Abstract

Drawing upon my experiences as a feminist sociologist performing public sociology on same-sex marriage and gay family rights issues, this essay cautions against romanticized visions of practicing feminist sociology in the public interest. I demonstrate the paradoxical and tacitly conservative conditions that structure contemporary public sociological discourse in the U.S. Performing public sociology under contemporary conditions of globalized, market-driven communications technologies and neoconservative discursive frames, I argue, reinforces positivist epistemology, regardless of one’s ideological goals or epistemological convictions. Paradoxically, moreover, the arena of sound-bite sociology exploits reflexive and semiotic knowledge to convey research in rhetoric that reinforces the positivist, normalizing ideological regime that the former seek to deconstruct. Feminist and critical social scientists should be aware of these pitfalls before they venture into the public arena.

Keywords

Public sociology, same-sex marriage, academic feminism.