

Book Review

Social Relationships. By George J. McCall, Michal M. McCall, Norman K. Denzin, Gerald D. Suttles, and Suzanne B. Kurth. Chicago: Aldine, 1970.

This is a series of five independently prepared essays each of which, in some manner, sets off "social relationships" from other kinds of relationships. The authors, in a collaborative overview, define social relationships as ". . . a symbolically recognized probability of recurring interaction between two persons as distinctive individuals, based on some functional fit between their respective roles and/or selves" (p. 171). Social relationships are thus dyadic, personal, not situationally or temporally bound, and involve some deeper and more subtle involvement of the "true self" than more structurally determined relationships (e.g., roles and encounters).

George McCall in the first essay places social relationships within the general framework of social organization. This discussion suggests ways in which the application of such factors as bonding, structure, culture, recruitment, socialization, and social control applies to social relationships as differentiated from their application to other forms of social organization.

The second essay (Michal McCall) centers attention on differentiating social relationships from encounters on the basis of differing uses made of the focus and boundary rules in these two forms of interaction.

Denzin in the third essay is concerned with the properties of social relationships per se (i.e., rules of relationship and accepted violations of rules of civil propriety). He clarifies the unique nature of social relationships by developing a conceptual scheme specifically for these "relationships of substance." In addition, Denzin points out how these relationships operate as deviant behavior in the larger social context.

The fourth (Gerald D. Suttles) and fifth (Suzanne B. Kurth) essays focus on friendship, a specific type of social relationship. The first of these outlines how the development of friendship involves "setting off" the relationship from ordinary interaction. The second of these two essays is more specific in differentiating friendship from the more common form of interaction - friendly relations.

Several of the essays point out that "deviant" behavior in the form of violations of civil propriety, is not only tolerated in personal relationships, but becomes a routing part of their moral order. These violations serve to demonstrate that one's commitment to the relationship is personal rather than proper. Further, because one engages in this deviant behavior only within personal relationships, it operates to clarify and reinforce, rather than undermine the rules of civil propriety.

Book Review continued

For anyone interested in the general area of symbolic interaction, this volume is interesting and suggestive. The only question which I have after reading it - and which I am admittely unable to answer - is to what extent has it gotten us "beyond" writers such as Simmel, Cooley, and Goffman?

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