James M. Henslin



SOCIOLOSY

A Down-to-Earth Approach.



A Down-to-Earth Approach

James M. Henslin

Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

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Allyn and Bacon
A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
160 Gould Street
Needham Heights, Massachusetts 02194

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ISBN 0-205-13754-7

92-41575

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Printed in the United States of America

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Preface

If you like to watch people and try to figure out why they do what they do, you will like sociology. If you like variety and surprises, sociology will provide them. As you study sociology, you will see how society has become part of your own consciousness, influencing everything you do. You will also see that many of your assumptions about life are unfounded. Over and over in this book, you will see that the "common sense" you are told to depend on comes up short when compared with the findings of sociologists. For example, did you know that what you see is partly determined by language? Or that stereotypes help to produce the very characteristics that are stereotyped in the first place?

Part of sociology's attraction is its fascinating combination of breadth and focus. Sociology is so broad that it includes an analysis of how industrialization is changing the face of the world, yet so focused that a couple's quarrels find their way into sociological scrutiny. From how people become presidents to how they become homeless, from why women are treated as second-class citizens to why people commit suicide—all are part of sociology.

Much to their dismay, instructors who believe that sociology can stimulate a fresh way of looking at the world often hear students complaining about their sociology textbook. These complaints are often well founded, for many texts are cumbersome and ponderous. Given the excitement—and enchantment—of sociology, this just shouldn't be. On the contrary, an introductory sociology textbook should impart some of the joy of discovering a new way of perceiving the social world.

Writing style, then, is critical in introducing sociology to a new generation. In this text, I ask you to participate in the exciting venture of discovering how social groups influence your behavior—including how you look at the world and yourself. As you read this book, you will see how the social environment penetrates your very being, how your opinions and attitudes are a reflection of your experiences, how remarkably different you would be had you been reared in a different family, social class, race, gender, or culture. The joy of self-discovery while exploring society is part of the excitement of sociology.

As you gain an overview of sociology (studying what are called social structure and social interaction), you will be introduced to classic works of early founders such as Durkheim, Weber, and Marx, as well as current sociological investigations. You will see the all-encompassing effects of racism, as well as how bureaucracies shape our experiences. You will understand how social institutions affect our lives, as well as how people become deviants. You will see how the world economic race, especially our competition with Japan and Europe, affects your future.

There is no reason that an overview of the principles of sociology should get lost in a morass of abstractions that impede learning. Consequently, I have made liberal use of examples from everyday life, so that sociological principles, concepts, and theories are presented in a "down-to-earth" fashion. Similarly, to help you see the world in broader perspective, I have also included many cross-cultural and multicultural materials. Their value is two-fold. On the one hand, they provide interesting and illustrative contrast, which helps you understand other ways of life. On the other hand, the compar-

isons challenge you to see yourself differently. That, in my opinion, is one of the objectives of an introduction to sociology.

These, then, are the goals that I have tried to reach in writing this introductory text. Initial classroom testing of these materials has elicited very positive response from students. Only you, however, can tell me if I have succeeded.

I find sociology the most interesting of all subjects offered in college—as I hope you will. It is my wish that your introduction to sociology provides a new way of looking at the social world. I would be happy to hear from you concerning your reactions to this introductory venture into sociology. If you wish, you may write to me at:

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although writing this text engulfed my life for longer than I care to recall, it represents the contributions of many people. First, I owe a debt of gratitude to the fine reviewers whose perceptive comments have improved its presentation. I was pleased with the efforts they put into the reviewing process, and I have done my best to accommodate their suggestions. I wish to thank:

Sandra L. Albrecht The University of Kansas

Kenneth Ambrose Marshall University

Karren Baird-Olsen Kansas State University

Linda Barbera-Stein The University of Illinois

John K. Cochran

The University of Oklahoma

John Darling

University of Pittsburgh—Johnstown

Nanette J. Davis

Portland State University

Lynda Dodgen

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Laura O'Toole

University of Delaware

Phil Piket

Joliet Junior College

Adrian Rapp

North Harris Community College

Walt Shirley

Sinclair Community College

Marc Silver

Hofstra University

Susan Sprecher
Illinois State University
Larry Weiss
University of Alaska
Douglas White
Henry Ford Community College

Stephen R. Wilson Temple University Stuart Wright Lamar University

Second, I also am indebted to the capable staff of Allyn & Bacon—especially to Karen Hanson, who gave such positive feedback to the early manuscript; to Susan Badger, who initiated the project; to Deborah Fogel, for thorough copyediting; to Susan McNally for coordinating the project; and to those fine people in the art and production departments.

Finally, I cannot adequately express my appreciation to Hannah Rubenstein. If I were to compile a list of characteristics I desired in a development editor, it would include intelligence and dedication, of course. Those I received in abundance. By themselves, that would have been adequate. The surprise was the remarkable insight, and the humor under pressure—all wrapped up in a tireless worker who insisted on perfection. It was my privilege, Hannah.

It is with this goal—of making the introductory course in sociology an enjoyable, challenging, and eye-opening experience—that I have written this book. It is my privilege that you have selected *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* to use in your teaching. I will also count it a privilege if you will share your teaching experiences, including any suggestions for improving the text. I am not averse to receiving criticisms, for they allow me to see matters in a different light and to improve my efforts.

I wish you the very best in your teaching, and it is my sincere hope that this text contributes to that success. I look forward to hearing from you.

James M. Henslin Department of Sociology Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Illinois 62026

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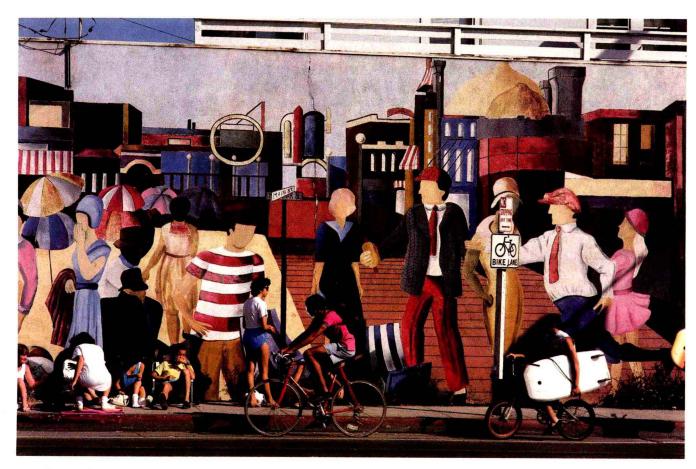
About the Author

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 seventh 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."

CHAPTER 1



Jane Golden, Early Ocean Park, 1976

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