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Part I
The Background

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Introduction: Sociology, Uncertainty and the Possibility of an Imagined Future

Abstract: *This chapter focuses upon the disciplinary and social contexts in which sociology operates. It identifies a general sense of uncertainty in the discipline. It also outlines the challenges of the neoliberal academy. This chapter argues that in order to prevent sociology from withering, and to ensure its vibrant future, we need to turn to alternative forms of knowledge. This chapter suggests that punk might provide a source of inspiration for developing creativity, inventiveness, and liveliness in sociology.*

It is probably fair to say that there is quite a bit of uncertainty in sociology at the moment. This sense of uncertainty doesn't look like it is likely to leave any time soon. This is nothing new. Sociology is renowned for its almost chronic sense of crisis. It could even be said that a continual sense of crisis has dogged large parts of its history. John Holmwood (2010: 650) has pointed out, for instance, that 'sociology has to be achieved against an internal tendency to self-subversion'. This is perhaps illustrative of a discipline that lacks self-esteem, a discipline that is self-conscious, and maybe even insecure – as Arthur Stinchcombe (1994) has put it, a 'disintegrated discipline'. Stinchcombe (1994) argues that fragmentation is a central problem in forging a solid future for sociology. What Stinchcombe is concerned with is the growing inability of sociology, as a 'disintegrated discipline', to defend itself. At the heart of the fragmentation or 'disintegration' described by Stinchcombe (1994: 283) is the 'wide variety of substantive subject matter in disintegrated disciplines, and the strong boundaries around substantive specialities'. Stinchcombe suggests that this simply 'means that people cannot get interested in each other's work'. This type of disciplinary segmentation has been echoed in Andrew Abbott's (2001) classic study of the *Chaos of Disciplines*. In this book Abbott describes how 'fractal distinctions' carve up disciplines and make dialogue both within and between disciplines extremely difficult. As I will describe in this book though, a more open form of diversity in the discipline is something we might strive for. We need to find a way to resolve the heightened forms of specialization that translate into the barriers that prevent cross-fertilization. Despite the problems and difficulties, and this might be considered a little naïve and utopian, we might look to cut across the distinctions and specialisms that currently divide those with a shared if diverse interest in what Becker (2007) calls 'telling about society'.

Given the apparent fragmentation it has experienced, it is perhaps not surprising that Steve Fuller (2006: 1), in his attempts to think through a 'new sociological imagination' suitable for our times, has even suggested that sociology is 'suffering from an identity crisis'. But can we let this broader sense of uncertainty permeate into our sociology? Can we let it shape and define our practice and our collective sociological imagination? Perhaps a better question would be to ask if we should let this uncertainty come to inhibit and restrict what C. Wright Mills (1959) called the 'promise' of sociology. A sense of crisis might help us to rethink our purpose and approach, but if left unattended it might also

become inhibitive and restrictive. If it undermines our confidence then it is likely to limit and restrain our approach and ultimately hold us back. A sense of crisis, in itself, is not a productive thing, but, if dealt with properly and directly, it might lead to productive outcomes.

In the face of the challenges and questions that are being posed it would be understandable if sociologists were to be overwhelmed by a desire to 'play it safe'. Yet this retreat to apparent safety might in itself become counterproductive. It is likely to de-energize the discipline, to restrict its scope, and to place sociology in the background of public dialogue. It might mute our voice amongst the din of dialogue on social matters. We sociologists might simply be left to whither on the vine. Playing it safe and moving into the background might even come to undermine the credentials of the discipline, a discipline intended to be at the forefront of social commentary, particularly in the eyes of the next generation of prospective students and sociologists – who will no doubt be drawn towards engaging and exciting ideas and accounts of the world that they can associate with or that speak to them. In a context in which narratives and commentaries of the social world are to be found densely packed into the cultural forms we consume (Beer & Burrows, 2010), can we afford to be tentative? Will the discipline thrive and regenerate if it is not able to spark interest and to speak to the next generation of sociologists? These questions are, of course, open to some debate, as are the potential responses. So, instead of playing it safe, being tentative and conservative, and living by the newly forged rules of the game, my suggestion, no, my demand here, is that we respond to our uncertainty by being bold, creative, imaginative, and, if we can bring ourselves to manage it, unapologetic and maybe even radical. I will use this opening chapter to try to set up the issues and to think about the conditions and circumstances that sociology is responding to and that are likely to shape the possibilities and opportunities that we face.

Put simply, this book develops the notion of a *punk sociology*. This is a form of sociology that takes inspiration from, what might be described as, *the punk ethos*. The book uses the punk ethos to re-imagine sociology. The argument of the book is that the attitude and sensibility of punk can productively be used to regenerate and energize the sociological imagination. What motivates this agenda is the pressing need to look for inspiration in shaping the future of sociology in a changing social context. It is part of a broader project aimed at thinking through the possibilities of drawing upon cultural forms and alternative forms of knowledge in

order to re-imagine sociological practice, ideas, and forms of communication. As it works through the various features of the punk ethos, the book demonstrates how these ideas, approaches, and attitudes might be adapted to sociology. At a time when the focus has been absorbed or hijacked by what is often referred to as the 'impact agenda', this book aims to show how we might develop a form of sociology that is engaging for the wider public, that is relevant and responsive, and that makes people feel like anyone can engage in sociology. This, I claim, will lead to a vibrant future for sociology in terms of both its research and teaching. This is a book aimed at firing the sociological imagination by rethinking the principles and values that are at the heart of sociology and sociological work.

As the above suggests, this is a book that aims to imagine a productive and vibrant future for sociology. The book opens with such a 'promise', to return to C. Wright Mills, and then elaborates the different features of the punk ethos that might be used to shape sociology. The book returns to some key literature on the punk movement; it uses these to outline the core principles, attitudes, and practices that are central to the punk ethos. The book then moves to focus upon how this ethos might be imported into a punk sociology. The second half of the book explores these features in turn, and critically applies each to the sociological project. The book then concludes by summarizing the key features of a punk sociology and by imagining where this approach might take us over the coming years. There will be a number of places throughout this book that will engage with cutting-edge issues and debates within sociology, and the book will explore what answers a punk sociology might have for the types of problems and issues that have been highlighted by sociologists over recent years. These include the apparent public indifference shown towards sociology (particularly off the back of the economic downturn), the problem of a public sociology, the challenges to sociology's jurisdiction from commercial and cultural forms of sociological discourse and analysis, the perceived waning of the promise of sociology, the opportunity and challenges of digital data and digital sociology, the position of the discipline within the audit culture and the neoliberal university, increases in fees and reductions in research funding, and the opportunities for re-imagining the craft of the discipline, along with a range of other issues outlined in visions of disciplinary fragmentation, crises, and the like. This book is not an indulgent or nostalgic return to a particular cultural moment; it is instead a reflection upon the state of sociology

within the contemporary context in which it operates. It shows how we might use cultural resources as inspiration, as alternative forms of knowledge, which might be powerful in thinking about how sociology might respond to its contemporary challenges and opportunities. This book attempts to show how our response can be creative and imaginative as we attempt to engage people in sociology and as we carve out a successful future for the discipline.

In a time of uncertainty, which sociology appears to be in – as a result of a range of largely external social, cultural, and economic conditions – it is important to return to the core issues within our discipline and to reflect upon their purpose and value. This book looks to do just that. It looks to provoke imagined futures for sociology and to reflect upon how we might develop particular responses to these imagined futures. This book offers what I hope will be seen as an imaginative response, a response that resists particular pressures to *play it safe* – which in turn are likely to narrow sociology's remit and limit its scope. It is a book that promotes diversity and resistance in the discipline. It is a direct response to calls for a renewed creativity in the deployment of the sociological imagination (which I will describe in a moment). I suggest here that in order to develop a response to these calls, which are actually quite difficult to respond to, we might look back to punk for inspiration. We can use punk's ethos or sensibilities to imagine just one alternative future for sociology.

To situate the arguments of this book, in what remains of this introductory chapter, I will discuss briefly some of the contemporary conditions under which sociology is being performed. I have already suggested that sociology is in a moment of uncertainty, but we might wonder what the conditions are that have contributed towards this shaky self-esteem. This short chapter, and even the book as a whole, cannot aim to fill in all the gaps in this particular story. There are actually some excellent resources that we might turn to in order to understand the issues faced by sociology throughout its history. In the British context we can see the battles over the form and direction of sociology from its inception. An instructive example is Chris Renwick's (2011) account of sociology's relations with biology and the appointment of the first British chair of sociology at the London School of Economics. Renwick's account shows that sociology might have gone in a very different direction if this single appointment had been made differently, which is illustrative of how sociology was, in a sense, uncertain about its identity from the outset. To continue the

narratives around the changing identity of sociology we could also turn to Mike Savage's (2010) accounts of post-war British sociology. There are also other prominent histories of British sociology, such as that provided by Halsey (2004) and across a range of articles (with a new book on the history of sociology edited by John Holmwood and John Scott soon to be published). The competing narratives and complex histories we find in these accounts only afford an understanding of sociology in one particular national context. If we were to look internationally we would find vastly different forms of sociology, with equally if not more profound complexities in the cultivation of disciplinary identities and values. Hence, it is not really possible here to attempt to elaborate a full historical account of our uncertainty, rather this is something that might be pieced together from these various resources and might then be explored in its contemporary manifestation through a range of accounts of crisis, limitation, and instability (the range of literature here is significant in its volume, but prominent examples would certainly include Savage & Burrows, 2007; Burawoy, 2005; Adkins & Lury, 2009, 2012, Osbourne et al., 2008; Ruppert et al., 2013 amongst many others). What we see then is an emergent desire to 're-imagine' the 'practice of sociology' (Fuller, 2006: 7), or as John Holmwood (2010: 649) has put it, it is seen to be 'a discipline that has to be "achieved", or continually re-invented, in new circumstances'.

What I am particularly interested in here are accounts that, responding to this general sense of crisis, provide some thoughts on the future of sociology, the values that we might cling to, and the ways in which the discipline might be re-imagined or re-invented. These are accounts that tend to endorse a renewed engagement with Mills notion of a 'sociological imagination', alongside an eagerness to hone and rework this concept to suit the particular problems and challenges of the contemporary world. It is in this type of work that we find a set of questions to which we might respond. These are questions that are a little more particular and go beyond the more general sense that sociology might be reshaped and re-energized. What we find is a growing set of literature in which sociologists are being encouraged to be 'creative' and 'inventive'. This is a call that many of us would agree with in broad terms, but that we may also find to be extremely hard in practice. Let us consider what these calls are suggesting and what they leave open to interpretation, before moving on to think about the particular response that I suggest in this book.

Of course, visions for the future of sociology are not likely to converge around any particular shared ideals. As Abbott (2006) has shown, the very basis of the discipline is far too fragmented for this to happen. But there is a growing sense that we will need to think radically about the way forward. In some cases this might be to reaffirm and rediscover some of the important concepts that have fallen by the wayside, such as 'value' and 'measurement' (Adkins & Lury, 2012). In other cases the suggestion might be that we will need to build a sociology that is responsive to social transformations and that adapts with them, such as the recent call for an interest in new social connections (Burnett et al., 2010), digital sociology (Orton-Johnson & Prior, 2013), or the 'social life of methods' (Ruppert et al., 2013). Underpinning many of these positions is a sense that we need to be creative and imaginative in rethinking what sociology is and what it does. This stream of thought found a voice in a recent article reflecting on the work of C. Wright Mills some 50 years after his death. In this piece Nicholas Gane and Les Back (2012) return to the 'promise' and 'craft' of sociology laid out in the work of Mills. They attempt to argue that 'the enduring relevance of Mill's legacy is his way of practicing intellectual life as an attentive and sensuous craft but also as a moral and political project' (Gane & Back, 2012: 404). In other words, returning to Mills work, Gane and Back remind us that sociology need not be restricted in the form it takes, and in fact that sociology needs to use Mills' work to rediscover an interest in experience, the senses, and its place in moral and political debates (an argument on the importance of experiences and senses to the sociological imagination can also be found in Fraser, 2009). Again, this might be contentious, particularly in a discipline where neutrality has become a central feature. Gane and Back's piece is important because it represents a direct call for sociologists to re-engage with Mills' work and to use it to think about the way we might develop the craft of sociology in new and creative ways. As they put it, 'it is necessary to think again about the promise of the discipline and, beyond this, what might be brought to this promise by the kinds of critical attentiveness, of dialogue and critique, and of different forms of writing or inscription that are central to the sociological craft' (Gane & Back, 2012: 415). The argument here is that, in order to do this, 'Mill's vision of what sociology can be, in its exercise of an attentive and imaginative craft, still has much to offer' (Gane & Back, 2012: 418). Clearly then the theme of the day, in response to a sense of crisis and a changing social setting, is that we need to be imaginative in re-imaging the craft of sociology.

This argument, concerning the craft of sociology, continues in a recent collection of pieces on *Live Methods* (Back & Puwar, 2012). This collection gathers together pieces concerned with offering a lively and imaginative engagement with how sociology is conducted (see for example the account of curation in sociology in Puwar & Sharma, 2012). The scope of the collection is far reaching, and actually shows the range of ways in which this re-imagining of sociology might lead us. Rather than attempt to sketch all of these out, we can remain focused on the core idea: liveliness. In a central piece designed to orientate the collection, on the topic of 'live sociology', Les Back (2012: 18) suggests that there 'is more opportunity to re-imagine sociological craft now than at any other point in the discipline's history'. The argument here is that sociologists are faced with a world that is producing new forms of data, a social world that is media saturated with versatile devices and where social media lead individuals to broadcast aspects of their everyday lives. For Back, we are re-imagining sociology at a time when new opportunities for social research are rapidly opening up. These opportunities are presenting themselves, particularly if we open up our understanding of sociological research and attempt to exercise our sociological imagination in ways that perhaps diverge from our established understandings of sociological practice. There is an absence within these emergent cultures, Back argues, of the attentiveness that sociology can bring. The core point is that, for Back (2012: 34, italics in the original), we need to bring 'a *bit of craftiness into the craft*'. Clearly then this requires the creativity and craftiness of the sociologist to be exercised. Back (2012: 34) summarizes his position in the following terms:

> live sociology involves developing the methodological opportunities offered by digital culture and expanding the forms and modes of telling sociology through collaborating with artists, designers, musicians and film-makers and incorporating new modes and styles of sociological representation. The use of digital devices…offer the opportunity to augment sociological attentiveness and develop mobile methods that also enable the production of empirical data simultaneously from a plurality of vantages.

Back's vision of 'live sociology' then is something of a creative engagement with the world, which attempts to think not just how we might conduct a sociology of these changes but also how sociology might be a part of these changes in its forms of analysis and communication. It is seen to be a collaborative endeavour that draws on new knowledge. We

are left to wonder what types of ideas and approaches might structure such an expansion of sociology's promise. In the conclusion to his piece Back (2012: 36) makes the claim that we, as sociologists, 'need to argue for an alternative future but also craft one into existence'. This sentiment is a call to sociologists to respond to their conditions. But it does leave some questions about exactly how we might 'craft' an alternative sociology 'into existence'. As I will discuss in a moment, one option is to borrow such a vision or ethos from another place and to transpose it onto sociology. This, I suggest, might help us to move beyond the fairly intimidating or scary, maybe even inhibiting, idea that we might be responsible for coming up with a viable and re-crafted future for sociology.

Elsewhere, Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford (2012a) invite us to involve ourselves in developing 'inventive methods'. In the introduction to the edited collection on this theme, Lury and Wakeford (2012b) attempt to provide an agenda for these 'inventive methods'. They base this agenda around a series of assertions about what makes for a particularly inventive method, these are then pursued by the various contributors – whose chapters range from dealing with the inventive use of anecdotes, experiments, numbers, photos, patterns, sounds, amongst others. Again, Lury and Wakeford position this piece, echoing the earlier collection on the question of 'what is the empirical?' (Adkins & Lury, 2009), as a response to what they describe as 'the current renewal of interest in the politics of method' (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 1).

In general terms, they contend that inventive methods are 'oriented towards an investigation of the open-endedness of the social world', they add that their hope is that these methods will 'enable *the happening* of the social world – its ongoingness, relationality, contingency and sensuousness – to be investigated' (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 2, italics in the original). They attempt to work some specificity into these quite general aims. The assertions that they work with, and that, they state, are not intended to 'aspire to either unity or completeness' (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 2), revolve around a number of key statements. For example, they argue that 'it is not possible to apply a method as if it were indifferent or external to the problem it seeks to address, but that method must rather be made specific and relevant to the problem…if methods are to be inventive, they should not leave that problem untouched'. (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 3). There is a sense of immanence here, with methods operating from the inside of the issues they aim to investigate. The implicit suggestion here is that methods, which are integrated into

the social world, will need to change with that social world. They talk of reconsidering the 'relevance of method' and how it might fit with the 'here and now' (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 3). This attachment of methods to the changing social world is something that has been examined historically by Mike Savage (2010). Savage's book performs the exact role of exploring 'how methods contribute to the framing of change' (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 6). We can start though with the general point that, according to Lury and Wakeford's (2012b: 10–11) vision, inventive methods are 'devices' that are usable in 'multiple contexts' and are also part of the 'assemblage' and 'apparatus' of 'particular situations'.

Perhaps unsurprisingly Lury and Wakeford (2012b: 4) also assert that inventive methods are not bound to particular disciplines, they need to be interdisciplinary in nature. Alongside this, and returning to the issue of relevance, they also argue for the need to think of our approaches in distinction to commercial forms of research, this is a challenge they too suggest that we need to take on. Perhaps the most telling of the assertions they present concerns the point that 'inventiveness does not … equate to new' (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 6). This approach then is not just about finding new things and using new methods to do it, it can also be to use old resources to think in inventive ways. These assertions, of which I have picked out only a small handful, come together to define the notion of inventive methods. For example, Lury and Wakeford (2012b: 7) state that their proposal:

> is that the inventiveness of methods is to be found in the relation between two moments: the addressing of a method … to a specific problem, and the capacity of what emerges in the use of the method to change the problem.

We have something here that is illustrative of the way that such approaches might be embedded in the world. They continue, 'All of this is a way of saying that inventiveness is a matter of use, of collaboration, of situatedness, and does not imply the ineffectiveness of methods, only that their inventiveness … cannot be secured in advance' (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 7). This would indicate that it is by having a go, by trying things out, that inventiveness might emerge. It might seem an obvious point but it is not until we try things out that we know if they will work. This experimentation takes a level of commitment and bravery, it is to invest an effort in something that is risky and may not pay off.

If this collected volume on inventive methods is not a 'conventional set of "how-to" recipes for research' (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 7), then what

is it? Inventive methods, we are told, 'act as a provocation' to 'the reader' that might allow them to 'consider (more) methods in relation to your own purposes, to begin devising yourself' (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 2). So, although we have some substantial discussion of inventive methods and a series of examples of how they might pan out, the collection is not prescriptive. It is still left to the reader to follow this lead and be 'inventive'. This is no easy feat. And again, we are left to wonder what might provoke this invention. Lury and Wakeford provide us with a tantalizing hint in concluding their agenda setting piece. They say that:

> Grasping this excess, configuring it, is one of the principal sources of a method's capacity to be inventive, a capacity that can only be enhanced by the use of the material-semiotic properties of materials and media to expand relations between the sensible and the knowable. (Lury & Wakeford, 2012b: 21)

The suggestion here seems to be that we should turn to materials that we can think with and that might then provide us with a means to be inventive. At least that is one possible reading of this passage. And this is only a hint. The sense again though is that sociology needs to look outwards for inspiration. It leaves us to wonder where we might turn for the apparent mass of opportunities that are available for us to rethink our approach.

All of the above leaves us with some difficult questions to answer. We can see that there are debates about where sociology might go and how it might be performed, but we are left with some unanswered questions about how this might happen. These questions concern the way we might proceed with such a renewed engagement with the sociological imagination, especially one that is based upon a more creative and inventive craft. We have been given this as an opportunity, but I'm not sure that we have been presented with much in the way of a model of how to proceed, of where we might look for inspiration, or how we might appropriate other forms of invention and creativity into sociology. How do we re-imagine the craft and promise of sociology? How do we find ways of being creative, inventive, and lively? How can we deploy the sociological imagination in creative ways? How can we resist the restrictions of uncertainty, crisis, and measurement? My answer in this book is to use cultural resources to help us to be creative and to re-imagine. In this case I turn to punk; the explanation for this choice will, hopefully, become clearer during the book. But for the moment at least, let us reason that it

provides us with a model for guiding or provoking creativity and invention. It provides a tracer bullet for a potential direction in which sociology might travel. It gives us a model for being creative and inventive and it affords us, in my view, an approach from which sociology might learn to rediscover its promise.

Of course, one thing I have said little about here is the changing environment within which sociology is most usually being conducted: the university. It is widely acknowledged that universities are changing (Wernick, 2006). This has undoubted implications for how knowledge is produced. It is also likely to have differential impacts amongst academic disciplines (Holmwood, 2010). The form the university takes, the way it is funded, how academic practice is managed and measured, and how the university is seen within broader systems of governance are all likely to have consequences for how sociology is done and the form it ultimately takes. Without wanting to get too bogged down within current higher education policy, which of course takes many forms across many national contexts, it is worth dwelling for a moment upon the institutional context of sociology, particularly as this is likely to continue to have powerful outcomes for sociological research. What is perhaps most notable currently is the turn towards political theory in order to understand the trajectory of university life. This is particularly appealing because it allows us to think of global differences whilst also attempting to see what universities share as a common future. However accurate it might be, the currently popular concept of neoliberalism is often invoked in order to explain the current conditions that academics find themselves working in (the references are numerous and growing; for just one recent example, and making the common connection between neoliberalism and zombies, see the various mentions of neoliberalism in Whelan et al., 2013).

Neoliberalism has become a catch-all term for the wider political and social conditions that have come to impinge on the working practices of academics and sociologists. Neoliberalism is something of a slippery concept, but it occurs fairly frequently in writings and discussions on the state of higher education. In very general terms it has been suggested that the 'lynchpin of neoliberal ideology is the belief that open, competitive, and unregulated markets, liberated from all forms of state interference, represent the optimal mechanism for economic development' (Brenner & Theodore, 2002: 2; and for a detailed response to Foucault's key accounts of neoliberalism see Gane, 2012b). Now, of course, this starting

definition is quite open and can translate into different forms in different contexts. Brenner et al. (2010) describe this variability in terms of 'variagated neoliberalization'. They use this term to do two things. First, it shows that neoliberalism is not a discrete and coherent ideological project. And, second, it redefines neoliberalism as an ongoing project or process of neoliberalization. Given this broad scope, it is easy to see how the central focus upon the imposition of markets and competition on the social sphere mean that neoliberalism is a concept that academics might be able to readily apply to their own conditions. Research assessment exercises, league tables, student fees, citation scores and impact factors, virtual learning environments, time allocation models, funding bids, and so on are readily understood to be the materialization of neoliberal ideologies within higher education. For example, Robyn Dowling (2008: 2), reflecting on some of the growing literature that talks of the neoliberal university, contends that:

> Neoliberalism is the dominant trope here, with geographers, like other social scientists, exploring the neoliberalization of the contemporary university (...). These neoliberalization processes include the infusion of market and competitive logics throughout universities, the rise of audit processes and cultures of accountability, and the replacement of public with private (...) funding.

Indeed, we even find that neoliberalism is seen to be embodied in the lives of academics. To pick out an example, Ros Gill (2010) has spoken of the 'hidden injuries' of the 'neoliberal university'. In this case we see an account of the affective responses caused by the apparent encroachment of neoliberal ideologies, with bodily and emotional outcomes for individuals. Gill (2010: 241) argues that 'academia represents an excellent example of the neoliberalisation of the workplace and that academics are, in many ways, model neoliberal subjects, with their endless self-monitoring, flexibility, creativity and internalisation of new forms of auditing and calculating'. This plays out, she argues, in the form of 'insecurity, stress, anxiety and shame' (Gill, 2010: 241).

It should be added that Gill is not alone in her assertions. In a piece titled 'Living with the h-Index?', which refers to a way of calculating citations, Roger Burrows (2012) also describes in some detail the way in which the rise of new types of metrics, or number-based measures, have made aspects of academic life increasingly visible and measurable, with profound consequences. Again, directly linking this to a wider neoliberal

agenda, Burrows describes the increasing possibilities for audit that arise from the university sector's vast new 'data assemblage'. Like Gill, for Burrows, academics, including sociologists, are complicit within this. According to Burrows (2012: 368), the central problem is that 'academic value is, essentially, becoming monetized, and as this happens academic values are becoming transformed'. Again, the practices of sociologists are *not just being measured but they are also being altered*. The interpretations vary, but the broader movement towards market-based higher education, which takes many forms, is often seen to be an 'attack' on education as a 'social right' (Holmwood & Bhambra, 2012) as well as potentially eroding the values of certain types of work whilst pushing researchers and lecturers towards others. These systems of measurement don't report on practices; they change behaviours and shape experiences. Indeed, they cajole the academic towards certain types of work, they encourage the academic to play it safe, even though, as I discuss in this chapter and in Chapter 7, this is actually counterproductive – if we play it safe there is a chance that few people will have an interest in what we have to say.

We have to wonder what these conditions might mean for the cultivation of academic disciplines such as sociology. The outcomes are not yet clear. But it would seem that there is a need to tackle such issues and to think deeply about how sociology might respond to these conditions. We may not necessarily agree with Ros Gill and others, with regard to the consequences and hidden injuries (although there is a good chance that we might), but there is a need to understand the broader social, political, and institutional conditions that shape sociology. In other words, we cannot leave our sociological imaginations at the door when we think about what sociology is. We need to understand how the biography of the discipline of sociology is also being shaped by its wider social conditions. I do not have any particular answers for this. My expectation is that the readers of this book will actually be experiencing different types of contextual issues in their work, across geographies, and across time. It would seem though that sociologists are already suggesting that neoliberalization is coming to directly impact upon how they do sociology.

It is obvious that we are not going to reverse the apparent marketization and neoliberalization of higher education. Instead, we need to think about how we should respond. The best response, that is to say the best form of protection, is to shape a discipline that is attractive, lively, and exciting. A discipline that draws people in. This will ensure that sociology has a ready-made and substantial audience, and that it is able to

attract those who will then go on to be the future of the discipline. It will also make it far more likely that value is seen to reside in the sociological project. This does not mean that we are 'selling out', it is not to go with the flow and to simply adopt the spirit of market-based competition into our lives. Rather it is to work towards a version of sociology that thrives under these conditions by offering an alternative voice and an engaging tone. Sociology will then thrive, because it will draw people into its debates, into its ideas, and into its findings, all of which are likely to provide alternative visions of the social world. This is a version of sociology that plays the game to its advantage. It is a version of sociology that succeeds by its own rules. This is a version of sociology that operates in the contemporary, if you will forgive the expression, knowledge economy, whilst providing a space for thought and provocation. My suggestion is that the best way to achieve all of this is to work on producing a discipline that fires people's imaginations. Sociology might then work at creating messages that seep out into the circulations of data in social media, that draw responses, that speak to different audiences, in different places, that show the world in new light, that responds quickly but also offers considered and timely reflection – in each case stimulating and provoking. A dull, disconnected, and worthy discipline might survive for a while, maybe even indefinitely, but it is likely to wither whilst becoming increasingly marginal. We do not want sociology to become an esoteric pastime for a small band of insular followers.

This changing context of knowledge production is bound to have a constitutive effect on sociology. This is inevitable. In this instance, what I am suggesting with punk sociology, is that we attempt to play along with the demands placed on us, but that at the same time we try to preserve a creative space. This will be a space in which sociology is not entirely bounded and shaped by the directions that are intended for it (by systems of government, measurement, and the rhetoric of impact). In other words, it uses an engagement with a creative cultural form to help direct it away from the obvious and to give it space to react and respond to the challenges it faces. The punk ethos, as one example, gives us the type of creative space and imaginative framework that might allow us to continue to thrive in a changing academic and social context, whilst also enabling us to be bold and confident, and to think in ways that escape from orthodoxy and conservatism. It is to find a way of productively responding to the requirements we face whilst also turning them to our advantage. Perhaps most of all, it is not an attempt at escape, rather it is

to face up to the challenges and to respond accordingly. It is not to shy away but to stand up to structural, systematic, and external pressures in the same way that it is also a call to stand up to internally manifested senses of crisis, uncertainty, and disciplinary convention.

What this introduction suggests is that there are significant possibilities for turning to cultural resources in our re-imagining of the methodological, conceptual, and communicative repertoire of sociology and the social sciences more generally. This could take many forms; there are many cultural resources that might provide such a schema for thinking about disciplinary practices and approaches. In this case I have opened by claiming that we might look back to the punk scene to respond to calls for a re-energized engagement with the 'promise' of a 'creative' and 'inventive' engagement with the social world. Drawing on cultural resources, such as punk, might give us scope to imagine the discipline in ways that are not possible with our established conceptual and disciplinary ideas. In other words, cultural resources give us imaginative spaces in which disciplinary ideas might be completely reworked away from contemporary academic, cultural, social, and economic pressures and structures. This introduction sets the background to the project of a punk sociology. It intimates towards the hope that this book might be seen to be a direct intervention across a range of contemporary debates within sociology and the social sciences, and it is also suggestive of how, more broadly, we might draw upon cultural resources to rethink and play with conventions and ideas. It might seem strange to look back nearly 40 years in order to do this, but, as I will show, the punk ethos is there to be refreshed and reused in ways that respond to distinctly contemporary questions. This book stands as a direct response to both the sense of crisis and uncertainty we may be experiencing, which is likely to be particularly profound for those in the early stages of their sociological journey, and to the calls for a renewed sociology that is responsive to the social world. It is also an attempt though to provoke and engage sociologists in the promise of the discipline and in an unlimited and unconstrained engagement with its future. The rest of the book is concerned with elaborating upon the notion of a punk sociology and with trying to convince the reader that it might be a good idea to pursue further, or at the very least it will provide a framework to react against and argue with.

To this end, the book itself is separated into two parts. The first part of the book contains two chapters that provide the background for the book. This chapter has set the book in the context of contemporary sociology,

the second sets up the key features of a punk ethos. The chapters in part two attempt to apply the key features of the punk ethos to sociology. It begins with a short chapter that outlines the move from the punk ethos to punk sociology, and follows this with chapters that explore this move in detail. These will be relatively short and concise chapters that take the basic ideas outlined and try to adapt them to help in rethinking how sociology is done and the type of approaches and ideas it might develop. Each chapter uses particular features of the punk ethos to open up questions about sociology and how it might be developed. In keeping with the punk aesthetic, these chapters are short, explicit, and suggestive – intended to be the sociological equivalent of a direct burst of energy in a 2- or 3-minute song, with no solos and little tangential or unnecessary content. These chapters are structured to be representative of the features they describe. They provide ideas that the reader might use or respond to. These chapters are not detailed instructions about how sociology should be done. They are rather intended as interventions, thought experiments, encounters with an imagined set of possibilities. Part two closes with a short concluding chapter that reiterates the notion of a punk sociology and begins to imagine where it might take sociology in the future. Let us begin though by opening up the punk ethos.

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