

## Book Review

Joslyn, Jacqueline. 2022. *Conceptualizing and Modeling Relational Processes in Sociology: Introducing Disjointed Fluidity*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing

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**C**onceptualizing and Modeling Relational processes in Sociology: Introducing Disjointed Fluidity by Jacqueline Joslyn provides an intriguing new way to think about the analysis of relational processes and social networks that adds depth and complexity to more traditional ethnographic and social network analysis techniques. Specifically, Joslyn's book argues for a cognitive process-based data analysis that integrates the flow of memory and imagination within the study of relationship networks. She presents us with a conceptual tool she calls disjointed fluidity to frame this innovative analysis. Then moves on to explain the internal psychological and external sociological bases of this concept. Her expertise and

writing style make this text a strong contribution to ethnographic methods of data analysis, social psychological studies of relationships, and social networks. This work is best suited for scholarly audiences and specifically for those with a background in social psychology, social network theory and relational analysis, and/or symbolic interactionist theory. This text is intellectually, theoretically, and methodologically dense, though the use of illustrative case studies and examples throughout helps strengthen the reader's understanding.

In her first chapter, she introduces the concept of disjointed fluidity as a way of understanding and modeling relational processes in sociology, broad-

ly speaking. Joslyn begins the core of the book by providing a complex theoretical background for her conceptualization. Utilizing phenomenological and social psychological frameworks, she introduces us to a way of thinking about relationships that employs time and cognition. She does this by considering relationships in terms of remembered and imagined events and the thought or cognitive frameworks that she defines as “disjointed fluidity.” Conceptually she argues that relationships are understood by relations actors as a series of remembered or imagined events and cognitive understandings of the meanings of such events within relationships. This chapter is theoretically dense and, at times, gets confusing. Still, her argument about the symbolic meanings of interactions as a way of understating and perpetuating relationships is effective.

Chapter 2 seeks to provide a kind of process-oriented evaluation of disjointed fluidity by specifically identifying what she terms as “internal mechanisms of continuity.” These three mechanisms include reminiscing/reflection, relationship evolution or transformation, and extending the relationship during absence or loss. Joslyn provides interview data to illustrate these relationship-forming processes from her project on mentorship relationships among faculty and graduate students. She effectively argues that the social psychological processes, which she summarizes as “reflections transitions and extensions,” form the core of her approach to relational analysis. This chapter feels particularly persuasive from a social-psychological standpoint. It is very effective in persuading the reader of the importance of these mechanisms in creating symbolic meanings that are attached to relationships by relational participants. Her examples are well-chosen and highly illustrative.

The third section explores some of the external mechanisms that create relationship continuity from a disjointed fluidity perspective. Joslyn argues that her conceptualization also integrates an evaluation of external mechanisms, which primarily operate through structural and institutional frameworks that create relationship formation and continuity. She specifically discusses material/symbolic mechanisms, which she defines as empirical mechanisms. She also discusses institutional/structural or normative mechanisms and interactional/discursive or communication-based mechanisms. Joslyn, again, provides ethnographic data from a variety of her sources to illustrate the phenomena she is discussing. She adds case studies to this chapter to highlight the application of her disjointed fluidity concept. This chapter strays a bit from a true symbolic interactionist perspective, moving instead into a more traditional ethnographic analysis, but still, she effectively frames and demonstrates the methodological strategy that she is introducing in this text.

In the next chapter, which Joslyn titles “Pixels and Flows,” she moves away from arguing the theoretical and intellectual underpinnings of her analysis and proceeds to introduce it as a modeling tool or methodology. She begins by explaining that she has developed a specific method to allow disjointed fluidity to function as a practical means for analyzing relational social processes. She places this tool as a mid-point between the fluidity of qualitative content analysis and the rigidity of social network analysis. She uses the terms pixel and flows to represent two interrelated means of organizing data. First, the concept of “pixel” that she uses as a representation of individual RIECOs (remembered or imagined events or cognitive outputs) that make up the individual perceptions by a relationship

partner that define the nature of the relationship. Secondly, she introduces the reader to the concept of “flows” to indicate temporal elements that exist within a relationship. Once again, Joslyn utilizes illustrations from her research to highlight how this pixel and flow framework functions as a modeling tool for the theoretical analysis of relational processes. This is her strongest chapter, where she finally presents to us the framework of her analysis and demonstrates how it could be used effectively by other researchers.

The final substantive chapter focuses on fully illustrating the use of her pixel and flow model as a tool for empirical analysis. This chapter is the publication of an article addressing gender awareness training using mixed methods research and pixel/flow analysis techniques. While it is clear that Joslyn is seeking a means to fully illustrate the empirical possibilities, this chapter is by far her weakest. First, given the extensive use of case studies, examples, and research illustrations, it feels somewhat unnecessary. Secondly, and perhaps most problematically, the decision to use a journal article style, including a literature review and so forth, makes the section feel padded. Still, although this chapter feels separate from the rest of the book, in many ways, it does function as an illustration of the empirical possibility of her analysis framework.

In her conclusion, Joslyn makes her final case for the use of a disjointed fluidity as a means of understanding relationships, which is firmly embedded in social psychological and symbolic interactionist theoretical frames. She also addresses lingering questions and concerns about the strengths and weaknesses of her theoretical analysis and her methodological toolkit and does so quite persuasively.

This book is a solid introduction to a method of relationship analysis that brings together strengths from both traditional unstructured ethnographic analysis and the more computational social network analysis techniques. Further, it contributes to the ever-evolving body of literature that helps scholars to analyze empirical data. This book effectively brings a systemic and explicitly social psychological mode of relational qualitative analysis to the table and illustrates its effectiveness for both theoretical and empirical research. Joslyn’s discussion of both the theoretical and methodological implications of her work is powerful, though, at times, the complexity of her writing makes the ideas less clear. Further, while the final substantive chapter is illustrative, it seems like a missed opportunity to spend more time fleshing out the details of her pixel and flows tool, which is the strongest contribution of the book. Overall, this text is useful, if a somewhat limited, contribution to the methodological and theoretical subfields of qualitative data analysis.

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