

## BOOK REVIEWS

### CONJOINT FAMILY THERAPY.

By Virginia Satir, Revised Edition, Palo Alto, Calif.: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1967. Pp. xii + 208, \$6.40.

Reviewed by John Friesen,  
Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia.

What is "conjoint family therapy?" It is an attempt to establish effective interpersonal relationships within the family, says Virginia Satir, Director of the Residential Program at the Esalen Institute, Big Sur, California. She suggests that *interrelating* that started out as immediate, functional, and agreed-upon may become dulled through usage into futile relics of relationships satisfying no one and destroying the marriage.

The first section of this tripartite book is entitled "Family Theory," but judging from the content might better be labeled "estrangement through low self-esteem." Taking a potpourri approach, and utilizing the informal outline format of her training manual, the writer focuses on the family from the perspective of a social psychologist and a "reality" therapist. As a social psychologist, Satir views the family as a basic social unit that has the potential for either sharing common aims, efforts, ideas, and experiences, or becoming trapped in automatic and meaningless ways of interrelating. The focus is on the family as a group rather than on the individual. The family is the problem rather than a family member. From this premise follow the goals for therapy—namely to change the structure and functions of the family and to develop the concomitant technical steps which produce optimal conditions for group change.

The second section, entitled "Communication Theory," consists of a discussion on the process of giving and getting information. Satir clearly illustrates that communication in marriage occurs within a social context and includes those symbols and cues used by persons in giving and receiving information. Numerous illustrations are provided describing emotional blocks in listening and hearing.

The last section is concerned with the theory and practice of therapy. In line with phenomenological theory, Satir explores the relationship between the self-concept, especially low self-esteem, in conflicting or incongruent communication and family interaction. Where members of the family have low self-esteem, they tend to have constricted communication patterns and are afraid to question each other to find out what each really feels and means. As a result, each member of the family operates from his assumptions, which may in fact be invalid. Therapy consists of removing faulty assumptions and establishing effective channels of communication—that is, developing open systems for the exchange of information together with an honest self-awareness.

In conclusion, Satir considers irrelevant the customary norms around which professional psychologists have become so accustomed to build their practices. These include statistical norms, behavioral standards like masculinity, femininity, aggression indices, achievement percentiles, intelligence quotients, and *within* psychoanalytic phraseology, productive character, ego inte-

gration, and successful sublimation. All these norms and more have been developed within several centuries. Are we about to discover that we have been preoccupied with a system of measures and criteria that tend to fragment the individual? Satir proposes a therapy of interrelationships in which there is a reordering of certain mutually reinforcing defense systems. It is a therapy about which we will hear much more in the years to come.

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**SOCIAL CLASS AND THE URBAN SCHOOL:** The impact of pupil background on teachers and principals.

By Robert E. Herriott and Nancy Hoyt St. John. New York: John Wiley, 1966. xi + 289 pp. \$7.95.

Reviewed by David Bain,  
Faculty of Education,  
University of British Columbia.

Of interest to all school counselors are problems relating to the interactions between students and teachers, since such interactions can affect intellectual and emotional development, and may be causes of underachievement and dropping out. In studying "the impact of pupil backgrounds on teachers and principals," Herriott and St. John seem to have entered a new and potentially rewarding area of research.

Most research in education is concerned with academic and personality changes of pupils as consequents of variations in programmes, techniques, school reorganizations, and regroupings of pupils for different types of instructions. A few studies have examined the effects of teacher personality upon pupil performance. Those that have, have found that certain types of teacher personalities (usually termed authoritarian) have had a less desirable effect upon the personality development of the charges than less demanding personalities (often termed democratic). The authors have reversed this latter approach to educational change and examined the effects of pupil personalities upon teachers and principals.

Herriott and St. John present an excellent exploratory study into the effects of four levels of socioeconomic status of students in elementary, junior, and senior secondary schools in large urban centres across the United States. The socioeconomic levels were based upon fathers' professions, the combined family incomes, and the extent to which both parents of each student were educated. Four types of schools were selected; each type whose students were representative of one of these predetermined socioeconomic status (SES) levels. Thus the schools of the highest SES level had students of whom only 13% came from homes of under \$5,000 per annum income, only 17% of whom had fathers in a semi-skilled or unskilled trade, and only 20% of whose parents had completed high school. The comparable figures for the lowest SES schools were 85%, 89%, and 94%.

Compared to pupils in the highest SES schools, the pupils in the lowest SES schools had fewer parents who attended school events, initiated discussions with teachers, gave their children adequate supervision, or even appeared