Therapy* contains some rich information and ideas for family therapists and, I hope, will stimulate the reader to study more deeply the ethnic groups with which she or he is working.

### REFERENCES

- Green, James W.  
1982 Cultural Awareness in the Human Services. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Jenkins, Shirley.  
1981 The Ethnic Dilemma in Social Services. New York: The Free Press.
- Kluckhohn, C.  
1951 "Values and value orientations." In T. Parsons and E. Shils (eds.), *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Kluckhohn, F. R., and F. L. Strodtbeck.  
1961 *Variations in Value Orientations*. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson.

CONNECTIONS: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS by Harry Cohen. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1981.

Reviewer: John F. Glass

*Connections* is a unique and engaging book. Cohen writes clearly and in a lively and personal style on how sociological knowledge can be used for group and individual improvement. This is not a self-help book; Cohen's study is theoretically sound and contains many examples and cases to clarify and explain.

Each chapter covers a major sociological perspective: symbolic interactionism; the exchange perspective; conflict theory; dramaturgical analysis; labeling; and structural functionalism. Cohen clearly explains these perspectives, how they are useful as guides for qualitative research and understanding about human behavior and the social world, and how they can be applied to

clinical interventions. Each chapter concludes with a practice section full of provocative questions and guidelines that are directly useful to therapists and other practitioners working with individuals, groups, families, and organizations.

The discussion of symbolic interaction teaches us about how self-concepts are formed, maintained, and changed through communication, how we use language and symbols, and how symbolic meanings are important to relationships of all sorts. A marriage counseling case is included in the appendix for practice in the use of this perspective.

Exchange theory enlightens us as to the essence of social life — how relationships are linked by give and take, how they sour when exchanges are faulty or fall into ruts. Here the reader is guided by some thirty-five useful analytic questions, such as: What are the expectations? What is given and received? Where is the power and stake of each participant? Where are the dependencies? Are there coalitions? Are there negotiations? If so, over what issues and with what effects?

Dramaturgical analysis is useful in understanding and using roles and role playing. From labeling theory comes the famous Thomas theorem, “If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” — a most useful guide for understanding behavior in social settings.

Structural-functional analysis helps us understand interdependencies, balance, and change in relationships and social systems, and enlightens us about social order and disorder and about manifest and latent processes. Here the questions for practice guide us to boundaries, criteria for determining function and dysfunction, and points of stress and strain. This kind of analysis is also most relevant for the group and organizational consultant.

*Connections* confirms and consolidates much of what clinical sociologists have known, practiced, and preached in recent years, to wit, the enormous value of sociological thought and analysis for counselors, therapists, and other change agents. Although this book is written as a text for students and is ideal for use in courses dealing with counseling, social psychology, and even theory, *Connections* is just as useful to the practitioner as an introduction to or a convenient reminder of the basic sociological principles that underlie so many of our therapies and intervention strategies.