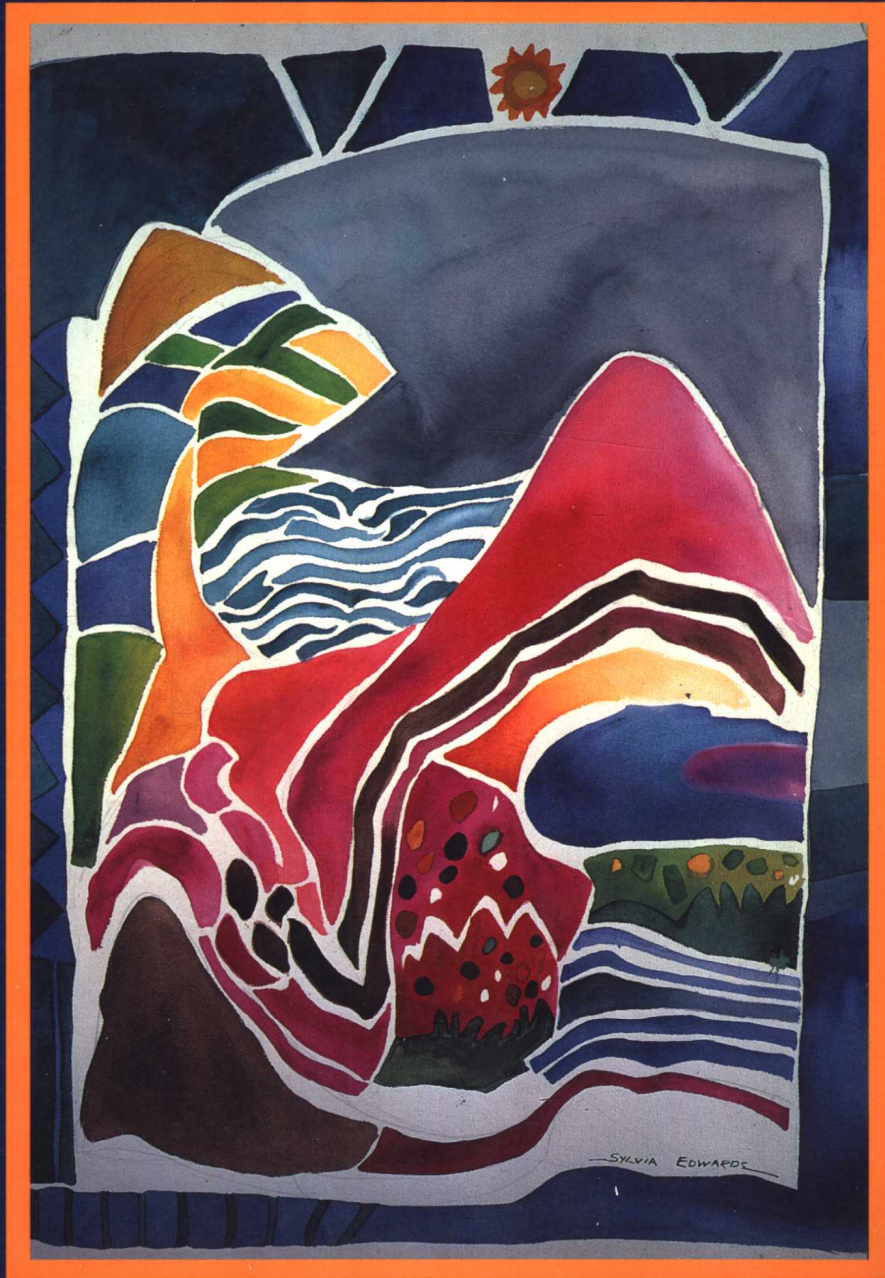



Essentials of
SOCIOLOGY

A D O W N - T O - E A R T H A P P R O A C H



J A M E S M . H E N S L I N



Essentials of Sociology

A Down-to-Earth Approach

James M. Henslin
Southern Illinois University

Allyn and Bacon

Boston London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore

To my son, Paul,
who is inheriting a world not of his making.
May his contributions to it be of value to those who follow.

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As instructors of sociology, we have set formidable tasks for ourselves—to communicate both structure and social interaction, to introduce students to the main sociological literature, to both the classic theorists and contemporary research—and to do so in ways that enliven the classroom, encourage discussions and critical thinking, and stimulate the sociological imagination. Although formidable, these goals are attainable. As an instructor who requests the introductory course because I enjoy seeing students begin to think sociologically, I have written this book to help you reach these goals.

The subtitle of this text, “A Down-to-Earth Approach,” is not proposed lightly. The goal is to share the fascination of sociology with students. Remember when you first got “hooked” on sociology, how the windows of perception opened and you began to see life-in-society through the sociological lens? For most of us, that was an eye opening experience. This book is designed to open those windows onto social life, so students can see clearly the vital effects of group membership on their lives and orientations. Although few students will get into what Peter Berger calls “the passion of sociology,” we can at least provide them the opportunity.

Sociology is like a huge jigsaw puzzle. Only very gradually do the intricate pieces start to fit together. As they do so, our perspective changes as we shift our eyes from the many small, disjointed pieces onto the whole that is being formed. Of all the endeavors we could have entered, we chose sociology because of the ways in which it joins together the “pieces” of society and the challenges it poses to “ordinary” thinking. To share this perspective with students is our privilege.

Over the years, I have found the introductory course especially enjoyable. Even after many years in the classroom, it remains a pleasure to see students’ faces light up as they begin to see how separate pieces of their world fit together, as they gain insight into how their social experiences have given shape to even their innermost desires. This is precisely what this text is designed to do—to stimulate the sociological imagination so students can better perceive how the “pieces” of society fit together, and what that means for their own lives.

Filled with examples from around the world as well as from our own society, this text helps make today’s multicultural, global society come alive for the student. From the international elite dividing up global markets to the intimacy of friendship and marriage, the student can see how sociology is the key to explaining contemporary life—and his or her role in it.

In short, this text is designed to make your teaching easier. There simply is no justifiable reason for students to have to wade through cumbersome approaches to sociology. I am firmly convinced that the introduction to sociology should be enjoyable, and that the introductory textbook can be an essential tool in sharing the discovery of sociology with students.

▼ The Organization of This Text

This text is laid out in five parts. Part I focuses on the sociological perspective. After introducing the sociological perspective in the first chapter, in Chapter 2 we then look at how culture influences us, examine socialization in Chapter 3, and compare macrosociology and microsociology in Chapter 4. Part II, which focuses on groups and social control, adds to the students’ understanding of how significantly social groups influence our lives. In Chapter 5, we examine the different types of groups in society, looking also at the fascinating area of group dynamics. Then in Chapter 6, we focus on how groups “keep us in line” and sanction those who violate their norms.

In Part III, we examine how social inequality pervades society and how those inequalities have an impact on us. Because social stratification is so significant, I have written two chapters on this topic. The first (Chapter 7), with its global focus, presents an overview of the principles of stratification. The second (Chapter 8), with its emphasis on variations in social class, focuses on stratification in U.S. society. After establishing this broader context, in Chapter 9 we examine inequalities in race and ethnicity, and in Chapter 10 those of gender and age.

Part IV makes students more aware of how social institutions encompass their lives. In Chapter 11, we look at how politics and the economy are the overarching social institutions in contemporary society. In Chapter 12 we turn our focus on the family, while in Chapter 13 we examine education and religion. Throughout, we look at how these social institutions are changing, and how these changes, in turn, influence our orientations and decisions.

With its focus on broad social change, Part V provides an appropriate ending for the book. Here we examine why our world is changing so rapidly, as well as catch a glimpse of what is yet to come. Chapter 14 opens this concluding part with a focus on population and urbanization, while an examination of technology, social movements, and the environment in Chapter 15 takes us to the “cutting edge” of the changes that engulf us all.

▼ Themes and Features

Three central themes—cultural diversity, down-to-earth sociology, and critical thinking, run throughout the text. The first theme, cultural diversity, explores the cultures of peoples worldwide, as well as subgroups that make up the United States. The second theme, down-to-earth sociology, examines sociological processes that underlie everyday life. The third theme, critical thinking, focuses on controversial social issues and engages students in examining the various sides of those issues. Let’s look at these three themes in more detail.

Cultural Diversity

In the new global economy, the interdependent fate of nations affects students’ lives in many crucial areas—from influencing the kinds of skills and knowledge they need, types of work available to them, and costs of the goods and services they consume, to whether our country is at war or peace. This text has a strong emphasis on global issues, such as a separate chapter on global stratification, extensive coverage in the chapters on social institutions, and a global focus in the final chapters on social change: population, urbanization, technology, social movements, and the environment.

Because we live in a global society, our sociological interpretations must take into account this broader perspective. What is going on in Russia and

Japan, as well as in such much smaller nations as Chechen and Bosnia, have direct and far-reaching consequences in our own society. Consequently, in addition to this global focus throughout the text, in a series of global boxes titled “A Global Glimpse” we focus on dimensions of social issues as they are played out in other societies.

In addition, the text recurrently highlights key issues of multicultural diversity within U.S. society. A prime example is the boxes on the immigrant experience. Each year over a million people from around the world legally immigrate to the United States, with the number of illegal entrants perhaps as large. Currently, about one American in four defines himself or herself as Latino or nonwhite. In the next few years, the population of Asian Americans and Latinos is expected to increase by about 22, that of African Americans by 12 percent, but non-Hispanic whites by a mere 2 percent. In some places the future has already arrived. In New York City, for example, 40 percent of all primary and secondary students belong to an ethnic minority, while in California that figures stands at 51 percent.

A sociology textbook that does not explore this fundamental demographic shift cannot adequately introduce the realities of life in a multicultural society. Thus, “The Immigrant Experience” boxes introduce students to how immigrants’ fundamental orientations of the world are challenged and modified as they are immersed in this new culture. For example, we examine how education can force huge gaps between young immigrants and their families (Chapter 3), how the rules for life in the new society conflict so greatly with what immigrants had previously learned that they get in trouble with the law (Chapter 6), how they confront prejudice (Chapters 9, 13, 14), and how Latin American wives become much less submissive after they are introduced to North American culture (Chapter 10). See the inside front cover for a complete listing of this feature.

This focus on cultural diversity, as well as the many discussions of multiculturalism throughout the text, helps develop the student’s sociological imagination. By stimulating a broader perception of their society, it helps students see the connections between key sociological concepts such as culture, socialization, norms, race, gender, and social class. As your students’ sociological imagination grows, they will be able to apply these ideas to their own and others’ experiences—and to their understanding of the social structure of U.S. society.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

The second theme is highlighted by a series of “Down-to-Earth Sociology” boxes, in which we explore the sociological implications of everyday life and their application to social issues. Using this feature, we consider such issues as the relationship between heredity and environment (Chapter 3), the role of sports in producing “real boys” (Chapter 3), college football as social structure (Chapter 4), how society is being “McDonaldized” (Chapter 5), and how women survive in the male-dominated business world (Chapter 10).

I have reinforced the “down-to-earth” theme throughout the text by a friendly, accessible writing style. As long years of teaching have shown me, all too often textbooks are written to appeal to the adopters of texts rather than to students who must learn from them. Thus, a central concern in writing this book has been to present sociology in a manner that not only facilitates understanding but also shares its excitement. During the course of writing other texts, I have often been told that my explanations and writing style are “down-to-earth,” or accessible and inviting to students—so much so that I have used the phrase in the title of this text. The term is also highlighted in my introductory reader *Down to Earth Sociology*, 8th edition (New York: Free Press, 1995).

This down-to-earth quality is also seen in the introductory vignettes, many of which are based on my own sociological investigations, which invite the student into each chapter. It also shows up in the absence of unnecessary jargon, concise explanations, the use of clear and simple (but not reductive) language, and by the numerous student-relevant examples that illustrate key concepts.

Critical Thinking

The third feature, “Thinking Critically about Social Controversy,” also helps enliven your classroom with a vibrant exchange of ideas. These sections address pressing and often controversial issues, such as the “Mommy Track” (Chapter 6), and our tendency to conform to evil authority, as uncovered by the Milgram experiments (Chapter 6); bounties paid to kill homeless children in the Third World (Chapter 7); inequalities in health care (Chapter 8); racism on campus (Chapter 9); marital tensions caused by “the second shift” (Chapter 12); how to restructure the classroom to overcome limitations imposed by the in-

ner city (Chapter 13); and abortion as a social movement (Chapter 15). These sections, based on controversy that either affects the student’s own life or is something he or she is vitally interested in, stimulate critical thinking and lively class discussions. For a full listing of this feature, see the inside front cover.

In-Text Learning Aids

Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach includes pedagogical aids that will be especially helpful in the teaching-learning process.

Summary and Review. Each chapter closes with a question-and-answer format that highlights and reinforces the most important concepts and issues discussed in each chapter. The question-and-answer form is pedagogically superior to the traditional summary as it more effectively engages students in a thinking process.

Suggested Readings. A list of suggested readings is included for each chapter. These readings are useful for wider background reading on the various topics presented here, as well as a guide for students as they write papers. Sociological journals are also listed.

Comprehensive Glossary. A comprehensive glossary at the end of the book gathers into a single, accessible format all the concepts and terms introduced throughout the text.

Supplements

For the Student. The Study Guide Plus contains key terms, learning objectives, glossaries and self-tests. In addition, it contains a glossary of potentially confusing idioms and colloquialism.

For the Instructor. The *Instructor’s Manual/Test Bank* which accompanies this book contains chapter summaries, outlines, key terms with definitions, author suggestions for interactive teaching, class discussion questions, essay questions, projects, guest speaker suggestions, and suggestions for using CNN video and transparencies. The Test Bank portion of the manual contains over 2000 questions in multiple-choice, true/false, and essay formats. The Instructor’s Manual portion of this supplement is available on disk (Mac and IBM).

The **Test Bank** is available in a computerized format (IBM DOS and Windows and Macintosh), utiliz-

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A package of 100 color acetate **transparencies** accompanies this text.

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▼ Acknowledgments

The gratifying response to the first and second editions of the hardback text that preceded this book indicates that my efforts at making sociology down to earth have succeeded. Perhaps part of the credit goes to the many years that I have been “on the front lines,” practicing the communication of sociological ideas in the classroom. But no text issues solely from its author. Although I am responsible for the final words on the printed page, I have depended heavily on feedback from many sociologists. I especially want to thank

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and her suggestion that students would greatly benefit from a focus on U.S. immigrants have been invaluable.

Since this text, then, is based on the contributions of many, I would count it a privilege if you would also share with me your teaching experiences with this book, including any suggestions for improving the text.

I wish you the very best in your teaching. It is my sincere desire that *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* contributes to that success.

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR TO THE STUDENT

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.

Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach stresses how all of us are profoundly influenced by the society in which we live and the specific experiences we have. Social class, for example, sets us on different paths in life. For some, these paths lead to better health, more education, and higher income, while for others they result in poverty, dropping out of school, and even a higher risk of illness and disease. These paths are so significant that they even affect our chances of making it to our first birthday, as well as of getting in trouble with the police. They even influence how our marriages work out, the number of children we will have—and whether or not we will read this book in the first place.

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

From how people become homeless to how they become presidents, from why some people are treated as second-class citizens 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.

None of us is 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 the clothing we “ought” to wear. 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 we study life in groups (which can be taken as a definition of sociology). Whether these groups be in some far off part of the world (if there still are some 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, because it can lead you to a new way of looking at the social world—and in the process, help you better understand both society and yourself.

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

James M. Henslin
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