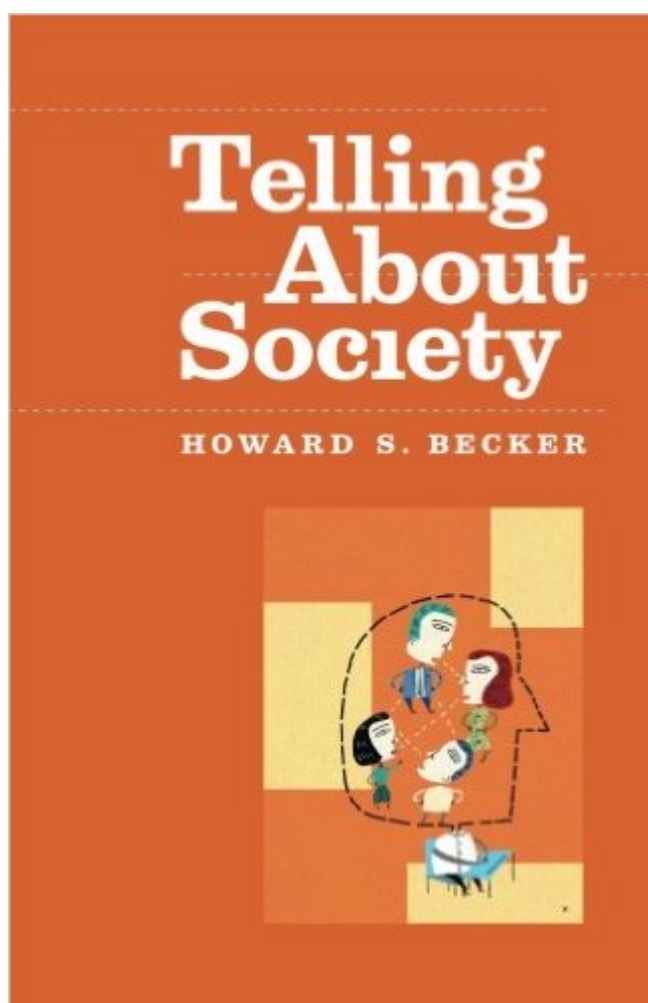


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# Telling About Society (Chicago Guides To Writing, Editing, And Publishing)



## Synopsis

I Remember, one of French writer Georges Perec's most famous pieces, consists of 480 numbered paragraphs—each just a few short lines recalling a memory from his childhood. The work has neither a beginning nor an end. Nor does it contain any analysis. But it nonetheless reveals profound truths about French society during the 1940s and 50s. Taking Perec's book as its cue, *Telling About Society* explores the unconventional ways we communicate what we know about society to others. The third in distinguished teacher Howard Becker's best-selling series of writing guides for social scientists, the book explores the many ways knowledge about society can be shared and interpreted through different forms of telling—fiction, films, photographs, maps, even mathematical models—many of which remain outside the boundaries of conventional social science. Eight case studies, including the photographs of Walker Evans, the plays of George Bernard Shaw, the novels of Jane Austen and Italo Calvino, and the sociology of Erving Goffman, provide convincing support for Becker's argument: that every way of telling about society is perfect for some purpose. The trick is, as Becker notes, to discover what purpose is served by doing it this way rather than that. With Becker's trademark humor and eminently practical advice, *Telling About Society* is an ideal guide for social scientists in all fields, for artists interested in saying something about society, and for anyone interested in communicating knowledge in unconventional ways.

## Book Information

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"Little can be said about the crystal clear language Becker uses and the corresponding clarity of his arguments. . . . It is encouraging--without intending to sound corny--because Becker makes you want to become a better sociologist, which might be the prime intention behind reading such a book in the first place. By the same token, it is safe to say that this book is especially recommendable for graduate students or anybody who is still open to apply other forms of representing social reality." (Matthias Revers *Acta Sociologica*) "Becker's study of methodology is a fantastic resource, assembling new and previously published material of interest to those facing the challenge of doing and reporting on social research. . . . Telling about Society showcases the breadth and depth of his scholarship, drawing together thought from several decades of research, teaching, and creative production." (Kris Erickson *Visual Studies*) "Telling About Society presents a deeply worthwhile and generous series of observations collected over more than 20 years. This book would surely spur important discussions in Introduction to Sociology, methods, and advanced graduate courses alike. Telling About Societymaps and gently questions the boundaries of the sociological discipline. Becker should be applauded for bravely attacking (but with subtlety and respect) the standards and conventions of the field." (Alexandre Frenett *Canadian Journal of Sociology*)

Howard Becker lives and works in San Francisco. He is the author of several books, including *Outsiders*, *Writing for Social Scientists*, and *Tricks of the Trade*, the latter two published by the University of Chicago Press.

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