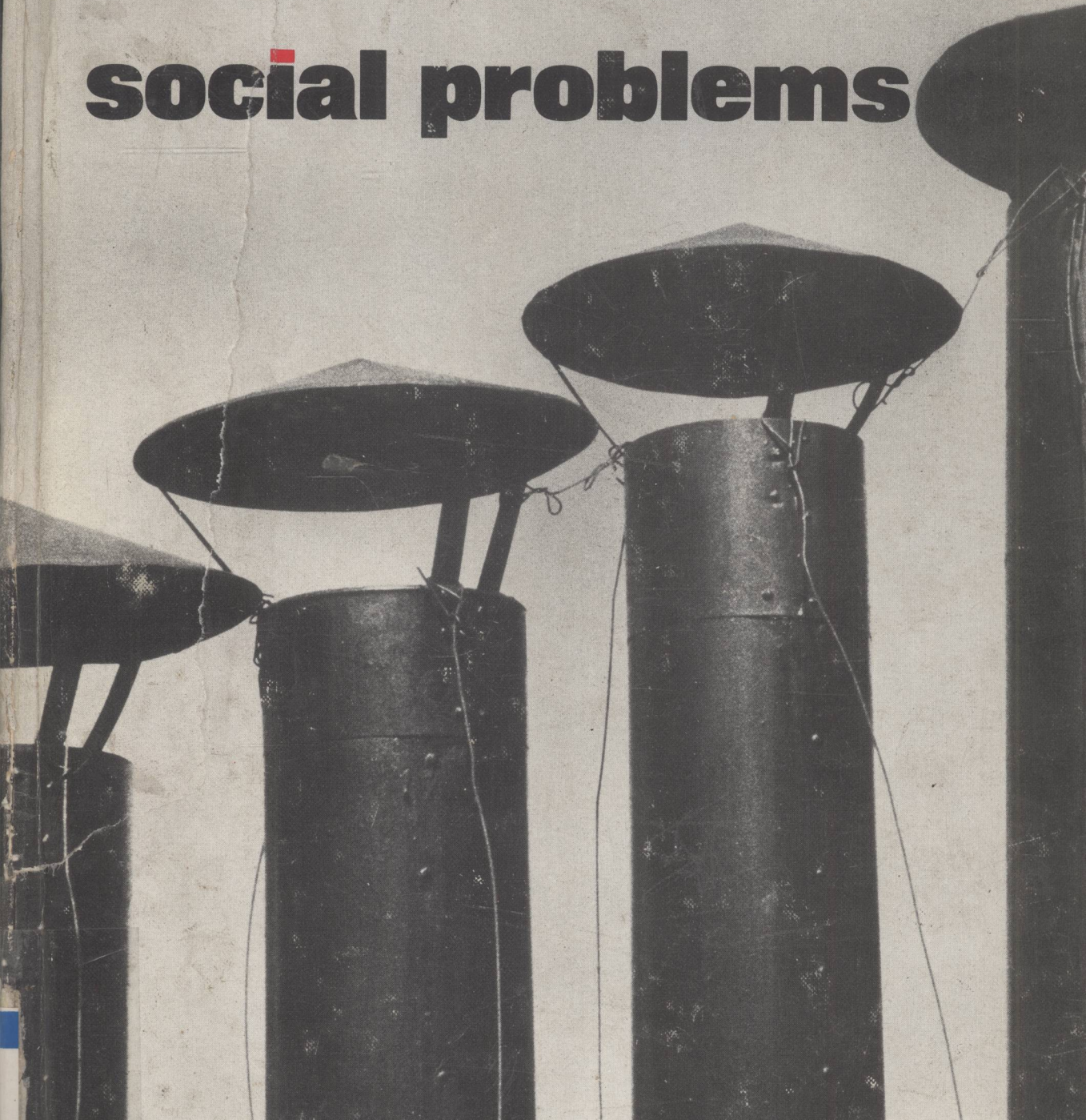


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social problems



social problems

Frank R. Scarpitti

University of Delaware



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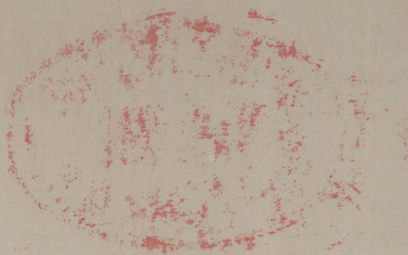
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preface

purpose

This text for the Social Problems course provides a comprehensive sociological analysis of the major problems confronting American society, based on the best of recent research as well as on classic sociological studies. The book is suitable for use either in a course sequence including the introductory course in sociology, or in a separate course, since all sociological concepts it utilizes are clearly explained to the student before they are used in exposition. The complexity of the problems considered has drawn sociologists of many differing perspectives to the task of analysis and explanation. This text draws freely on the insights of all schools.

organization

The book is divided into three sections. In the first, Social Disorganization, problems of traditional social institutions and conditions that threaten social cohesion are considered. Chapters are devoted to the family and to prejudice and discrimination, among others. The second section, Deviant Behavior, is given over to problems that are primarily the result of deviation from social norms, such as mental disorder, crime and the use of drugs. The chapters of the third section, Technology and Social Change, are concerned with problems related to the institutions of society's macro-structure, such as the communications media, government and business.

The instructor may, if he wishes, resequence chapters to fit his own course organization. Chapter One, Urbanization, provides a background for understanding many of the problems later discussed; all other chapters may be utilized in any order, depending on the instructor's desire for emphasis, and some may be omitted entirely. The book has been designed for maximum flexibility in course use.

Each chapter begins with a discussion of the problematic nature of present conditions, and an account of the development of social consciousness concerning them. This provides an introduction to the detailed discussion of the scope of the problem that follows. Each chapter ends with an account of responses made to the problem, whether governmental or private, and an assessment of the possibilities for solution of the problem. A summary follows each chapter.

The text features an introduction designed to orient the student to the sociological consideration of social problems. An epilogue at the end of the book discusses the variety of proposals, from revolution to social engineering, that have been put forward as a way to end social problems. The book also includes, as an appendix, a discussion of the methodology sociologists use to gather and interpret data.

readability

Throughout the text, an effort has been made to present the subject matter in clear and readable form. Each chapter is broken down into several topics, permitting the student to move one step at a time in studying otherwise difficult matters. The language used in discussing sociological concepts is familiar. Even complicated concepts are

presented using a minimum of professional terminology; when such terms are used, however, they are immediately defined. Though published studies provide a basis for much of the discussion, illustrations and examples are frequently drawn from the students' own environment, the behavior of family, friends and community.

readings

In addition to the text, the book contains thirty-three readings, ranging in length from 1000 to 3500 words. Their inclusion permits the book to fulfill the function of a reader as well as a text. The selections are from sociology and allied disciplines, as well as from journalistic and literary sources. Many provide the student with examples of sociological work, both investigative and theoretical; others, more personal than scientific, are statements by or about those whom social problems touch most closely. The readings are placed within the text, to relate them directly to the material being presented.

additional features

Included in the book as a kind of running commentary are quotations from literary, sociological and political sources. Some are aphoristic, some discursive. They provide commentary on the difficulties through which institutions, individuals and groups within our society are passing.

Sequences of photographs placed at the beginning of each chapter provide visual representations of aspects of the problem. Each chapter includes line art, which presents statistics in graphic and chart form. Five phototopics, or picture sequences with a brief text, deal with American women, the elderly, youth, and the critical problems of land use and strip-mining.

acknowledgements

Many people have been of great help to me in the preparation of this book. I would like to thank my colleagues at the University of Delaware, Dennis Wenger, Howard Harlan, and Shigeo Nohara, for the benefit of their advice, and the staff of Latham Publishing Enterprises for their editorial help. Mr. Richard Owen of Holt, Rinehart and Winston contributed valuable criticism and editorial advice, as did two anonymous academic readers. I dedicate the book, with thanks for their help and support, to my wife Ellen, and my children Susan and Jeffrey.

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