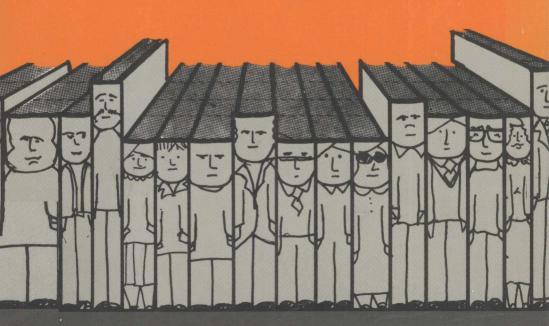
JAMES M. HENSLIN

# DOWN TO EARTH SOCIOLOGY

INTRODUCTORY READINGS
THIRD EDITION



# Down to Earth Sociology

Introductory Readings

THIRD EDITION

James M. Henslin, Editor



#### THE FREE PRESS

A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. NEW YORK

# For my children — Stephanie, James, Greta, and Paul

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### Preface to the Third Edition

It is with pleasure that I introduce the third edition of *Down to Earth Sociology*, a pleasure akin to seeing a dear friend reach another welcome milestone in his or her life. Adopters of earlier editions will find what I hope are refreshing changes in both the content and the organization of the book.

Following the suggestions of those who have used the first two editions of Down to Earth Sociology in the classroom, I have strived to find articles even more down to earth in order to make the student's introduction to sociology enjoyable and meaningful. More than ever, these articles reflect the experiences of people who have "been there," and who, with a minimum of jargon and quantification, insightfully share those experiences with the reader.

Focusing on social interaction in ordinary or everyday activities and situations, these selections share some of the fascination of sociology. They reflect both the individualistic and the structural emphases of our discipline. Social structure is not simply an abstract fact of life; it vitally affects our lives. The decisions of the rich, the politicians, and the bureaucrats provide social constraints that augment those dictated by birth, social class, and other circumstances. By social structure our vision of life is lifted or limited, our chances of success closed or opened. Social structure concretely brings tears and laughter, hopes and despair.

Yet so much of sociology goes about its business as though data were unconnected to people, as though the world consisted of analysis of abstract social facts. From my own experiences I know this is far from the truth—divorced from life—and I have sought authors who share the realities that people directly experience. At least as I see it, sociology is the most fascinating of the social sciences, and it is this fascination that these selections are designed to convey.

It is my hope that I have succeeded in accomplishing this goal, because I believe that sociology is able to open new windows of perception that can touch every aspect of the individual's world. If these readings achieve at least part of this goal, I owe a great debt to the many who adopted the earlier editions, especially to those whose reactions and suggestions have helped give shape to the contents of *Down to Earth Sociology*.

In response to those suggestions, I have reorganized the selections to make them more compatible with most introductory textbooks.

Through subjects inherently interesting, we cover the major substantive areas of sociology. Part I is an introduction to the sociological perspective; it invites students to view the world in a new way by participating in the exciting enterprise we call sociology. Part II examines the cultural underpinnings of social life, the taken-for-granted assumptions and contexts that provide the contours of our everyday life in society. In Part III, that essential part of our beings—sexuality—is the focus, including an analysis of both the processes by which we assume the social identity of male or female and how those identities provide the basis for interaction among adults.

Part IV examines social groups and social structure, looking behind the scenes to see how people's assumptions, the features of social settings, individuals' previous relationships with one another, and the structuring of work relationships establish both constraints and freedoms. The process of becoming deviant, the broader social context that shapes deviance and social reactions to violations of social control are the subjects of Part V. We examine social stratification in Part VI, looking at the income, educational, sexual, occupational, and racial dimensions of social inequality. In Part VII the social institutions of the family, education, religion, medicine, law, and our intertwining political, military, and economic interests are analyzed. Social change is the focus of Part VIII; after introducing the concept of future shock, the realities of urban renewal and the search for personal roots in a rapidly changing social world are then discussed.

These selections bring the student face to face with the dual emphases of contemporary sociological research: the focus on the individual's experience and the analysis of social structure. Uncovering the basic expectations that underlie routine social interactions, these articles emphasize the ways in which social institutions are interrelated. It is to these authors' credit that we lose sight of neither the people who are interacting nor the structural base that so directly influences the form and content of their interactions.

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# Part I: The Sociological Perspective

I would like to begin this first introduction on a personal note. Since my early school days, I enjoyed reading immensely. I read almost anything I could lay my hands on and was especially fascinated by books that helped me understand people better—that described their life situations, their thoughts, their relationships, their hopes and dreams and the obstacles to their realization. Without knowing it, I was gaining an appreciation for understanding the context of people's lives—for seeing how important that context is in determining what they are like.

When I went to college and took my first course in sociology, I was "hooked." I found that there was a name for my interests: sociology.

This was an exciting discovery for me. In college I found an entire academic discipline centered around understanding the general context in which people live and analyzing how their lives are influenced by that context. I could not help wanting to read sociology, to take more courses, to immerse myself in it.

The intention of this book is to share some of the excitement and fascination of sociology, to make more visible the context of social life that affects us all, and to whet the appetite for more sociology.

This then, is an invitation to sociology, to look behind the scenes to a different way of viewing life.

As Peter L. Berger says, the discovery of sociology can change one's life. It can help one to understand better the social forces one confronts, the forces that constrain and free. This understanding has a liberating potential; by examining these forces one can stand somewhat apart from at least some aspects of society and exert more creative control over one's own life.

#### 2 Part I

C. Wright Mills indicates that the liberating potential offered by sociology centers on understanding three main issues: (1) the structure of society—that is, how the essential components of society are related; (2) where one's society stands in human history and what changes are occurring in it; and (3) what type of people prevail in one's society, how they are selected for prevalence, and what types are coming to prevail.

Thinking of life in these terms, says Mills, is a quality of mind worth striving for. It is this "sociological imagination," to use his term, that allows us to see beyond our immediate confines, to understand the broader social and historical forces at work in our lives, and to see ourselves more accurately through that perspective.