

Public Sociology

Research, Action, and Change



Philip Nyden
Leslie Hossfeld
Gwendolyn Nyden



Public
Sociology

Public Sociology

Research, Action, and Change

Philip Nyden
Loyola University Chicago

Leslie Hossfeld
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Gwendolyn Nyden
Oakton Community College





Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

FOR INFORMATION:

Pine Forge Press
An Imprint of SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
33 Pekin Street #02-01
Far East Square
Singapore 048763

Acquisitions Editor : David Repetto
Editorial Assistant : Maggie Stanley
Production Editor : Catherine M. Chilton
Copy Editor : Pam Suwinsky
Typesetter : C&M Digital (P) Ltd.
Proofreader : Annette R. Van Deusen
Indexer : Diggs Publication Services
Cover Designer : Bryan Fishman
Marketing Manager : Erica DeLuca
Permissions Editor : Karen Ehrmann

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Image #1: ©[iStockphoto.com/TomML](https://www.istockphoto.com/TomML)

Image #2: ©[iStockphoto.com/track5](https://www.istockphoto.com/track5)

Image #3: ©[iStockphoto.com/pixdeluxe](https://www.istockphoto.com/pixdeluxe)

Image #4: ©[iStockphoto.com/asiseeit](https://www.istockphoto.com/asiseeit)

Image #5: ©[iStockphoto.com/MadKol](https://www.istockphoto.com/MadKol)

Image #6: ©[iStockphoto.com/DIMUSE](https://www.istockphoto.com/DIMUSE)

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Nyden, Philip W.

Public sociology: research, action, and change / Philip Nyden, Leslie Hossfeld, Gwen Nyden.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4129-8263-4 (pbk.)

1. Sociology—Methodology. 2. Sociology—Research. 3. Applied sociology. 4. Social change.
I. Hossfeld, Leslie H., 1961- II. Nyden, Gwendolyn E. III. Title.

HM511.N93 2012 301.01—dc22 2010050142

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

11 12 13 14 15 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Foreword

Michael Burawoy

Foreword

Steven Redfield

Foreword

Dan E. Moore

Acknowledgments

Public Scholarship, the Sociological Imagination, and Engaged Scholarship

Sidebar: Expert Testimony

Gregory Squires

Crossing Boundaries in 21st-Century Research: Sharing Knowledge and Collaborating Between University and Community

Sidebar: Setting a Graduate Education Path for Public Sociology

Julie Hilvers

Sidebar: Developing Student Commitment to Public Sociology

Kim Lancaster

Starting Up and Sustaining Public Sociology Projects

Sidebar: Working With the Academy: A Community Perspective

Mac Legerton

Career Guide for Public Sociologists

Sidebar: Enjoying Success Outside the Academy

Roberta Spalter-Roth

Sidebar: Public Sociologist as Teacher First

Susan Ambler

Sidebar: Learning Is a Two-Way Street

Leslie Hossfeld

Case Studies 1. Equitable Community Development

Sidebar: Partnerships From the Perspective of the Community

1.1 Educating About Homelessness: A University–City Government Research Partnership

Laura Nichols, Fernando Cázares, and Angelica M. Rodriguez

1.2 The Differential Impact of Gentrification on Communities of Color in Chicago

Philip Nyden, Julie Davis, and Emily Edlynn

1.3 Research in Action: The Case of InnerCity Entrepreneurs

Daniel Monti

1.4 Art and Equitable Community Development

Diane Grams

Case Studies 2. Environmental Issues

2.1 Public Sociology for Environmental Health and Environmental Justice

Alissa Cordner, Alison Cohen, and Phil Brown

2.2 Learning From Disaster: Documenting the Impacts of Hurricane Katrina on Displaced College Students From New Orleans

Anthony E. Ladd and Duane A. Gill

2.3 Working for Global Environmental Justice: Channeling Privilege, Producing New Knowledge

David N. Pellow

Sidebar: Testimonial From “Briana”

Case Studies 3. Regional Research and Data Collection to Enhance Public Knowledge

3.1 Neighborhood, Region, and Place: The Chicago Experience

Garth Taylor

3.2 The Sacramento State Annual Survey of the Region

Amy Liu

3.3 Reducing Hunger in Oregon

Michael Leachman

3.4 PovertyEast.org: Providing Information to Help Communities Address Critical Needs

Leslie Hossfeld

3.5 Sociology in Public Service

Paul Luebke

Case Studies 4. Inequalities of Race, Class, and Gender

4.1 Bringing Feminist Sociology to Smart-Girl: Building a University-Nonprofit Partnership

Abby L. Ferber

Sidebar: Public Sociology as a Foundation for a Counseling Career in Education

4.2 Feminist Research in Action: An Intersectional Approach to Girlcentric Programming

Melissa Swauger

4.3 Youth Participation in Community Research for Racial Justice

Barry Checkoway and Katie Richards-Schuster

4.4 Building Resources to Create and Maintain Stable Diverse Communities

Madeline Troche-Rodriguez

Case Studies 5. The Media

5.1 The Media, ACORN, and Presidential Politics

Peter Dreier and Christopher R. Martin

5.2 Pressuring Alcohol Companies to Reform Marketing Practices

David H. Jernigan

5.3 The Reel Girls Project: Self, Image, Adolescence, and Filmmaking

*Shannon Silva, Susan Bullers, Mariana Johnson,
Donna King, and Jean-Anne Sutherland*

5.4 The Internet as a Leveler Between Advantaged and Disadvantaged Communities

Keith N. Hampton

Case Studies 6. Health

6.1 Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Vandana Kohli

6.2 Doing God's Work and Doing Good Work(s): Unique Challenges to Evaluation Research in Ministry Settings

Anne E. Figert

6.3 Feast on the Southeast: Creating a Sustainable Local Food System in Southeastern North Carolina

Leslie Hossfeld and Mac Legerton

Sidebar: Doing Public Sociology

Raven Bruno

6.4 Challenging Discrimination Against Women, Minorities, and the Sick in Health Insurance

Donald W. Light

6.5 Tobacco Use Prevention in Montana's Frontier Communities: Developing New Rural Strategies

Patricia G. Nichols

Case Studies 7. Crime, Reducing Violence, and Promoting Justice

7.1 Forty Years of Codifying and Mapping Homicides in Chicago: Impacts on Policing, Research, and Community Well-Being

Carolyn Rebecca Block and Richard Block

7.2 Racial Disparities in Criminal Justice in Wisconsin: Analysis, Graphs, and Engagement

Pamela Oliver

7.3 The Role of Relationship Building in Research Partnerships

Christine George

Sidebar: The Process of Partnering Is as Essential as the Final Product

Leslie Landis

7.4 Hate Crime Motivation: The Practical Consequences of an Offender Typology

Jack Levin and Jack McDevitt

Case Studies 8. Community Organizing

8.1 Cultivating Public Sociology From the Classroom: The Case of a Student-Organized Tenants Union

Peter L. Callero

Sidebar: The Power of Community Organizing

Ellen Keithley

8.2 The Unity of Theory and Practice: The U.S. Social Forum and Movement Building for Social Transformation

Walda Katz-Fishman, Rose M. Brewer, and Jerome Scott

8.3 When the Community Leads

Catherine Willis, Crystel Anders, and Randy Stoecker

8.4 The "Third Place" Project

Ray Oldenburg

Conclusion: The Case for the New, Engaged 21st-Century Scholarship

Index

About the Editors

About the Contributors

Foreword

C. Wright Mills famously defined the sociological imagination as linking personal troubles to public issues. He thought it was sufficient to trace personal misfortune to social forces and people would throng the political arena. Thus, knowing that unemployment was not the result of bad luck or individual sloth but of the operation of the labor market, workers would demand state protection against unemployment. Knowing that domestic violence was conditioned by male power, women would demand laws and services that would empower women.

Knowledge, Mills assumed, was power. Maybe. But not in quite the sense he intended. Faced with those daunting forces beyond their control, but forces certainly within their intellectual grasp, the dominated throw up their hands in despair, paralyzed by their impotence rather than empowered by their understanding. Sociological imagination may expose social structure as the source of our malaise, but it is not sufficient for political action. We also need a *political imagination* to turn personal troubles into public issues, which is precisely what suffuses this collection of public sociologies edited by leading figures in this field. Whether they are writing about community development, environmental justice, access to education and health, overcoming inequalities, or tackling crime, the authors are found not only in the classroom but also in the trenches of civil society (or in the classroom as a trench of civil society), exercising their political imagination in galvanizing the public will. Outside a few elite research universities—those rapidly disappearing islands of insularity—carrying sociology into the community is neither rare nor controversial. In fact, for the authors of these case studies, and so many others, it is a way of life that needs to be made more known, more public.

An effective political imagination depends on an organic connection between sociologists and their publics. But such “organic” public sociology is not just a form of sociological practice suited to the social justice foundations of sociology; rather it is an

essential intervention, necessary to save the university under siege from state and market. Bereft of public funds, the university is rapidly becoming a capitalist machine, servicing corporations with research and demanding escalating fees from students-become-consumers. Living in a fool's paradise, we have been accustomed to take for granted public funding of universities. Those days are definitively gone. In the end we may have to accept the corporatization of the university, in which everything is reduced to the bottom line, but for now we can put up a fight, building and extending collaborations with communities, themselves under assault. This book shows we still have a choice, albeit one that is rapidly receding, to defend the public university—public in the sense of being accountable to broad public interests. In this regard sociology leads the way in alliance with other academic disciplines. It has, after all, its roots and its standpoint in civil society, defending the latter's integrity against the predatory state and the tyrannical market. Thus, in defending civil society sociology is not only defending its own existence, but that of wider humanity too.

Michael Burawoy
University of California, Berkeley

Foreword

Community-based service organizations are in continual motion. Our speed and adaptability create numerous benefits. We respond quickly to changing needs, we modify services midstream when we discover a more effective strategy, and we can launch new programs with little notice to bring new funding to our communities.

But operating in hyperdrive leaves little time for reflection, planning, or deeper learning. Every day, we add to our unexamined stockpiles of information. Too often, that means unique and valuable data go to waste—data that could have led to better results, transferable lessons for other organizations, or headway on broader, systemic problems.

Fortunately, partnerships with academic institutions to engage in applied research can unlock the potential of that unprocessed knowledge. The methods, discipline, and perspective of research and evaluation expand our decision-making tools from gut reactions to conscious analysis. They let us integrate relevant information about our regions, or see small changes over time, or uncover correlations that lie beneath the surface. In our case, at STRIVE, a nonprofit job training program in Chicago, an ongoing partnership with Loyola's Center for Urban Research and Learning led to research and program evaluations that yielded expanded staff development, improved retention for hard-to-serve clients, and a new model for clients' career advancement.

At the same time, researchers gain unique benefits from this access to field data and immediate application of findings. They get information long before it appears in official statistical reports or administrative records. They can see in real time the impact of applying proposed revisions to service models. And ultimately, when evaluating their recommendations, they can apply the critical test: Will they work?

Together, this collaboration between universities and communities is the remarkable realm of sociology in action.

Steven Redfield
Coro National

Foreword

Public sociology. It has been done. It is being done. And you can do it. This timely book explains what it is and cites important historical examples. The book also provides dozens of contemporary cases demonstrating how public sociology “gets put into play.” I hope the readers can find themselves in these examples and “just do it.”

As the authors of these chapters and case studies point out, the majority of people who call themselves sociologists work in academia. However, all the people who have advanced degrees and even all who take undergraduate sociology courses have the opportunity to use what they have learned in the public arena. I got my “Invitation to Sociology” from Peter Berger in his book of that title back in the early 1960s. In it he said that sociology is an attempt to understand in a disciplined way the “world taken for granted” that we all live in. That understanding is the beginning. Making a difference is the real challenge of public sociology. The challenge is beautifully laid out in these pages.

I spent 20 years in departments of sociology in three major universities and 20 years in a large private foundation. I concur with the authors that doing public sociology requires intentionality, persistence, and sometimes courage. Each organization—especially the academy—has its own set of expectations. And sometimes it requires effort to connect with the world outside. Any discipline spends a lot of effort differentiating itself from others, sociology perhaps more than others. In my experience that process can lead to insularity and inward thinking. Public sociology helps us break out, but we must be intentional.

One chapter refers to public sociology as “crossing boundaries.” My metaphor is building bridges. Bridges require firm foundations at both ends; they are built to last; and they go both ways. Public sociology must not only have a permanent foundation in the academy (or your organization), but also in the community. And it is not a one-time affair. Knowledge, even wisdom, exists at

both ends of this bridge and must flow both ways. I have had colleagues suggest that doing research with community “waters down the research.” To the contrary, it makes the findings richer and more relevant.

In 20 years at a foundation, I never began a sentence with “As a sociologist.” But, I never examined a proposal without thinking of the project as a test of a null hypothesis. We never called grant making research, but I always considered every report and every publication a contribution to a continuing intellectual dialogue. Some seem to think that public sociology is somehow less rigorous than other kinds. I have found that it takes more theoretical and methodological sophistication. And while results may not find their way to the top disciplinary journals, true practitioners do contribute to the dialogue in appropriate written vehicles and in organizational and public policy.

Public Sociology: Research, Action, and Change confirms and reinforces my experiences. I highly recommend it to teachers, grad students, and practitioners.

Dan E. Moore
GivingInsight