

---

# Social Processes

---

*An Introduction to Sociology*

---



TAMOTSU SHIBUTANI

---

# Social Processes

*An Introduction  
to Sociology*

TAMOTSU SHIBUTANI

*University of California Press*

BERKELEY LOS ANGELES LONDON

University of California Press  
Berkeley and Los Angeles, California

University of California Press, Ltd.  
London, England

© 1986 by  
The Regents of the University of California

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Shibutani, Tamotsu, 1920–  
Social processes.

Includes bibliography and index.

1. Sociology. I. Title.

HM51.S519 1986 301 85–20846

ISBN 0–520–05050–9 (alk. paper)

ISBN 0–520–05056–8 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

# *Preface*

Those who turn to the study of sociology for the first time, whether they are college students or general readers, do so to develop a better understanding of their society. They expect to form some kind of working orientation toward the events in which they become involved as well as those reported daily in the news. Such expectations are not unreasonable. After all, if they cannot derive that much from their inquiry, what is the point of studying the subject? After three decades of teaching undergraduate sociology courses, I have concluded that the types of structural analysis that prevailed in mid-twentieth-century sociology are simply not adequate for this purpose. Although they are useful for studying organized groups, serious deficiencies become apparent when one attempts to study social change and intergroup conflict.

But we live in a world marked by rapid and continuous change—one filled with uncertainty, confusion, and turmoil. Why are decent young men transformed into beasts when they become involved in mob violence? Why do bureaucracies perpetuate ineffectual programs in callous disregard for their clients? Why do revolutionaries squabble so viciously among themselves after they have succeeded in deposing a hated ruler? Why are human beings unable to correct glaring and acknowledged defects until after some catastrophe has occurred? Such questions are difficult to answer, even tentatively, from the standpoint of structural sociology. I have therefore tried to organize selected findings in sociology and some related disciplines in terms of another conceptual framework—one that views human society as an ongoing process. This approach makes possible the study of stable patterns, transformations, and conflicts from a single, consistent perspective and thereby makes sociology a more effective tool for comprehending modern mass societies.

The term "social process" is ubiquitous in sociological discourse. Like "social control" and "social institution," however, it is used in such diverse ways that it designates nothing in particular. Furthermore, few sociologists have attempted to follow through the implications of process philosophy, a comprehensive perspective for ordering all human experiences (Browning, 1965). Perhaps one reason is that its principles clash with some key assumptions underlying commonsense discourse. We tend to think of the world as being made up of innumerable ready-made things, which in turn are composed of ready-made parts. Research is thus directed toward finding out about various things by breaking them down to their component parts and showing how these parts are related to one another. Thus, empirical knowledge becomes what some philosophers have called an inventory of the "furniture of the universe." Even physicists, who do research in terms of process models, often revert to an emphasis on substance and structure once they leave their laboratories. But there is no fixed world, and there are no definite things except as the human mind contributes to their definition. The universe is in perpetual flux—reality is a continuous process—and thinking, which is a way of doing something, is itself a process that emerges and operates amid other processes. Furthermore, social structures need not be ignored; they are viewed as the manner in which various activities are organized. As in modern physics, statics may be viewed as a special case of dynamics—the study of motion. It may take time to become accustomed to a mode of thought that differs somewhat from our commonsense thinking, but the resulting comprehension makes the effort worthwhile.

In recent decades sociology has become a vast enterprise, involving thousands of dedicated practitioners throughout the world. There are numerous research institutes, large graduate departments, and flourishing professional societies. It would be a serious mistake, however, to regard sociology as an established science, producing knowledge comparable to what is being produced in the physical and biological sciences. Although an extensive body of research literature has developed, some of it highly specialized and requiring considerable technical virtuosity, there are few generalizations that can be regarded as firmly established on the basis of adequate evidence. Although serious efforts at verification have been made, the results have been inconclusive. What is disdainfully dismissed as "anecdotal evidence" is in fact not evidence at all—only illustrations to clarify some point. Thus, any work done in the field today must be viewed as that of pioneers facing a vast wilderness, much like the work of naturalists in the nineteenth century. There is still need for examining specimens, experimenting by trial and error, and improvising

ad hoc explanations; such problems are but part of the growing pains of a young discipline.

Although I have stated many of the key ideas in this book explicitly, their tentative character must be clearly understood. They are little more than plausible generalizations not contradicted by widely known facts. With their publication many exceptions and contradictions will be found, and they should be welcomed. Any generalization that holds for a large number of known cases is worth stating, but each exception provides the occasion for further inquiry, which should lead to qualifications and eventually to the formulation of more accurate principles. The aim of this book is to describe how human society works, and any attempt to account for anything so vast, complex, and diversified as social life in the twentieth century is bound to be simplistic. At this point in the history of sociology any statement of this kind can be, at best, only programmatic. What is presented here is obviously just one of several possible ways of ordering the available material.

Even if sociologists have yet to produce a scientific theory of society, our work is not useless. We face all kinds of pressing social problems, and we must do our best to make sense of what is happening in the world. Consistent findings from a long succession of investigations—comparative analyses of historical data, results of sample surveys, case studies of various groups, experiments of all kinds—provide a more reliable basis for judgments than commonsense knowledge. Detailed observations by specialists have produced a better understanding of areas of life unfamiliar to all but those directly involved—interactions among institutionalized patients, unconventional life-styles, social pressures faced by families of executives, the coping strategies of slum dwellers. In societies as diversified as ours such findings have helped dispel many popular superstitions. Large bodies of factual data are being collected and placed in repositories. Generalizations, once formulated, are subjected to critical review; as errors are corrected, our comprehension is improved. Through specialization and focused observation sociologists are becoming informed observers of the contemporary scene. Educators, social workers, reformers, as well as executives in unions, corporations, and governments—all have found some of these materials helpful in planning their work.

The theoretical and research literature in sociology has become so extensive that no single person can possibly cover it. So much material is being published that even specialists have difficulty keeping up with the latest developments in their areas of expertise. Coverage of the literature in this book is therefore highly selective. Those accustomed to reading

scientific publications may be surprised that no effort has been made to cite the latest research on the various topics considered. The practice of citing the most recent work is justified only in fields in which knowledge is cumulative, as it is in the natural sciences. Although recent sociological investigations are generally superior to earlier ones, there is no consistent relationship between the accuracy of observations or the validity of generalizations and their date of publication. For the most part I have cited sources that are pertinent, well known, and readily accessible. The documentation is somewhat heavier in areas over which there is less agreement among sociologists, such as the study of emotional behavior. Additional sources have been included as suggested readings at the end of each chapter; most of them are more technical than the text itself, and many have been written from standpoints that differ from the position taken in this book.

Some teachers may also be surprised that there is no treatment of research methods. This does not mean that I regard research procedures as unimportant. Many beginning students, however, find such discussions tedious, especially when the reason for mastering complicated techniques is not clear. Some beginners are so repelled by such presentations that they abandon the study of sociology before they have developed any appreciation of its potential relevance to their lives. Once students have developed an interest in the subject, they will have no difficulty appreciating the importance of mastering techniques for the collection and analysis of reliable data to be used in developing and testing hypotheses.

Although this book differs markedly from other works on general sociology, it is nonetheless an outgrowth of a venerable intellectual tradition—Pragmatism and what has at times been called the “Chicago school” in the social sciences (Bulmer, 1984). During the period preceding World War II a group of scholars in the Midwest, most of them at the University of Chicago, developed a point of view at once both behavioristic and processual. This group included anthropologists (Robert Redfield and Edward Sapir), political scientists (Arthur Bentley, Harold D. Lasswell, Charles Merriam, and Quincy Wright), and sociologists (Albion Small, W. I. Thomas, Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, Ellsworth Faris, Herbert Blumer, E. Franklin Frazier, Everett C. Hughes, Edwin Sutherland, and Louis Wirth). Although they disagreed among themselves on various matters, for the most part their work rested on a set of similar presuppositions—most of them stated explicitly by two philosophers (John Dewey and George H. Mead). Although many of the key ideas developed by these men and their countless students have been incorpo-

rated into the main body of the various social sciences, the conceptual framework *per se* has passed out of favor. It has become attenuated through disuse, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation in some secondary sources. Only the social psychology has survived as Symbolic Interactionism. Furthermore, the potential of this approach has never been explored. Although I started with this conceptual scheme, I have not felt constrained to confine myself to the views developed by these scholars. My aim is not to resurrect an old school of thought but to use the approach as a point of departure for investigating problems of current interest.

My greatest debt in formulating the approach used in this book is to Robert E. Park; his work, in turn, was strongly influenced by his mentors — John Dewey and Georg Simmel. I wish to acknowledge my enduring debt to Professor Louis Wirth, who first suggested to me that a careful study of Park's writings might point the way to a more satisfactory sociological theory. Those who are familiar with their work will also recognize the influence of three other great teachers with whom I had the privilege of studying — Herbert Blumer, Everett C. Hughes, and W. I. Thomas. Jonathan Turner reviewed the entire manuscript in great detail; since he does his own work from a quite different standpoint, I found his critical comments especially helpful. David Gold was also kind enough to review the manuscript. Although I did not always accept their suggestions, I learned much from their appraisals, and the book has benefited from this added understanding. My wife, Sandy, contributed to this project in many ways in addition to providing encouragement and support — looking up references, criticizing the content, and checking proofs. I also wish to thank Muriel Siry for the extraordinary care and accuracy with which she prepared successive drafts of the manuscript. The overall readability of the text has been enhanced by the editorial staff of the University of California Press, and I am especially grateful to Amy Einsohn and Mary Renaud.



# Contents

<i>Preface</i>	xi
----------------	----

## INTRODUCTION

I. SOCIAL TRANSACTIONS	3
The Subject Matter of Sociology	4
Instrumental Components of Transactions	9
Expressive Components of Transactions	18
Sociology as an Emerging Discipline	22
Summary and Discussion	29
Suggested Readings	30

## PART ONE. COMMUNICATIVE PROCESSES

II. SYMBOLIC RECONSTRUCTION	33
Mapping the Environment: Objects	34
Evaluations and Emotional Reactions	40
Symbolic Representation of Objects	46
Human Knowledge as a Social Process	52
Summary and Discussion	58
Suggested Readings	59

III.	COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE	61
	Communication as a Serial Process	62
	Formation of Culture Patterns	67
	Norms of Social Interaction	72
	The Media of Mass Communication	78
	Summary and Discussion	86
	Suggested Readings	87
IV.	HUMAN COMMUNITIES	88
	Formation of Community Patterns	89
	Composition of the Population	95
	Segregation in Urban Communities	101
	Cultural Diversity in Mass Societies	109
	Summary and Discussion	116
	Suggested Readings	117
V.	INTERACTION PATTERNS	118
	Accommodation in Routine Situations	120
	Confluent Expression and Suggestibility	126
	Strategic Interaction in Rivalries	131
	Development of Mass Behavior	137
	Summary and Discussion	144
	Suggested Readings	145
PART TWO. SUSTAINING PROCESSES		
VI.	NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS	149
	Characteristics of Social Norms	150
	Acquisition of Social Norms	155
	Personal Identity and Moral Conduct	162
	Reaffirmation of Social Norms	168
	Summary and Discussion	172
	Suggested Readings	173

VII.	SOCIAL STRATIFICATION	174
	Bases of Social Stratification	175
	Patterns of Social Inequality	181
	Reaffirmation of Status Differences	190
	Preservation of Social Distance	196
	Summary and Discussion	201
	Suggested Readings	202
VIII.	SUSTAINED ASSOCIATIONS	204
	Constellations Within Communities	206
	Networks of Personal Contacts	212
	Operation of Formal Organizations	219
	Conditions of Group Solidarity	225
	Summary and Discussion	231
	Suggested Readings	232
IX.	REGULATORY INSTITUTIONS	234
	Community Reactions to Deviance	235
	Development of Deviant Careers	241
	Enforcement of Formal Norms	248
	Legitimation and the Moral Order	254
	Summary and Discussion	259
	Suggested Readings	260
PART THREE. TRANSITIONAL PROCESSES		
X.	PROBLEMATIC SITUATIONS	265
	Crisis and Collective Adaptation	267
	Decisions by Collective Deliberation	272
	Recurrent Patterns of Crowd Behavior	279
	Policy Formation in Mass Societies	288
	Summary and Discussion	296
	Suggested Readings	297
XI.	SOCIAL DISLOCATIONS	299
	Emergence of Incongruities	301
	Factionalism and Marginal Status	308

Demoralization as a Social Process	316
Development of Collective Anxiety	323
Summary and Discussion	329
Suggested Readings	330
XII. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS	332
Focus of Collective Discontent	333
Recurrent Patterns of Development	341
Opposition and Group Solidarity	349
Problems Facing Successful Movements	356
Summary and Discussion	362
Suggested Readings	363
XIII. SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION	364
Selective Acceptance of Innovations	366
Patterns of Social Mobility	372
Establishment of Social Norms	379
Reconstruction of Perspectives	385
Summary and Discussion	391
Suggested Readings	392
PART FOUR. AGONISTIC PROCESSES	
XIV. POWER AND POLITICS	397
Conflict as a Social Process	399
Techniques of Negotiation	406
Techniques of Persuasion	411
Techniques of Coercion	419
Summary and Discussion	424
Suggested Readings	425
XV. BIPOLARIZATION	427
Intensification of Rivalries	428
Formation of Contrast Conceptions	433
Hostile Outbursts Within Communities	440
Intervention in Civil Disorders	447

	Summary and Discussion	451
	Suggested Readings	453
XVI.	ORGANIZED WARFARE	454
	War as a Social Institution	455
	Mobilization of Popular Support	460
	Military Organizations and Careers	467
	The Struggle for Collective Morale	474
	Summary and Discussion	481
	Suggested Readings	482
XVII.	INSURRECTIONS	483
	Conditions of Insurrection	485
	Displacement of the Government	492
	Struggles Among Revolutionary Factions	498
	Reestablishment of Authority	504
	Summary and Discussion	511
	Suggested Readings	512
	CONCLUSION	
XVIII.	SOCIAL INTERVENTION	517
	Utopias and Problematic Situations	519
	Obstacles to Orderly Reconstruction	523
	Techniques of Conflict Resolution	527
	Values and Sociological Research	532
	Summary and Discussion	536
	Suggested Readings	537
	<i>Bibliography</i>	539
	<i>Name Index</i>	563
	<i>Subject Index</i>	571

# INTRODUCTION



# I

## SOCIAL TRANSACTIONS

Francis Bacon articulated his grand vision of science early in the seventeenth century. He saw knowledge as the key instrument for manipulating natural processes to improve the lot of human beings, for he was convinced that to control nature one first had to understand how things work. In *Novum Organum* he wrote that "we cannot command nature except by obeying her." He argued that scientific knowledge should be empirically grounded rather than speculative, that scientists should be organized to facilitate their collaboration, and that the entire enterprise should be conducted to enhance the human condition. Although Bacon attained high positions in the government of King James I, he was unable to persuade the crown to follow his suggestions. Not long after his death, however, his writings provided inspiration for others. The Royal Society was founded in London in 1662; not long thereafter several scientific academies were established on the Continent. For more than three hundred years scientists throughout the world have struggled to live up to the ideals Bacon enunciated, dedicating their lives to contributing to the reservoir of reliable knowledge, taking it for granted that the fruits of their work would be used for the benefit of humanity. Only in recent times, especially after some physicists became appalled by the destructiveness of weapons developed on the basis of their research, have serious questions been raised about this ideology.

We live in troubled times. Remarkable advances in medical research have reduced infant mortality and prolonged life but have also led to the possibility of overpopulation. Although some of the dire warnings of



demographers may be exaggerated, many natural resources are likely to be exhausted in the not-too-distant future. The distribution of existing resources is so uneven that societies for gourmets flourish at a time when people are starving. As we attempt a more equitable distribution, we shall probably become embroiled in civil and international wars. The immense achievements of the physical sciences have improved the material lot of millions, but they have also enabled us to develop deadly weapons. With the proliferation of nuclear arms the extinction of the human species is for the first time a distinct possibility. In desperate efforts to increase production, most of the world is becoming more industrialized. With increasing production comes greater pollution. Even if we are not incinerated in a nuclear holocaust, many of us may well die of suffocation. As such problems mount, social scientists are asked to help alleviate them. But the different disciplines have not developed at an even pace, and to date findings in the social sciences are not as reliable as those in the other sciences.

Sociology is one of the social sciences. Although not all sociologists are concerned with humanitarian goals, Bacon's ideals have always attracted students to the discipline. Auguste Comte, whom many regard as the founder of sociology, was interested primarily in social progress. During the past century sociology has become a vast enterprise. Research is being conducted in most countries, and the subject is taught in most universities. As we begin our study of the field, several questions arise: What is the subject matter of sociology? What is the state of knowledge in the field? Can an understanding of sociology help us deal more effectively with the pressing problems that confront us?

## THE SUBJECT MATTER OF SOCIOLOGY

*The Study of Concerted Action.* So far as we know, human beings have always lived in association with one another. Even misanthropes and recluses who have renounced their fellows were once members of families or inhabitants of orphanages. Sociologists have focused their attention on the fact of joint existence, but locating the boundaries of the discipline, which must be done at a high level of abstraction, is not easy. Although many formal definitions of sociology have been proposed, the most comprehensive approach commits sociologists to analyzing various forms of common endeavor — things that people do together in units of two or more. Those who happen to be on the scene of an accident render