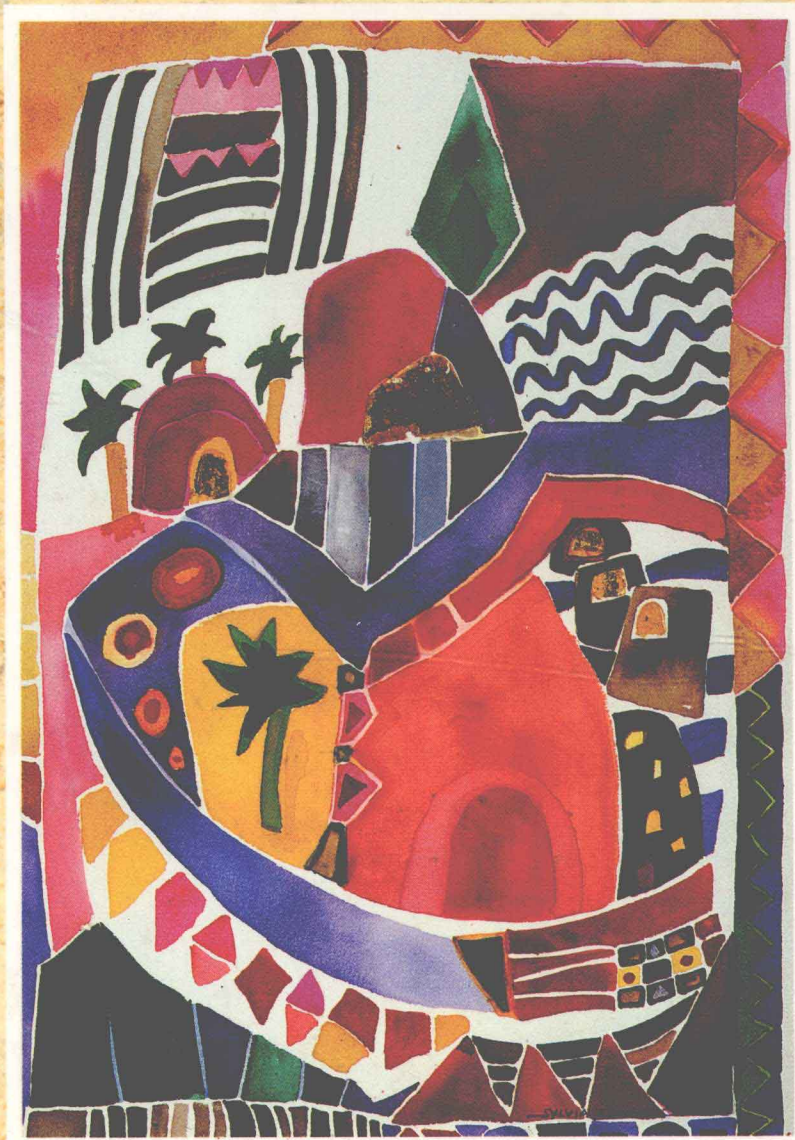


SECOND EDITION

SPECIAL

# Sociology

*A Down-to-Earth Approach*



*James M. Henslin*

USED





# **Sociology:**

## *A Down-to-Earth Approach*

Second Edition



**James M. Henslin**

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## P R E F A C E

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If you like to watch people and try to figure out why they do what they do, you will like sociology. Sociology pries open the doors of society, so you can see what goes on behind them.

In this book, you will especially see how social class sets us on different paths in life, how in one direction they lead to better health, more education, higher income, even better marriages—and in the other to more illness and disease, dropping out of school, low income, and higher chances of having your marriage fail. Those paths even affect your chances of making it to your first birthday, as well as of getting in trouble with the police—and of reading this book in the first place.

When I took my first course in sociology, I was “hooked.” Seeing how marvelously my life had been affected by these larger group influences opened my eyes to a new world, one that has been fascinating to explore. I hope that this will be your experience also.

From how people become homeless to how they become presidents, from why women are treated as second-class citizens around the world to why people commit suicide—all are part of sociology. This breadth, in fact, is what makes sociology so intriguing. We can place the sociological lens on broad features of society, such as social class, gender, and race, and then immediately turn our focus on the small-scale level. If we look at two people interacting—whether quarreling or kissing—we see how these broad features of society are being played out in their lives.

We aren’t born with instincts. We don’t come into this world with preconceived notions of what life should be like. At birth, we have no ideas of race, gender, age, social class, of how people “ought” to be. Yet we all learn

such things as part of growing up in our society. Uncovering the “hows” and the “whys” of this process is also part of sociology’s fascination.

One of sociology’s many pleasures is that as we study life in groups (which can be taken as a definition of sociology), whether those groups be in some far off part of the world (if there still are far-off places) or in some nearby corner of our own society, we constantly gain insights into our own selves. As we see how their customs affect them, effects of our own society on ourselves become more visible.

You can look forward to reading this book, then, for it can lead you to a new way of looking at the social world—and in the process, help you to better understand both society and yourself.

I have done my best to communicate the fascination of sociology in a down-to-earth manner. If there are sections of this text that you especially enjoy, or that you wish to comment on for whatever reason, don’t hesitate to write me. I enjoy communicating with students.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The gratifying response to the first edition indicates that my efforts at making sociology down to earth have succeeded. The years that have gone into writing this text are a culmination of the many more years that preceded its writing, from graduate school to what now have become decades in the classroom. But no text comes solely from its author. Although I am responsible for the final words on the printed page, I have depended heavily on feedback from instructors who used the first edition. I especially want to thank:

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

---

JAMES M. HENSLIN, who was born in Minnesota, graduated from high school and junior college in California and from college in Indiana. He earned his Master's and doctorate in sociology at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. His primary interests in sociology are the sociology of everyday life, deviance, social psychology, and the homeless. Among his more than a dozen books is *Down to Earth Sociology* (Free Press), now in its eighth edition, a book of readings that reflects these sociological interests. He has also published widely in sociology journals, including *Social Problems* and *American Journal of Sociology*.

While a graduate student, James Henslin taught at the University of Missouri at St. Louis. After completing

his doctorate, he joined the faculty at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, where he is Professor of Sociology. He requests the introductory course, teaching it several times each year. He says, "I've always found the introductory course enjoyable to teach. I love to see students' faces light up when they first glimpse the sociological perspective and begin to see how society has become an essential part of how they view the world."

Henslin enjoys spending time with his family, reading, and fishing. His two favorite activities are writing and traveling. He especially enjoys living in other cultures, for this brings him face to face with behaviors that he cannot take for granted, experiences that "make sociological principles come alive."

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