

# **Crafting the Academy** **Writing Sociology and Disciplinary Legitimacy**

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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own

Sarah Victoria Alexandra Burton, March 2017

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## Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic study of the craft of writing in U.K. sociology. Centred around key concepts of consecration and value, the thesis uses Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice to examine the relationship between the craft of writing and becoming or feeling legitimate within sociology. The thesis sits within a context of debates in sociology which have examined the idea of disciplinarity: what is sociology's history, practice, and purpose? However, whilst sociologists have paid significant attention to the construction of the discipline and even how 'the discipline' writes, no one has yet examined this from the perspective of individual sociologists and the everyday of their writing practices and processes. This thesis addresses the gap in the research.

The work here is based on a year-long ethnography of ten academics working in U.K. sociology departments. The thesis contributes significantly to understanding the relationship between macro-level structures of power and domination (institutional power and structural social inequality), and how this is felt and engaged with on a micro/everyday level, through writing. It adds an original perspective to considering how legitimacy is produced in sociological knowledge, and understood to reside in/with sociologists themselves. Crucially, the ethnography adeptly demonstrates that underpinning these consecrated intellectual and institutional positions are structures of 'race', class, and gender inequality. As such, the thesis shows how legitimate(d) ideological disciplinary positions interpolate with institutional racism, sexism, and classism in elite and exclusionary fashions. Thus, this study of the craft of writing in sociology gives original access to means by which the reproduction of power and privilege is done on a micro, everyday level. Moreover, the research here gives cause for hope: participants' accounts show where hegemonic power may be challenged and interrupted. They mark where change may begin.

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## Chapter One

### UK Sociology and Writing Practice

#### Vignette One

*It's a humid April evening and we're sitting outside a café in Sobo – me and my friend from work, Matthias. I've been thinking about switching from English Literature and doing a Ph.D. in Sociology but I'm apprehensive about all the things I don't know – all the incomprehensible theorists I don't understand (I think) because my reading eye is tuned to stories and fiction, poem and make-believe. My friend has a lectureship in Sociology, he's written several books, and more articles than I thought possible for his age. He's universally (I always perceive...) regarded as clever, competent, someone who knows what he's doing and is confident doing it. So I've invited him out to talk theory and talent: does he think I have 'what it takes'? And what is that anyway? I want him to tell me that I'm also clever, and that I get it, and that I'll be fine. That's not what I get. We turn to theory: we speak of an American giant and a French colossus. I know he knows this work; after all he's written a book on it – a **book!** (still incredible to me) – surely he must be confident about what the Giant thinks? But instead, he tells me that he finds it hard – hard to understand, hard to unpick the argument, and that often he's not even certain that he's fully grasped the content. Because of this, he tells me, he feels an imposter - a fraud. For him, his books are accidents, fakes, and flukes: he feels that everyone else intimately and instinctively understands the complicated material, but that he has to labour and toil. Even after this – after pushing and pushing himself - he feels a block and that his deficiency may be discovered in his writing. I'm taken aback. I didn't realise what lay beneath the surface of self-assured poise and erudite prose. I didn't even realise it **was** a surface.*

#### Vignette Two

*'Tell me what you think of Stevens, here? How does Ishiguro show his character development?'*

*Tumbleweed...Are they asleep? Are they bored? Was the question too hard? Have I not done enough scaffolding? My Year 12 A Level English Literature and Language class remain mute. 'Ok,' I say to them, 'Let's do some group work and talk through this a bit more'.*

*Later on I chat informally to my class. I'm still learning how to teach and I want to know what works for them – how do they feel about engaging with different texts? 'The thing is,' Georgia tells me, 'it's just so hard to feel like I have anything sensible to say. Like, why would anyone think my opinion is important?'. I'm upset, I tell her that I and her other teachers – and her examiners – all very definitely think her opinion is important. I tell them that*

they've studied hard and they have the material to back themselves. 'But,' chips in Stella, 'we can't really say anything negative when the book is like this – like a classic'. I'm intrigued – are classics untouchable, could I make a critique where they can't? 'Yes,' Stella tells me, 'Because you've been to university, you have a degree in this. You've, like, got the authority'.

\* \* \* \* \*

I want you to email me your presentations ahead of next week. And get in touch if you have problems'. I write my email address on the whiteboard.

'That's a funny email', Jessica says. 'Yeah, they give you odd usernames at Cambridge', I reply. The class reacts: hushed silence, awed faces, a few impressed exclamations. 'You're at Cambridge, Miss? Like, the real one? WOW'.

\* \* \* \* \*

I lay my dissertation out on the desk – the notes, the scribbles, the mind-maps, the chapters with scrawled edits, the revisions, the questions, the bits where I missed something and made a note to find out, the bullet point plan, the rewritten sections, the increasingly pristine copy – which I'm still not certain is the final draft.

The Year 13 class pour over it. They comment on how messy parts are, how often I've made notes, how many stages there are before 'finality'. We've been working on the age-old 'How To Write an Essay' question. They're not confident, they see every wrong-turn or crossing out as evidence of their failure to be good scholars. I want to puncture that, I want them to know that we all draft and we all rethink, reconsider. No one channels a supreme authority, no one is perfect. Writing takes time. It is messy. I give them my dissertation to reveal another person's writing process, to dismantle a little bit of the power that being their teacher gives me. 'I had no idea that it would be like this', Will says. He's joined by Hester and Emily and George:

I always thought you'd get to a stage when you just **knew** how to do it, straight off?

I just assumed because you're the teacher than you wouldn't struggle'

'Oh. So I'm totally normal. I think I feel better now'

(Vignette Two constructed from my 2011/2012 PGCE teaching practice diary; featuring Year 12 English Literature and Language class, Year 12 English Language class, and Y13 English Literature class).

### **The Craft of Writing and U.K. Sociology**

This thesis examines the craft of writing in contemporary U.K. sociology: what is the relationship between the craft of writing, and becoming legitimate or gaining a ‘sense’ of legitimacy as a producer of sociological knowledge? Sociologists have often turned their imaginative gaze upon themselves, and asked key questions of the discipline they practice (see, for instance, Back 2008; Bauman 2000; Dean 2017; Gane and Back 2012; Harley 2012; Scott and Husbands 2007; Silva and Vieira 2011; Steinmetz 2013; Turner 2012). These include considering what might be the ‘essence’ or core of ‘being sociological’, how does the discipline of sociology fit into the contemporary university, and are the philosophical bases of sociologists’ practice reflected in their writing? It is these debates that this thesis sits within, and contributes to. The research here, then, is an examination of sociology *through* its writing. In the thesis I argue that, in order to progress the questions above, sociology must be attentive to the relationship between the personal, professional, and institutional conditions which shape sociologists and sociological practice. Doing so is the original contribution of this research.

By bringing together the everyday writing practices of sociologists, together with the institutional and professional conditions within which they work, this thesis demonstrates a more fine-grained and complicated state of the discipline than is shown within current literature. The thesis connects the writing practice of individual sociologists to broader issues of structural inequality, the way this affects the value ascribed to forms of knowledge, and the way in which sociologists (and sociology) use writing in order to make claims to being intellectually and institutionally legitimate. The vignettes above begin to indicate how authority, legitimacy, and ultimately power are conveyed through writing. They also, however, show writing as a *site* of power. In this research, I show that writing is mobilised in two ways: to produce and propagate a particular conceptualization of sociology, and by sociologists to shape perceptions of themselves within the discipline. In this thesis I draw attention to the way that sociologists put writing to work and in doing this I expose

the work this writing does. This exposure sheds light on the partial way in which knowledge is legitimated and how hegemonic power underpins sociology and works through it. The thesis therefore pulls together a number of currently separate reflections on the discipline and furthers these by adding rich empirical ethnographic data.

This thesis is an ethnographic study of U.K. sociologists and their personal, professional, and institutional(ized) practices and processes of writing. The research questions investigate the relationship between the craft of writing and the production of legitimate knowledge. However, they also tend to the production of a legitimate sociological self – how do sociologists become legitimated within the discipline through their writing? Further to this, the thesis explores the microcosm of the production of sociology writing and explores the extent to which personal, professional, and institutional processes sit both in friction and accord. Are the demands of the discipline different to those of the individual researcher or university institution – and further to this, can we even conceptualise ‘sociology’ as a single, coherent discipline? This thesis argues for understanding sociology as a field (Bourdieu 1991); within this conception sociology is a hierarchically structured setting in which the ‘interests and stakes implicitly shared by its members’ (Skeggs 2004a: 23) are played out. This perspective, coupled with the focus on the everyday lived experience of playing within this field supplied by examining writing practices, enables this thesis to successfully demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between disciplinarity and power which occurs.

This is not the first time the qualities of sociology writing have been discussed by sociologists. However, this thesis is original in being based on an ethnography of sociology writing, as well as dealing in a concentrated manner with the interplay between structural and conceptual factors which affect writing. Perhaps the most common assertion in the literature on sociology writing is that sociologists produce incomprehensible prose. Andrew Abbott, for instance, refers to ‘the old canard that sociologists can’t write (2007: 68) and Howard Becker’s immediate assertion in *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish your Thesis, Book, or Article* (1986) is that ‘everyone knows sociologists write very badly, so that literary types can make jokes about bad writing just by saying “sociology”’ (1986: 1). These claims are often made in an offhand and humorous manner – though with some attempt to understand why the prose might be so dense. Becker, indeed, notes that writing travels with us, it is part of what credentialises us, and through using ‘classy locutions’ (Becker 1986: 31) sociologists can show themselves as intellectually superior. The research in this thesis moves forward from Becker’s identification to consider in a more detailed and systematic

way what kinds of cultural capital are in play when writing is being used to legitimate a sociologist. This is not to dispute Becker's basic premise; however, the ethnographic material in the thesis clearly demonstrates a deeply textured and complex mobilization of different forms of cultural capital including whiteness and masculinity, as well as forms connected with social class.

Moreover, the ethnography in this thesis specifically challenges the direct – and often unevidenced – claim that sociologists are bad writers as well as the implicit assertion which stands alongside, that sociologists do not care about their writing, or have no emotional engagement with it. The accounts of participants demonstrate sociologists who are committed to clearly and powerfully communicating their research through their writing, who desire audiences beyond their immediate research topic, and who experience writing in affective and personal terms. This focus on affect in sociology writing echoes the work done by scholars such as Carol Smart (2013) and Laurel Richardson (2002), as well as experimental publications which foreground the 'personal voice' of professional sociologists (Saldaña 2014; Kaufmann and Wamsted 2014). It also draws on the legacies of feminist scholars such as Avtar Brah (Back and Brah 2012), who has reflected at length on the role of the imagination in writing, and noted writing as a deeply political act. This scholarship is important in challenging conventional notions of authoritative voice in academic research, as well as considering how claims to researchers accurately and sensitively presenting the 'truth' of their participants' words may be obscured through use of unemotional, professional academic prose. The research in this thesis builds on these ideas but applies the questions to sociology as a disciplinary space. This enables the thesis in showing the structural, conceptual, and institutional conditions which lead to the questions and frustrations evidenced by this literature. The participant stories in the ethnography in this thesis provides strong reason to change the way sociologists perceive writing as part of disciplinary identity, as well as how perceptions of writing shape a disciplinary identity.

The data in this thesis shows sociologists as active agents who are aware of the ways their writing will work for them, and speak about them. Owing to this it challenges the idea, presented by sociologists including David Beer, that sociologists are passive purveyors of a particular writing style (2014: 54). Beer identifies this as part of sociological pedagogy and asserts that it is a way in which the discipline exerts authority over its inhabitants: 'I follow the dictum, which I assume is the product of the attempt to draw on an objectivist and scientific approach in order to legitimise the discipline, "be more neutral"' (Beer 2014: 54-55). Importantly, Beer is connecting conceptual issues within the discipline (the aping of science) with claims to legitimacy of knowledge, and the

use of a specific writing style (neutrality and passivity). This is a concern shared in this thesis – however, the research here also presents the challenges sociologists make to disciplinary power through their writing, and the ways in which sociologists pragmatically use writing in order to alleviate or oppose hegemonic power within sociology. The research in this thesis moves the scholarship forward by demonstrating how writing can be agentively mobilised as part of narrating yourself with legitimacy within the field of sociology. It also shows sociologists as part of a dynamic, precarious, and power-laden relationship with the discipline: the writing sociologists produce is also shaped and influenced by their perceptions of what constitutes legitimacy. Participants’ stories challenge a coherent reading of disciplinary legitimacy and make clear that sociology writing is also affected by institutional concerns (drawn from government policy), multiple professional spaces of sociology (departments, conferences, journals, subject association), as well as intellectual spaces which do not share concomitant notions of legitimacy.

### **The Landscape of the Thesis**

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark

- Marcellus, *Hamlet*, Act I Sc. IV, l. 76.

The above discussion indicates the areas of scholarship the thesis sits within, as well as beginning to outline the reasons for conducting the research. In this section I contextualise the thesis within U.K. sociology and show why the research is both timely and important. The thesis engages with a number of factors which shape contemporary sociology in the U.K., but provides an original perspective on these through ethnographic study of sociologists’ writing. Literature on the practice of sociology, its disciplinary grounds, and position within U.K. higher education, suggests that sociology currently suffers from serious failings and vulnerabilities. To paraphrase Marcellus’s words above – something is rotten in the state of sociology. Discussions of sociology as a practice have been approached through the lens of audit culture, sociology’s reach beyond academia, the disciplinary canon, the history of the discipline, and the role of critique. Within all of these approaches is a common theme of sociology existing as a discipline which has somehow lost its way, and become lifeless, lazy, flat, or deaf to its participants and publics. The research in this thesis operates within the context of a discipline where practitioners are deeply dissatisfied with it as both an intellectual and institutional space. Where the thesis moves on from current scholarship

is in showing how sociologists tackle this – how they conceptualise their work in connection with a bigger disciplinary whole, the way they recognise and engage with forms of disciplinary power, and the small ways they try to change the discipline through their writing. This is important because it demonstrates – again - that sociologists are not passive recipients of an inert and old-fashioned intellectual tradition or institutional space.

Sociologists have identified the way in which the discipline is currently being shaped by government and internal institutional policies of audit. Indeed, throughout the ethnography for this thesis the Research Excellence Framework (REF; see Appendix A) policy was repeatedly raised as extremely problematic for sociology and higher education more broadly. These cultures of audit have a particular affect on writing which is important to be attentive to in the context of this thesis. Audit culture is a ‘condition [in which] the techniques and values of accountancy have become a central organizing principle in the governance and management of human conduct’ (Shore 2008: 279). This mode of organizing and accounting extends to the writing sociologists produce in academia – the way in which writing is counted, rated, and transformed into statistical data for the institution. Moreover, a process of reification takes place here in which writing and the written product become divorced from the person writing; in a culture of audit focused on counting and grading submissions the idea of writing as a personal and affective practice is obscured. Additionally, in the particular situation of sociology, the role of particular researched groups or participants in the writing produced can be lost. Arguably, within this context, sociologists’ writing is useful insofar as it gains prestige for the institution through being highly rated within a particular paradigm of value. This value system is not necessarily one commensurate with disciplinary concerns. In subsequent chapters, this thesis shows how participants react to this culture, especially as it lies in friction with how they understand themselves as a sociologist. Participants articulate how their writing style and decisions can be shaped by institutional pressures of audits but also how these pressures may be resisted through a turn to other disciplinary value paradigms. Here it is possible to see writing being used as a tool of power in everyday struggles where intellectual and institutional spaces blur into one another.

Audit culture provides a further key context in this examination of writing practices and processes within sociology. The research questions in this thesis specifically explore the affective relationship between writing practice and understanding oneself or one’s work as legitimate. However, as Ros Gill notes, the ‘punishing intensification of work’ (Gill 2009: 237) in audit culture is acknowledged to increase feelings of ‘exhaustion, stress, overload, insomnia, anxiety, shame, aggression, hurt,

guilt and feelings of out-of-placeness, fraudulence and fear of exposure within the contemporary academy' (Gill 2009: 232). These feelings – particularly in terms of ideas of being an imposter or fraud – surfaced repeatedly in participants' narratives. When considering the emotional engagement participants talk about in the following chapters it is vital to read this in the context of both a personal, affective relationship which is creative, political, and imaginative – but also one which is born from institutional and policy expectations. Related to this is the affect of audit culture on sociologists' perceptions of what their writing should be doing for them. Michael Billig asserts that audit culture is not only one of 'inspection and managerial control; it is also a culture of boasting' (Billig 2013: 24). Writing in this context, where '[t]here are good economic reasons not to be modest' and academics must 'proclaim their achievements vigorously' (Billig 2013: 24), means that affective relationships with writing are attuned to multiple emotional encounters with the institution, the subject material, and the personal practice of writing. These are emphasized by arguments such as John Holmwood's (2010) that sociology, as a discipline, will fail in audit culture because it lacks clear theories and methods which are explicitly and unmistakably sociological. The presence of this line of thought in the field of sociology intensifies feelings of vulnerability, particularly with participants who produce 'interdisciplinary' writing. These participants – as is shown in the following chapters – often spoke of their concern over where they might fit within the REF/institutional parameters and how their perceived lack of fit may affect career progression or stability.

Increasing cultures of audit have been a key driver of debates in sociology regarding the future of the discipline and where it does, or can, fit with a changing academic landscape. Indeed, there is a significant stream of literature which explores what 'sociology' actually is. These questions mark staging points to which participants' questions and assertions of legitimacy often returned. Osborne, Rose and Savage (2008), for instance, argue that sociology 'thrives' when it approaches social problems through 'an empirical commitment with an ethical purpose – that is to say, with an eye to engaging in debates which simultaneously raise both political and social questions' (Osborne et al 2008: 521). For this reason, they contend that the future of the discipline rests on progressing sociology as a combination of empirical and theoretical endeavour. The work in this thesis takes these questions further by examining the forms of disciplinary legitimacy sociologists themselves identify, and how they choose to engage (or not) with these through their writing. The assertion of the empirical and theoretical as important is uncontroversial but there is little detail on what this actually means. Taken in light of Holmwood's concerns regarding disciplinary distinctiveness, and Billig's identification that academics are pushed to boast through their work,

whether your writing is understood as legitimately ‘sociological’ matters. Therefore, Osborne, Rose and Savage’s open definition of sociology is potentially unhelpful when very specific and closed parameters may be used in judgement.

The thesis also engages with assertions made regarding the foundations of sociology and the way these support very particular, elite forms of legitimacy and legitimation. Sociology is repeatedly avowed as resting on the work of a number of ‘founding fathers’ (Osborne et al 2008; Outhwaite 2009; Marshall and Witz 2004; Susen 2013) whose aims and scope continue to drive and inform contemporary sociology. This, as Osborne, Rose and Savage note, hints at sociology as ‘the property of great individuals blessed with special powers of inspiration, and special insights into society’ (Osborne et al 2008: 521). Though it shows a modicum of dissatisfaction at the structures of sociology, much of the literature does not go so far as to challenge the ongoing validity and relevance of these men to the composition of sociology or forms of sociological thought. Gurinder Bhambra (2007a, 2007b, 2011, 2014) has adeptly highlighted the continued dominance of Europe and whiteness in shaping sociology as a discipline. Bhambra contends that sociology’s orientation to modernity ‘rests on ideas of the modern world emerging out of the processes of economic and political revolution located in Europe and underpinned by the cultural changes brought about by the Renaissance, Reformation, and Scientific Revolution’ (Bhambra 2011: 653). Thus in training the sociological eye to the West and conflating Europe with ideas of progress and modernity, sociology is guilty of weaving in structural racism to the fabric of the discipline. The research in this thesis draws on the arguments supplied by Bhambra, but extends these to a consideration of the everyday practice of sociology through writing. How is structural racism – as well as sexism and classism – evident in the forms, styles, and content of writing deemed legitimate? Furthermore, how does tracking writing enable attention to be paid to tracking insidious and silent mobilisations of white and male supremacy? This thesis shows starkly how legitimacy is wielded as a tool of white, male, middle-class domination in sociology through the particular foundational tenets of ‘sociology writing’ – including turns to science, rationality, logic, objectivity, and authority of voice. The research of this thesis sits within a strong body of work which engages with the racialised, classed, gendered and heteronormative qualities of academic spaces and the various affective and emotional landscapes trodden and inhabited by contemporary academics. Katherine Sang’s (2016) research looks at the lived experiences of women in academia and finds that their experiences and perspectives are inflected by a confluence of factors and that the way in which spaces of academia are used and occupied are often deeply personal but concomitantly influenced by tight structures of ‘race’ and gender. Yvette Taylor’s reflexive research

considers the ‘emotional disjunctures across time and place felt in occupying academia’ (Taylor 2012: 51) and positions these in relation to cultures of audit, impact, and ‘diversity’. Elsewhere, citation practice and its effect in training and controlling the disciplinary histories and stories is gaining traction (Maude 2015; Burton 2015). Whilst drawing on these, the thesis presents an original contribution through focusing on the detail of the everyday in writing. This allows me to pull together the concomitant macrocosmic debates which question sociology’s historical and contemporary structures and relation to wider inequalities, and show how these affect daily disciplinary practice. In doing so, I show how these inequalities continue to be upheld through conceptual and structural grounds – but I also demonstrate what is changing and how new spaces of legitimacy are being carved.

Universities in the U.K. are undergoing a period of rapid change and with numerous new policies being applied to both research and teaching. Considerations of disciplinary legitimacy made in this thesis, the mobilisation of writing by sociologists seeking legitimacy, and the power machinations of sociology as a discipline are not only relevant to internally-driven intellectual concerns - though these are undoubtedly important and pressing. This thesis is also significant in terms of the place of sociology in the future of higher education and this is not limited only to what sociology offers as a degree programme. Perhaps even more pertinently, the focus on the everyday of writing shows with clarity what is at stake in higher education policies: that these policies can work in operation with the hegemonic power of a discipline to intensify structural inequalities, and further devalue the voices and perspectives of non-hegemonic people. Thus, this thesis adds much-needed texture to analyses of the context and composition of sociology, pulls together a number of strands of scholarship on sociology as a discipline, and shows the powerful intersections at work. Furthermore, the danger of many current debates on sociology is the tendency to paint it in monotone, as if there is no light and shade to the issue and the death of sociology is a *fait accompli*.

Contrarily, the research in this thesis tempers some of the disciplinary pessimism in evidence. The stories in the ethnography give cause for hope because they show how sociologists confront, circumvent, and harness hegemonic power in the discipline and the way they use this power institutionally. The thesis challenges binary ideas of hegemony and inequality, and shows these as intertwined rather than always oppositional or mutually exclusive. Moreover, the thesis adds significant texture to understanding the relationship between the field of sociology and the actors within it; as part of this, I demonstrate how writing is a significant driver of the creation of the legitimate sociological self. This thesis does not present an easy or clear-cut story of sociology. It

reveals a set of complicated and complex lived experiences of writing within the structures of academic sociology and higher education which problematize straightforward understandings of how hegemonic power operates and is perceived.

### **The Foundations of the Thesis: Methodological**

To examine the issues above the thesis uses a collection of methodological, theoretical, and conceptual tools. The thesis is an ethnography of sociology writing. It takes individual sociologists as its sites of research, rather than particular departments, journals, or institutions. This enables the thesis to be oriented to sociology as a field, rather than the writing cultures of particular places. All participants are U.K. sociologists – that is to say, they were all at the time of the ethnography attached to sociology departments of U.K. universities. The research participants comprise both U.K. nationals as well as international academics working in the U.K. I used a set of gatekeepers to nominate participants; gatekeepers themselves hold senior positions within the discipline – being either Professors of Sociology, Heads of Sociology departments, or editors of major sociology journals. The ethnography took place over the course of an academic year, during which I met with participants on a monthly basis (sometimes more or less frequently as our timetables allowed). At these meetings we discussed writing – works in progress, ideas, feedback, problems, co-authors, deadlines, future projects, converting one form of writing to another. We also discussed sociology as a discipline – where did they feel they fit, if they fit at all? What is distinctive about sociology writing, and why? What are the ‘rules’ for getting published? What is the difference between writing for publication and other forms or genres of writing? Participants also sent me draft copies of work – sometimes to see the process they went through, and other times for more specific discussion in person. We kept in touch by email, with some participants sending detailed ‘diary-style’ updates, more or less frequently. Taking an ethnographic approach to the research means that the thesis can offer the original perspective I indicate in the debates above. Rather than beginning from a set of theoretical principles or overarching schema, the thesis pays close attention to the way the above debates are interpolated in the narratives and practices of participants. From this I am able to construct a more complex and textured argument regarding the formation of legitimate sociology knowledge, the key role of writing within this, and the way this is shaped by forms of power in the discipline.

This argument problematizes aspects of current scholarship which fail to properly include the detail of the everyday practices of sociology in their analyses of the discipline. This intervention is

particularly relevant, important, and timely because – as I demonstrate in the next chapter – the everyday practices of writing sociology are intimately married to how individual sociologists are able to navigate and negotiate the field of the discipline. A focus on these practices reveals how academic subjectivities (or habitus) are made in relation to the almost-silent, sedimented but pervasive forms of inequality which structure and shape sociology. By looking in detail at the writing lives of sociologists, this thesis uncovers not only ongoing institutional and conceptual structures of racism, sexism, and classism but – crucially – the close relationship between these forms of exclusion and the parameters for becoming legitimate within the field. The findings, therefore, have potential repercussions not only for how sociologists understand their discipline and their work, but also for how higher education more broadly engages with the necessity of confronting persistent inequalities of professional access and pedagogy, and how academics approach their capacity to make legitimate knowledge claims.

### **The Foundations of the Thesis: Theoretical**

The thesis is underpinned by two central theoretical pillars: legitimacy and value. My use of these theoretical concepts is drawn from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice and specifically used as part of my engagement with Bourdieu's concept of capital. This theoretical construction is aimed towards closely exploring the research questions. The relationship between value and legitimacy as concepts is complex. Legitimacy operates from a more systematic and objective position; value, by contrast, can be utilized in certain forms to offer a more fine-grained set of techniques for understanding alternative processes of self-legitimation. Legitimacy is connected with the action of symbolic capital and the formation of the habitus – a set of inculcated dispositions which shape the way actors move within particular fields. One of the key concerns of the thesis is the way in which actors become legitimate within a field. Skeggs and Loveday describe the process of legitimation and the way this occurs through accrual of capital so that it becomes part of personhood or habitus:

as people move through social spaces they encounter the possibilities for increasing their overall value through the acquisition, conversion and accrual of capitals...[Bourdieu] proposes a model of the exchange-value self where capitals, accrued

over time, are lived and displayed on the body so that they become habituated – “the habitus” (2012: 475).

As noted above, I conceptualise sociology as a field, in Bourdieu's sense. The research questions investigate the relationship between individuals and the field in which they operate, as well as between individuals operating within a particular field. Further to this, the research questions are designed to examine the action of forms of power within a field – for instance, the ways in which participants shows themselves as aware of constructions of what constitutes legitimacy in sociology. Because I am examining sociology as a field, one of the aspects the thesis is geared towards is a consideration of how value systems are formed and dispersed within the field. Particularly, the research questions are constructed to investigate the existence of more than one form of legitimacy, different demarcations of disciplinary power, and the extent to which these meet, compete, and cross over.

A concomitant focus on value supports the thesis in achieving this owing to the treatment of value in feminist readings of Bourdieu. Skeggs demonstrates that when value is understood as exchange-value it remains part of the dominant symbolic. Under the rubric of exchange-value the self is formed through accrual of exchange-value in which ‘some activities, practice and dispositions’ (Skeggs 2004b: 75) are read as ‘culture’ and thus their apparent inherent value can be exchanged to ‘enhance the overall value of personhood’ (2004b: 75). This results in powerful (legitimate, valuable) people deciding what the conditions are for being considered powerful, legitimate or valuable. This is important in questions of gaining legitimacy for one’s knowledge or oneself through writing – as earlier work in this chapter shows, there is already a rubric for being legitimate and much of this is based, openly or not, on following prescribed positions of hegemonic power such as whiteness and masculinity. These positions exist not only in simply being white or male but also in adhering to conceptual machinations of these structures. Thus, the prestige (or value) enshrined in certain gendered, racialised, or classed practices is converted (or exchanged) into prestige for the person. Value and legitimacy are key drivers for the thesis because they help disimbricate ways in which structural inequalities are hidden within claims to ‘being sociological’. The question then becomes one of how those positioned ‘outside value’ can narrate themselves with value: ‘what if you cannot enter the game, join the action, or get on the field?’ (Skeggs 2004b: 87). Thinking carefully through the interplay of use-value and exchange-value in the context of legitimacy is vital for this thesis. Firstly, it is important to recognise that there are other paradigms of value outside the dominant symbolic and these enable excluded groups/individuals to

conceptualise themselves in terms of legitimacy. Kate Hoskins, for instance, describes the ‘tensions and ambivalence’ with which working-class women academics conceptualise ‘success’ (2010: 137). Within these negotiations there is evidence that working-class women understand their success, or value, not only in terms of career progression and prestige, but also in terms of family life and non-career goals. This interplay of paradigms is crucial in terms of the thesis because it allows me to highlight the effect of social inequality on what is deemed ‘prestigious’ or ‘legitimate’ sociology writing. Based on this the thesis is able to question why certain practices, forms and styles of sociology writing should confer legitimacy upon their authors – and what forms of dominance and inequality are supported through this.

### **The Foundations of the Thesis: Conceptual**

Running through the thesis, and supporting the theoretical discussion, are five conceptual thematic strands: space, routes and boundaries, sense of self, stories, and the everyday. These themes are intended to make the enaction of value and legitimacy within sociological writing more tangible, and provide concrete ground for engagement. The thematic strands map onto chapters as well as providing a structure through which I seek to draw together the work of the thesis in the final chapter. Each speaks to elements of the research questions and lays out the multiple aspects affecting disciplinary power and participants’ understanding and assertion of their own legitimacy. The theme of space is tightly tied to my treatment of sociology as a field, and acknowledges the manifold spaces present within the discipline and the ways these interact, connect, and influence one another. The theme draws on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of field as a central spatial theoretical tool. Field is important to the thesis, because it underpins analysis of disciplinarity and of higher education. Both can be engaged with as particular fields. A field has rules or conventions and these govern how social actors engage with the spaces in which they are located as well as with other social actors. These conventions are a form of structural power which acts on individuals and colours the way they view the space. By being attentive to this, I am able to discuss structural positions (‘race’, gender, class), alongside the way they fit into, or themselves pattern, different spaces of sociology in respect to affect as well as the ‘structured/structuring structures’ of Bourdieu's theory of practice. Doing this is helpful to both the theoretical aim of the thesis – in rethinking and re-understanding sociology as existing through multiple composite and sedimented spaces – but is also attentive to the complex way that participants speak about the spaces they enter and occupy. The narratives of participants in this thesis show agentic engagement with these rules – both through performances of legitimacy and through assertions of peripheral or

fringe location; in each case, the engagement with the field conventions is used by participants to locate themselves and their work within a particular space (or spaces) of sociology, and to mobilise legitimacy for their work in that space.

A further aspect of 'field' which is important to this thesis, is the recognition that there is always more than one field in operation, in any particular space. This is particularly relevant in terms of my use of Bourdieu's concept of consecration (Bourdieu 1991). Within the thesis here, I use consecration as a way of discussing how a sociologist's writing relates to their gaining a 'sense' of their own legitimacy, or being externally recognised as such. Based on the ethnographic data, I argue that writing is – or can be – an act of staking one's claim to legitimacy within sociology; consecration, then, is a way of marking that you, or someone else, has achieved legitimacy. Furthermore, it is a theoretical mechanism which allows me to question how that legitimacy has been achieved. That fields are multiple and overlap in social spaces and institutions indicates that there is always more than one set of rules or conventions governing the outlook and behaviour of social actors in a certain group, area, or community. Following from this, there are therefore multiple spaces of and for consecration within the field. This emerges strongly in the ethnographic data as participants discuss the numerous competing and contradictory forms of legitimacy which can be secured within sociology.

These forms of legitimacy do not always travel securely into other spaces of sociology – indeed, participants often discussed how they were pressed to choose which space of sociology, and which sphere of consecration they could become legitimated within. Using Bourdieu's theory of practice – which encompasses ideas of field, habitus, and capital - supports the theoretical work of the thesis in a close analysis of the ways participants perceive, shape, traverse, and reflect themselves within the spaces of sociology. Bringing in capital – which Bourdieu defines as 'the structure of the distribution of species of power' (Bourdieu 1991: 97), and categorises further into social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital – gives the thesis tangible and meaningful touchstones for discussing the range of choices made, and advantages mobilised, in order for participants to successfully negotiate the spaces of sociology. Therefore, this theme – and when the thesis talks about space or spaces - it is not only referring to Bourdieu's fields and the operation of habitus and capital within these fields. Space, here, also connotes the sensual and the affective. As well as using 'space' to think through particular spaces such as departments, the university, the Research Excellence Framework, the discipline, subject associations, publishers, and journals, I also use it in relation to the organic communities, groups, and practices which shape these spaces. Here, I

call on messier and more diffuse ideas of space – ones which are less tangible or neatly classified than a department or journal. This is where ‘space’ begins to integrate more fully into the other themes, as it touches on the slipperiness of sharing space, and the creation of space through particular uncoded practices. Part of these discussions are questions of bounding and (out)lining space, the role of bodies and conceptions of self within this, and the changing constitution of spaces based on the bodies present within.

The theme of routes and boundaries engages strongly with the scholarship cited above on the parameters of U.K. sociology. It asks questions of disciplinarity, and does so by tracking routes of thought, argument, and particular bodies through the (purported) history of sociology. These questions of disciplinarity focus on how the canon is shaped and what routes of legitimacy and consecration this shaping sets in place. Routes, here, are tracks to be followed; they are mobile – shifting and changing – but also travel and create a trajectory (both backwards and forwards) of the discipline. Boundaries are formed through these routes; they act to delineate spaces but also to protect spaces and police entry (and exit). The thesis further explores these boundaries as a way of understanding what it means to be legitimated or consecrated in a particular space of sociology. The boundaries of disciplinarity tracked through the thesis show how the spaces of the discipline are shaped. The starting point of this is the dual historical and narrative perspective set out by Gurminder Bhambra, in her key interventions on rethinking the historical context of sociology and the number of narratives and players currently erased within a Eurocentric model of modernity, and sociology as a space in which modernity is theorized and developed. Bhambra challenges ‘the continued privileging of the West as the “maker” of *universal history* and seek[s] to develop alternatives from which to begin to deal with the questions that arise once we reject this categorization’ (Bhambra 2007a: 2). The thesis uses this premise to consider the e/affects of banishing claims to neutrality and value-free judgements in decisions of canonicity: how might we better understand the current spaces of sociology, their value paradigms, and conditions of consecration, if we further understand the central literary canon of the discipline as partial, incomplete, transient, and mobile? In doing this, the thesis also draws on scholarship which sees boundaries in terms of cracks, breaks, or fissures. John Holloway writes that ‘cracks are explorations – creations of a world that does not yet exist’ (Holloway 2010: 38). This prompts attention to the liminality and ambiguity of routes and boundaries. In tandem with the attention towards spaces, this theme of the thesis considers how boundaries drawn to demarcate may also be new spaces in progress.

The third thematic strand is a focus on a sense of self. In the opening vignettes I show some early instances in which I became attuned to the pertinent gap between the work of writing and what is eventually presented to the discipline. The thesis investigates this gap, but, furthermore, also shows the way in which writing functions differently in different spaces to do this; indeed, that the same piece of writing can be differently presented in order to garner legitimacy within alternative value paradigms. This theme speaks to internally-constructed ideas of a person's understanding of 'who' they are and how they fit – or don't - with the spaces they occupy and trajectories they travel. In this thesis, a 'sense of self' is about how participants see themselves as sociologists, how they see themselves holistically, and how these two understandings of 'self' work together or in friction – the points at which they collide or elide. This is 'self' in a generative and interactive sense, rather than anything codified or fixed. Within this, a sense of self engages with the different roles played, or which potentially can be played, by participants. These include (simultaneously): sociologist, writer, activist, intellectual, academic, neoliberal subject, (social) scientist, woman, person of colour, storyteller, father, co-author, friend, professor. The thesis moves away from hard lines of 'identity' and towards identity as practiced, or modes of identification (Brubaker and Cooper 2000) and in tandem with the theoretical work on value, draws on feminist Bourdieusian interpretations of the habitus. 'Sense of self' is also used in relation to structures of 'race', gender, and class. The thesis seeks to present a nuanced analysis of legitimacy which recognises the different forms, spaces, and gradations this can take. However, the thesis is also cognisant of the power of the dominant symbolic, which coheres power around particular locations of 'race', gender, and class – i.e. the supremacy of whiteness, masculinity, and middle-class (or dominant class) positions across almost all social spaces and structures. In this sense, the thesis is attentive to the way these supremacies shape the parameters in which participants' sense of self is made, but also how they narrate or story this sense of self.

The fourth theme of the thesis is stories, storytelling, and narration. This draws on a large body of sociological scholarship on both writing and the telling of the self. Within the thesis, it concerns the way participants tell stories of themselves in order to fix themselves in particular spaces, or to understand the way they have been fixed in particular spaces. This is an understanding of stories as part of an agentive orienteering of uneven and potentially fraught disciplinary, intellectual, and institutional ground. Storying is also methodologically present, and used throughout as a way of presenting ethnographic data. Attentiveness to the stories of participants and the way they make stories of themselves engages with the idea of sociologists as (literary or fiction) writers and stories as spaces of research. Beer notes that, 'fiction has been used to encounter and interrogate far-

reaching and vital questions about the social world, some of which are deeply political and global in their scope' (Beer 2015: 2). Whilst the thesis does not use fiction specifically as a doorway to theorizing the social world, it does pay heed to the way that both social structures and lived experiences are as much imagined as they are actual. This is not to say that participants' narratives represent something imaginary in the sense of being unreal, but rather that experiential knowledge is produced through recourse to already present and known narratives; it also asserts that all knowledge is, to some extent, experiential in that it is gained through sight, sound, touch, and talk. Further to this, the thesis recognizes the practice of sociology itself as potentially done through craft and storytelling – following C. Wright Mills (1959). This pulls the above tendency to stories as 'ways of understanding' to a more practical place where stories can also be 'ways of doing' – and in the thesis, participants show themselves as 'doing' sociology or positioning themselves in sociology through telling sociological stories.

The final thematic strand is the everyday. This is particularly important in understanding the focus of the thesis on the small, micro, mundane, and detailed aspects of writing, and draws strongly on the literature of the sociology of the everyday. This is important to the thesis because of the relationship between the micro and macro aspects of living within particular spaces or fields. Sarah Pink asserts that the everyday is vitally important as a site of study and attention because it is 'at the centre of human existence, the essence of who we are and our location in the world' (Pink 2012: 143). It is exactly this connection that the thesis seeks to place itself within, in terms of sociology. By looking at the everyday practices and processes of writing the thesis builds up the detail of this to place writing within the larger landscape of sociology and show the operations of power therein. It is the connection the sociology of the everyday makes between ordinary and commonplace in daily life and wider issues, problems, complexities, and conversations (Neal and Murji 2015: 812) that this thematic strand of the thesis links to. Neal and Murji note that,

Everyday life approaches attempt to capture and recognize the mundane, the routines in (and of) social relations and practices. In doing so, they not only give importance to the ordinary, and take the ordinary seriously as a category of analysis, but they also evidence how everyday life social relations, experiences and practices are always more than simply or straightforwardly mundane, ordinary or routine (Neal and Murji 2015: 812).

This depiction of the importance of the everyday is significant to the work of the thesis. The stories within and the spaces it enters are ordinary, routine, and unexceptional – indeed, most participants described similar writing spaces or idiosyncrasies. And yet these spaces are fascinating because of the complex interactions and lived experiences of wider social divisions, conflicts, inequalities, and positions that underpin ‘humdrum’ everyday life. The sociology of the everyday is important to this thesis as a way of approaching a far larger and more elusive problem - the relationship between writing and how sociology works as a field - through tangible and meaningful methods. By looking at the mundane in writing my intention is to do as Back recommends – to ‘pay attention to the fragments, the voices, the stories that are otherwise passed over or ignored’ and ‘pay them the courtesy of serious attention’ (Back 2007: 1). The theme of the everyday is also present methodologically, particularly drawing on Robert Macfarlane’s assertion that ‘we see in words’ (Macfarlane 2015: 10). The narratives which follow are based on participant listening but also work to create a terrain through words and description. Macfarlane draws attention to how knowing a word for something provokes more intimate and profound experience of everyday spaces. He notes of learning a forgotten word, *smense* – ‘a Sussex dialect noun for “the gap in the base of a hedge made by the regular passage of a small animal”’ (Macfarlane 2015: 5) – how this greater linguistic capacity promotes a finer perception of the world around him: ‘now I know the word *smense*,’ says Macfarlane, ‘I will notice these signs of creaturely movement more often’ (Macfarlane 2015: 5). This is how I approach the analysis of ethnographic accounts of writing environment and their connection to the spaces of sociology. Through giving words to often unarticulated forms of power which occur through writing, my intention is to make these ambiguous, liminal, and transient spaces of sociology more visible - to bring to existence the terrains in play through this and enable the process of seeing through words. Macfarlane notes how ‘some of the words here are eldritch, acknowledging a sense of our landscape not as settled but as unsettling – the terror in the terroir, the spectred isle’ (Macfarlane 2015: 7). This is similar in the ethnography here which often points to the ephemerality of writing spaces and the way in which aspects of practices of sociology we do not wish to recognise in ourselves may unconsciously creep into our writing practices. In these instances, it is possible to see spectres and hauntings of ‘other’ spaces in the domesticity and familiarity of our own.

## **Mapping the Thesis**

The sections above have already indicated the content of later chapters in terms of themes, theoretical tools, and methodological approaches. It is useful, though, to give a more precise

outline of the substance of each chapter and the way they relate to one another. Chapter Two presents a review of the relevant scholarship, focusing on the structures and styles of sociological writing and the way this reveals disciplinary hierarchies and values. It underscores these disciplinary writing styles with analysis of the way these relate to dominant social structures of gender, 'race', and class. Chapter Three looks at the theoretical bases of the thesis. It centres on a discussion of value, legitimacy, consecration, and authority – both drawing out what these words mean within the literature and in connection to the work of this thesis. The chapter plays on the idea of routes and boundaries of legitimacy, as well as proximity and distance to consecration, in order to assess sociology in terms of the different and diffuse spaces which emerge. It uses ethnographic interviews with gatekeepers in order to question how consecration of knowledge comes about and what kinds of access to this consecration are available. Chapter Four focuses on the methodological approaches and questions within the thesis. It sets out the central research questions and the specifics of the fieldwork. The chapter draws on scholarship on narrative, stories, and mess, and uses these to outline the ethnographic work of the thesis as well as the way subsequent ethnography is written through various storytelling techniques.

Chapter Five considers how sociologists do and don't define themselves as writers and what effect this has on their relationship with writing. Further to this, it explores narratives of writing practice in order to reflect back and understand how these accounts of writing also present space for examining participants' perception of themselves as sociologists. The chapter introduces key ethnographic data which explores and complicates the relationship between writing, disciplinarity, and a sense of self. This is built on in Chapter Six, which explores the writing practices and processes of two participants, as regards the environments they create for writing. The chapter examines the way these relate to the body and a sensual and affective experience of writing. By doing so, the chapter poses questions regarding the way bodies fit – or don't - into different spaces of sociology. Chapter Seven looks at the way participants story themselves as writers as a way both of fitting themselves into different spaces of sociology, but also of understanding their own relationship with the discipline. Chapter Eight focuses in detail on the multiple spaces which emerge in sociology, through participants' narratives. By a close examination of the production of an article – co-written by two of the research participants – the chapter looks at how sociologists engage in these multiple different spaces through their writing practices, and the way in which this occurs in microcosmic and iterative ways. Chapter Nine takes as its central focus the putative notion of 'mainstream' sociology and questions how and where this emerges – and if it exists as a coherent space at all. Chapter Ten concludes the thesis; it brings together the five themes detailed

above and shows how these have been developed in the preceding chapters. The chapter uses these themes, and analysis of the previously set out ethnography, in order to posit answers to the initial research questions.

## Chapter Two

### The Story of British Sociology: Disciplinarity, Writing, and Power

D'Angelo Barksdale: Now look, check it, it's simple, it's simple. See this?  
This the kingpin, a'ight? And he the man.

...

Wallace: So how do you get to be the king?

D'Angelo Barksdale: It ain't like that. See, the king stay the king, a'ight?  
Everything stay who he is. Except for the pawns. Now, if the pawn makes  
it all the way down to the other dude's side, he gets to be queen. And like  
I said, the queen ain't no bitch. She got all the moves.

Preston 'Bodie' Broadus: A'ight, so if I make it to the other end, I win.

D'Angelo Barksdale: If you catch the other dude's king and trap it, *then*  
you win.

Preston 'Bodie' Broadus: A'ight, but if I make it to the end, I'm top dog.

D'Angelo Barksdale: Nah, yo, it ain't like that. Look, the pawns, man, in  
the game, they get capped quick. They be out the game early.

Preston 'Bodie' Broadus: Unless they some smart-ass pawns.

'The Buys', *The Wire*, 2002.

This chapter narrates the story of contemporary U.K. sociology: how did we end up with the discipline we have now, in the form it currently stands? The historical formation of sociology in the U.K. is quite frequently discussed, as is the formation of the sociological canon. What is less often talked about is how this disciplinary history actually relates to contemporary sociological practice and practitioners, and the way in which they navigate their disciplinary space and boundaries. In this chapter, I tell the story of sociology in order to understand it as a field (Bourdieu

1993: 181-182) in which the participants in this ethnography produce writing. I apply Bourdieu's theory of practice to understanding the way that disciplinary writing is demarcated and bounded, and how this shapes – and is shaped by – the way actors negotiate the field in question. I provide compelling foundations for assessing the implications of the research questions posed in the thesis: sociologists need to care about how sociological writing gets produced because it is evidence of the ways that access to higher education, and access to knowledge production, are policed through upholding structural inequalities within intellectual work and spaces of higher education. The thesis itself investigates how claims to intellectual legitimacy can be made within contemporary sociology; this chapter contributes to this overall aim by detailing the landscape of sociology in which participants act and interact, and by showing the key role of (access to) capital in how some sociologists are more and less able to traverse the field and achieve consecration.

Before I move to the substantive part of this chapter, I want to return to the quotation from *The Wire* with which I open. I think this analogy neatly lays out how being connected to, and through, certain hierarchical disciplinary spaces enables a sociologist to mobilise power – for themselves, and for their work. During this scene, D'Angelo Barksdale - lieutenant of the Barksdale drug-dealing organization - uses the hierarchy of their crew to explain the rules of chess to his low-level street runners. Bodie is ambitious and proclaims that, despite the legion of obstacles that stand in his way, he will be able to 'win the game'. D'Angelo is sceptical. He tells Bodie straight that the hierarchy does not change – you might be able to become a queen, but the king will *always* stay the king, and what is more likely is that you - as a feeble pawn – will get 'capped quick'. You will fall to the rules of the hierarchy and be out the game. D'Angelo's analogy is helpful in explaining how legitimacy works in sociological writing and knowledge making. Both sociological scholarship and accounts of writing from participants reveal the existence of a dominant symbolic – a value paradigm which informs us how we should act as sociologists, and how we should judge both our own legitimacy and that of others in the field. This dominant symbolic is based upon hegemonic power, and it structures sociology as a discipline.

In the following sections I show the contested history of British sociology as a university discipline, and the ways in which scholars compete for ground through allegiance to particular schools of thought, specialisms, and sub-disciplinary topics. I further demonstrate how this relates to the continual reshaping of the sociological canon, and draw attention to how this apparently 'hegemonic' structure is in reality unfixed and mutable. However, whilst I tell the story of sociology, I also draw attention to how – amid all the changes, upsets, and ambivalences – the

supremacy of masculinity, whiteness, and dominant social class has largely remained intact. I show how these organisations of cultural capital function in sociology to obscure the intellectual contributions of people of colour, women, and working-class sociologists. Taking this approach to understanding the story of sociology allows the thesis to speak to the conditions of the field which support the continued structural exclusions and inequalities within higher education.

### **The Development of Contemporary British Sociology**

British sociology's disciplinary origins are hotly contested. In this section I tell the history of the discipline not by cohering these narratives into a harmonious whole, but by emphasising the disagreements and partiality of each account. My aims are twofold: to lay ground for understanding sociology as a field; and to show how this field is generative – it is not static or determinative, but shaped by and through the actors which inhabit it. I also begin here to detail how social, cultural, and economic capitals are mobilised in order to gain credibility and consecration within sociology. The various tales of the discipline demonstrate the competitiveness associated with allegiance to particular sub-topics within the discipline, as well as the hostility and rivalry in relation to method. Further – and related to the generative capacity of field – I begin to plot how the histories of the discipline show sociologists as invested in 'the game' (Johnson 1993: 5). How and why people tell the story of the discipline starts to reveal the stakes of the game, and moreover, that sociologists have concluded that this is a game worth playing.

Having promised not to render any sense of coherence to this narrative I nevertheless assert a defining theme to the literature: competition. What is notable in the literature on the development of sociology is both the competitive elements of the institutional 'founders' as well as that of the contemporary sociologists and historians in asserting their particular reading of the discipline. This in itself is rather more interesting than the actual origins of U.K. sociology, and it is on this that my tale of sociology pivots. In Chapter Nine, one of the ethnography participants, Naomi, will assert of current published research that it represents disciplinary 'penis-waving'; keep in mind, then, the contested history of British sociology wrought here.

The first professor of sociology in Britain, L. T. Hobhouse, began his academic career in philosophy – and this permeability and hierarchy of discipline has played a key role in the subsequent characterization of sociology in the U.K. since. A. H. Halsey describes the scrap for disciplinary supremacy as often being simplified into 'conflicts' between three parties, 'The

Eugenicists, the Town Planners, and the Ethical Evolutionists – all with policy aims but different political commitments’ (Halsey 2004: 9). Elements of this rivalry – both classical and contemporary – indicate a certain investedness in ‘playing the game’ as well as highlighting the primary means for doing so as a contestation of disciplinary mores. Much of the historical framing of these struggles is, as in contemporary U.K. sociology, carried out within a narrative which asserts a crisis or problem with British sociology. Under the sub-heading ‘The Trouble with British Sociology’, Chris Renwick (2012) proceeds to inform his reader of the lack of institutional gains made by sociology in the first half of the twentieth century, and emphasises that, ‘not a single person involved with the process of founding sociology as a discipline in Britain has ever been widely considered worthy of a place alongside the greats of the field’s classical canon’ (Renwick 2012: 5). Writing rather earlier in 1969, Timothy Raison in the Penguin Books series, *New Society*, notes of the inclusion of ‘contributors from the British academic world’, that he hopes this will show ‘that there are more intelligent and articulate British sociologists than some people realize’ (Raison 1969: 7). Why, then, is there such competition surrounding the decisive ownership or characterization of a ‘troubled’ or ‘failing’ discipline? My suggestion is that British sociology with its ‘inchoate’ beginnings, and having ‘no agreed boundaries or birthday’ (Halsey 2004: 3), provides fertile ground for asserting legitimacy based on claims to having identified or embodied the ‘centre-ground’. The apparent lack of clear boundaries or borders in its institutional history positions sociology as a useful disciplinary tool for such action. Further to this – and as becomes clear in the ethnography which follows – a sociologist’s intellectual allegiances matter in terms of how, and for whom, they are positioned with legitimacy.

We can see this in some of the interactions of early progenitors of British sociology. Wolf Lepenies recounts the treatment of novelist H. G. Wells’s contributions to defining early British sociological ground; Lepenies notes that, ‘regret was expressed at [Wells’s] lack of sociological knowledge and reading lists were drawn up for him: “he really must read his Spencer”’ (Lepenies 1988: 153, quoting an anonymous review cited in Parrinder, 1972: 92). It is striking that an ‘inchoate’ discipline without relevant ‘greats’ in the canon can nevertheless enact symbolic violence on its participants and practitioners through recourse to the notion that there are particular lauded individuals or texts which one ‘really must’ read. This reminds us of Bourdieu’s identification of the role of dominant definitions in cultural production and the way in which these act ‘in particular on new entrants as a more or less absolute right of entry’ (Bourdieu 1990: 144). The paradigmatic struggles in the history of British sociology are understood by Halsey (2004) to reflect a wider rivalry within the university between literature and science.

This filtered in microcosm to British sociology, and ‘The struggle for possession has not ceased’ (Halsey 2004: 15). Indeed, Renwick’s (2012) book claims that current sociologists have lost sight of the biological science roots of the discipline, whilst Abbott (2007) and others (Bauman 2011, Jacobsen and Marshman 2008) make the case for pursuing sociology as a literary, aesthetic discipline. Again, the competitive stance is potent. Halsey describes the ‘spectacular drama’ of ‘an ill-tempered fight’ (Halsey 2004: 24) staged at Cambridge between C. P. Snow (arguing for the viability of science) and F. R. Leavis (who wanted modern universities built around English studies). Halsey notes that Snow accused literary circles of ‘habouring anti-democratic attitudes’ whilst Leavis issued ‘a polemical reply’ (Halsey 2004: 24). How much of this enmity is accurate versus created in Halsey’s portrayal is another question; notwithstanding authorial license, even representations of competitive sparring are enlightening in terms of showing the stakes of the game.

To take a more recent, but less lurid example, here is a claim Renwick makes in his book, *British Sociology’s Lost Biological Roots: A History of Futures Past* (2012): ‘*very few scholars have ever paid attention to the part biology played in laying the foundations for sociology in Britain*’ (Renwick 2012: 9; emphasis added). Claims to originality are very common assertions made by scholars of all types, and I use it not to cast aspersions at Renwick but as an example of the relationship between actor and field when it comes to creating and assessing ‘the game’. Further, it goes to showing how field is generative – made through the interest of those who play within it. Bourdieu explains that ‘a field can function only if it can find individuals who are socially predisposed to behave as responsible agents...to pursue the objectives and obtain the profits with the field offers’ (Bourdieu 1990: 194). In order to do this, actors must be able to see some impetus or profit to playing the game. The kind of assertion that Renwick offers here is one which engages with the profits of playing the game of academia: in order to be consecrated within the field, one of the things an academic must strive for is originality of purpose and output. In this short sentence Renwick claims his originality – he can see something other scholars have ‘missed’ and his book is taken to ably correct this omission. To others these profits may seem ‘illusory’ – indeed, Bourdieu contends that ‘they always are [illusory] because they rest on that relation of ontological complicity between the habitus and the field which is the basis of entry to the game, and commitment to the game that is *illusio*’ (Bourdieu 1990: 194). The history of British sociology is not an easily-divined tale, but the evidence of *illusio* it provides is compelling. Through attentiveness to how the history is told, the

claims made, and the careers made, on telling and retelling this disciplinary origin story it is possible to more clearly see the complexities of sociology as a field.

A number of these complexities, as outlined, relate to a broad struggle between literature and science – and the machinations of cultural capital involved in this: to which faction do you belong, and how does this support claims to disciplinary consecration (or, indeed, scupper them if you are positioned more akin to Wells). To conclude this section, I consider how the importance of cultural capital, as organised through social locations of gender, ‘race’, and class, also emerges through looking at the history of sociology. The New Society Series Penguin Book cited earlier was one of the first I bought – second-hand – when began my first degree in sociology. I did so in an attempt to understand the lineage and history of the subject. This book presents sociology’s origins as ‘the Founding Fathers of Social Science’ (Raison 1969: 7; also the book’s title). Renwick argues for the biological roots of sociology ‘from the perspective of three men who arrived at the Sociological Society in the early twentieth century’ (Renwick 2012: 10). These same three men - Francis Galton, Patrick Geddes, and L. T. Hobhouse – are representative of the frictional parties Halsey cites as competing over the origins of the discipline in the late nineteenth century (see also Harley 2012).

Though gender politics and freedoms were substantially different in the latter years of the nineteenth century, it is erroneous to conclude that they were such that women played no part in the formation of the discipline. Author Mary Ann Evans was an important figure in early sociology – and, indeed Halsey finds space to cite her as ‘an early example of a person who espoused the cause of literature as the prime vehicle of social criticism’ (Halsey 2004: 20). Evans’s interventions are obscured not only because of her gender, but also the means by which she made them through literature rather than scientific endeavour or academic publications. Josephine M. Guy notes that the aim of ‘social problem’ novelists was to ‘educate, and therefore by implication to change the opinions and prejudices of their readers’ (Guy 1996: 4), aligning them closely with the emancipatory practice of critical social theory. However, with what Halsey terms ‘the rise of the scientific method’ (Halsey 2004: 31), contributions of a literary bent became less and less the dominant mode of doing sociology. Sociologists of colour are also afforded little mention in these histories. I deal with this more closely in the next section, but it is worth noting that the influence of early Black sociology such as that of W. E. B. DuBois in the U.S.A is seldom discussed, and the development of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies under Stuart Hall is given just one line in Halsey’s book (Halsey 2004: 24). These exclusions go towards the way I use the term

'hegemonic power' throughout this thesis. It draws on Bourdieu's assessment of capital, and further understands this in terms of how it is practiced and read through social categories – primarily 'race', gender, and class.

### **Canonicity, Citation Practice, and the Influence of (Academic) Capital**

The previous section of this chapter has detailed the debates which surround the formation and organisation of sociology, as a university discipline. It has indicated how a number of these converge in the assertion that sociology is a science, and that the foundational principles for evaluating – and valuing – knowledge claims are predicated on what is arguably a fetishization of the scientific method. I have also drawn attention to how the work of women and people of colour is so often omitted from sociology's disciplinary origin story. This section builds on the discussion before to hone in on two central textual technologies for undergirding and prolonging the apparent centrality of white men to the discipline's history and present. In doing so, I want to draw attention to these social locations as organisations of forms of capital – specifically cultural capital (Skeggs 1997: 1); this is important for the latter part of this chapter which focuses on the complex forms of access to the field held by different types of sociologist. As shown above, the boundaries of the discipline shift – they are not held immanently in place by any external force, but are shaped by those who engage in, use, and manipulate, the discipline. Bourdieu and Wacquant note that field, as a concept, is generative (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 14). I will show this, later in the chapter, with reference to the particular ways that academic subjectivities – or habitus – form and are formed by a continual, dynamic relationship with field. In this section, my focus is on texts – how sociological writing comes to be used, or institutionalised within the field, and what forms of power this shows us.

Concentrating on the canon is helpful. In this chapter the canon of sociology serves as a landmark – a site in which to demonstrate my argument, which also stands as a tangible, quasi-physical space to which the reader can return throughout the thesis. Robert Macfarlane writes that, "The word *landmark* is from the Old English, *landmearc*, meaning "an object in the landscape which, by its conspicuousness, serves as a guide in the direction of one's course"" (Macfarlane 2015: 12). The canon of sociology is a guiding presence: it enables me to map disciplinary spaces and boundaries, to show how writing is part of legitimating these spaces, and how writing can be used to gain access to legitimacy. I am also able to show the liminality and ambiguity of the canon – its

artificiality exposing how legitimacy is made in one space by opposing it to the value system of another. From here I am able to argue that the transience and instability of this landmark indicates how multiple spaces of sociology sit in friction and in concord – how they operate in relation to each other and work as dynamic and connected spaces. I want to think about this through recourse to male, white, middle-class bodies as being the somatic norm of the canon, and of sociology too. Nirmal Puwar discusses which bodies fit in which spaces and notes that ‘subtle means of inclusion/exclusion continue to informally operate through the designation of the somatic norm’ (Puwar 2004: 33). A central argument in this thesis is that sociology continues to be a space of white male dominance. Based on this, legitimacy within sociology is oriented towards values of whiteness and masculinity – these social locations are inculcated as correct and valuable expressions of cultural capital in the discipline. The composition of the canon provides evidence for understanding sociology as patrilineal and oriented towards Western – and primarily European – ideas of the social world, self, society, and modernity. The canon is – at first glance – a parade of white men, and indeed, jokes about ‘dead white men’ abound in the literature (Macey 2000: 46). Barbara L. Marshall and Anne Witz specifically identify the canon as a series of men. They contend that,

The sociological canon is patrilineal. It is a procession of men, of “founding fathers” who, joined by their sons, have made their way from the nineteenth through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century as the canonized “masters” ... of sociological thought (2004: 1).

William Outhwaite directly notes that in the canon of social theory ‘the “theory boys” tended to be ... boys’ (2009: 1036). Further to this, the whole telling of sociology as a discipline has arguably become a patrilineal undertaking – there are exceptions, but a significant proportion of the literature on sociology and its writing has been done by white men (see, for instance, Cole 1957; Mills 1959; Becker 1986; Giddens 1995; Outhwaite 2009; Bauman 2011). This is a problem for this thesis: a careful reader will note how many of my references on the topic of disciplinarity and writing are to white, usually European, men. The more sociology is told by white men the more it appears as an endeavour of (and for) white men. Scholars frequently describe the canon in terms of ‘founding fathers’, usually taken to be Marx, Durkheim, Weber and occasionally Simmel (Osborne, Rose and Savage 2008: 521; Outhwaite 2009; Connell 2007: 1). It is important to recognise that this thesis is examining the relationship between the craft of writing and legitimacy of knowledge in a space where the canon – the codification of the discipline in writing – is

dominated by men. A discipline which begins – historically, pedagogically, institutionally, and conceptually – from a set of European ‘founding fathers’ sets out its stall as valuing masculinity and whiteness above all. It operates as a standing assertion that the somatic norm is the white man and others enter spaces of disciplinary legitimacy in relation to this norm. Thus, the milieu of sociology formed by the canon shapes its inhabitants: it tells sociologists what they should expect from the discipline and what the discipline expects of them.

The language used in relation to these men in the canon further demonstrates how hegemonic power forms spaces of disciplinary legitimacy. The canon is understood to represent sociology through demonstrations of ‘what is most distinctively sociological’ (Sugarman 1968: 84). As a disciplinary product, the canon is often engaged with as a set of texts or authors which represent the most authoritative or legitimate writings of a discipline (Leavis 1948). Indeed, honorific language is frequently applied to canonical authors. Outhwaite calls Marx, Durkheim and Weber a ‘holy trinity’ (2009: 1029) and Osborne, Rose and Savage term the ‘founding fathers’ both ‘great’ and ‘sovereign thinkers’ (Osborne, Rose and Savage 2008: 521). This language of valour and esteem demonstrates a reverence for the canon of sociology and implies a hierarchical aspect to the evaluation of knowledge and scholarship. When the thesis turns to the accounts of participants this is the landscape in which they are speaking. Participants continually demonstrated awareness of hierarchies of value within sociology, as well as feelings of exclusion and rejection based on these. Understanding the reverence with which the canon of white men is spoken of – and that this is very rarely contested or done reflexively – is important to comprehending the way in which participants feel stuck within the discipline.

The regal language used in descriptions of the canon, and the reproductive language employed by Marshall and Witz encourage readings that focus on the routes to canonicity as akin to royal lines of succession or hereditary lines of patronage. This is further supported by Outhwaite’s analysis of how one becomes canonical. Outhwaite asserts that ‘It is probably essential for canonical status to be categorized as a general theorist, rather than one specializing in class, gender, ethnicity or in a specialism such as work, education or medicine’ (Outhwaite 2009: 1036). It is worth considering what it may mean to be a ‘general theorist’ and what might be obscured in the use of this term. Outhwaite sets up a dichotomy between those sociologists who do things ostensibly linked to ‘identity politics’ – class, gender, ‘race’ – or a particular ‘speciality’, and those who work on much broader narratives - the ‘general theorist’. Initially this may seem a logical distinction to make, but if we scrutinise what a ‘general theorist’ does more closely we can begin to see cross-overs with

the somatic norm. The analyses of grand narrative social theories tend to take place outside of social structures and issues of identity that have been asserted as crucial to understanding power relations in the social world. Arguably then, the only bodies that these grand generalizable theories may apply to are those whose identities are elided with the hegemonic: the ‘general’, by and large, is applicable only to those who are able to conform to a generalized, dominant standard. Realistically speaking, the ‘general’ is a heterosexual middle-class white man. As Bourdieu notes ‘the tradition is silent, not least about itself as a tradition’ (1977: 167). The white man is so universal as an exemplar of humanity that he is able to travel unseen; he is the convention and implicitly understood as such to the extent that he can pass himself off, in a seemingly benign and mundane manner, as the general and universal. Here, we may think of Marshall and Witz’s description of how white male privilege begets yet more white male privilege – and is woven into the fabric of sociological judgments. As a navigational tool the canon is so far so male. Moreover, it would be wilfully blind to assert that there is any sort of equality or fairness – in terms of gender and ethnicity at least - as to how one becomes canonical.

The centrality of the somatic norm to the canon produces a centre/periphery effect. It asserts – and allows sociologists to assert – that there is an ‘inside’ to sociology only accessible by those who conform, and who are legitimated by the dominant symbolic. Gurminder Bhambra, for instance, argues that,

Sociology’s orientation to history is based around agreement on the importance of key substantive issues concerning the emergence of modernity and the related “rise of the West”, as well as agreement around a stadial idea of progressive development and the privileging of Eurocentred histories in the construction of such a framework (2011: 667-668).

Bhambra contends that the underlying value system of the discipline of sociology and its canon or classics are already internally driven and attended to by those on the inside. She asserts that a Eurocentric history or disciplinary story has been told and retold in order to scrub out the contributions of people of colour and form a narrative of sociology as a particularly European endeavour. Likewise, Ari Sitas, writing about the lack of African sociology in the mainstream, rejects the notion that this is related solely to economic forces and deprivation in African universities, and the continent more widely. He argues that even if ‘the pressures of the market

were ameliorated...it would not take long before the deeper problems would surface. The actual disciplinary dislocation between African sociologists and the canon of sociology would then become visible and appear in its plenitude' (Sitas 2014: 458-459). Sitas contends that African sociologists tend to be more transdisciplinary than their Western counterparts, with area studies and African studies creating a 'more generous tent for social scientists and humanities scholars from Africa' (Sitas 2014: 459) than the traditional Western canon. Sitas ties this to an institutional and organisational dislocation, noting that the interdisciplinarity of African sociologists meant that they 'veered further away from the sociological canon, from the sociological community and from the post-Second World War epistemic communities like the International Sociological Association' whilst the 'rest' of Western sociology 'remained inside the cage of its original ideal types, proscribing movements across the conceptual moat that surrounded it' (Sitas 2014: 459). Sitas helpfully draws attention to the credentialising capacity of official disciplinary institutions, and the ways in which sociologists uphold the symbolic power of these spaces by orientating themselves around them (Bourdieu 1988: 8).

What is argued here is that abandoning the traditional (and dominant) modes of studying sociology has seen a shift in the role and operation of African sociology which has marginalised it on a global stage. This argument builds on that of Outhwaite and indicates that in order to be canonical - and legitimated – sociology and sociologists must inhabit a centre ground created by dominant identity groups. The existence of this 'inside' or centre-ground is both challenged and reinforced within this thesis. It remains a potent force, though almost no one could articulate or agree on where it actually lies. The operation of the somatic norm through the canon is certainly a clue – the arguments of Bhambra and Sitas show how the canon has been able to mobilise capitals of whiteness and masculinity into powerful positions through enabling these categories to claim intellectual legitimacy and supremacy. On the other hand, the thesis indicates elite positions being held across a range of sociological and social locations, thus contradicting a straightforward explanation of one uninterrupted space of disciplinary legitimacy.

Frequently raised within both the literature on canons, and the ethnography I undertook, were questions of 'merit': the notion that the canon is a sort of meritocracy and simply producing a strong body of memorable, original, and systematically applicable work is enough to potentially invest you of canonical status. This contention is rebuffed, though, by scholarship such as Bhambra's. Contrarily to the outline set out by Outhwaite (2009), Bhambra specifically asserts that canon formation is not based on merit, and hence the content of the canon cannot be altered

simply by persuading sociology of the value of currently marginalised forms of knowledge. Noting how the contributions of Black sociology have ‘come to be defined as being about race, rather than about sociology and the broader politics of knowledge production (Bhambra 2014: 486), she draws our attention to this definitional trickery as part of the ‘mechanisms of exclusion from the sites of institutional knowledge formation and dissemination, exclusion from the canon and, more importantly, from the processes of canon building’ (Bhambra 2014: 474). This assertion is vital in that it makes clear how the dominant symbolic works through the canon. Bhambra’s analysis opens up the notion of value and merit to show the artificial quality of these categories and the way in which social structures of power operate to include and exclude in academia and knowledge formation.

In this context it is possible to see why Sara Ahmed refers to citation practices as a ‘screening technique’ (2013): tracking citations reveals how certain groups, identities or bodies assert their dominance and their right to space through blocking out and erasing the very existence of others. In this understanding of canonicity, the rest is silence. What appears as tradition (or talent) is in fact the result of quiet processes of usurping power. Bhambra notes of her re-orientation of the story of sociology’s history that she is,

seeking a broader dialogue, one that brings the non-West more thoroughly into understandings of the construction of the modern world and, further, that displaces the privileged position of the West within comparative historical-sociological accounts (2011: 669).

The notion of displacement here is important to the notion of belonging to sociology through writing practices. In order to successfully grapple with why sociologists may or may not see themselves as belonging to the discipline, it is necessary to understand not only the multifarious possible constructions of the discipline, but also why there is a particular version which is passed off as the ‘norm’. Further to this is the requirement to recognise that the West – and other forms of social dominance such as whiteness, maleness and patriarchy – were *placed* in a position of power. It is vital that we understand the composition and marketing of the discipline as something which is constructed and deliberate, rather than accidental. Within this context, the composition of the canon itself and the criteria for entry would still appear to uphold a centre/periphery dichotomy of hegemonic and marginal(ised) scholarship. However, the mechanisms for upholding the canon point to it as a far more vulnerable and permeable institution. The canon is not a stable

entity and canonical authors shift according to fashions and trends – indeed as one of my participants, James, said to me: ‘who would ever think of teaching [Talcott] Parsons as canonical now?!’. My argument, then, is that the canon functions as a semi-permeable abstract object which polices and delimits the ‘hows’ and ‘whos’ of sociology, rather than being a beacon of the best sorts of sociology. The contents of the canon shift over time and are contested by scholars such as Marshall and Witz. Following the lines of canonicity reveals the fragility of hegemonic claims to greatness.

The make-up of the canon is reflected in the institutions and structures of sociology – in that these are white and male, but also that certain forms of knowledge are considered less important to the curriculum and of lesser importance in the composition of departments and degree programmes. This is aptly shown in the case of feminism, gender, and women’s studies. There is a consistent exclusion of marginal voices through denigration of the intellectual positions they inhabit. When these intellectual positions sit at a distance from the dominant symbolic, they are also understood to be disconnected from disciplinary legitimacy:

When it comes to finding a seat at the already-established table, the number of places is restricted, selective, and highly precarious...And this is precisely where a tacit – yet persistent and multifarious – hierarchy of worth between disciplines comes in; one in which gender and LGBT/queer issues are often conflated and dismissed as “not as important as” (Santos 2014: 17).

What is implied here by Santos is also identified earlier by Outhwaite – the importance of appearing neutral and value-free. In the same way that purported neutrality supports the dominant symbolic in travelling unseen it is also key to asserting authority within its own rubric of legitimacy. One tactic of the dominant symbolic is to assert that scholarship connected to ‘identity’ is political and therefore not value-free, neutral, or rational. Owing to this, the scholarship can never be ‘scientific’ and so must be dismissed as partial, biased or ‘not as important as’. And all through this, the dominant symbolic itself is informed by hierarchies of whiteness, masculinity, and middle-classness. The operation of the dominant symbolic to distance these ‘political’ forms of scholarship and their connected non-somatic norm bodies, from the centre-ground of sociology it delineates can be seen in the pedagogy of sociology. Feminism (including related areas such as gender-, women’s-, and queer- studies) and race/ethnicity studies frequently form part of social theory

modules taught at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Indeed, when I surveyed undergraduate social theory modules (Burton 2015) almost all of those which covered contemporary theory included at least a week's study of feminism and a further week on 'race', ethnicity, or postcolonialism. This inclusion may at first indicate a hold upon legitimacy in that they are considered part of the core themes of social thought and critique. However, it also shows the ephemerality of this legitimacy and the paradoxical power bestowed upon these sites of scholarship. These topics are generally taught separately from 'mainstream' social concerns (for example, feminist or women authors appearing only in the one week on feminism rather than throughout a social theory module), thus effectively segregating them and implicitly indicating that their concerns are not the concerns of 'the social' at large.

This bifurcation implicitly asserts that the concerns of feminism or postcolonial scholars are only relevant to being a feminist or postcolonial, rather than understanding the ways in which gender and race inequality structure and shape the social world. Disciplinary legitimacy is controlled through mobilisation of the dominant symbolic to shape sociological spaces. It is mercurial, transient, and paradoxical. The tentacles of the canon also emerge in decisions made in regard to departments and degree programmes. Clare Hemmings discusses the closing down of women's studies degrees and departments, as well as decisions to stop teaching modules on feminism. She notes that, being assumed to have achieved its aims of equality, and therefore to be outdated and of no continuing relevance to students, feminism and women's studies is increasingly absent from the curriculum: 'there are repeated examples of Western feminist progress narratives in particular being used institutionally to justify non-investment in feminist knowledge projects.' (Hemmings 2009: 10). Because feminism, gender, 'race', and ethnicity are seen as 'identity politics' rather than structural and conceptual concerns, it is often assumed that once they have 'achieved' the political change they are understood as demanding, that they are no longer relevant to discussions of how to theorize the social world. They are understood by those in positions of power as temporary and goal-oriented forms of scholarship rather than vital, permanent questions about self and society: 'gender and LGBT/queer studies are never self-evident or taken for granted as mandatory and legitimate. They need to be constantly retold, redone, reasserted' (Santos 2014: 19). This is in contrast to the white, male authors of the canon who are never required to assert themselves, to argue for their inclusion, or to defend the viability and continuing relevance of their work. Being viewed as universal, and therefore always and generally applicable, these theories and concerns of whiteness and masculinity are unquestioned as marking and holding legitimate disciplinary space.

## The Relationship between Hegemony and Writing

It is important, now, to move this discussion to styles of sociology writing themselves. I have already outlined the dominant position of whiteness and masculinity on the textual structures of sociology – including how its disciplinary history is asserted through these texts. What is necessary from this is to indicate how these hegemonic social locations make themselves felt – visibly and invisibly – within a number of central writing styles. Through this I show how writing comes to be used as part of claiming legitimacy in the field – the different forms of capital sociologists play on, and the precise way this invocation of capital travels to form the prestige of symbolic power. My aim here is not to categorise all sociological writing into broad types, but to consider some ways in which oft-debated writing styles of the discipline linguistically draw on forms of capital to consecrate themselves in the field. The dynamism of this is important: as sociologists write texts which undergird themselves through high value forms of cultural capital, so these forms of high value cultural capital become further inscribed into the discipline. They come to, and continue to, mean something to other sociologists. They are moved by practitioners of the discipline into being the dominant definition of sociology – which, as Bourdieu notes in relation to the means of cultural production, ‘imposes itself on everyone’ (1990: 144). Identification of hegemony in styles of writing is ‘something altogether different from futile wars of words’ (Bourdieu 1990: 144); it is means by which dominant power is exposed and critiqued – ‘the overthrowing of the dominant definition is the specific form taken by revolutions in these universes’ (Bourdieu 1990: 144). Here, I look at sociology writing’s various orientations towards i) being critical; ii) foregrounding aestheticism or experiential prose; iii) and political intent. These sub-genres or styles are not necessarily ‘canonical’ within a mainstream conception of the field – and, indeed, may contradict one another. The primary aim of the exercise is in showing how high value cultural capital is produced within and by sociologists across the discipline.

Rita Felski contends that in writing within the critical tradition, ‘arguments are a matter not only of content but also of style and tone’ (Felski 2015: 4). Common to this style and tone are moves by writers to ‘interrogate, unmask, expose, subvert, unravel, destabilize, take issue, and take umbrage’ (Felski 2015: 5). These are arguably all literary conceits or poses which focus on the abilities and skills of the writer, pushing them, rather than the sociological findings, onto centre-stage. Moreover, this phrasing often works as a semantic trick which presents standard academic practice of analysing, explaining, and describing as something avant garde and boundary-pushing. Through this the writer themselves becomes credentialised through their proximity to the

(apparent) intellectual complexity of the prose: it is a ‘manifestation of [mood]’ which is oriented to ‘the cultivation of an intellectual persona...suspicious, knowing, self-conscious, hard-headed, tirelessly vigilant’ (Felski 2015: 6). This writing style is exemplified both in the sociology of critique and Critical Social Science (CSS). The idea that complication, density, and difficulty is synonymous with sophistication of thought, originality, and intellectual ability is a cultural hangover which permeates academia, and this notion is gendered, raced, and classed. These privileged ideas of complexity are gained through recourse to showing high value cultural capital. For instance, complexity can only be deployed through access to legitimated forms of linguistic capital. Academic writing may hold an appearance of ‘being purely scholastic and meritocratic, but in reality it is a process for ensuring that those born privileged are twice-born’ (Barnard 1999: 139). This relationship between critique, structural power, and disciplinary legitimacy is shown in the way sociologists continue to (mis)use the word ‘critical’ – in which it functions as ‘a term of praise, an honorific title used by writers to commend their work’ (Hammersley 2005: 175) or a ‘posh synonym for “criticize”’ (Sayer 2009: 768). To be ‘critical’, and to abide by the writing rules for the genre, is to claim legitimacy through securing yourself to epithets of hegemonic power represented in writing. I am not claiming that a sociologist needs to fit into the privileged structures of masculinity, whiteness, or dominant social class in order to write this way – but this is the power on which the legitimacy of this writing rests. The extent to which non-hegemonic identifications and bodies desire, or are able, to use hegemonic forms of writing to ‘secure’ their sociological legitimacy is explored in subsequent chapters.

Like critique, aesthetically or experientially oriented writing is also based on particular ways of understanding and practicing sociology. Much of the scholarship on writing as experiential is driven by feminist, race/ethnicity scholarship, and other forms of what William Outhwaite terms ‘identity politics’ (2009: 1036). This type of scholarship begins from the perspective of lived experience and the writing styles attempt to reflect this; the foundations of the sociological practice set themselves in opposition to the positivist, ‘objective’ focus of conventional scientifically-driven sociology and argue for a more personal, poetic, or literary quality to sociology writing. This form of writing attempts reflexively critique sociology writing – for instance in Dorothy Smith’s assertion that patriarchal conventions are imported into styles of sociology writing through the privileging of objective over subjective knowledge (1999: 31). However, it is not automatically free of dominant symbolic values. Legitimacy here continues to rely heavily on high value cultural capital. When Richard Harvey Brown suggests that a ‘poetic’ response to the social is more valuable than a positivist epistemology (1977: 25), and Andrew Abbott argues for a ‘lyrical

sociology' to bring forth experiential or emotional knowledge (2007: 76), their 'alternatives' to dominant practice still remain tethered in hegemonic power. There is nothing inherently democratic about poetry or lyrical writing – indeed, being able to write in these forms requires knowledge of another discipline, pedagogy, and genre of writing. Zygmunt Bauman argues that sociologists began employing jargon-ridden and obfuscatory writing styles in an attempt to ape science - to 'secure the sovereign authority of our pronouncements' (Bauman: 2011:163). This move away from science is not also always a move away from overly complicating your writing.

Much like the critical tradition above, the legitimacy of this sociological space rests on the mobilisation of cultural capital. This cultural capital is classed – particularly in terms of structural and emotional access to learning the poetic or lyrical form. It is also implicitly geared to a traditional, Western white male tradition of poetry. When Abbott notes the commonalities between the epistemological bases of poetry and sociology, he goes to William Wordsworth's defence of poetry in *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1801) – a Poet Laureate and part of the canon of English Literature. The choice of comparison made demonstrates a mode of writing which may exist in opposition to certain enactments of dominant power in sociology but nevertheless continues to orient itself to a white, male, European cultural tradition. I assert a similar formulation in the political or normative style of sociology writing. This is writing which attempts not only to describe or analyse the social world but also to effect social or political change. To a certain extent it shares this in common with critique, which seeks social change via 'uncovering' and 'exposing' individuals' social domination. It also shares aspects with the underlying foundations of aesthetic writing in that political styles of writing in sociology are often driven by projects which focus on the experiential nature of lived identity positions. One sociologist who writes in this style is John Holloway. He asserts a clear normative, political aim of his prose, stating 'A plague on the preciousness of so much "critical theory" that thinks it can hold itself aloof from crisis and the social antagonism it indicates' (2012: 517). Holloway rejects the styles and rules of critical sociology writing, which he says provides us with a language and a way of thinking that makes it very difficult for us to express our scream' (2002: 3). Holloway's technique shares much with the aesthetically-oriented writing style above, and he uses numerous metaphors, similes and extended poetic analogies to describe the affects of capitalism on the human condition and social world. This writing style moves away from the credentialism and legitimacy of spaces of science and objectivity, but relies on the cultural capital of aestheticism. What this thesis does is to pinpoint the complex and often problematic relationship sociologists have with writing – particularly, as shown here, the

instances in which an ‘alternative’ form of writing is presented as challenging convention or power but upon closer inspection continues to tacitly uphold the same power.

### **The Sociologist in the Game: Academic Subjectivities within the Field**

The work above has set out the means by which sociology is organised as a field. I have shown the way certain forms of cultural capital are highly valued and rewarded within this, in both the abstract structure of the canon, and in styles of sociology writing which permeate the discipline. I have also shown the ways that some sociologists are invested in playing the game, and this interest is part of what upholds the structure of the field. In this final section, I conclude by considering how different sociologists may navigate and negotiate this disciplinary space with greater or lesser ease, depending on their access to capital. By doing so, I show that the parameters of consecration – focused on in detail in the next chapter – do not arrive *a priori* into the discipline, but are produced through those who inhabit and use the space. This is significant to the purpose and import of the work here: a study of the writing lives of sociologists is vital to comprehending how they, as agents within a field, shape the space to make legitimate knowledge claims and potentially function to uphold hegemonic domination. This has wider consequence for higher education in terms of access to, and inequality within – both for academic staff and students.

Writing styles across sociology reflect hegemonic power, and many of the tropes of sociology writing link to qualities of the dominant symbolic. They are oriented to protecting and concealing knowledge behind complex sentence formations. C. Wright Mills calls this ‘socspeak’ and asserts that it is geared towards the creation of ‘prestige’ (1959: 218): it elevates the prose by forcing a status gap between writer and reader. Its recourse to complexity is an implied declaration of the superior intellect of the sociologist. Writing which is hard to understand disadvantages the reader, placing them in a submissive position of requiring the work to be deciphered. In *Homo Academicus* (1988), Bourdieu perspicaciously notes that “There are surely few social worlds where power depends so strongly on belief; where it is so true that, in the words of Hobbes, “Reputation of power is power”” (Bourdieu 1988: 91). Thus, the ‘socspeak’ Mills identifies stands as an emblem of this reputation of power – an implicit declaration that the user is ‘better’ than their peers. This declaration creates a world in which to not be able to declare oneself thus becomes tantamount to an admission of lack of value.

So, then, how does this affect the possibilities for moving within this field, and how does this formation of (sociological) habitus work in relation to accrual (or not) of highly valued capitals. A useful example of the potential limits of navigating the field comes from Laurel Richardson. Richardson writes of her initial attempts to write outside of the dominant symbolic conventions, and the reaction of sociological publishers to this:

In my first post-Ph.D. years whenever I wrote an article that veered from rhetorical conventions of the discipline, it was rejected. The *American Sociological Review* gave my submission “Women in Science: Why So Few?” a one-line rejection: “This paper was obviously written by a woman, because no one but a woman would be interested in it” (Richardson 2002: 416).

Richardson’s experience highlights the connection between the dominant symbolic in sociology writing and structural power and inequalities. Implicit in the condescending rejection on the basis of gender is not only the centrally powerful place of men and masculinity in sociology, but implicitly the concomitant assertion that ‘woman’ is not a highly valued form of cultural capital in the field. It cannot give access to symbolic power. It is not only that the concerns of men are privileged, but also that concepts and frameworks conventionally considered as masculine are also foregrounded. The traditional link between rationality, logic, strength, and hardness and being masculine filters through to sociology writing. The dominant symbolic of sociology writing, being in such rapport with privileged social groups therefore is able to create and reproduce elite status through sociology writing.

This is visible in the reverse, if we return to the literature on British sociology’s disciplinary history. In this we can see in practice Bourdieu’s claim that ‘we cannot entirely understand the phenomena of the concentration of academic power without also taking into consideration the contribution made by the claimants by way of the strategies which lead them towards the most powerful protectors’ (Bourdieu 1988: 91). Renwick describes how:

there was never an interview for the Martin White chair of sociology. In fact, Hobhouse became Britain’s first professor of sociology because [Victor] Branford, one of Geddes’ closest supporters, selected him for the

job in the belief Hobhouse could unify what was becoming an increasingly fractured field (Renwick 2012: 148).

The first professor of sociology in Britain did not become so through an open or meritocratic process, but through appointment by an ally. This demonstrates the strong force of social capital, in the form of academic networks, on the consecration of some and not others. What is further indicated here is the importance placed on institutions – that Hobhouse’s appointment was based on his embodied demonstration of institutional values, such that he can be relied upon to unite a dispersed and warring field. What Hobhouse’s selection as chair shows in action is Bourdieu’s assertion that ‘there is no master who does not recognise the value of the institution and its institutional values which are all rooted in the institutionalized refusal of any non-institutional thought’ (Bourdieu 1988: 93). Further to this, it is another example of how ‘capital breeds capital’ (Bourdieu 1988: 91). It is important to note how the cultivation of an academic habitus (outlined further in Chapter Three) is key in enabling not just ease of movement within a field, but in having your personhood and work recognized as legitimate, and being rewarded within institutions as such.

The social locations of whiteness, masculinity, and dominant class position that I have foregrounded in this chapter are significant in structuring sociology as a discipline, but also do great work in opening access to the forms of symbolic power important in academic institutions – such as university hierarchies, publishing opportunities, and the credentialism of being included in the canon. To hold the high cultural capital of whiteness or masculinity puts someone that bit closer to being able to be recognised as legitimate within a given field. This – for Bourdieu at least – is not a wholly conscious task. He asserts that, ‘the most cunning pupils, who are also the most favoured, have no need to calculate opportunities or weigh up chances before offering their gratitude and custom to the most influential masters’ (Bourdieu 1988: 91) – because these are strategies of the habitus and its ‘feel for the game’ (Johnson 1993: 5). My intention in this chapter has been to show how being, what Puwar describes as the ‘somatic norm’ (Puwar 2004: 1), supports the sociologist in moving with ease within the discipline, precisely because the cultural capital of whiteness, masculinity, and dominant social class has been subtly transposed to connote symbolic capital in the realm of knowledge. The ethnography which follows draws out some of these subtleties, showing complicity with, recognition of, and rejection of ‘the game’.

## Chapter Three

### Legitimacy, Value, and the Craft of Writing: A Theoretical Framework for Research

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework employed within this thesis. The research questions detailed in Chapter One stress the importance of the concept of legitimacy – what this thesis aims to do is examine the existence of a relationship between the craft of writing sociology and the production of legitimacy vis-à-vis both knowledge and individual sociologists. Legitimacy, then, is a key theoretical concept important to the analysis within the thesis. In this chapter, I show how legitimacy works as part of the framework within which I examine the ethnographic data which follows. The framework used begins from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, and I employ the concepts of field, habitus, and capital throughout. This chapter follows from the work done in Chapter Two on disciplinary power and the way in which, within this, hegemonic social positions and power are employed to convey a very particular form of authoritative text – and version of the discipline - in sociology. My intervention, within the framework of Bourdieu's concepts, is in both a reconceptualization of 'legitimation' and through reconsidering the relationship between the 'agent' and 'the game', which constitutes Bourdieu's analysis of the interplay of field and habitus. Bourdieu sees very little evidence for an agents' awareness of their complicity in upholding the stakes of 'the game' (Bourdieu 1990: 194-195; 1993: 72-73). However, I build my theoretical framework from the themes and concerns which emerged in my ethnography; as such, I show a more nuanced situation – a paradox in which sociologists recognise the game, continue to strategize and play, and yet also vocally decry the parameters and outcomes of it.

Furthermore, I tie this to my suggestions regarding how sociologists may understand legitimacy. I contend that, though scholars working from critical feminist, disability, and 'race'/ethnicity positions have consistently shown the bias of the hegemonic within sociology (and academia more widely), that even these interventions have also engaged with legitimacy in a way which emphasises it as fixed and stable. I argue that in taking this stance in respect to the concept of legitimacy, the value paradigm which underpins it is able to move unseen and unremarked. In these conditions legitimacy is read as something which sustains a single, immutable sacred space in which the 'most valuable' become consecrated. It is the aim of this chapter to show the ambiguity of legitimacy as seeming fixed but existing as liminal, transient, temporary, and vulnerable. Instead of suggesting

different forms of legitimacy, or frameworks of value, as scholars such as Delgado Bernal (2002) and Skeggs (2004b) do, the theoretical framework here contends that legitimacy can be understood as a bricolage of concepts and their context in particular spaces. I suggest that legitimacy is not a single stable and bounded state into which you can pass, having undertaken the correct rites of passage; rather, it is a dynamic and shifting state, specific to individual's particular machinations of structure and agency.

The following chapters will show how participants in this ethnography create and sustain their legitimacy through numerous competing and contradictory means, how they are differently legitimate to one another but also share strategies and tactics as well as bases for claiming legitimacy. This chapter foregrounds the interviews I undertook with the gatekeepers for the ethnography, in which they discussed the grounds on which they nominated sociologists. I provide greater detail on the methodology of the thesis and detail on the fieldwork in the following chapter (Chapter 4); for the purposes of this chapter, it is important to understand that gatekeepers acted as figures of legitimacy within the discipline, and in nominating participants, were understood as legitimating these sociologists. The conversations with gatekeepers direct attention to how sociologists perceive a 'mainstream' and a set of clear rules, but also vacillate around this – making distinctions and suggestions which show other means by which oneself and one's knowledge may be legitimate. Moreover, they also demonstrate how senior figures within the discipline *engage* with the rules of the game. The ethnography shows these sociologists as perceptively aware of, and opposed to, the parameters and rites of consecration, and the resulting exclusions made; yet they often openly continue to sustain these in their own practice. I set up the theoretical framework through a focus on the craft of writing: how did the gatekeepers in this project locate legitimacy within sociology writing? By doing so, I show a rich seam of possibilities for producing 'value' in research, but set these in contrast to a prevailing notion that there are rules which must be followed. Within this, legitimacy sits as a linchpin which draws together other connected concepts of authority, value, and consecration. I begin with a discussion of these central concepts, move on to embed these in discussions of writing, and end by showing how the theoretical framework is advanced in the thesis through the thematic strands outlined in Chapter One.

### **Value Paradigms and Writing: Ambiguous Legitimacy in Sociology**

“Poetry’s the speech of kings. You’re one of those  
Shakespeare gives the comic bits to: prose!

All poetry (even Cockney Keats?) you see  
's been dubbed by [ʌs] into RP,  
Received Pronunciation, please believe [ʌs]  
your speech is in the hands of the Receivers”

“We say [ʌs] not [uz], T.W.!” That shut my trap.  
I doffed my flat a’s (as in flat cap)  
My mouth all stuffed with glottals, great  
Lumps to hawk up and spit out...*E-nun-ciate!*

Tony Harrison, “Them and [ʌs]”

Value and legitimacy are closely related concepts, and they operate in tandem. To simplify, value relates to specific privileged categories, spaces or positions; legitimacy is the outcome of being aligned with these privileged categories. Being able to demonstrate one’s affinity or proximity to categories, positions, or spaces that have been privileged bestows value on a person. The accumulation of this value brings about legitimacy. A value paradigm describes a group of these categories or positions in connection to each other. It underpins and subtly controls how legitimacy can be brought about in a particular space. Different spaces privilege different values, and so becoming legitimate in one space does not necessarily make you legitimate in another. However, there are certain categories and positions which are so dominant as to seem to confer value which travels across spaces and legitimates the bearer in a more universal manner. Examples of these are whiteness, masculinity, middle-classness and being able-bodied. This chapter argues that a fine-grained analysis of legitimacy demonstrates it as both mutable and unstable. Owing to this, legitimacy becomes something which it is possible to contest, as well as a concept or state which can be understood within a range of possible value paradigms. Nevertheless, it is important also to be mindful of the forceful way in which hegemonic power makes itself felt within knowledge production and the lives of individual sociologists. Within the thesis I am understanding hegemonic power in line with work on intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991). Hegemonic power, in this formulation, denotes a top-down conception of power – the idea of ‘power over’ something or someone. My use of the term is in line with my focus on structural inequalities. Thus, in this thesis, hegemonic power is the power to dominate, and it appears through the supremacy of privileged social/structural categories such as whiteness, masculinity, and dominant social class in academia and sociology.

The above poem, by Tony Harrison, is a good example of this ambivalent state in action. ‘Them and [ʌs]’, lays bare two distinct modes of language use, the formal and the dialect. Harrison aims his pen at the hierarchy of language: that some forms of language, accent, and words are valued (and legitimated) whilst others are viewed as barbaric, dirty, comedic, or stupid. ‘Them and [ʌs]’ shows the operation of the dominant symbolic, as an act of symbolic violence, and how this is related to structural power. Received Pronunciation and Standard English are the dominant symbolic in the English language – they are understood as most legitimate and so exert themselves over regional accent and dialect which are read by Harrison’s teacher as less valuable and, indeed, backward. Received Pronunciation and Standard English are also gendered, raced, and classed: they are forms of language deemed legitimate by and through upper middle class, white, male structures. Harrison, though, is defiant and he shows how he values his dialect words and northern English accent – ‘used my name and own voice: [uz] [uz] [uz]/ended sentences with by, with, from/and spoke the language that I spoke at home’ (Harrison 1987). Harrison doesn’t capitulate to his English teacher’s symbolic violence – he continues to assert the legitimacy of his language, and uses it in his writing. He even goes as far as to directly counter the premise of fixed and sole legitimacy claimed by Received Pronunciation: ‘You can tell the Receivers where to go/(and not aspirate it) once you know/Wordsworth’s matter/water are full rhyme’ (Harrison 1987). It is such powerful but everyday assertions like Harrison’s on which the theoretical framework for this thesis rests – and which are shown throughout the ethnography. Harrison takes a form of writing (poetry) which is conventionally understood to be ‘high-brow’ (the ‘speech of kings’) and uses it to precisely detail the oppression wrought through the same high-brow hegemonic power. He both co-opts and subverts the hegemonic, putting it to use for himself. In doing so, Harrison shows how these positions – hegemonic and marginal – may work in co-operation. The term ‘marginality’ implies a sort of in/out construction, but what Harrison points to is the possibility that putatively marginal positions can express themselves using hegemonic forms.

The theoretical framework I suggest attempts to move away from this in/out construction of power, whereby either you have it or you don’t. I also suggest something more complex than a spectrum of power – in which individuals, paradigms, or concepts may be closer or further away from a powerful/hegemonic ‘centre’. This theoretical framework – and conceptualisation of legitimacy emphasises the paradox of hegemony and marginality: that it is possible to be both at once. The specific interplay varies across social actors and in relation to the space they are in. The theoretical framework used in this thesis contends that legitimacy is brought about through

interactions; social actors are agentive beings who are capable of deploying their various forms of capital in advantageous ways. This formulation does not ignore or reject the idea of dominant power, but it does assert that social actors have developed means (though not infallible ones) of working with and through this dominant power.

Addressing the reach and affect of hegemonic power is vital here. Steph Lawler (2013) provides a useful counterpoint. Lawler asserts, regarding language and accent, that, ‘not all social locations are themselves equally valuable...An upper-class drawl may be subject to derision, but is unlikely to be a barrier when it comes to making connections or getting a job’ (2013: 277). The claim here is that there may be variation as to how different social markers are valued and legitimated within different spaces, but there is a single, hegemonic power which controls and delineates legitimacy. Existing outside of this power means to exist outside of legitimacy. Following Lawler’s argument, it is possible to assert that Harrison’s co-option of the hegemonic through use of dialect in poetry is only a superficial challenge to dominant power – that, actually, it does little to alter the grounds on which hegemony is judged and enacted. The assertion made in this thesis, that legitimacy is unfixed and malleable, does not also automatically deny that hegemonic power exists and can be oppressive. However, it does move away from positions which rest on ideas that social actors’ privilege is undifferentiated – that a lack of one form of symbolic capital means a concomitant lack of others. The conception of legitimacy offered in this theoretical framework highlights how social actors have varied access to forms of symbolic power and may knowingly employ these, as well as using their difference as a form of power.

A useful example of this emerged in a conversation with, Andy, one of the gatekeepers in the ethnography. Andy explained to me how his work stands outside of current trends in sociology, and of institutional concerns regarding the Impact Case Study aspect of the REF. Andy describes himself as a ‘general sociologist’, inspired by the sociological impressionism of David Frisby and concerned with theoretical and conceptual advancement. Andy felt resolutely outside what he saw as the dominant power in sociology – as he states, the ‘fetishization of method’. Andy went further on this:

I think important work is now seen as empirical work. Theoretical work is seen as dicey, seen as not terribly grounded. What you need to do is have surveys, and focus groups, interviews. And also, I mean the Research

Exercise says that research should have a promotional outlook, it should have outputs that are useful to business or to government.

Andy recognizes that his writing practice and sociological position is located outwith this dominant symbolic – both disciplinary and institutional. Using a rubric of legitimacy which asserts fixed parameters and lack of access for marginal positions, it might be thought that Andy would struggle to legitimate himself in sociology. Andy, though, is a professor and so clearly has to some extent been able to narrate himself as legitimate. So what tools has he used to do this, and how do they show a framework of legitimation-as-mutable in action? Andy asserts that ‘I can spin myself as an expert on [my research topic]’ and that this can be turned to a commercial use. He was, however, very clear that this is not the aim of his research, nor is developing business outputs something he ever actually does; as he says, ‘it’s just pulling the wool over people’s eyes’. Andy has recognised, to use Bourdieu's phrase, the ‘rules of the game’ and though his position sits tangentially to these rules he has found a way of narrating himself so as to fit the notion of the discipline which is rewarded in sociologists. It is important that he does not follow through on his ‘spin’ – once he has gained a position of power, Andy appears to work with relative autonomy. The distinction I am making here between the position outlined in this theoretical framework and the frameworks of scholars such as Lawler is a subtle one. I am not arguing that dominant power does not exist; I am arguing that dominant power can be harnessed by those in unequal positions – and that this is often done through using the hegemonic power available. Andy, for instance, is marginal only in a disciplinary sense. He can employ his cultural capital of whiteness and masculinity (Skeggs 1997: 9) as well as his strong social network – thus demonstrating the cultural capital gained through age and career stage. Andy legitimates his marginal sociological work through recourse to dominant power but without changing any aspect of his practice. As noted earlier, this form of legitimation is paradoxical: it both relies on, and subverts, hegemony.

### **Using Bourdieu's Theory of Practice as a Framework for Investigating Legitimacy in Sociology Writing**

I have, so far, explained the relationship between legitimacy and hegemonic or dominant power. I want now to situate this conceptualization of legitimacy within current scholarship, particularly Bourdieu's theory of practice and feminist responses to Bourdieu. Bourdieu sets out his theory as a relationship between field, habitus, and capital. Habitus is a series of dispositions, inculcated from childhood, that enable agents to move (unconsciously) within specific situations (Bourdieu

1977: 78; Bourdieu 2000: 85-87). Bourdieu refers to habitus as ‘sens pratique’ or practical feeling – it is what gives individuals a ‘feel for the game’ (1980: 66). Capital denotes specific resources a person possesses, which are unequally and asymmetrically distributed. For Bourdieu, the process of consecration occurs through the accrual of capital so that it becomes part of personhood or the habitus. As noted previously, I am conceptualising sociology as a field – and this field includes journals, departments, canons, and individual sociologists. For Bourdieu, field is a bounded site in which certain rules structure the action within; habitus is produced through imbibing these rules so that they become part of your ‘bodily hexis’ (Bourdieu 2000). A further important concept to introduce is *illusio*. This is the notion that playing the game is ‘worth it’. The theoretical framework I offer pivots on the relationship between these concepts, but predominantly intervenes to assert that *illusio* can exist in tandem with awareness and rejection of the dominant power and structures of a field. In this section I demonstrate how I am using Bourdieu's theory of practice, where I deviate, and how this fits in to my project.

Bourdieu's theory of practice is not without its pitfalls. As has been noted by numerous scholars (Skeggs 2004b, Lawler 2004, McLeod 2005), he assumes a largely homogeneous aspect to the person, and lacks subtle differentiation in relation to how ‘race’ and gender affects the ‘feel for the game’ and an actor’s ability to strategize. This apparent lack of subtlety is an important weakness within the context of this thesis. Lois McNay’s assertion that, ‘Bourdieu has no concept of multiple subjectivity’ (1999: 108) would seem to directly go against my using habitus as a useful method of examining personal, individual experiences of the field of sociology. In relation to gender, McNay further notes that Bourdieu ‘significantly underestimates the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions’ (1999: 107). These dissonances are important to the work here – it is largely through the ambiguities and ambivalences which emerge from the ethnography that I make claims to contribute a more fine-grained understanding of experiences of legitimacy and hegemony. Can habitus be used, then, to grasp the intricate gendered and racialised differences between the participants in this ethnography? And what of the ‘the power of desires, emotions, and longing in the formation of subjectivities’ (McLeod 2005: 18) noted is important to feminist analysis? Added to this is the fact that Bourdieu's theory of practice is well-trodden intellectual ground. Indeed, Diane Reay contends that, ‘there is an increasing tendency for habitus to be sprayed throughout academic texts’ (2004: 432). What then is the place of Bourdieu's theory of practice in this thesis, and in what way are the limits of habitus to be confronted?

Importantly, whilst I undertake the analysis in this thesis from the position of defining as a feminist, and with the influence of Critical Race Theory and intersectionality heavily present, this is not intended to be a ‘feminist analysis’, *per se*. It is worth noting, too, that in his later work – in this case *Pascalian Meditations* – that Bourdieu progressed his views of the habitus to a rather more mobile concept:

The diversity of conditions, the corresponding diversity of habitus and the multiplicity of intra- and intergenerational movements of ascent or decline mean that habitus may, in many cases, be confronted with processes of actualization different from those in which they were produced. (Bourdieu 2000: 160–1).

McNay is forceful on a similar point, asserting that Bourdieu's work is a reminder that structures and systems ‘be conceived of as temporal and open-ended if change to dominant norms is to be conceived in terms other than total rupture’ (McNay 1999: 102). Both habitus and field are generative concepts, and Bourdieu is clear on this throughout. Nevertheless, Bourdieu is repeatedly accused of being structurally deterministic (McLeod 2005; Arnot 2002; Butler 1999), and this results in ‘norms and relations of domination [being made to seem] secure and straightforward’ (McLeod 2005: 20). My use of Bourdieu's theory of practice, and in the case of habitus in particular, is in recognition of the necessity to understand how some bodies become trapped within systems and structures – and how this is visited on some bodies more than others. As McNay adroitly writes, ‘Bourdieu's work provides a corrective to certain theories of reflexive transformation which overestimate the extent to which individuals living in a post-traditional order are able to reshape identity’ (McNay 1999: 113). Though the theoretical framework here takes issue with the lack of agency presented by habitus – as I detail below – it remains an important method of reading the forceful power of structures as a social problem.

Sociologists create the field of sociology in higher education. Arguably, this field is part of, or at least linked to, the much larger field of academia or higher education – and indeed, many participants identified the institutions of this larger field as either existing within sociology or influencing modes of practice and legitimacy within it. These institutions would include such elements as the Research Excellence Framework (REF), over-arching senior management within universities, and ‘Performance Development Review’ or similar professional procedures, but also a kind of shared-but-not ‘cultural memory’ of what it means to be an intellectual or academic. In

short, there are significant elements of the make up of the field which are tangible structures or policies – nevertheless experienced and narrated through the very particular subjectivities of each participant. There are some, though, that emerged as far more interpretively driven, and predicated often on a participant’s early experiences of the forms of capital Bourdieu outlines. This becomes especially relevant in later discussions of the ‘ideal type’ of academic, in which a number of class, gender, and ethnicity based vulnerabilities become visible (see Chapter Five). What is crucial, though, is that fields – the ‘concrete social situations governed by a set of objective social relations’ (Johnson 1993: 6) – do not exist in and of themselves; they are structured through the ‘relations between the positions agents occupy in the field’ (Johnson 1993: 6). Field, habitus, and capital are interlinked – and this is greatly important to the project here, and a strong reason for using Bourdieu's theory of practice to work towards making sense of the relationship between legitimacy and writing.

The importance of this interplay of concepts to the research questions here becomes apparent in the gatekeeper data. Katharine, a Professor of Sociology and editor of a centre-ground sociology journal, contemplated the relationship between her own inclinations regarding theoretical ‘jargon’, and her work as a journal editor. She told me that, ‘I suppose I have a problem with sociological writing that isn’t very clear, so, I don’t like jargon, I don’t like opaque writing and I personally feel that, in terms of widening participation and those kind of issues, we have duty to express ourselves clearly’. Katharine is very clearly showing a preference for a more inclusive linguistic standard, specifically – with her reference to widening participation - one which takes account of differently mediated access to cultural and economic capitals. She implicitly recalls, here, Bourdieu et al’s assertion that, ‘Success in literary studies is very closely linked with the ability to manipulate scholastic language’ (Bourdieu et al 1994: 38). In terms of the relationship between the generative capacity of field, and the perseverance of a dominant symbolic (which enables the accrual of symbolic capital, or prestige), Katharine’s contrary position as editor is important. She discussed her work as journal editor and the feedback reviewers gave on manuscripts, as regards use of theoretical ‘jargon’:

I think it’s much more common for people to say, “this is too descriptive, where’s the analysis, where’s the explanation, where’s the theory”, than to say “this is too theoretical, where’s the data or where’s the evidence”. I would say it is actually quite rare that we’ve rejected an article for those

kind of reasons, because of opaqueness of language in that kind of theoretical sense.

Katharine's comments open up a position which reappeared throughout the ethnography. This was one in which participants felt a deep sense of discomfort with the dominant modes of sociological practice, and the forms and styles of writing considered legitimate, but concomitantly *consciously* continued to uphold them. The theoretical framework in this thesis very much recognises that field is 'a dynamic concept in that a change in agents' positions necessarily entails a change in the field's structure' (Johnson 1993: 7). However, it is also necessary to recognise the ways in which habitus and *illusio* are limited as concepts. Bourdieu contends an interdependency between field and habitus, or agent: 'The player, mindful of the game's meaning and having been created for the game because he was created by it, plays the game, and by playing it ensures its existence' (Bourdieu 1993: 257). One interpretation of Katharine's stance is that her habitus has been created through exposure to the game, and that having reached a senior position where she has control of a structural element, that she continues the play and so upholds the dominant conditions of the field.

Partly, what limits Bourdieu – and where Katharine's testimony shows this – is in the evidence the ethnography here brings regarding a part *awareness* of the strategies of the habitus and their affect on the field. Bourdieu inscribes the habitus as 'more unconscious than conscious' (1988: 91) and furthers this with his concept of *illusio*. He argues that 'the game makes the *illusio*, sustaining itself through the informed player's investment in the game' (Bourdieu 1993: 257). What I argue, contrarily, is that accounts from both gatekeepers and participants frequently demonstrate a paradoxical awareness and blindness to the game: it is a simultaneous conscious, but silently unconscious, recognition of the game's rules and their interest in playing and sustaining these. It is useful to unpick this in detail. Bourdieu writes that, 'As for awareness of the logic of the game as such, and of the *illusio* on which it is based, I had been inclined to think that it was excluded by membership of the field, which presupposes (and induces) belief in everything which depends on the existence of the field' (Bourdieu 1993: 72). Arguably then, Bourdieu is pessimistic about the likelihood of an agent being aware of the logic of the game they are involved in; the *illusio* which follows is a product of this. Thus people gain a sense that the rewards of the field are achievable and worth the effort because their relationship with the field itself shapes their value system.

This would tend towards an explanation that agents lack the capacity to step outside the field and comment upon it because the apparatus for doing so is held within the field. Bourdieu comments on this, that to ‘utter the truth about a field which excludes the *publishing* of its own truth’ can only be done when it is said ‘in a language which is designed to be *recognized* within the field’ (Bourdieu 1993: 73; italics in original). I think the testimony of gatekeepers at least partially contradicts this in the way that they show themselves as agentively aware of the conditions of legitimacy in the discipline. Importantly, though, Alison Phipps points out the necessity of tempering the temptation to make habitus into a more fully agency-driven concept; Phipps advises instead that, ‘examining the cognitive aspects of habitus should not lead to a naively agentic interpretation’ but rather should lend clarity to understanding ‘the conception of an interaction between strategic action and the deeply embedded aspects of habitus (Phipps 2006: 131). Based on this, the extent to which *illusio* can be transcended or ‘broken’ is debatable. What the ethnography in this project demonstrates, however, is that gatekeepers (and participants) showed a discerning awareness of their own effect on the field, and the reasons they might choose to write in tune with dominant conventions, or to place themselves within a particular disciplinary space or school of thought.

Take, for example, Maria’s account of how scholarly journals have an important economic position in contemporary higher education. Maria, like Katharine, is a Professor of Sociology and edits a major U.K. sociology journal. We discussed the function of a journal to give space to new debates and perspectives, but Maria brought into this the influence of economic and cultural capital and how these structure journal activities. She noted that,

There’s lots of pressure on us as an editorial board to publish big, key white males because their articles get downloaded and therefore we get more money. Now, I’m really not interested and that’s not what I want to be a journal editor for. But, that means we have much less money...The type of research that makes money for journals is not necessarily the type of research that’s both good for sociology more generally or, I think, necessarily good for the individual - because you may publish something that may deplete the value of your reputation rather than enhance it.

Firstly, Maria shows an ability to externalise herself from the field and prioritise a different set of values, beyond those which pressure her to publish ‘big, key white males’. Furthermore, she is able to see the possible negative consequences of playing the game, both for sociology and the

sociologist. Where then, is Maria's investedness in playing the game – is she operating entirely without *illusio*? I would argue not: the theoretical framework here is not a rejection of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and *illusio*, but rather an attempt to fine-tune these in light of the ethnographic evidence. Arguably, Maria's investment in the game is disciplinary – she works from a feminist perspective, and as such, made it clear to me that part of her sociological practice is in using her authority as professor and journal editor to make space for obscured, silenced, or unequal positions. Like the rest of the participants, and as shown in the history of sociology in the preceding chapter, Maria is competing for disciplinary space. That she takes on the role of journal editor and makes herself active within feminist and sociological spaces is arguably evidence in itself that she thinks the game worth playing.

I think Maria and Katharine's awareness of the structures of the game and their role in it indicates some of the limits of Bourdieu's concept of habitus – that it may not be mostly unconscious, as he states, but rather something that individuals are actively aware of. This is not to say that sociologists *always* act reflexively, nor that they act on their awareness of dominant power in the field by making forceful rejections. Sometimes their actions are shown to be pessimistic and fatalistic – the 'that's just the way it works' attitude which emerges in the ethnographic accounts here. This, however, I argue is a product of the academic subjectivities discussed in Chapter Two, and the strong influence of hegemonic social structures on shaping how a sociologist acts within the discipline. What the theoretical framework aims at, is the possibility of understanding how dominant paradigms of legitimacy within sociology come to be felt and discussed as impenetrable and static, whilst also being attentive to the very agentive ways participants negotiated these and enacted small and mundane revolutions.

A similar perspective is held in my use of legitimation and consecration. Bourdieu emphasises that legitimation is not agentive: it 'has nothing in common with an explicitly professed, deliberate, irrevocable belief, or with an intentional act of accepting a "norm"' (Bourdieu 1991: 51), but instead comes via the habitus. Bourdieu clearly presents legitimacy as fixed, and arguably in their formulation of 'the game', Skeggs and Lawler share this position and credentialises the idea of a single space of legitimacy. Skeggs, for instance, asserts that, 'legitimation is the key mechanism in the conversion to power' (1997: 8) – by which she means symbolic power. By contrast, I argue that the connected-but-dispersed pattern of spaces in sociology, and the different ways in which participants interact with this, point to multiple value paradigms in action. Skeggs argues that Bourdieu's theory of practice relies on the concept of 'exchange-value', under which 'some

activities, practice and dispositions' (Skeggs 2004b: 75) are read as 'culture' and thus their apparent inherent value can be exchanged to 'enhance the overall value of personhood' (2004b: 75). Skeggs is deeply critical of exchange-value and asserts that it does not allow equal access to narrating oneself with value. She contends that, 'Objective forces force habitus to strategically game play, but what if you cannot enter the game, join the action or get on the field?' (Skeggs 2004b: 87).

Like Skeggs, the theoretical framework I employ here recognises the use of strategic acts to position oneself with value. Where the theoretical framework differs to that offered by Skeggs is on the destination. I argue that the exchange-value mechanism can be used as Andy does – to swap a surface allegiance to dominant power for legitimacy. The hard and fast boundaries that Skeggs sees do appear in the ethnography here, and participants talk frequently of institutional and disciplinary racism, sexism, and classism. But participants also show that they are able – particularly in disciplinary terms – to find ways in which they can connect themselves with elements of different value paradigms at once. Thus, their legitimation is never fully 'complete' but they are able to position themselves with value and to articulate ways in which they are (differently) legitimate within sociology. What I show, through gatekeeper data, in the following section is the way in which legitimacy emerges not as a coherent and defined space/state, but as pockets of legitimate practice, collusion and co-option with hegemonic power, or space-specific legitimacy.

### **Rites of Consecration: Legitimation in Sociology**

So far, I have begun to outline how legitimacy relates to hegemonic power, and the way in which I argue for rethinking this concept as concretely demarcated and always connected to/employed by hegemonic positions. In this section, I want to show practically how legitimacy is grappled with by sociologists through recourse to the interviews with the gatekeepers in my ethnography: what forms of legitimacy exist for sociologists, and where does having legitimacy place a sociologist within the discipline? In doing this, I will show that a disciplinary 'mainstream' exists for sociologists – if not in reality, then in perception. This mainstream is a key site of consecration. However, the way gatekeepers discuss this mainstream space shows that there are numerous other ways in which a sociologist might become legitimated within the discipline – other ways they might wield disciplinary power, and in doing so, become sociologically consecrated. Before turning to gatekeeper testimony I want, briefly, to explain the concept of consecration, its place in the theoretical framework, and what it allows the thesis to do.

Bourdieu discusses the process of consecration and how this is brought about through ‘rites of institution’ (1991: 117). Bourdieu counters Arnold van Gennep’s focus on ‘rites of passage’ (1960) by contending that the important component here is not the passage but the line. Specifically – and importantly for this thesis – Bourdieu turns his attention to the ‘*social* function of the ritual and the social significance of the boundaries or limits which the ritual allows one to pass over’ (1991: 116; italics in original). The line does not only divide the before and after of the ritual, but also demarcates those who can take part in the ritual from those who cannot. If we link back to the work above on legitimation and exchange-value, the place of consecration becomes more apparent. Within this formulation the habitus (which individuals do not control) accrues capital (which is already unequally distributed) and exchange-value allows this capital to be traded for prestige. This act of trade is a legitimation of the capitals exchanged, and functions to designate the symbolic power of the individual. As Skeggs notes, legitimation is a mechanism – it is a process through which an individual comes to be read with power. Legitimation is the mechanism by which you pass over the line Bourdieu writes about in his theory of consecration. Understandably, then, Skeggs’s concern regarding who can get on the field, never mind strategically play the game is relevant – it tallies with Bourdieu’s identification that the line in question also separates those who cannot take part in the ritual. Indeed, Bourdieu explains that, ‘To institute, in this case, is to consecrate, that is, to sanction and sanctify a particular state of things, an established order’ (1991: 119). This framework shows hegemony as continually upheld and unchallenged – and, I think, is reflected in a number of positions laid out in Chapter Two, regarding disciplinary power.

Consecration is important in this thesis as a state of being sociologists (and their work) may obtain through the process of legitimation. However, following the narratives of gatekeepers suggests that different spaces of sociology work around different value systems, which in turn mechanise legitimacy differently and result in multiple states of consecration being possible. Therefore, rather than showing hegemony as stable and unchallenged, this theoretical framework asserts that a number of oppositions exist – and that these provide space for narrating oneself with value. Sometimes this space is only very small or fleeting but the testimony of gatekeepers – and of participants, too – demonstrates its existence. Within the thesis this alternative reading of consecration does important work because it enables me to draw attention to the incremental ways in which sociologists understand their writing practices and processes and positioning them with legitimacy – ways in which sociologists feel they have become consecrated through their craft of writing.

In developing this theoretical framework and arguing for a more malleable conception of legitimacy, it should be emphasised that this malleability and challenge to hegemony comes in small and commonplace instances. This is shown in the attitudes expressed to ‘arriving’ in sociology and the ways you might achieve this. Bishan, a professor and head of department, was very clear on the centrality of writing to a sociologist being able to be legitimate. He emphasised to me that ‘a strong body of written work’ was the only way to be read with legitimacy. However, what counts as a strong body of written work was extremely variable across gatekeepers. Some asserted the dominance of particular writing styles, some of methodology, some cited specific intellectual foci, and some noted institutional concerns such as type of publication – Andy highlighting that an article in a high-impact journal would rank higher than a chapter in an edited book.

### **Sociology as a Field: The Roles of Capital and Habitus in Making ‘Legitimate’ Sociologists**

The centrality of high cultural capital was marked by Peter, who described an exchange during an undergraduate exam board. He noted how an external examiner had been assessing grade disputes between the First/Upper Second Class boundary. The external examiner’s identification of the main difference between these essays was comments by internal examiners as to the ‘quality of the writing’. The predominance of the First Class marks were assigned to those students deemed to be producing high quality writing. Peter told me: ‘His implication was that actually what we were marking was cultural capital. We were marking writing that we recognised as being good’. This identification builds on Bourdieu's treatment of capital and habitus, in Bourdieu's assertion that, ‘The academic manipulation of language presupposes a constellation of acquired abilities’ (Bourdieu et al 1994: 36). Bourdieu is helpful, then, in providing an initial avenue for understanding how seemingly mundane aspects of writing relate to much broader, institutionalized concepts of value.

Gatekeepers repeatedly referred to ‘good writing’ using adjectives such as engaging, coherent, imaginative, effortless, perceptive and creative. These are all epithets which denote high cultural capital and a bias towards a bourgeois class position. Speaking in capacity as an editor of a major sociology journal, Peter told me about the submission process and quality of journal articles he received, and the preferential treatment given to articles that are well written but lacking in ideas, over articles which have a core of good ideas but are badly written:

Something that's not all that good but is really well written – referees will say ‘It's really well written I really want to make something of this’. and I think that's partly, that's partly just a response – you read something and you enjoy reading it and it flows and it's entertaining and engaging and you want to give it something.

Here, a clear bias to subjective (and disciplinary) interpretations of good writing is shown, indicating that at least part of what determines legitimacy as a sociologist is the performance of being an intellectual through one's prose style and the high cultural capital this connotes. There is an element of style over substance – the performance of being an intellectual can manage to stand in for the actual practice of having a worthy idea. Good writing, in this sense, is about marshalling your cultural capital and expressing it properly. The inclination towards ease and effortlessness implies mastery of the discipline. Pierre Bayard approaches the mechanics behind this assumption from the perspective of the reader of literature. Bayard discusses – rather irreverently – the possibility of talking confidently and intelligently about books you haven't read. Identifying the ability to do so as emanating from possession of ‘cultural literacy’ (Bayard 2008: 8), Bayard emphasises that understanding literature as a field, and the position of an individual book within that field is vital. He tells us that,

As cultivated people know (and, to their misfortune, uncultivated people do not), culture is above all a matter of orientation. Being cultivated is a matter not of having read any book in particular but of being able to find your bearings within books as a system (2008: 10).

This ingrained cultural capital is essential to the performance of the legitimate sociologist. Bayard notes the central roles of shame and confidence in the possession – or not – of cultural literacy, describing how, ‘It is an intuitive grasp of this same concept that allows certain privileged individuals to escape unharmed from situations in which they might otherwise be accused of being flagrantly culturally deficient’ (Bayard 2008: 10). Cultural capital functions as a protective shell: the accumulation of cultural capital enables your prose to be read as high quality – sometimes even masking the lack of substance to one's argument; further to this, the instinctive embodied knowledge of the field it brings enables the sociologist to disguise and conceal gaps in knowledge.

As Bayard notes: 'My intellectual library...is sufficiently well stocked for any particular lacuna to be all but invisible' (2008: 11-12). This cultural literacy can be understood as part of the habitus – and exchanged in the field of sociology for the prestige and consecration of top grades or high-ranking publications. As such, sociologists are arguably legitimated through their deployment of high value cultural capital.

### **Disciplinary and Consecration: Partial Positions and Partiality in the Field**

This, however, is not the only way to be legitimated – and Andy was very clear on the biases in sociology and partial positions from which hegemonic power is exercised. This identification of bias and partiality is not new but I think it is significant that sociologists speak openly about this and show evidence of accounting for hegemonic bias in their own value judgements on others. Andy and I discussed the process of peer review in publishing and the basis on which these judgements are made. He asserted that, 'I know from writing articles that there is not a scientific process in how things are decided. There are certain journals with certain positions which encourage certain types of research and publication'. Here, Andy indicates that there is more going on than simply the repeated enforcement of hegemonic whiteness, masculinity, or class privilege. This does occur – and is imbricated in intellectual positions – but Andy's identification of journals as having certain positions which encourage specific types of research and writing also implies space for feminist, 'race', or working-class oriented positions to stake a claim to legitimacy, and to be consecrated on their own terms. Andy also noted the variability and contradictions that are part of peer review – that, 'I know from responses to the same article I've written – I've had three radically different responses' – and asserted this as evidence that 'academics are not scientific' in their process of disciplinary judgement.

To follow Bourdieu's framework of legitimation and consecration as fixed and not agentive, one could argue that peer review might look more uniform and that it would be clear from the comments which direction an author should travel in order to reach destination consecration. But gatekeepers and participants made it clear that this was not always the case. In Chapters Nine and Ten I will discuss at length a situation in which peer reviewers do become positioned as the dominant power, but it is important to recognise that this isn't the only way peer reviewers function. Indeed, Andy further asserts that much academic critique is driven by competition and the fraught professional situations created through institutional power and audit culture. He expanded that, '[academics are] bastards and bitches when they know it's all done anonymously.

They'll say things in a review that they would never say to your face. Which they know will damage you'. This was something Andy recognised as 'party paradigmatic rivalry', noting that, 'They come from a different paradigm and they're trying to knock a paradigm they don't like. And they pretend it's all done objectively, that there's no bias in it but, of course, there is'. The competition between intellectual paradigms indicates multiple forms of legitimacy a sociologist might engage with, but also that these forms exist in friction with one another. Taken in context with Andy's earlier assertion regarding 'prestigious publications' and the need to strategically manage these, it becomes more apparent that legitimacy exists through institutional and intellectual mechanisms. Using a theoretical framework which cites legitimacy as moveable supports a more precise analysis of the ways these competing mechanisms work in relation to one another.

Mark and Katharine both also indicated how they perceive their particular research interests affects their capacity for being legitimated within sociology— how far they could feel 'natural' within sociology. Whilst both are professors of sociology, their sub-topic interests lie outside what they saw as the mainstream. Katharine told me that 'I probably feel less secure about my [position] - or I wouldn't talk about myself - as a kind of senior person within the discipline of sociology. I think because I do research in youth studies, I do feel quite marginal'. Katharine noted how the networks she has created among what she considers senior academics are all in youth studies rather than a broad base of sociology; her social and cultural capital in the field is accrued almost wholly within that space. As such, whilst she found it hard to see my interpretation of her as a senior or influential person in sociology, she was more confident about her position of power within the field of youth studies. For Katharine, this has institutional consequences. Because her institution has introduced 'targets' for publishing in Q1 journals (that is, journals with an Impact Factor in the top 25% for that subject area), Katharine is restricted in her ability to publish work in the 'best' youth studies journal, and feels her work editing a journal in the topic area is not valued by her institution. Mark, too, noted in evidence of his own marginality that his research interests in education and social policy were not perceived as mainstream or valuable, nor was his university understood as 'elite'. He told me, 'I don't think I do what senior sociologists are perceived as doing - which is more theoretical sociology. I work at a second rate, third rate university. Nobody knows where it is. The sort of fields that I work in... [are] pretty marginal to sociology'. I have already noted how cultural capital works as system of recognition; Mark and Katharine's accounts indicate the central position of cultural capital in interpreting what is valued within disciplines and institutions.

## How Do You Write Your Sociology? Disciplinarity, Marginality and Writing Styles

Moving to focus on writing style further demonstrates that there are multiple paradigms of legitimacy through which a sociologist can claim legitimacy. Peter was quick to assert that 'sociology is a literary discipline; it's all about writing and I don't think of writing as neutral'. When Peter made his selections he spoke of deliberately privileging theorists and ethnographers over statistical and quantitative sociologists because of the insightfulness the former paradigms of sociology provide in their writing. He claimed that theory and ethnography result in writing which is more conceptually-driven and, as such, more likely to be original. However, this reading of sociology is countered by Andy, who initially selected Zygmunt Bauman among his nominations but eventually decided not to include him. Having already noted his particular bent towards sociological impressionism, I was surprised that Andy omitted Bauman – but his reasons for doing so are relevant here. He told me that, 'I discounted him simply because I don't think authorities would treat him seriously. If we're trying to change British sociology, we don't want somebody who's saying stuff in poetry. We have to actually look at the mechanism by which people decide what's important in sociology'. This is fascinating in that Andy marshals the idea of sociology having 'authorities' – unnamed and unidentified – who are capable of deciding what is important. This draws attention to the idea of a mainstream, with fixed boundaries through which only some can pass – much like Bourdieu's line of consecration. And yet, Andy initially selected Bauman and thinks his work significant – which demonstrates that, for some, 'saying stuff in poetry' is valuable.

Again, attention is drawn to the operation of more than one paradigm of value. Andy's identification that we must 'look at the mechanism by which people decide what's important in sociology' – which for him is the fetish of method mentioned earlier – suggests a council of arbitrators demarcating boundaries. This is contradicted by the lack of clarity participants were able to offer on the composition of the 'mainstream', as well as the actual make-up of the sociologists nominated for this ethnography in which ethnographers and theorists dominated and quantitative researchers were minimally represented. To become consecrated, then, is not simply a matter of obeying the rules of hegemony. To be consecrated under that rubric would not also result in consecration within the value paradigm used by Andy, Peter, and others. Thinking back to Skeggs's articulation of exchange-value and Lawler's assertion that not all social locations are equally valid, it could be argued that these other value paradigms present a non-hegemonic and therefore less powerful, lasting, or complete form of legitimation and consecration. Indeed, this itself is precisely the point I am making here: legitimation and consecration shift; some forms (like

the hegemonic) move more slowly than others, but they *do* move. Consider James's statement from Chapter Two regarding the canon and 'who would think of teaching Talcott Parsons as canonical now?'. What was once canonical – and powerful, legitimated, consecrated – is now out-moded, unfashionable, and stale.

A final consideration of writing style outlines the composition and action of the theoretical framework in this thesis – particularly in terms of a relationship between hegemonic practices and disciplinary marginal positions. Tim began by claiming that 'there's quite a narrow set of frames for how to write sociologically. And if you don't fit into that there's no way you'll ever get into sociology'. Tim identifies here a relationship between correct writing style and acceptance or legitimation as a sociologist. He continued:

if you want to submit bits of literature, or poetry as part of your sociology you're not going to get very far. You're not going to get published. And importantly you're not going to be labelled sociology. Because sociology isn't just about society, it's something which fills a whole set of methodological and writing styles.

Two things are important here: firstly, that there is a specific sociological writing style and secondly, that there is no mention – in any gatekeeper or participant discussions – of actually being taught what this is or how to attain it. There is an ingrained assumption that academic sociologists will know what style to write in and how to produce this in their own work – the 'cultural literacy' that Bayard (2008) claims as key. This points to the inculcation of a particular habitus in sociologists – which I discuss in detail in the next chapter. Importantly, this habitus position suggests that knowing how to write sociology is a skill acquired through cultivation – not only discipline-specific sociological cultivation but also an over-arching sense of how to write 'good' prose. Tim's claim returns us to Andy's declaration of 'authorities' in sociology who provide the seal of approval – or legitimacy – upon styles of writing and paradigms of sociology. And yet, this claim stands in contrast to how sociologists actually employ their own value judgements – this thesis shows a particular rejection of 'standard' writing styles, as well as turns towards valuing the discursive, the story, and the imaginative.

## Legitimation for Who? ‘Researching Out’ versus ‘Teaching In’

One of the most contentious areas in which gatekeepers debated a sociologist’s scope to be legitimated is in teaching. Though teaching is often recognised as a central part of a sociologist’s professional life and a fruitful space of intellectual advancement (Back 2016: 13), the sociologists in the ethnography here contested it as a meaningful way of gaining legitimacy and so being consecrated within the discipline. Only one gatekeeper, Tim, noted that he nominated participants on the basis of both their writing and teaching. Tim had emphasised the role of ‘wider recognition’ in regard to publications, noting that part of having ‘arrived’ or being legitimate was in the recognition afforded you by your peers. He reflected on his own internalisation of this form of legitimacy when considering where teaching and publications place sociologists in relation to the discipline; when I asked him to expand on why he chose participants from these bases, Tim responded that, ‘strangely enough I seem to have gone for the external stuff for the research and personal opinion with teaching’. Another gatekeeper, David, extended this. He contested the possibility of being legitimated in the discipline through anything other than writing, commenting that, ‘we can try to believe that [you can be legitimated through teaching], but really to arrive, in the sense of establishing your reputation, you probably cannot do it anymore’. What was important for David, in thinking about legitimation, was the idea that it connotes a wide regard for your work.

Teaching is institutionally oriented and rarely happens in front of peers. As David notes, ‘It probably means you don’t fully establish your reputation if you’re just a brilliant, excellent teacher’. Reflecting on this, in terms of the theoretical framework, David’s remarks indicate that legitimacy must occur in the public space of the field. Writing – publications, specifically – travel further than teaching or administrative work. But Tim’s intervention shows that there is space for being credentialised by peers who are aware of more internal-facing work. This is a much slower and more incremental form of legitimation but nevertheless cannot be ignored. In addition, this friction – even within individual gatekeeper’s testimonies – regarding the value of teaching to sociological legitimation, is a possible instance of paradoxical investedness in, and awareness of, the game. The classed aspect of views on teaching is important here. In the contemporary neoliberalised university, much teaching is undertaken by Hourly Paid Lecturers, Graduate Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows – often on exploitative fixed term, low wage contracts and with no time built in for research (Gill 2009; Gallinat 2004). Under these conditions, teaching has shifted from the main activity of lecturing staff, to something done by penurious Ph.D. and

postdoctoral researchers to make what meagre living they can. Within this rubric, teaching becomes more practical labour than intellectual, and the cultural capital of undertaking it is severely lessened. Significantly, gatekeepers would discuss with me how they placed teaching very highly, and noted its strong engagement with research activities. But, in spite of this, very few chose to make nominations based on work done in teaching rather than work done in writing. Gatekeepers demonstrated an ability to ‘step outside’ and evidence their own value system, but nevertheless continued to visit the dominant value system on the field, through their choices.

### **Complexity and Consecration: The Sociological Mainstream?**

Significantly, this over-arching hegemonic disciplinary power could never be precisely located by gatekeepers or participants. The lack of tangible solidity afforded this paradigm is both what keeps it alive and what leads me to argue for its reconceptualization as only a part of a larger whole. As existing within the imaginative space of sociology – rather than being firmly located within a department, journal, or intellectual movement – hegemonic disciplinary power works like a bogeyman; it is more mythological than actual, but the myth is potent and powerful. Reflecting on the gatekeeper stories so far, there are none who actually privilege the hegemony – in fact most expressed feelings of resigned resentment. And yet, gatekeepers continued to shore up various ‘hegemonic’ positions – method, reputation, prestigious publications, ‘good quality’ prose – through recourse to this imagined other pushing them to put a powerful value paradigm over their own. Often, the justifications for choosing certain participants reflected the interplay of value paradigms – for instance, Tim’s negotiation between outward-facing reputation enhancing publications and the internally available knowledge of teaching ability.

It is possible to see this in action with two other gatekeepers, Mark and James. Their accounts show them navigating complexity of writing as indicative of legitimacy. Considering how they then chose participants for this research, and that this represents a process of legitimation within the discipline, their contrary views show the divergent paths through which sociologists can achieve consecration. Complexity and opacity in writing was seen both as a necessary element of writing complex material and sometimes as a form of posturing. Mark made indications towards the latter. He views complex writing as a symbol of status, used in order to baffle and subdue the reader:

One of the things I think impresses me in academic work is when it’s accessible to others who aren’t academics or Professors of Sociology. And

as you know, very much of what gets produced isn't, and doesn't pretend to be, in fact wouldn't even want to be. I do have a colleague who almost prides himself on his inaccessibility. And I remember him saying to me – “Mark, big ideas need big words”. It's a point of view, but it's not my point of view.

Here, Mark describes an often-cited idea that ‘difficult to read’ is indicative of great intellectual import. Indeed, Rita Felski's scholarship suggests that the complexity of writing is tied to the ontological foundations of intellectual critique – that the very way of forming knowledge is tied to it being difficult for the reader to discern. Felski writes of critique that, ‘Its sheer difficulty accentuated its allure to a certain kind of critic, convinced, akin to Burke commenting on the sublime, that the obscure is inherently more affecting and awe-inspiring than the clear’ (Felski 2015: 27). Here, Felski returns the craft of writing to the sense of orientation Bayard identifies – a *savoir faire* which enables carefree navigation of a field, and the ability to read that field and pronounce on it. This privileging of opacity and difficulty is strongly classed, raced, and gendered, precisely because it favours high cultural capital, and particularly valued forms of cultural capital such as masculinity and whiteness.

Unlike Mark, James sets out this high value cultural capital as part of what gets you legitimated in sociology. During the selection of his nominations – who were all social theorists - James discussed their writing styles in detail, characterising these as being quite ‘severe’. When pressed on this he stated, ‘Well, none of them is dumbing down...they tend to write at a high level’. The notion that these sociologists selected by James write at a ‘high level’ becomes all the more interesting because James characterised the sociologists themselves as ‘intellectuals’. Indeed, James spoke of a former colleague who ‘used to distinguish between “the intellectuals” and the “rest of the bog-standard academics”’. James did this whilst laughing, and in a manner suggesting that he himself wouldn't stand wholly by the characterisation of some academics as ‘bog-standard’. Nevertheless, he draws a distinction between being an intellectual and not being an intellectual – and writing is a key part of how you show yourself to be an intellectual. The fact that the sociologists James selected write at a ‘high level’ – and implicitly, a *higher* level than other sociologists - is part of characterising them as intellectuals. Within this discussion of social theorists as demonstrating high value cultural capital in the discipline it is useful to recall that Andy's understanding of hegemony in sociology would exclude James's nominees. As well as seeing more than one value paradigm at play within

judgements – such as Tim and David’s – it is also possible to see discrepancies in what counts as hegemonic across the value paradigms employed by gatekeepers.

### **Relationship Between Themes and Concepts**

During my conversation with David he made reference to ‘the stars of sociology’. Pressed on who would fall into this category he said,

Well, I mean I used it loosely, but [...] I guess if you begin with stars you begin with people like sort of something like Giddens, something like Bauman, those kind of stars. You know, Carol Smart or something... But then after that I think, you just have a variety of different kinds of people who are probably reasonably well known but they’re not stardust-y enough to be stars.

The theoretical framework outlined in this chapter works alongside the thematic concepts I drew attention to as important in Chapter One – self, stories, the everyday, spaces of sociology, and routes or boundaries. The function of these structural elements of the thesis is to allow me to draw out of the ethnographic material the ways and means by which sociologists become (or not) flecked with stardust. These theoretical and conceptual elements engage with current scholarship on value, legitimacy, and consecration but, in considering these through the lens of the ethnography, offer subtly new theorizations of how sociologists become legitimate, and what sort of legitimacy matters. The thesis considers how a sense of sociological self arises through participants’ practices – and narratives – of writing; as part of this the thesis draws on Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus and the way this works in tandem with field to inculcate value in personhood. Owing to the context of the everyday in the thesis, the research here is able to push forward to new ground in its theorisation of a ‘legitimate sociological self’. In the following chapters, I use the everyday to draw attention to the commonplace, and often overlooked, modes of producing disciplinary legitimacy. As shown in Chapter One, the context of this thesis is a reflective scholarship which primarily focuses on the macro-structural effects of higher education policy such as the Research Excellence Framework, and the neoliberalisation of the university through audit culture. Whilst sociologists show concern for how these will shape the discipline’s place in higher education, and the legitimacy of its knowledge contributions, there is a lack of attention paid to the complexity of these conditions in the daily writing lives of sociologists. By bringing together the everyday with

questions of value and legitimacy I am able to examine the precise mechanics of becoming a 'sociological star' – what does this mean, and is it a stable category?

Underpinning this is the focus on routes and boundaries and the spaces of sociology – by considering the ethnography through these emergent themes, I can point to the places in which Bourdieu's theory of consecration falls short in its monolithic and linear conception of legitimacy. I am also able to draw on the theorization of use-value and exchange-value set out by Skeggs (2004) and Lawler (2013), and offer a further delineation of this, showing how participants not only draw on their position in different spaces of sociology to narrate themselves with value, but also – and more importantly – narrate themselves in such a way as to produce value in themselves. This links to the thematic concept of stories and storying, and shows how legitimacy and value can be malleable properties. Participants' narrations of themselves – within this thesis, but also in their professional spaces, and through their career biography – show them as creating and sustaining their own legitimacy through the way they talk about their writing. The thesis shows that participants create symbolic stories of themselves through their writing choices, publications, and direction of research. These become clues to reading – and telling – about a sociologist's legitimacy in the discipline. The theoretical framework set out in this chapter is a means of investigating what legitimacy and value mean in the lives and work of sociologists, but equally reflects on sociologists' testimony to consider the viability of current theorisations of the concepts.

## Chapter Four

### Sociological Detection: Finding out about Writing

In this chapter I set out the research design of the thesis and detail how this relates to the modes of analysis I use with the data. I discuss the methodological reasons which underpin my research decisions and provide a discussion of how I dealt with issues of ethics, positionality, and reflexivity throughout the project. The thesis is an ethnography of sociology writing. Throughout, it understands sociology as a field (Bourdieu 1977) rather than a bounded or geographical space. The ethnography tracks an object – sociology writing – through the field of sociology as an academic discipline. I track sociology writing through its field in order to examine how writing can be mobilised to narrate yourself with value, and how writing (and narrations of) are affected by perceptions of what it means to be legitimate within the discipline, or field.

The thesis has a central research question: what is the relationship between the craft of writing, and becoming legitimate or gaining a ‘sense’ of legitimacy as a producer of sociological knowledge? To help better capture the nuanced aspects of this central question, I use a further set of exploratory research questions: i) what are the personal, professional and institutional(ized) processes of crafting academic sociology writing; ii) how are these different processes complementary or in friction with one another; iii) are these different and differing processes are each connected to a writer’s sense of their own legitimacy as a scholar of sociology, and if so, how? In this chapter I look at the relationship between these research questions and the way the thesis sets out to explore sociology writing. I begin with explanation of the research design and set out the stages and process of the fieldwork. I follow this with two related sections which discuss the ethics of ‘studying up’ (Nader 1972) and my own positionality within the research – the ways in which intersubjective research relationship with participants opened up space to consider the (re)production of power within the field. I then set out the philosophical framework of my original ethnographic method, ‘ethnographies of people’, and use this as a base for discussing the role of interviews in my ethnography. I conclude by detailing the frameworks of narratives, fictions, and storytelling in which the ethnography and analysis sit.

#### Research Design: Parameters of Methods and Fieldwork

The fieldwork is designed to capture the work done in order to create perceptions and performances of legitimacy in the field of sociology. The research questions above attempt to

discover how legitimacy is understood and constituted in sociology – what are the indicators of value, what suggests ‘star quality’ in a sociologist, and what work is done to produce these? The research design of the thesis emerged from the necessity of going behind the performances to investigate how they come about and the emotional and intellectual labour taken to sustain them. In doing so, the research design draws out the humanity and complexity underneath performances of disciplinary power and legitimacy. In this part of the chapter I set out what I did during fieldwork, and why.

The ethnography had two stages: first, using gatekeepers as part of recruitment and to explore mechanisms of legitimation in sociology; second, a study of ten sociologists working in U.K. higher education institutions (see Appendix B for further details of the methods and research design, and Appendix C for details of ethnography participants). Gatekeepers suggested potential participants who they felt made strong contributions to the discipline of sociology through their work. From this pool of names, I arrived at a cohort of ten participants. The gatekeepers themselves were all senior figures in U.K. sociology, holding professional positions of power and gaining expertise on the discipline through this. All were professors, and some held management positions as Head of Department. Additionally, a number were editors of major U.K. and international sociology journals or had other significant experience in sociology publishing. Choosing gatekeepers in this way tended towards them having an overview of the discipline, a wide range of knowledge of sociology writing, and experience of making judgements on sociology writing based on its ability to be published. As I detail later in this chapter, it allowed me to explore how hegemonic power works in institutional and intellectual frameworks of legitimation – whilst the work with the day-to-day participants enabled me to learn how individual sociologists negotiate these. I worked with gatekeepers across the spectrum of sociological sub-disciplines and styles of research. I conducted a semi-structured interview with each gatekeeper in which we discussed why they chose particular sociologists, their understanding of what constitutes legitimacy in sociology, and how they would characterise the discipline. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and several hours; though I oriented the conversation around sociology as a field I allowed gatekeepers to lead the talk. No questions were sent prior to the interviews. The interviews share certain commonalities but also demonstrate the very different parameters for legitimacy and writing style in different spheres of sociology.

The central part of the ethnography was undertaken over the course of a year. Outwith this, I have had follow-up conversations with some participants. The ten participants included a number from

the gatekeeper selections, the co-author of one of these people, and one of the gatekeepers themselves. The latter two, in order to i) explore the extent and impact of a co-author relationship, ii) engage further with the idea of the dominant symbolic and legitimation by/within the field. All participants are employed in U.K. sociology departments. In Chapter Three I discussed Pierre Bourdieu's theorisation of consecration and the 'rites of institution' (1991: 171) which are a key mechanism in it. My decision to admit only those employed in U.K. sociology departments is tied to my focus on U.K. sociology as a field, and in doing so it does make exclusions of legitimacy which segue with Bourdieu's identified mechanism of consecration. That some people who identify – or could be externally identified as sociologists – were excluded from selection because they are not based in a sociology department is a point to note in the research design. A question for future research is whether focusing on disciplinary self-identification, rather than institutional/professional location, would produce different narratives. I had preliminary meetings with each participant to discuss the scope and style of the ethnography, and afterwards sent a consent form and plain language statement via email.

The ethnography had several components: an opening interview which was recorded and transcribed; a series of meetings in which we discussed works in progress, and writing/publishing in sociology more broadly; photos and descriptions of some participants' desks; and a 'peer review' style task in which participants unpicked a published journal article. We maintained regular contact outside of meetings; some would spontaneously send me drafts of work or final copies, some sent me regular diary-style updates or personal reflections on their affective relationship with writing and sociology. Our meetings were held in a variety of formal and informal settings – offices, cafés, and participants' homes. For one participant, who was for most of the ethnography a substantial distance from my home in London, most our discussions were conducted via the video function on Skype. Though the detail I gained from this participant was no less than with others, I did feel that the physical distance and gap between us affected the personal and emotional research connection. As a researcher, these meetings felt distinctly different in that they more closely resembled a question-and-answer interview rather than the mutually constituted, shared space conversations of the in-person meetings. I also observed this effect when I used Skype or the telephone to do occasional follow-up meetings with other participants who I would usually meet in person.

I designed the opening interview to set the scene and to allow me to gain a sense of the participants as individuals. It covered their relationship to sociology, their writing and their position in the field.

It also questioned how participants understand writing practice in terms of importance to being a (legitimate) sociologist. This method works towards a number of the research questions: discussing writing style and their current relationship to sociology provides data on perceptions of privileged or legitimated writing styles; I gained an overview of processes of writing; I also ascertained an initial sense of the relationship between writing practices and legitimation through discussing participants' relationship to sociology and their position in the field. The opening interview was semi-structured, audio recorded and transcribed. Following this, I had monthly one-on-one meetings with each participant. During these meetings participants shared their works in progress, or reflected on their writing – in both practical and abstract terms. Some showed me plans and drawings. We discussed peer review comments and comments from their co-authors, if applicable. Further to this, meetings included affective and emotional aspects of writing – what emotional states we experience, when and why. These meetings supported the research questions in several ways. Through reflexive discussion I was able to uncover participants' assumptions about what is privileged stylistically. I was able to track processes of writing through observation and participants' accounts and being able to see their drafts and plans. I was also able to observe and discuss participants' emotional states and sensitively explore whether this is related to feelings of legitimacy/failure in the writing process and academia. These meetings allowed me to track, over the course of time, the processual nature of crafting writing and the personal, emotional, professional and practical stages involved.

As noted above, within this research design gatekeepers function as legitimated and legitimating subjects. Therefore, their very inclusion in the ethnography indicates that participants are already externally legitimated by figures who represent institutions of sociology – in particular, publishing and departmental recruitment. I go further in Chapter Three on the mechanisms of legitimation present in the thesis, and the framework of value, legitimation, and consecration I use. It is, nevertheless, helpful here to pause and briefly consider how this works in the methodology. Bourdieu's examination of academic capital identifies both institutional classifications (such as formal titles, university posts, or positions of authority) and markers of 'prestige' (such as membership of research groups, position in a strictly intellectual hierarchy) which denote academic capital (Bourdieu 1988: 9). The gatekeepers in this research have accrued academic capital across these categories, and as such bear the signs of the 'accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour' which constitute symbolic capital (Johnson 1993: 7).

The consequence of this is that gatekeepers arguably represent the dominant symbolic in the academic field (though I suspect many of them would challenge this!). Indeed, the very use of them as gatekeepers – as people who are taken to know about sociology and thus have the authority to judge who is making a significant contribution to sociological knowledge in their work –reinscribes and re-authorizes this symbolic capital. This is a further process in their legitimation: recognizing these people as capable of making these decisions promulgates the notion that they are people who *should* make these decisions. It is important to comprehend the selection process undertaken by gatekeepers as a legitimation process whereby gatekeepers act as conduits of legitimation. The selection process is performative: the act and the discourse brings about the legitimacy (Butler 1990). This symbolic capital is textured by other social identifications gatekeepers identified as - working-class, black, brown, woman, immigrant, among others. A number of them drew on these identifications in narrating their own power in sociology, and noted the ambiguity of a senior professional position which is held by a woman, working-class academic, or person of colour. As such, the inequalities pointed to, or felt, within these social identifications work, albeit sometimes rather softly, to trouble the linearity and coherence of the symbolic power they hold. It is equally important therefore, not to assume untroubled access to privilege and power on the part of gatekeepers.

### **Ethical Practice: Reflexivity when ‘Studying Up’**

The position of participants in this study, and their relationship with me as a researcher, is ambiguous and underscored by a complex interweaving of power relations. On the one hand, they arguably represent elites. Participants have access to symbolic power through the accoutrements of their profession – their titles, publications, reputation, economic capital, and (in some cases) current social class position. This symbolic capital is not always easy or uninterrupted – what of the stories of sexism, racism, Anglocentrism, ageism, ableism and classism that emerged through the ethnography? Participants in the ethnography identify as women of colour, working-class, mothers, and disabled. Thinking about ethical practice in this context is tricky, but my concern is to do so with reference to the intersubjective researcher-researched relationship. Owing to this, I approach my ethical practice from the standpoint of ‘studying up’ (Nader 1972). What I am marking here is the difference in professional status and hierarchy between me and my participants within the field of academic sociology. Equally, because they are academic sociologists, the participants in this study have far greater access to understanding the research process and likely eventual uses of data than is often present in work with groups or individuals outside the academy.

Laura Nader discusses the ethical implications of ‘studying up’, noting that ‘confusion results depending on whether one recognizes the implicit double standard - is there one ethic for studying up and another for studying down?’ (Nader 1972: 20). Do sociologists studying the powerful have different obligations to their participants – do our responsibilities and commitments alter? How might studying ‘the colonizers rather than the colonized’ (Nader 1972: 5) affect the relationship between the putatively powerful researcher and the subjects of research? One of my primary concerns when setting out on the research was how the disparity in professional status between me and my participants might shape the gathering of data and the eventual culmination of writing. Would I feel beholden to them, or fearful that critiquing their practices would result in my own marginalisation in the field? I deal further with the intersubjective research encounter in the next section, but here I want to consider how my research decisions and conduct were framed in this ethical context.

The central dilemma came through the question of privacy, and the relationship between public and private presentations of self. A chief aim of this research is to expose the working of hegemonic power in sociology – particularly the forms of oppression and injustice which result from it. Where then, as Karen O’Reilly asks does this leave my ‘responsibility to participants who have been so kind as to help you? Where do we respect privacy and where do we decide it is in the interest of others that we do not?’ (O’Reilly 2005: 67). Could I, in fully delineating the machinations of power in sociology, also expose participants in a way that constitutes harm – and what is the implication of this if they are understood as powerful elites? In considering this, I was mindful of the work of Wiles et al, which notes that during research academics may ‘be critical of other researchers, which could have implications for their relationships with their peers and perhaps also for their careers’ (Wiles et al 2006: 288). Nevertheless, I felt a pressing concern that to not fully explore the conditions of structural inequality experienced by participants was potentially also a form of harm – what, really, is the point of ethnography that induces participants to discuss their oppression but then does nothing to counter that same dominant power? Techniques of creative writing and ethnographic fictions – discussed later in this chapter – are employed in the thesis to enable a discussion of these structures of exploitation and inequality, while being attentive to participants’ rights to privacy and confidentiality. Participants are given pseudonyms and character descriptions, which contain data from the ethnography but are refashioned and presented so as to generate distance between the person and the research persona. Though ethically responsible and desirable, this action does somewhat shore up participants’

vulnerability and mark once again the hierarchical gap between me and them. In working to protect participants I am, in a sense, enabling them to remain as elites.

O'Reilly notes that 'Of course, our first responsibility is to our research participants' (O'Reilly 2005: 67). This stance coincides with the ethical guidelines given by both the British Sociological Association and the Economic and Social Research Council. At the same time, it is also important to think about my own vulnerability in the research – the disadvantage of the researcher who reports the secrets of the powerful. As Nader says, 'Telling it like it is may be perceived as muckraking by the subjects of study' (Nader 1972: 21). Gusterson, drawing on Nader's research, discusses how he relied on 'conventional kinds of ethnographic authority to even the balance of power' (Gusterson 1997: 117) in his own 'studying up'. Owing to the novel form of ethnography here – and the very tenor of the thesis topic itself – returning to conventional academic authority as a form of researcher protection feels distinctly unreflexive and unethical in this context. This situation compelled me to rethink what happens to power in the research encounter, and whether it is possibly to ethically study power. The ambiguity and ambivalence that characterised my relations with participants in this regard was never fully overcome in the study or the writing of the thesis – and I discuss this in detail in the following section. I think it would be erroneous to assume, as Katherine Smith notes, that 'the power associated with people through their professional positions will transfer directly onto the interview space (i.e. that it is transferable across contexts because it is inscribed in particular individuals)' (Smith 2006: 645). Indeed, elite participants may be 'better equipped to protect themselves and are better positioned to manipulate research results and dissemination' (2006: 644), but this does not mean that they are wholly safe within the research, nor that their symbolic or structural power will always be imported into the research encounter. Nader assumes that the colonizer and colonized are separate entities, but the reflexive questions of ethics that surround this research throw doubt on this categorization. At various times throughout the ethnography, researcher and researched tussled and transferred powerful positions – a resolution was never fully possible.

### **Positionality and (Inter)-Subjectivity: Power in the Research Encounter**

The complexity of the ethical positions outlined above were emphasised in the research through my own shifting positionality with participants. In this section I 'out' myself as a researcher (Finlay 2002) and explore how far my positionality affects the research encounter, and what this intersubjectivity actually looks like. The relationships I developed with different participants often

necessitated moments of reflexive repositioning and stepping back. Through examples from my field notes, I discuss how my own identity in the research shaped the ethnography.

One day, a few months into the ethnography, I went to see Kate. I describe this meeting in detail in Chapter Five, but here I focus on my response, as a way of pulling out the threads of power in our research encounter. Something had gone wrong in her own research and she had spent her entire morning pulling her already difficult and sensitive research relationship back on track. Added to this, she was experiencing difficulty combining her post-maternity leave return to work with the demands of a very young child, and had recently – and accidentally – agreed to write an article for a predatory journal. As she began speaking to me that day I sensed the emotion in her tone – the vulnerability coming through her voice, the hesitancy, and the self-flagellation occurring. Valerie Hey makes a useful note on her own ethnography of female friendship. She describes how,

The central premises of girls' friendship are: reliability, reciprocity, commitment, confidentiality, trust and sharing. The repertoire of emotions that are provoked if these rules are broken are as powerfully felt and as dramatic as those that have characteristically been claimed as the sole prerogative of sexualised relations (Hey 2002: 86).

Hey is writing not about her own relations in ethnography but about her participants. Nevertheless, the demands of female friendship that Hey identifies resonate in my relationships with several of the women participants with whom I formed a bond that seemed to go beyond them telling me about their writing. With these women, their hopes and fears were opened to me – and much of this initially arrived through the confidentiality and trust placed in me as an ethnographer. Slowly, though, something shifted and merged with these properties of female friendship. I began to feel conflicted and guilty when I wrote about them in a critical or 'objective' way. This was guilt both of telling their secrets to the world, but also of making them vulnerable again. In a context in which they'd told me of their experiences of sexism and racism I began to wonder if my critical approach to their writing practice amounted to a betrayal of trust. The power relations of the research encounter extended it well beyond the specific instance of our meeting and into the writing of the thesis itself. This was buttressed by my position as a white researcher. As Skeggs (1997) notes, whiteness is also a structure of cultural capital, and mine was certainly a factor in the research. I often felt that the participants who were women of colour were doing a lot of work in explaining to me the experience of being black or brown and working in academia. As a reflexive researcher

committed to intersectional feminism, and recognizing that intersectionality as a theory begins from the experiences of women of colour (Hill Collins 1993; Patil 2013), I often understood this form of 'white education' as a potential form of soft power or oppression. I certainly felt that more was happening than a simple 'participant informing a researcher' binary. It was easy to become 'tied' in this fear and to then feel unsure of myself as a researcher. Thus, I often allowed a return to an academic hierarchy whereby I openly took the position of 'student' and inhabited this as a way of receiving 'an education' in sociology.

This position as 'student' was one I agentively moved into with women participants, but one I was pushed into by a number of the male participants. There are a number of points in my fieldwork journal in which I – only half-jokingly – note that such-and-such a male participant 'loves explaining things to me'. The emotion work (Hochschild 1983) I did in these research relationships was of a very different character to that I did in maintaining female friendships with women participants. Men in the research repeatedly – and without irony – referred to me as a 'baby academic'. Gopaul (2014) applies Bourdieu's concept of *sens pratique* or the 'rules of the game' to doctoral students and notes that they experience struggles of academic hierarchy which enable them to learn these rules, and subsequently move within academia. These hierarchies include gaining external doctoral funding and producing publications. That I entered the ethnography with both ESRC funding and with publications in progress meant that I already presented (when asked by participants – and I often was asked) as having attained symbolic capital in academia. However, my age, position as a Ph.D. researcher, and gender, culminated in men reading me as especially youthful and in need of educating. This is partly accurate – after all, the research relationships existed in order for me to learn about how sociologists write. The tenor of conversations with men and women was qualitatively different: where women would ask me questions about my own writing, questions from men tended to revolve around my knowledge – what had I read, what theories did I know, where did I go to university? As I listened to the recorded opening interviews I realised how far those with male participants were dominated by their voices, where those with women were more equal conversations. I record in my field notes that I feel emotionally exhausted after speaking to participants such as Naomi, Kate, and Johanna because I'm equally active in the encounter. By contrast my reflections on meetings with male participants – particularly the older, and far more senior professors – show that I spend much of my time 'just listening'.

Thinking reflexively about this relationship with male participants, I'm struck by how my designated role as *ingénu*e presents a similar ambiguity of power as that of the female friendships.

On the one hand, it led to participants being increasingly open about themselves. Though some expressed fear regarding what might be revealed in the thesis, they were also able to be insistent (where a number of the women were not) about what could and couldn't be included. The intersubjectivity of our research encounter allowed a hegemonic white masculinity to be reproduced and reinforced there, but also throughout the thesis. Where it was up to me to censure myself in what I exposed regarding the women, men were active in guiding me as to their presentation in the data. The openness I was afforded as the 'baby academic' was equally proscribed by their moves to shape the content of the material. I also write frequently in my field notes that I am worried about 'faking myself' in these relationships – that my presentation of self is so malleable as to constitute deception. Positioning myself reflexively throughout the process – especially in writing practice - has been important in disimbricating the layers of power which intersect. I work here from Bourdieu's concept of 'participant objectivation' in which the researcher objectifies both themselves in terms of age, gender, nationality and so forth, but also 'most importantly, her particular position within the microcosm' (Bourdieu 2003: 283). Seeing me as part of the data, and placing myself methodologically in the narrations and stories which follow is a key way of unpicking power by openly admitting its presence and affect. As Simon Susen notes, 'reflexive sociology *is* vigilance', (Susen 2007: 134; emphasis in original). Though I assert the importance of reflexivity as an awareness or vigilance of the affect of the researcher on the data, I do not do so as a way of scrubbing clean my influence on the data. Linda Finlay describes the mutuality of research and argues that in order to lay 'claim to the integrity and trustworthiness of qualitative research' (Finlay 2002: 531) it is necessary to fully analyse the subjective and intersubjective elements of research – and that with 'the use of reflexivity, subjectivity in research can be transformed from a problem to an opportunity' (Finlay 2002: 531). Ultimately, the way in which my subjectivity was made and remade through research encounters became a reflection on power relations within the field. Like the stories which follow, my power is shown as unstable, ambiguous, and contextual. The continual shifts unsettle conventional theories of hegemony and dominance and show elite status as sticky and mercurial.

### **Ethnographies of People**

Having earlier outlined the design of the fieldwork, I turn here to look at the conceptual underpinning of it and my original methodological technique, 'ethnographies of people'. Researching sociology as a field – focusing on the diffuse institutions, spaces, and practices which comprise the discipline – means that place-based ethnographic approaches are not appropriate to

this thesis. To base ethnographic fieldwork in one location would assume a homologous character to sociology as a discipline, and to accept that sociology is constituted similarly across institutions or geographies. My research questions focus on the intricacies and complexities of building disciplinary space and the frameworks of power and legitimacy which operate in the field. My new approach is designed to better capture this richness. My ethnographic strategy draws on the tenets of institutional ethnography, particularly those set out by Dorothy Smith (1987). Smith's institutional ethnography focuses on the everyday and allows the researcher to 'explicate the processes through which power is routinely organized' (Townsend 1996: 181). If my work as an ethnographer in this thesis is to explicate the processes of legitimation of knowledge by which dominant power is organized and asserted in sociology, then it is also necessary that I show awareness of these power processes in my research design. Pursuing the research in this format enables discovery of information, perspectives, and ideas which lie outside of a dominant value system or dominant symbolic power in sociology and creates space for participants to narrate these with value (Skeggs 2004).

The interest of this thesis is in sociology as a field, rather than in making claims that sociology writing belongs in any one or more specific sites. It marks a difference between the site a sociologist is employed in, and the spaces in which they engage in sociological craft. Institutional spaces are certainly important to the legitimation of writing forms and styles in sociology. However, we also need to be attentive to the way that institutional spaces understand and demarcate sociology differently – and that these can often be in friction with one another across journals, departments and subject associations. Ethnographies of people allows the thesis to engage with the everyday lived experiences of sociologists as they move *between* places of sociology and through a more amorphously-defined disciplinary field, rather than constraining the study to the life of a particular department or journal, and the writing culture of that location. Part of the original contribution of the research comes from this attempt to understand the various interacting, contradictory, and complimentary ways that legitimacy in sociology writing is produced across these disciplinary locations. The decision to move away from location-bound sites is supported by the perspective of institutional ethnography. Smith's intervention focuses on 'how the everyday lives of people connect with ruling relations...instead of focusing on the systems themselves in a top-down manner (Taber 2010: 11). This is a study looking at sociology writers and how they are affected by the institutions they are part of, rather than a study of institutions and how they affect their inhabitants. Departments, journals, and subject associations are important to this thesis because they have influence on the way sociologists work and write. They

form key aspects of the shape and shaping of the discipline. But they are not the only sites of sociology writing, nor the only influences upon it. The research questions in this thesis are not oriented to what the *British Journal of Sociology*, the British Sociological Association, or Goldsmiths Sociology (for example) think of sociology writing and legitimate knowledge production in the U.K. Rather, they seek to capture something more elusive, slippery, and ephemeral: how a sociology writer's sense of legitimacy emerges. The thesis begins with the person and the personal, and travels to consider what engagement occurs with/in certain locations of sociology and sociology writing.

I have designed the thesis around individual participants who work in sociology departments. This methodology draws on ideas set out in multi-sited ethnography but shapes these anew for the purposes of this project. Similar to multi-sited ethnography's 'empirically following the thread of cultural process itself' (Marcus 1995: 97), I am following sociology writing through the field of sociology, via the actions, narrations, and engagements of my participants. Ethnographies of people designates that the focus is on the practitioners of sociology, and that each person constitutes a separate but connected research site. It is well oriented to investigate what happens at the interstices of forms of legitimacy, and explore the gaps between different forms of writing across places in which sociology is practiced. Sociology – and its writing - is distributed and manifold. It takes numerous forms and happens across multiple geographic, institutional and conceptual locations. Drawing on multi-sited ethnographic methods opens space for me to compile both a macrocosmic understanding of sociology as a field or fields and then compare this to the multiple different narratives that come from participants. This allows me to ground my research findings in terms of the structural elements of a field, whilst also recognizing the agentic quality of the production of a field, thus ensuring that my methods are in line with the theoretical framework of my research. Further to this, it also gives me a very pointed and incisive access and insight to writing practices and processes. By understanding each different participant as a site of ethnographic study, I can foreground the processual nature of writing by focusing on the microcosmic in writing. Instead of drawing across participants to discuss writing *in that location*, I am able to more finely describe and assert the nuance of legitimation in a field. Drawing on multi-sited ethnography in this way is intended to show that sociologists exist in numerous overlapping communities – their departments, universities, writing relationships, sub-topic area, the discipline more generally, subject associations, and in connection to particular journals or publishing houses. This innovative methodological approach is attentive to 'the reader's right to a reasonably reliable rendering of the social world' (Duneier 2011: 2).

My methodology resides in the space between a multi-sited ethnography which tracks the mobility and movement of people across places, and a location-based ethnography in which participants and researcher stay in the same place. My participants share a space – sociology – but they are not geographically or institutionally coherent with one another. Participants in this study are not geographically mobile but they do move around different spaces of sociology. The notion of community cohesiveness is particularly sticky in academia given that practitioners operate both as individuals and as collaborators, but these collaborations are often not held within a single university institution. I argue that, as in multi-sited ethnography, my participants exhibit a kind of ‘empirical connectedness’ (Hage 2005: 468), whereby they can be conceived as a group through their professional positions and disciplinary location. However, because they remain separate as practitioners – and the research questions focus on a person’s sense of legitimacy as a sociologist, rather than understanding sociologists as a group – it is more precise to approach this study in a way which acknowledges the very particular separate-but-connected relationship present. Ethnographies of people recognizes the way in which sociologists share a single dispersed location (the discipline of sociology) but often move independently within this.

Ethnographies of people draws on Hage’s identification that distinctions between field sites are incomplete and problematic. He notes that, ‘If I was committed to study a transnational family or village *as a global phenomenon*, then I could not treat all the locations in which each one of their members existed as a separate site. I had to treat all these locations, dispersed as they were, as just one site’ (Hage 2005: 465; emphasis added). It counters the simplistic notion that ethnography is *either* singular or multiple, place-based or mobile. Ethnographies of people as a methodology is both and neither at once. It is, in a sense, singular and place-based because it sits within sociology as a field. It is also multiple and mobile as it sees participants as discrete but allied sites of study and tracks writing as a concept around these sites. It is necessary to design the methodology in such a way in order to successfully track a phenomenon – legitimate sociology writing – which is simultaneously distributed and bounded. The contradictory and complex qualities of sociology writing cannot be fully represented by either a single-location based method or a multi-sited philosophy. Laurel Richardson suggests that a key factor in ‘holding all ethnography to high and difficult standards’ is to look at how far it ‘expresses a reality’ (Richardson 2000: 254). For Richardson, this means assessing whether the text embodies ‘a fleshed out, embodied sense of lived-experience? Does it seem “true”—a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the “real”?’ (Richardson 2000: 254). This set of questions is a central concern for this thesis and I have shaped the methodology so as to highlight and affirm the contradictions

and complexities of the space and activity I am researching, and attempt to show the intricacies of the everyday lived experience of sociology writers. Pursuing the research via ethnographies of people works to more precisely capture the experienced reality of legitimation in sociology via writing.

### **Interviewing and Observation in Ethnographies of People**

Given the originality of the methodology, it is important to contextualise the way in which both participant observation and interviewing sit within my ethnographic method. Here, I extrapolate why this relationship is a strength of the research design and how the two methods linked with each other within the context of ethnographies of people. This conversation sits in a complex scholarship which continually debates the validity of interviewing as part of ethnography in an anthropological tradition focused on participant observation. Judith Okely, for instance, notes that anthropologists such as James Clifford ‘argue that the method of long-term immersion via participant observation is the hallmark of the discipline [anthropology]’ (2012: 2). Likewise, Martin Forsey – with rather more obvious critical intention – apes Marx in asserting that the ‘ghost of Bronislaw Malinowski haunts ethnographers’ (Forsey 2015: 65), pushing an understanding of ethnography which sees the ‘practice of participant observation *qua* ethnography’ (Forsey 2015: 65). Ethnographies of people, by contrast, is both interview-led and attentive to researcher observations. In this section I assert interviewing as part of immersive ethnographic research, and detail how observation formed part of my interviewing strategy.

The primary means of gathering data was through unstructured interviews. These took place in cafés, university offices, participants’ homes, and outside – including on the bank of the river Cam, and perched in a nook of a library building. Interviews were never a series of questions and answers, but instead a form of directed conversation. Participants would also ask questions of me – which I answered – regarding my own relationship to sociology, writing, class, gender, work, and academia, among many others. Current scholarship on the relationship between interviewing, participant observation, and ethnography arguably continues to place these in parallel, rather than considering how they are mutually constitutive. Hammersley asserts that interviews are part of the multiple methods ethnographers use – that they are ‘designed to understand people’s perspectives, perhaps complemented by the study of various sorts of document/official, publicly available, or personal’ (Hammersley 2006: 4). Forsey, too, argues for ‘placing engaged listening on a similar footing to participant observation in our conceptualization of ethnographic practices’ (Forsey

2010: 560). Though useful to understanding interviewing as a legitimate practice in ethnography, both Forsey and Hammersley seem to cleave participant listening from participant observation. There is, here, still a pressing gap in the bifurcation of listening and looking. My use of interviewing in ethnography challenges this duality. I was not immersed in the ethnography only through my presence in the same spaces as participants, but also through the intersubjectivity of our relationship and the interview encounter. Equally, I did not *only* focus on ‘engaged listening’ with participants, nor were interviews ‘supplemented’ by other means drawn from the ethnographic/anthropological toolkit. To linguistically frame it in such a way draws distinctions between methods which are too sharp and defined. I used observation as much in interviews as I used listening in shared spaces.

Though the research is not placed-based in a geographical sense, it remains ‘placed’ in terms of the numerous shared spaces of a discipline, both physical and intellectual. Throughout the research it was impossible for me to be separate from my participants, even when no formal research was being conducted. We met at conferences, in circles of friends, and in online spaces. It was important for me to observe and understand how participants moved within sociology, how others related to them, and how their various forms of capital (in different measures) allowed them purchase, or to traverse disciplinary structures and mores. In these instances, I was able to observe the way that participants present themselves in sociological spaces – both in terms of everyday and mundane interactions but also as regards the actual performances of their work in keynote speeches and conference papers. Often, the participants I saw in these contexts would take me aside, or nudge me and whisper something which spoke to contradictions in these performances or presentations of self. Equally, I would frequently ask them questions based on discrepancies I saw between how they acted in these public places and the things they said to me in our more private encounters. Ethnographies of people, as a research method, draws attention to the way in which interviewing in ethnography is not distinctly separate from participant observation. They are connected by the underlying ethnographic sensibility of both the research design and the researcher – and indeed, can both happen in the same instance, in the same encounter, through the same method. As I noted earlier in this section, the intersubjectivity of the interview encounter – the fact that it is co-produced by both me and my participant – already suggests a level of immersion and mutual participation in a particular space or act. Ann Oakley calls for ‘no intimacy without reciprocity’ (1981: 49) – by which, of course, she asserted the need for attending to power imbalances in the interview situation. In this instance, I use the parallel to indicate how the reciprocity of our conversations supported the intimacy of the research, and the way this was

attained through cumulative open discussions from both researcher and participant. As such, my approach to and understanding of interviewing in ethnography – particularly in the context of ‘ethnographies of people’ – demonstrates the mutuality of listening and observing.

### **Narrative, Stories, and Fiction: Differences and Roles in the Thesis**

The thesis uses stories, narrative, and fiction within the data presentation and analysis. These are distinct forms of writing and here I unpick each function and their role in the presentation and analysis of data. Though my primary means of data gathering is interviewing, I have chosen not to present this data in a conventional interview format but to instead convey it through the medium of stories, vignettes, and thickly described conversations. My focus is on interview as sitting within the context of ethnography and the presentation and analysis chosen works to show the interpersonal interactions, reciprocity, and immersion in participant relationships and shared spaces. My aim in doing so is to represent – as much as possible – the totality of the encounter on the page. Further to this, it is intended to fit with the trajectory of the research questions, particularly in attempting to understand the relationship between writing and legitimate knowledge, from the perspective of the participants. In conceptualising data as narrative I can highlight how participants’ narratives relate to wider disciplinary narratives, thus emphasising the way that ‘sociology’ is constructed through (re)tellings of particular disciplinary stories. Before embarking on this, I outline exactly how I am using the terms ‘narrative’, ‘fiction’, and ‘story’.

‘Narrative’ denotes an account of connected ideas or events; ‘story’ describes the way in which a narrative is told. Tzvetan Todorov’s work on narrative and story in another context, is helpful in explaining my use here. Writing about the genre of detective fiction, Todorov identifies the difference between the ‘story of the crime’ and the ‘story of the investigation’ (Todorov 1988 [1966]: 159). Declaring that the story of the crime ‘is what happened in life’ (Ibid: 160), Todorov asserts that the story of the investigation ‘is the way the author presents it to us’ (Ibid). These are not separate, but represent ‘two aspects of one and the same work; they are two points of view about the same thing’ (Ibid). I suggest that both exist within my data. There is some access to participants own ‘story of the crime’ – i.e. the events as they happen, particularly as this relates to biographical elements, life history, or the different stages of writing a particular piece. But this appears through – and interspersed with – the ‘story of the investigation’: the way in which the ‘truth’ of any events or ideas within the interview data arrives through being told to me by participants. As participants speak to me, they shape and form the ‘facts’ through their perspective

and interpretation, with aspects pushed forward or held back. Equally, this data is further mediated through me – I am retelling their stories in this thesis. I, and my participants, construct a plot.

My emphasis on stories, narrative, and fiction is intended to foreground in honesty the layers of interpretation in this form of qualitative research. I am not claiming to be unique in this – indeed this partiality is, I think, arguably part of much qualitative interviewing and ethnography in particular (Geertz 1973, 1983; Clifford 1986; Willis 2000). However, part of the methodological approach of the thesis is to be attentive to the way in which sociologists tell stories about themselves and the way in which storied narrations – in all their partiality – become part of bringing into being certain ideas of sociology as a discipline and sociological knowledge. These ‘stories of investigation’ build a tangibly-felt and experienced version of a discipline through repeated invocation of stories as ‘facts’ or as widely experienced. Thus, to be part of U.K. sociology comes to involve telling your own version of the same essential ‘facts’ or ‘story of the crime’. I therefore present the data specifically as stories of research rather than factual accounts of sociology. These are experiential accounts of thinking and practicing a discipline. That is not to invalidate them as legitimate knowledge – or even to claim that they are potentially unrepresentative - but to acknowledge that data arrives into the thesis as partial and personal, even when participants assert their own objectivity.

This acknowledgement of the storied quality of data leads on to the role of fiction and fictionalization in the thesis. Here, I use both words to denote the addition of imaginative elements to the data. I focus on ‘fictionalization’, in particular, in that it suggests that writing is not fully a work of imagination, or invented, but has been shaped through the imagination and incrementally removed from the actuality of the original narrative or story. As part of my ethical practice I have fictionalized aspects of participants’ identities and accounts. I have added elements of imaginative input and levels of removal from the original content of conversations and events, such as changing geographical location or topic of research. However, I have also chosen to present some of the ethnography as longer pieces of creative prose. Scholarship on ethnography acknowledges that writing is more than method (e.g. keeping field notes, writing up results) and shapes interpretation and explanation (Clifford 1986: 2). As such, these presentations depict an event or conversation drawing on both the story/ies participants told me, as well as my own interpretation of the encounter. I also ground this technique in the increasing use of creative practice methods in exploring the personal in qualitative research (Saldaña 2014; Clough 2000; Vickers 2002). However, these pieces of creative prose have been shaped in order that the theoretical analysis of

the thesis can begin in the creative elements. As such, I am attempting to combine the imaginative and the analytical into the same space, as a way of pushing towards the nuance of the data through its 'writing up' in the thesis. In doing so, I am attentive to the ways of knowing, seeing, and interpreting which are available across different disciplines of writing – that 'Creative arts is one lens through which to view the world; analytical/science is another. We see better with two lenses. We see best with both lenses focused and magnified' (Richardson 2000: 254).

Working with literary and creative writing techniques allows me to be attentive to the lives of my participants. The research questions in this project relate strongly to the personal – something which Carol Smart recognises is at risk in the writing up of academic research. Smart notes that 'constraints of certain academic disciplinary conventions – and here I am specifically thinking of sociological writing' mean that 'the richness of lives is omitted from written accounts' (Smart 2013: 61). Following this, and with emphasis on the research questions and ethnographic context, I argue that it is important that the personal is not erased from the analysis here. Some chapters are focused around a pair of participants – this is done when a new reading of sociology emerges through the clefts and joins of two different stories told together. Other chapters focus on a group of participants who all share stories about a particular practice, event, or idea. Here, I give substantial ground to creative vignettes which I eventually intersperse to draw together the ways in which participants' stories bring texture and richness to comprehending the mundane and commonplace aspects of sociological writing and practice. Like Smart, I wish to make my data analysis rich with the voices of participants, and by allowing their narratives to speak for themselves, avoiding the trap of unreflexively placing participants' experiences into standard social and cultural structures. Through these fictionalizations I attempt to protect the anonymity of participants, avow the storied quality of qualitative research and provide a genuine attentiveness and sensitivity to research participants and data.

## Chapter Five

### The Sociologist Writer: Self, Identity, and Writing Practices

Me: So, do you feel like a writer?

Christian: What?! No! [shakes head vehemently and leans in to me]. What you have to understand, Sarah, is that I'm not a writer, I'm a sociologist. A sociologist is not a writer, nor should they be. In fact, if you're describing yourself as an academic or a sociologist or whatever, there's simply no way that you can call yourself a writer, full stop.

Christian is fierce on this point. For him, it is utterly incomprehensible – even ridiculous - that a sociologist should consider themselves a writer. Christian makes a clear distinction between writing as a space – that it is ‘the domain of the things we [academic sociologists] do’ - and ‘the writer’ as an identity which is open to sociologists. Grinning and intensely animated by now, Christian locks eyes with me and says, ‘The clue’s in the name – “writer”. When you’re a “writer” the form, the substance is always about writing. Sociology has limits to writing related to logic, and empirical data. When you’re a writer the written piece is in the driving seat’. Christian makes reference to novels and fiction, telling me that a ‘proper writer’ would make changes to a piece according to what it requires. Christian has a notion that works of imagination tell a writer what to do, they lead the writer in a particular direction. ‘Sociology,’ Christian tells me, ‘is more logical. The stringency and consistency of thought binds you in sociology’. Sociologists cannot be ‘writers’ because writing is literary: writers are concerned with writing in and of itself.

In contrast, sociologists are bound to follow the logic of the discipline, not the creative direction of the writing. Christian raises several provocative points. Firstly, that personal or social identifications may be divisible from practices those identifications – you can write without being able or inclined to describe yourself as a writer. Christian clearly separated out the identity of ‘writer’ from the practice of writing. For him, it seemed that ‘being a writer’ in terms of a sense of self or identity indicated an orientation to the imagination and to creativity because writing, for Christian, is an artistic or artisan enterprise. By contrast, we see sociology as understood to be a scientific undertaking and therefore at odds with the identity of ‘writer’. What Christian seems to be arguing is that, as sociologists, the writing one does is a practice of the discipline – a practice of

being a sociologist – rather than an indication that sociologists are writers. Secondly, Christian raises the notion that sociology is an inherently scientific discipline – a practice which is objective and value-free, whereby ‘being a writer’ would interfere with this scientific position. Finally, Christian’s comments also infer that someone’s disciplinary identity could be identified in their writing: if sociology has a set of rules that bind, that must be adhered to in writing, then it follows that it should be possible to detect a sociologist’s adherence to a hegemonic disciplinary value paradigm through their writing.

These are important considerations for this thesis because they go to the question of whether a sociologist’s craft of writing is related to their understanding of themselves as legitimate, and the extent to which the knowledge they produce is deemed legitimate within the discipline. But, do writing practices, processes, and styles show sociologists bending to or wielding disciplinary power? Further to this, what forms of disciplinary power emerge through writing – and can these be more precisely accessed through talking to sociologists about how they see themselves as writers? Are there elements of sociology writing which are not about sociology *per se*, but the agentive and particular actions and perspective of the person who writes?

This chapter explores the relationship between sense of self and writing sociology. It foregrounds the production of the academic habitus, particularly as regards its generative properties and dialect relationship with field. Through this the chapter notes how the habitus is structured – and comes to structure the actions of sociologists – through a hegemonic value paradigm which upholds the dominant disciplinary power seen in Chapters Two and Three. Importantly, the focus on this generative quality of the habitus provides shape for the accounts of participants here to indicate ways in which habitus is not (always) determinative; what we see in this chapter is a complex combination of struggles within a system, along with active and reflexive acknowledgement of one’s place within this system.

The chapter shows the action of this hegemonic value paradigm through identification of an ideal type of sociologist, the ‘competent academic’. This personification of an ideal type demonstrates how the sociological habitus is formed with respect to intellectual, professional, and institutional aspects of sociology, but it also pertinently connects the contemporary sociologist to the production and conditions of the neoliberal subject. The primary work of this chapter is in using participants’ accounts of writing in order to show the imbrication of the ‘competent academic’

into the habitus of the contemporary U.K. sociologist, as well as the affect this ideal type has on the way sociologists think about themselves. Partly, this activity supports understanding legitimacy in the production of sociological knowledge/selfhood as oriented to one hegemonic value paradigm which dominates the parameters for legitimation – and excludes certain bodies, perspectives, and positions from being able to undergo rites of consecration. Certainly, there are aspects of the relationship between participants and the ‘competent academic’ which seem to be non-agentive – in which the hierarchy of this figure is taken for granted. Nevertheless, the chapter also reveals points of stickiness. There are instances in the ethnography in which participants show themselves deliberately engaging with this figure, rather than being blindly or unquestioningly led by it. There are also examples of participants recognising this ideal type but acting outside of it. I assert that these cases represent a disruption of the hegemonic norm, and indicate how hegemony and disciplinary power become malleable through varied and contradictory use of them. Furthermore, these instances arguably represent both alternative means of being currently legitimated within sociology, as well as showing the small and incremental ways that a hegemonic value paradigm comes to shift over time. I begin this chapter by looking at the figure of the competent academic, before moving to pen portraits of the writing practices of three participants – Euan, Philip, and Kate. These portraits, and the subsequent analysis, bring out the ways in which writing practice is interwoven with a sense of self, and how both of these elements are underpinned by adherence to, and negotiation of, hegemonic power.

### **The Competent Academic**

The figure of the competent academic emerges from the narratives of participants. It is, to use Ben’s words ‘the ideal other’, and all participants – to some extent – spoke of measuring themselves against this. What I particularly want to show in this section is the way in which the identification of this figure supports analysis of the relationship between a sociologist’s personal and institutional practices of writing and the production of legitimate sociological knowledge or self. Through a focus on this figure it is possible to uncover how institutional conditions of production are related to sociologists’ writing practices, and – importantly – how these institutional conditions, particularly of neoliberalism, come to be felt and interpreted as part of a personal, affective relationship with writing. The ‘competent academic’ is a personification of hegemonic power expressed in disciplinary terms. It combines tropes of the traditional intellectual with a notion that there are ideal ways to practice sociology, and is further bolstered in contemporary academia through connection with narratives of individualism in the ‘neoliberal university’ (Taylor 2014;

Holmwood 2010). Moreover, a number of elements of hegemonic disciplinary power map onto the ‘good neoliberal subject’, and this convergence gives the ‘competent academic’ a particularly potent power. Later in the chapter I show how these ideas are imbricated within the narratives of participants, but first I set out the parameters of this figure, focusing on the tropes of the intellectual and how these are mirrored in the fetishization of the individual in neoliberal academia. The competent academic is a ‘mythical other’ – an imagined academic sociologist who demonstrates absolute proficiency and ability in the field. Participants talked about this figure as one who shows sophistication and suave – they are capable of multiple styles of writing, they have extensive prestigious publications, they win grants, they are comfortable on the academic stage (both figuratively and literally), they have a wide network, and are quick-witted, verbally dexterous, and sharp-minded. This ideal figure is likely to be focused on research rather than teaching. As such, they mirror the hegemonic parameters of legitimation pointed to in Chapter Three, by gatekeepers such as David, Tim, and James.

The competent academic is therefore decorated with the symbolic capital of high-profile research but refrains from exerting this high cultural capital in any ornate capacity, opting instead for restraint and refinement. Many of the bases of this figure are located in ideas about what it means to be an ‘intellectual’. Patrick Baert deals with the origins of the term ‘intellectual’ and – though noting that it had been used earlier - locates the fashion for the term in the Dreyfus affair of the 1890s. Baert notes that, among the missives and petitions flowing between factions, the term ‘intellectual’ was used by anti-Dreyfusard, Maurice Barrès, in an article titled “La Protestation des intellectuels!”. This, Baert asserts, was formative, and the term quickly became a sarcastic pejorative used against Dreyfusards. Intellectuals were constructed as ‘outsiders, who drew on abstract thinking and who were therefore out of touch with the historical roots of French culture and language’ (Baert 2011: 628). This contrasts with how the foundational principles of the intellectual have been recognized in the performance of the contemporary academic sociologist. Neil Gross and Ethan Fosse build on it as a term of the left, to describe why professors are seen as – or actually are – ‘liberal’. They contend that the epithets of the intellectual link intimately with particular qualities and frameworks of Western knowledge – that, essentially, the intellectual is a figure of the hegemony and to be able to inhabit such a position is contingent on your structural power. Gross and Fosse trace the notion of the intellectual, citing ‘Ladd and Lipset (1976), taking up Lazarsfeld and Thielen’s (1958) notion of the “academic mind”’, whereby ‘intellectualism - a rational, critical, creative mindset [is] linked to the Western intellectual tradition’ (Gross and Fosse 2012: 128). Grosse and Fosse underpin this with further claims that the habits of the intellectual

are synonymous with high cultural capital, noting that ‘verbal ability is associated with the kind of cultural literacy often seen as a hallmark of intellectuals’ (Gross and Fosse 2012: 137).

Baert, however, moves the intellectual away from ideas of the hegemonic and further toward those of the outsider – though, it must be said, this formulation of ‘outsiderness’ remains reliant on high value forms of cultural and social capital. According to Baert, Dreyfusards took to the term and, as he comments, ‘swiftly adopted the notion of the intellectual themselves, stripping it of its negative connotations, and using it with pride to refer to themselves as principled defenders of true French values of justice and truth’ (Baert 2011: 628). This is important to the composition and affect of the figure of the ‘competent academic’ in contemporary sociology because Baert’s analysis demonstrates how the term and its connotations became associated with a certain critical liberal outlook and action. The ensuing victory of the Dreyfusards makes it ‘no surprise that their notion of the intellectual—and not the pejorative one— became more influential throughout the twentieth century’ (Baert 2011: 628). What Baert also notes – and is of importance here – is that ‘the intellectual became a self-congratulatory concept’ (Baert 2011: 628). This builds a picture of intellectuals as concomitantly left-wing, radical, critical, and political but nevertheless continues to push the notion that intellectuals are also out of touch, abstract, and egotistic.

Crucially, the concept of the intellectual has teeth, in terms of its relation to disciplinary location and power – which is significant to understanding sociology as a field, and disciplinary location as a mechanism for gaining power within that field. Martyn Hammersley indicates the relationship between being an intellectual and aligning with particular ideologies or schools of thought. He relates the intellectual to the contemporary critical social scientist, noting that the ‘influence of Marxism and Critical Theory encouraged the view that the social scientist is necessarily a politically engaged intellectual’ (Hammersley 2005: 177). Hammersley returns to classically French conceptions of the figure and cites Julien Benda’s book, *La Trahison des Clercs* ([1928] 1969) as providing an initial outline of the figure – one which the contemporary model of the intellectual as publically engaged moves away from. Hammersley writes that Benda inscribed intellectuals as having ‘an otherworldly concern with knowledge, literature, music, or art, their political participation being limited to making occasional public pronouncements in order to support universal ideals’ (Hammersley 2005: 177).

These contrasting – even contradictory – models of the intellectual show that multiple versions of the figure exist, but there cohere in a contemporary understanding of the figure as both radical

and critical, but also erudite, self-absorbed, and distant from the spaces and language of ordinary social actors. Furthermore – and underpinning the connection of the hegemonic to the figure of the ‘competent academic’ – the intellectual is an idealized conception of a person. The intellectual is a figure in relation to a position rather than a fully realized, thinking, feeling, reacting, embodied, engaged person. As well as this, the figure of the intellectual – especially in terms of its public nature – is obliquely gendered as male. Though it is not said outright that the intellectual is a man, the position of the figure in the public/political sphere rather than the domestic, and its alignment with Western masculine values of rationality and criticality, strongly suggest a gendered conception of the figure as male. Further to this, the association with the West, and Western knowledge paradigms, robustly positions the intellectual as white. This, again, returns to the assumptions made behind auspices of universality and generality that I discussed in Chapter Two in relation to Outhwaite’s contention regarding the ill-fit between ‘identity politics’ and becoming canonical in social theory. The ‘competent academic’ which emerges through participants’ narratives partly derives from these tropes of the intellectual and, as such, is similarly gendered, racialised, and classed. Owing to this, the ‘competent academic’ is a very useful figure through which to analyze how hegemonic power functions as regards legitimacy in sociology. With its connotations of intellectualism, the figure implies the elite status of intellectuals within the academic hierarchy. However, it also indicates the multiple and contradictory ways of practicing this intellectualism, and so leaves room for the contemporary sociologists to direct and shape their own intellectual practice within this model.

The figure of the intellectual and constructions of the academic in the neoliberal university share a focus on individualism. Hammersley notes that Benda envisioned ‘the autonomy of intellectuals’ (Hammersley 2005: 178), whilst the neoliberal academic subject is a figure emphasised as both singular, perpetually oriented to academic tasks, competitive, and incredibly productive. The neoliberal academic is attuned to ambition, achievement and devotion to scholarship – above personal, social, or domestic concerns. These come together to form an especially forceful ideal type, perceived by contemporary sociologists. The ‘competent academic’ might be a personification, but it stems from structures of the discipline and institutions, and in turn structures life within these. As I will show in the next section, the continual presence of this amorphous other acts as both a standard to be reached, as well as a rebuke to ‘failure’. Thus, part of the production of a sociological habitus comes through awareness of this ideal other and individuals’ agentive attempts to attain this status. This is a key example of the considered actions

of individuals existing in paradoxical harmony and contradiction with a sense of being pressed, constrained, and bullied by structures of the field.

The culture of neoliberalism in academia is particularly recognised around audit culture and academic governance – two institutional elements which shape the conditions for writing in the academy. Cris Shore defines audit culture as a ‘condition’ in which ‘the techniques and values of accountancy have become a central organizing principle in the governance and management of human conduct’ (Shore 2008: 279). Shore notes the ‘subtle and seductive manner in which managerial concepts and terminologies have become integrated into the everyday language of academia’ (Shore 2008: 283) and, indeed, it is possible to see the everydayness of neoliberal governance in the writing practices detailed below. The literature on audit culture and academic governance indicates multiple strands at work, several of which align closely with the intellectual. The focus on work and production as the primary goals of the neoliberal academic link intimately with the understanding of the intellectual as a construction within a position rather than a distinctly realised person.

Both the neoliberal academic and the intellectual are individuals rather than collective or community oriented positions. Furthermore, both are constructed as possessing and mobilising high cultural capital – the intellectual is erudite, and verbally able, and the neoliberal academic is a sophisticate, able to deal dexterously and competently with the always-on culture and pressure to publish. Equally the intellectual and the neoliberal academic both contain elements of the show-off – with Baert noting the self-congratulatory element of the intellectual and Rosalind Gill asserting the competitive strain in the neoliberal academic. Both assume a lack of interest in, or responsibility to a domestic or social life, and a devotion to scholarship. Like the intellectual, the neoliberal academic is a deeply gendered role, as regards the culture of presentism and assumption that an academic does not have domestic duties. The ability to navigate the structures of audit culture are unequally oriented towards men and the penalties for the inability to traverse this ground and perform the role are largely felt by women.

Gill elaborates on the affective impact of this culture on academics, writing of the ‘exhaustion, stress, overload, insomnia, anxiety, shame, aggression, hurt, guilt and feelings of out-of-placeness, fraudulence and fear of exposure within the contemporary academy’ (Gill 2009: 4). What I want to draw attention to, is how inability to cope with, or attain status within, the institutional policies of audit culture becomes felt as personal failing rather than structural inequality or domination.

This is central to the mobilisation of the ‘competent academic’ and why it gains so much traction in the affective lives of participants, and infiltrates their writing practice. Gill comments on the ‘punishing intensification of work’ (Gill 2009: 9) under audit culture, but states that ‘this has not resulted in collective action to turn down the heat, but instead to an overheated competitive atmosphere’ (Gill 2009: 10). As an inculcated part of the sociological (or academic) habitus, the ‘competent academic’ tells us that the fault is one of self and not structure.

As further chapters will show, sociologists in the ethnography cope with audit culture by writing more, changing their style to fit with high-impact journals, publishing in places they would not normally, or trying to present themselves within clear disciplinary boundaries. These are all alterations to writing practice – shaping the individual around the culture, rather than changing the culture. The ‘competent academic’ emerges from the ethnography as someone capable of playing the audit culture game – again, stressing the relationship between this figure and a dominant hegemonic value paradigm. Participants draw on both accounts simultaneously and obliquely. They do not always vocalise that these particular figures are prominent in their reading of the academic landscape, but they do repeatedly construct an ideal other, combined of these elements and against which they evaluate their position in sociology and their practice as a writer. The ideal other is not always ‘the best’ – sometimes it is a position against which participants positively declare themselves as opposite. The below sketches of three participants’ construction of their writing selves shows how they link to these depictions of the intellectual and the neoliberal academic, both implicitly aligning themselves and using these positions as ways of differentiating themselves and claiming a ‘novel’ or ‘special’ outlook. Further, they show how institutional conditions seep into affective writing relations.

### **Portraits of Participants: Writing Practices and a Sense of (Sociological) Self**

Within these portraits I show how participants’ sense of self emerges through how they talk about their writing, and how this sense of self often picks up on tropes of the intellectual and neoliberal subject. By doing so, I begin to show how hegemonic structures of gender and ‘race’ pattern the way sociologists see themselves, their work, and the discipline in which they are positioned. The three portraits follow Euan, Philip, and Kate. All three work in universities in the south of England. Euan’s portrait discusses his writing practice in terms of perfectionism, precision, and confidence; Philip’s portrait focuses on how his writing has changed over time based on the different perspective brought through commitments to family life outside of sociology; Kate’s portrait picks

up on a meeting I noted in Chapter Four, and looks at how the time pressures brought about by the 'push to publish' affect her sense of self both as a sociologist and as a mother. Each is based on a single meeting or conversation; what is provided below is a storied version of these events.

### ***Euan***

Euan and I have just discovered that we are both morning writers. We both rise early at 6am – in Euan's case, forcing himself to get up. Euan needs to have a clear space of time to begin new writing; he speaks of the period between rising early and having lunch as a vast expanse, unsullied by mundane administrative or teaching oriented jobs, and ripe for the creation and production of new words. His desk looks out over the river. He sees the sun rise and the tiny coloured boats mottle the water, sending forth ripples of tide. The scene is important: Euan says that he has to be happy, to be serene in order to write. 'The mood,' he says, 'is important for me to develop what I'm trying to get which is an easy, straightforward conversational style in my writing'. The peacefulness of the early morning is important too, and links to his interaction with the writing; it is a 'blank canvas' and 'the first couple of brush strokes can be put on the canvas precisely because it's so early and no-one else is around when the act of creation is beginning'. He laughs and tells me he knows this sounds pretentious but 'that's just the way I feel'. Euan moves to his desk and lifts a wad of paper, variously clipped together, covered with writing - but neatly and precisely. Resting his hand on the stack he looks at me and says, 'Actually getting the words down on paper is completely computer-driven, but there's a lot that goes on before that. I like to have everything planned out before I go anywhere near the computer. I always know what the overall structure of the text will be before I start typing'. I'm intrigued. Euan intimates that the process is quite idiosyncratic; I tell him to relate the whole thing.

'So, in order to get up to the point where I can sit and write on a piece of paper what the structure will be, I will have done a lot of reading of books and articles. I will have marked all of them with pencil for books or pen for journal articles. All the articles are printed, everything is a paper copy for this – that's essential. I can't do it any other way – I can't stare at a computer for hours, it gives me a sore head. Then, when I feel that I've read enough I go back to all the journal articles and all the books. I take a piece of A4 paper and under different headings I note where in those papers and books the particular, relevant bits of information are'. This already sounds an arduous and lengthy process to me, but Euan continues still. He flicks through the thick sheaves of paper as he talks, the crisp texture of the sheets puncturing the rhythm of his speech. He tells me that he

begins with the journal articles. He takes the first one in the pile – ‘it’ll say something and it will be on a particular theme. So, I start one piece of A4 and I write the theme at the top, followed by the author and the page number. And I just keep going through the same article until the next theme comes up and I put that at the top of a new piece of A4, following the same pattern’. Euan describes a slow and incremental process – one which cannot be rushed and by necessity takes an incredibly long time to complete. He tells me that ‘after a while you’ve reached saturation because there are no new themes coming up’. This image of being utterly filled to capacity by information neatly indicates Euan’s impetus: he wants certainty – to be completely sure about what the literature says, and where gaps in his knowledge and understanding might exist.

He takes this further – sifting each page of paper, filtering which information is particularly important and marking it with an asterisk, indicating too if he wants to take a quotation from it. If he is especially lacking confidence in a certain topic – something he says happens ‘90% of the time’, he will go through the sheaf of A4, looking at all the different themes, and write a précis of each different text he has noted down under that theme. ‘So,’ he says, with a definitive slap of the paper pile, ‘by the time that I sit down at the computer, I’ve got a piece of A4 where I’ve worked out my structure’. This is belt and braces planning – little is left to chance, and Euan is determined to work out, before he sits at his computer, exactly which arguments are in play and how. He frames this as a necessity to be precise when making sociological claims – that the rigour of the discipline demands this of its writers. I ask him why he lacks confidence and we talk about ‘imposter syndrome’ – the idea that somewhere, some time, you will be found out as not as capable, interesting, creative, or clever as your external appearance asserts. ‘Most intellectual producers,’ Euan tells me, ‘must think that they’re a fake – in some sense. Because it always looks like the other people – the other authors – well, their self-doubts aren’t on display. You think you’re the only one with self-doubts. You think you’re the only one that’s faking it’. Euan is smiling as he says this but it’s clear that it cuts deep: ‘You just think, “what am I doing, trying to get away with this?”. You know, I’m not really in charge of it – I’m just pretending. Though actually, if you don’t have feelings like that to some degree, then you’re probably dealing with a megalomaniac’.

### ***Philip***

Philip has completely changed his writing practice and process since having children. He described to me his pre-children situation in which he’d work ‘all the evenings and weekends’ – writing begun in his office at university would be taken home and carried on. This practice sounded obsessive,

even manic – writing painstakingly crafted and endless hours spent at work. But it’s all different now. ‘Children’, Philip says, ‘produce a particular set of anxieties’. His children are very young – both under ten – and still need close support and attention. ‘You worry for them instead of your career’, Philip tells me, ‘And your writing just becomes far less important’. This growing emotional distance between himself and his writing and career has had a distinct affect on Philip’s attitude to writing and the way he goes about it. His practice is now far more bounded – by time and space, and takes place with far fewer doubts and questions of confidence. Philip’s stance now is ‘smash it out’.

When Philip isn’t commuting to university (which he does during term time, and stays over a couple of nights because it’s some distance from home), he works at his local library. He is lucky to live near a substantially-stocked and intellectually-oriented library, which he gleefully told me has been recently refurbished and is a light and bright space to work. He uses the library both for its archive and as a space to ‘smash out’ his texts. Philip enjoys ‘the transience of the library’ – he talks like he thrives on it, telling me how the ‘peer pressure of others focuses my working’. Usually he would find writing ‘a lonely business’ but he gets ‘a sense of drive working next to others’. He enjoys the routine of the library – driving there for 9am and working until 4.30pm. Philip is back home by 5pm and all his time in the evening is focused on his family. The library rules force him to plan his work because he has to request any books he needs ahead of time; he talks about this with a great sense of relaxation. The planning seems to give him a real sense of security and purpose in his daily practice – he explains that he knows that each piece of work will be done, in a slow but sure manner. Philip explained how he thinks and plans by writing in all of his relevant books – or rather, in Philip’s words: ‘I destroy the book with notes’. He riffles in his bag and hands me a book he’s using for his current article. It’s covered in pencil scrawl – certainly to the extent that the book is unlikely to prove much use to anyone but him. Philip approaches writing by taking big tasks and splitting them into ‘small but achievable’ goals. He aims to write 500 words a day – building up work in an incremental but steady way. This is, Philip said, about having ‘clear limits for expectations of achievement. I’d rather achieve my goal of writing 500 good words than miss a target of 2000 words’. Philip talks about writing in a very settled way – specifically saying that he is ‘less anxious about writing as I get older. I just smash it out’. Writing is a positive thing for Philip – ‘part of my academic vocation, it’s what I should be doing’. He even spoke of writing as ‘a catharsis’, recalling the past few years as extremely difficult, with three major deaths in his family. Writing allows Philip to expel the nervous force of grief and unsettlement – it is, ‘a release of energy’. This positivity doesn’t mean that Philip is immune from worrying about his writing. He

tells me how he finds writing ‘hard and tiring’ and ‘feels anxious about tiny things’. Telling me about his current project – on a particularly dense and difficult theorist – Philip confided that he has found engaging with the primary texts ‘so hard – I’m only just getting it’.

### ***Kate***

I was late getting to Kate’s office, and when I arrived she was focused on finishing an email. She waved me in and I sat down, noticing that she was looking particularly chic – new haircut and elegant outfit. As she turned away from her computer and towards me I smiled and asked her how everything was. Her face in reply – I genuinely thought she might be about to collapse into crying. There was a bit of a pause – a gathering of herself, I think – and she replied, straight off, no lead in, ‘I’m really struggling with managing an academic career with parenting. There’s so little time, especially with starting a new research project. And it’s just the constant upheaval of having a small child’. Last time I was there, Kate had told me that she was aiming to write in the university library every day, in order to bring some routine to her work. So how was that going, I asked? ‘Well,’ Kate hesitated, ‘my schedule is always more an ideal than a reality. There are just always unexpected things – conferences, ethnography – things that need to be dealt with, and they send everything out of whack, so I’m constantly on the back-foot with work, which means I’m stressing about the time I spend at home’. Kate has an agreement with her partner that she’ll be home by 5pm every evening, and that this time should be family time with their very young daughter. But this in itself is anxiety-inducing: the baby cries, they spend interminable hours trying to get her into bed, and then there’s no time for either relaxation or work. Kate clearly judged herself harshly for not being able to swiftly and easily manage this situation: ‘Before Anna (the baby) I was a very organised person – revisions in on time, emails under control. But I’m just doing what I can now, and everything is last minute. I’m just clawing my way back, but there are huge problems of time’.

These time problems had had a very real affect on Kate’s writing. She had recently – and accidentally – agreed to write an article for a journal. Tiredly flicking through her emails, Kate had clicked a link marked ‘agree’: she thought she was agreeing to review an article, turns out she had just agreed to write it. She related this to her writing group who immediately advised her to check if this email had come from a predatory journal; Kate checked, it had. She told me this, sighing. Her tiredness and determination to get all her tasks done had led her not only to agree to write an article she didn’t really want to do, but even worse, it was now clear that she would have to pay a fee for the privilege. This error was something Kate fixed upon as evidence of her current inability

to do academia right: 'I probably would have caught this in the past. I just would have read things more carefully'. The writing group advised her to send the piece as it is because the journal isn't worth doing more revisions for, but that a better piece lies within the article, and she should bring this out and submit it to a higher quality journal. Kate told me that she can see this would be a positive way to deal with the situation, but she's so tired and fed up with the whole thing that she's not sure she can be bothered. Kate described the article 'sitting in a languished state... I don't know if I'm going to go back to it'. More pertinently, she carried on, 'I felt so stupid. It really brought home...', and she trailed off, looking upset and pained. Then she seemed to shake it off and concluded, 'I have to find a better way'.

### **The 'Competent Academic' and Writing Practice: Developing a Sense of Legitimacy in Sociology**

The portraits above show Euan, Philip, and Kate developing a sense of self in relation to writing sociology. Their narratives subtly show the moments where the ideal other 'competent academic' and institutional practices of neoliberalism creep into their personal relationship with writing and affective response to being a writer. Their accounts, particularly the qualities they privilege and strive to attain, demonstrate how they interpret the disciplinary aspects of sociology and what they think the spaces they inhabit in sociology want from them. Euan, Philip, and Kate show themselves as concerned to fit within the discipline, but also reveal the places where they perceive themselves – or have chosen – to deviate. Further to this, Euan, Philip, and Kate use their writing practice as a way of defining themselves as sociologists and academics, but also as a method of agentively negotiating the complex disciplinary terrain. Within these narratives ideas of the 'competent academic' emerge in the standards to which participants hold themselves. In this final section, I closely examine the portraits above in order to pick out the moments in which writing practice is used in these ways highlighted, and how 'ideal other' academic figures are pointed to within participants' stories – and, pertinently, how this demonstrates different types of negotiation with hegemonic power.

Turning first to Euan, his complex and laborious writing process demonstrates overtures to both the neoliberal academic and the intellectual. Having been described as both creative and critical, the figure of the intellectual would seem to promote quirky and logical practice simultaneously – and this is certainly what Euan's narrative shows. His need to rise early and write before the rest of the world wakes up – so that he is putting his brushstrokes on a blank canvas, to use his words

– indicates a particular set of conditions for writing. This is not writing seen as a job or a mundane task; there are elements of ritual present in Euan’s narration and it is clear that his whole process is one which entirely shapes not only the eventual work written but also his sense of self. The fact of Euan’s lack of confidence in being able to fully know and understand the field to which he is speaking is indicated through the existence of such a convoluted process and in his inability to successfully deviate from it. This is a process which Euan sees as utterly idiosyncratic – unique to him and not connected with any external forces. And yet, the repetition of steps and stages intimates the precision and criticality of the intellectual – everything must be in its correct place in order to shape the most specific and accurate rendering of the topic. That Euan’s practice is dependent on mood further draws in ideas of the politically and emotionally engaged intellectual. The way Euan narrates his writing practice also shows awareness of the strain of competitiveness in neoliberal academia; he notes of imposter syndrome that it comes about because you can never really access someone else’s internal sense of self and their own doubts – these are hidden and obscured in the neoliberal academy. Thus, Euan’s determination to hide or erase his lack of confidence in his ability through this time-consuming process of planning simultaneously shows him bending to, and engaging agentively with, this system. He perpetuates it by using his planning system in order to strengthen his external position and present a façade of competence and ease, but the reason he does this is because he does not want to be professionally or intellectually embarrassed through his writing. The notion that there is someone out there who is better than you and might see and highlight your flaws pushes sociologists to engage with writing and the discipline more broadly in ways which work to perpetuate this system. Owing to this, the value paradigm of the neoliberal academic/academy is insistently reinscribed through sociologists’ fear of it, and the means by which they attempt to quell this fear.

Philip’s account of his writing – though distinctly different to Euan and Kate’s open statements of doubt and difficulty – nevertheless continues to demonstrate him placing himself within particular value paradigms of sociology. When Philip says ‘smash it out’ he means to write without constant self-reflexive questions and hesitancy, rather than to any neoliberal call to be constantly producing new material. This shows a kick against the anxiety of the neoliberal academic as well as the abstract and emotional elements of the intellectual. Philip talks about how he used to feel the need to work every hour possible and used to get very stressed and anxious about his writing, worrying about each new word put on the page. His previous relationship with writing would seem to indicate particular elements of the culture of audits and competition. His current job and family commitments mean that his writing practice is now time and space bounded – writing is

approached as a task rather than as a space for sorting through emotional needs or pinning himself within the discipline. He has ‘stopped worrying’ about writing. Indeed, his current perspective shares ground with Hoskins’ (2010) findings regarding working-class women academics, and the way they legitimate themselves using value paradigms beyond that of academia or their disciplines.

Of course, Philip’s situation is not so simple as his statement that he no longer worries about his writing would seem to imply. He still experiences writing as an emotional activity – seen particularly in his recognition that it has been a helpful mode of catharsis. This recognition shows an element of Philip’s positioning within the discipline – that sociology is not ‘just’ his job, it is also a way of being for him. His practice as a sociologist is part of what structures his sense of self. Despite approaching writing at a 9am-5pm work-hours-only task, it is still a personal and creative endeavour which both feeds off and fuels his emotional life. Philip’s attitude to writing also recalls particular elements of the figure of the intellectual. Describing writing as ‘part of my academic vocation’ and noting that ‘it’s what I should be doing’, Philip’s statements invoke the politically active critical public intellectual, claimed by Hammersley. Philip also told me that he feels writing is centrally important to his work as a teacher of sociology – he cited writing as ‘a way of teaching’, particularly writing for online blogs or easily accessible critically-engaged newspapers and magazines, because ‘you reach greater publics’. This further taps into the intellectual as a figure which speaks to the public, laying out and critiquing the terms of debate.

Kate’s narration shows her trying to engage with the neoliberal academy and feeling like she falls short of the parameters for success. Throughout our conversation, Kate was very clear that this was a short-term problem – one specifically related to the age of her daughter, and which would in time dissipate. Nevertheless, her anxiety regarding her ability to balance parenting and academia shows both awareness of the idea of an ‘ideal other’ and a recognition of disciplinary power in sociology as gendered. Kate’s distinction between her levels of organisation before and after having had a baby demonstrate that she privileges this aspect of her abilities. Aspects of her sociological habitus are created through her time spent in institutions which make such demands on the academic. This is not to say that Kate has no option but to feel and act this way, but her account indicated that her familiarity with the field strategically pushed her to assess her ‘failures’ in this way. Organisation underpins a sense of competency, of being able to deal with multiple aspects of academia at once and to do so in such a way that foregrounds dexterity and sophistication. To not be organised is to lack competence and to be unsuccessful in the role of the productive neoliberal ideal. It equally goes against the erudite and capable intellectual, able to make

sharp and incisive contributions to public debate. Kate's account of her mistaken agreement to write a journal article draws attention to how she feels that writing is a space through which she shows her competence in sociology. Kate berated herself for this – her current lack of ability to organise her inner life and her external time pressures had converged in this mistake. It is significant that Kate blames herself even whilst recognising the particularity of her situation; it demonstrates an internalised aspect to the 'competent academic' – that this is not only a value paradigm inscribed in the discipline or institution but undertaken as a yardstick by which sociologists value themselves. Not being aware of the predatory nature of the journal, falling foul of the 'trick', and needing this pointed out by others, solidified Kate's perception of herself as not demonstrating the correct levels of sophisticated reading and interpretation of the field. Her identification that the mistake made her feel 'stupid' is indicative both of this, and further, a notion that her perceived disorganisation and subsequent lack of suave positioned her as an academic neophyte – still learning the ropes and the rules. However, Kate subsequently spoke to me about how she completed this article as well as taking the bones of it to write a far better piece which would become part of her REF submission. Certainly, Kate feels the dominant power of the neoliberal university and a compulsion to excel in order to survive. But she does also show evidence of being able to take control, to act decisively, and to make a detrimental situation work positively for her. Emphasising this, is how Kate later narrated the same events as minor problems rather than significant failures, and (whilst still slightly berating herself) was pleased to have started several publications because of it.

Examining how sociologists see themselves as writers shows the influence of multiple value paradigms on their judgements. Euan, Philip, and Kate explicitly discuss awareness of how disciplinary power works in sociology, and the way in which this interpolated with institutional and policy-driven expectations. But looking at their writing practice gives a new kind of access – it is possible, through this, to see how deeply this disciplinary power works its way into sociologists, so that acting according to it often appears agentic rather than hegemonically guided. Equally, the portraits and analysis reveal participants approaching the discipline from multiple positions – political, creative, intuitive, critical, scientific, professional, and personal. These different positions indicate a sociology which is amenable to more than one form of practice. That participants consistently judge and evaluate themselves suggests that they are also doing this to other people – that there exist multiple value systems across spaces of sociology, and by which sociologists are continuously compared and contrasted with, as the numerous and various inhabitants and practitioners of the discipline seek to negotiate the changing and transient terrain.

Furthermore, seeing these accounts in light of the framework of the ‘competent academic’ emphasises the extent to which the neoliberal academy is not sympathetic to issues of care-giving – in our capacity as parents, partners, friends, or family (Hile Bassett 2005; Hunter and Leahy 2010). Kate, and to a certain degree Philip’s, experiences of care-giving evidence the idea that the field of sociology largely reflects and enacts broader problems of higher education. Sociology favours the unencumbered individual – mobile, focused, and devoted to the discipline. The way sociologists relate their writing practices show that they call on value systems across disciplinary, institutional, and intellectual spaces by way of legitimating and understanding themselves. Participants’ narratives do not wholly sit within one value paradigm or another, nor do participants ever discuss their writing stories as existing solely within either hegemonic or marginal frameworks. The writing stories and narrations of sense of self in this chapter show the interconnectedness of spaces of sociology, the mutability of hegemonic and unequal positions, and the malleability of the continuum along which sociologists practice the discipline and their writing.

## Chapter Six

### Spaces of Writing: Everyday Environments and Disciplinary Legitimation

This chapter builds on the narratives of writing practice in Chapter Five, with detailed accounts of the environments in which participants write. In this focus, the chapter makes links between the creation of writing spaces and the connection to participants' understanding of sociology as a discipline, and the way on which they practice it. Here, I look particularly at the relationship between the personal, professional, and institutional practices and processes of writing that I stated as important to the thesis in Chapter Two. This chapter works to unpick some of these – to use writing as a site which tells sociologists about the complexity of a relationship with the discipline itself. Through this, I begin to show how disciplinary power reveals itself in the choices sociologists make about writing, how individual relationships with hegemonic positions influence this, but also how sociologists use their writing as a way of navigating the hegemonic elements of the disciplinary landscape. The chapter brings the reader into personal writing spaces (physical and imaginative) rarely viewed by others. In this, the chapter opens up consideration to the roles of contradiction, paradox, and duality in narratives of writing – the ways in which our experiences of writing and disciplinarity are uncanny, uneasy, troubled, and troubling. Here I return to Macfarlane's (2015) scholarship outlined in Chapter 1 regarding the haunting of spaces in order to consider the otherness in the domesticity and familiarity of our own writing practices.

The following three sections track the writing practices and processes of two of the research participants, Johanna and Christian. Johanna is in her forties and recently promoted to Professor. She's always been employed in academia but not always within a sociology department. Johanna's path has been, in some senses, consistently 'non-traditional'. She was – in her own words – a teenage 'wild child' and subsequently achieved 'shit A levels' which severely limited her choices post-18. Having chosen the local polytechnic institute over an apprenticeship with a mechanic, Johanna ended up among a class of largely mature students. Her educational 'epiphany' came when she sold her motorbike and bought a computer. The computer had a spellchecker and could cut, copy, add paste text – which made the spatial aspects of writing much clearer. It was in using this tool that Johanna realised she wasn't a 'poor student' but instead was likely to be dyslexic. This opened up writing to Johanna in a way which hadn't previously been accessible. From this Johanna

completed her undergraduate and Master's study and applied for a Ph.D. She returned to her hometown part way through to take up a permanent academic position involving heavy administration and teaching. She called this a 'Faustian pact': the caveat of the job being that she would not complete her Ph.D. research and would instead attain her Ph.D. by portfolio, through her published work. This is significant to Johanna's approach to writing and her ability to understand herself as legitimate in intellectual sociology spaces which she sees as dominated by conventional forms of research and book-length writing.

Christian is in his thirties and is a lecturer in sociology. He grew up in Denmark and – as detailed later – part of his writing practice stems from the requirement in the Danish education system to study Mathematics to the age of eighteen. Christian's only criteria for university application was 'to be in the U.K....[and] to be at a university that was fairly okay regarded'. His subject choice was made 'without really thinking about it', and he ended up on a Business degree. Christian laughed telling me, 'I remember there was some kind of rationale behind it'. Being flummoxed at his own choice he began looking around for alternatives. His housemate in the halls of residence happened to show him one of her course books - *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* by Anthony Giddens – and tell him that there was room on her sociology course. Christian 'took a punt' and changed programme. This was, he tells me, 'very, very coincidental'. 'I would almost say', Christian relates, 'that if it hadn't been a sociologist, and my friend had been a historian or someone, I might have ended up being a historian'.

### **Where Writing Happens: Physical Spaces of Production and Labour**

Our guided walk of writing practices and processes begins at Johanna's front door. Johanna – like many of the research participants – writes at home. On entering we move straight to the kitchen where, round a sharp corner in the room, is a dining table stacked with books. It is a very ordinary table and barring the presence of books, papers, and a laptop, has not undergone alterations to render it more like a writing desk. The piles of books are high - rising at least ten books tall – and unevenly stacked. They jut at angles, academic diaries and notebooks poke out of the piles, and unopened brown packages containing yet more books balance precariously, propped next to the stacks. Johanna tells me that she 'stockpiles' books - loading her desk with the necessary troves of information and inspiration. This is, for Johanna, 'my transitional phase before I will be able to write'. The books function as a resource – to be rifled and picked through, highlighted and used - but also as prompts, sparking ideas, and the recollection of knowledge tucked away. They are also

very actual accoutrements of cultural capital - Johanna literally appears to be amassing the cultural capital needed to support her writing. We sit at the table and Johanna runs her fingers over the books, occasionally retrieving one and showing me her annotations, or telling me how much she is enjoying re-reading it for her current project. 'This is my imposter syndrome laid bare', she says. Johanna will repeatedly tell me how she doesn't think she fits in academia or sociology and will someday be 'exposed' as stupid or lacking. The accoutrements of her table recall Bourdieu's account of the ways of codifying 'the world of "important academics" and their properties' (Bourdieu 1988: 8). In *Homo Academicus*, Bourdieu discerns various 'institutionalized properties' which construct the identities of academics. These include,

the formal titles used when introducing oneself... or positions of power or authority... and finally to all those indices, often impenetrable for the foreigner, which define what is often called "prestige", that is, one's position in strictly intellectual or scientific hierarchies (Bourdieu 1988: 9).

The books, so numerous, diverse, and ever-multiplying, reach towards these codifications of institutional power and prestige. Johanna demonstrates her place in the intellectual hierarchy through symbols of intellectual work. This is both an implicit and explicit assertion that she 'fits'.

The table, as noted, is in Johanna's kitchen in a small annexe of the L-shaped room. This means that, though Johanna and her writing are now present within the life of the home, the actual space surrounding the table is relatively calm. Beside the table is a dog bed. The dog is Johanna's timer system and was specifically brought into the home in order to provide a tangible reason for her to break from writing. Johanna loves the dog and appreciates the stability she brings to her own mental and physical health, though – as Johanna says to me – 'I wish she wouldn't interrupt me'. We rise and walk up the first flight of stairs and towards the back of the house. This is where the study is – secluded, forgotten, tangential. Johanna's desk is still here and she looks slightly longingly at it. It used to be her normal writing practice to ensconce herself here, away from interruption or invasion, only rising from work when absolutely required. The study was her domain but more pertinently it was also a world apart from her everyday life of family, friends, and the more job-like aspects of an academic role – administration and teaching. Upon entering, the outside world ceases existence. Writing is an intensely emotional and personal practice for Johanna, and expressed in hard physical graft. We stand on the edge of the doorframe, not quite daring to go in, and Johanna tells me that when she writes, she engages fully – 'body and mind oriented

completely to the task'. Johanna identifies that this intensity is born from her perception of being an imposter. She feels that she must work harder than others to compensate for her initial lack of success in early education, especially her identification that she finds spelling and grammar very hard. There is a sense that she feels the painful physical labour of writing must somehow compensate for her perceived 'lack' of linguistic sophistication. We back away from the doorway and Johanna comments, 'so that's why the desk is downstairs now'. Not only Johanna, but her family too, felt that her writing practice, supported by this environment, was potentially destructive. The recreation of the desk on the dining table is meant to guard against this by forcing Johanna into a space of family, life, and activity in which she cannot sink into the single-mindedness of isolation. The interruption provided by the dog's needs – to be fed, walked, petted - is designed to force Johanna away from all-consuming writing.

Christian, like Johanna, usually writes at home, but he is adamant that his relationship to writing is less emotionally-driven. That is not to say that he lacks an affective relationship to his writing environments and practice. This is evident as we walk with him through his writing. We are first in a half-lit university office where I've met Christian to discuss his writing. 'I'll tell you a story' he says to me, 'you'll like this'. Our terrain moves to a hazy evening in August. Christian needs to 'grapple with this really knotty problem to do with the logic underpinning the argument in my current article. I need to think it through properly. That means thinking without a computer'. Christian has to meet his friends in the evening and the train timetable puts him an hour late or an hour early. He plumps for an hour early. As he leaves the office he packs a notebook and a pen. Arriving at the local village he sets straight for the pub; 'I got myself a pint,' Christian says, 'and sat out in the beer garden'. As he sits in the sun, he lights a cigarette and takes a drink. The nib hits the notebook and draft ideas spill forth, as Christian thinks through the problem with the flick of his pen. 'I made a few sketches - see', Christian says to me. Christian tells me that writing with a pen and paper is 'more conducive if you're very clear about your question'. In this instance, Christian had a 'very concrete problem' and in his hour's wait he sat in the warmth and 'made a bit more sense out of it'. Though ostensibly less oriented to attaching emotional states to his writing practices, Christian isn't closed to affective engagement with these practices; his ability to think through an issue of logic is increased by changing his place and mode of working. He specifically emphasized to me the sensuousness of the environment – the late evening sun, the joys of smoking and writing. It is not only a matter of practicality – paper over laptop – but the more intimate tie between idea, self, and problem. The necessity of pen and paper to work out the answer to his concrete question hints at needing to pull closer to the tools of work – to express an

idea swiftly through the scratch of pen on paper, to sketch the links through pictures and diagrams, and be able to scribble out, amend and annotate.

Back in his office, Christian described the suitability of writing spaces once again in affective terms, noting how difficult he found it to procure a space to write whilst he was a Ph.D. student in London. He tells me that he regrets not making 'fuller use of some of the more quiet libraries in the city' during his thesis. I pushed him on this and he elaborated that a better use of these libraries would have made the thesis "less noisy" – by which he didn't mean sound/noise, but rather the chaotic pace and movement of not quite ever finding a place to be. The connotations of loud sound, claustrophobia, and pain held in this description intimate that despite his matter-of-fact outlook the material conditions of writing matter to his well-being and emotional capacity to work. His intense dislike of his former institution's busy, open-plan library - describing it as 'like a fucking media centre for future CEOs' - points to a need to work in a space fitting of his own temperament. Both of Christian's reflections – his tranquil image of writing in the summer sun and the invocation of his institutional library as oppressively busy – point to the importance of sound as impinging on writing. This is not simply sound as auditory experience, but sound as physical sensation affecting the whole body. Moreover, it is sound used as veiled analogy for the pressure of intellectual problem-solving and the gravity of the scholarship engaged with. Significantly, when Christian wants to think through a specific problem, he chooses a writing environment distinct from a 'scholarly' atmosphere. He moves away from accoutrements of intellectual endeavour and legitimacy – books, university buildings - and closer to more immediate tangible experiences – nature, outdoors, the sensual rituals of smoking and beer. This semi-conscious recognition of the stultifying quality of the library and other apparatus of the intellectual parallels with Back's identification of bibliophilia as capable of resulting in 'inertia' (Back 2007: 175). Advising against becoming 'addicted' to the library, Back notes that it is important to break with the lure of the library because 'you won't find the answers to the questions you want to pose there' (2007: 175). Christian seems to have understood this and consistently moves away from institutional buildings or other written texts when he wants to work out what he has to say.

The narrative of sound cements Christian's writing ritual firmly in the everyday. His move from laptop to notebook, from office to the outdoors – apparently mundane or circumstantial, demonstrates as Back says 'what is at stake'. Demonstrated here is the weight of the symbolic power of the intellectual environment and the symbolic violence it can enact on inhabitants. Arguably, Christian thinks more clearly about his problem when he moves away from this 'noise'

because he separates himself from the emblems of the dominant symbolic and legitimate knowledge. Through its function to sanction and authorize, the dominant symbolic constrains intellectual activity and its expression through writing. Christian doesn't see it this way – he frames this as purely a material shift, that for some types of problem he works better with pen and paper than with his laptop, and there's nothing much more to it. Bourdieu, though, notes that 'symbolic violence can only be exercised by the person who exercises it, and endured by the person who endures it, in a form which results in its misrecognition as such, in other words, which results in its recognition as legitimate' (1991: 139-140). Christian is happy to recognise the dominance of logic, rationality, and objectivity as legitimate. The way he talks to me emphasizes that he thinks this is just how sociology should be done and written because it's a scientific activity. He doesn't perceive himself as the subject of symbolic violence, but his acknowledgement of the noise and stress of academic environments and the subsequent affective experience of this in his own writing strikes a more ambiguous note. The unremarkable nature of the everyday is important here – legitimacy presents itself as a given, as doxic. Bourdieu notes how the 'subjective necessity and self-evidence of the commonsense world are validated by the objective consensus of the world' (1977: 167) through recourse to the – literally - unremarkable legitimacy of the dominant symbolic. The result of this is that 'what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*: the tradition is silent not least about itself as a tradition' (1977: 167; italics in original). The small, commonplace details of writing accounts are often narrated as deeply specific and personal, but attentiveness to these everyday activities reveal the imbrication of dominant power structures in the formation and production of sociology writing.

### **Where Writing Happens: Imaginative Spaces and Affect**

Spaces of writing are not limited to desks, chairs, studies, or – indeed – the pub. Where writing happens can also be an imaginative space – one created from the writer in order to facilitate their writing practice. In this section we follow a visual method – from Christian, and an invocation of place – from Johanna. With Christian we see how the imaginative conditions necessary for writing and thinking can be born through paper and pencil. With Johanna we are present in the very space of her imaginative conditions, as she constructs her thinking space in the domestic area of her home. The previous section outlined how these two participants engage with their physical space – changing, moving, and moulding it to suit their writing needs. This section demonstrates them *producing* the psychic space they require for writing in a physical form. These are two distinct

functions: the former is an agentive engagement with external forms and places; the latter is an act of making and shaping on the part of the writer.

Christian's space begins with a sheaf of paper. On each leaf are lines, intersecting and leading different directions. The lines begin with groups of letters, which form a symbol - sometimes with a square bracket alongside, within which is a further set of letters or word. Each set of letters is a concept, an argument, or an idea. There is a key which details what each symbol means. Essentially, this is a process of drawing ideas; each concept can be symbolized by a set of letters, and then replicated when the idea next comes up. If we follow the lines drawn from and between each of these symbols, we find ourselves at yet further complexes of letters. These are equations of sociological problems and concepts. The lines of equations filter downwards, or across and form a complex flow diagram. Occasionally, when a concept or problem requires more lengthy consideration, there is a ruled section - rectangle or parallelogram - filled with similar equations which merge back into the larger diagram. The lines and equations represent a thought process and are intimately connected to Christian's concern with the logic and tenability of any argument. They bring a mass of material to a single, coherent argument. This is how Christian writes. He refers to them as sketches or drawings, and they are part of helping him think through the substance of his work before he turns to laying it down in prose.

Sitting in Christian's basement office, he brings out a set of these sketches for his current writing project. It is specifically 'a set' that we see, because Christian has several 'rounds' of sketches for each piece of writing. They are, Christian tells me, 'a process of clarification'. The eventual aim is for all the equations, lines, and symbols to sit comfortably on one sheet of A4 paper. Christian's relationship with these drawings is acutely ambivalent: he is tied to them, feels them as potentially inhibiting, but also readily defends these sketches against any accusations that they are reductive. Once Christian has completed a sketch and worked out the problem of logic they pertain to, he throws it away - to prevent himself from returning to it whilst writing. The sketches are 'aids, heuristics, not standards for the paper to be written in'. They support Christian in his 'selection of emphases - "why this and not that?", "why the paper? The topic?". They help give reasons for the focus'. Drawing his argument is not confined to the initial planning stages of the writing. There are two phases of sketching - one for reading and one for writing. Christian clarifies his reading by putting it into equation form but he also turns each written paper draft into a sketch in order to check the tenability of his argument. The drawings are a way of understanding, refining, and processing the act of writing.

Despite the transitory quality of these drawings, Christian told me that he worries sometimes that his ‘sketches are walls’, and that there is a possibility this level of accuracy ‘holds you back from thinking’. Christian feels concomitantly that the sketches are indispensable and also potentially hold him back. He confided that ‘I fear it might keep me from saying interesting things because they can’t be drawn’. Nevertheless, when I asked what his writing would be like if he didn’t use the drawing method he looked perplexed and amused. Christian paused momentarily, smirked and said that ‘if I didn’t [use them] it would be a stream of consciousness. I would start writing like fucking...ha! I nearly said [names prominent sociologist]!’. Considering Christian’s fear of ‘what cannot be drawn’ brought us to a critical question of what happens off the page. This felt particularly pertinent given that one of Christian’s sketches was drawn on two sets of squared graph paper, meticulously sellotaped together. Christian had quite literally gone off the page and had to source himself more page. Christian’s equations seem only to work with concepts of logic that can be neatly symbolized and entered into a mathematical process. The notion of what cannot be drawn, and the exclusion of non-logical or creative elements from his writing based on this, returns us to Bourdieu’s warning that the things which have no place in the appropriate discourse...are not said’ (1991: 152). Christian proffered a counterpoint, asserting that ‘a sketch is not always doing violence to the text. Yes, the sketches are a reduction, but the text is not reduced as a result. The text stands’. Though the drawings are focused on the clarification of a logical argument, and as such potentially exclude that which exists in the field of the imagination (as Christian himself expressed), they also stand as spaces *of* the imagination. This is arguably Christian’s creative practice: he has devised this process himself, invented symbols and created a process of working with the drawings throughout his writing. The drawing method is responsive and mobile. Christian did not always write this way – it only began in earnest during his Ph.D. How he draws and why he draws has developed over time and in response to his needs as a writer and thinker; indeed, Christian tells me that the drawings have, over the course of years, become ‘more and more precise, detailed, pedantic’. The fact of something being precise and exacting does not exclude it as being imaginative. These sheaves of paper are where Christian thinks – where he creates. There is a contradiction present here. When I initially asked Christian what happens ‘off the page’ – whether there was something more ambiguous and imaginative happening, he half scoffed at me and said, ‘Oh you people at Goldsmiths, you want everything to be arty and quirky and weird’. And yet, Christian’s drawings are just that. They are not value-free or neutral representations of logic because they are filtered through Christian – his experiences, his knowledge, his pedagogical practices and inculcations. The drawings are idiosyncrasies –

profoundly personal to Christian and impossible for anyone but him to understand. Christian's writing practice draws both on exercises of logic and rationality as well as deeply creative quirks of the individual. This contradiction is not one to be worked out or clarified: the 'answer' to how Christian works is not an either/or. Rather, this co-presence of inventiveness, imagination, reason, and prudence subtly demonstrates the ambiguity of separate spaces of sociology. It shows apparently distinct elements of sociological thought occupying the same space, simultaneously cooperating and diverging. This is not a case of two strains of epistemological bases working in tandem or in parallel; it is more liminal and ambivalent than that. What Christian's writing practice and the particular invocation of psychic space suggests is concomitant fitting and unfitting of ostensibly separate modes of thought.

Like Christian, Johanna creates a secret space for writing – a protected, secluded environment which supports her thought process and enables precision of writing and theoretical claims. Johanna's space is delineated by 'a wall of books'. This – Johanna says – is something she 'builds'. Johanna's word choice is relevant; she sees the 'wall' as 'both a security blanket and an inspiration for writing', prompting a reading of the wall as a comfort or protection. It is also agentic: Johanna is the builder, rather than the piles of books themselves forming a wall through the cultural and intellectual significance they imply. But walls are also demarcation – indeed, Johanna notes that 'it is literally a kind of field formation'. Johanna's wall of books shows her building and outlining her field – 'the books which my book will speak to, extend and add to' – physically bringing into being a conceptual field. But this wall also acts as a break or barrier. It stops the research from becoming unwieldy but also functions to bar other books or voices from encroaching. Johanna acknowledges that 'interdisciplinary work is actually quite frightening as it doesn't have borders, so the wall of books is some way to establish a field, some markers, in the wandering'. By building the wall of books and creating her particular field, Johanna summons a psychic or imaginative space within the physical space of the table. This is a manufactured space – transient and task-specific. For each piece of writing the books will be different, the walls piled otherwise, and the environment of the imagination replete with different terrain and markers. It is also a space which supports Johanna's planning, reading, and thinking. It enables her to jump from thought to thought, but connects those via the wall of books. It is a space accessible only by Johanna; only she knows what fields the books symbolise or represent, and only she knows how they intersect for her.

Part of Johanna's practice is clearly about creating some sense of order out of the potential chaos and confusion of interdisciplinary research. In this way, Johanna touches on the logical practice

demonstrated by Christian – she wants ‘to draw together the threads, the materials for my writing in some symbolic way - to delineate something’. For Johanna, though, this methodical approach does not continue into the writing process. She tells me that she reads ‘in an unsystematic way’, covering ‘at least 3-4 books at a time, and collecting more, buying more, as I go, following references’. Johanna’s affective process resembles a figurative ramble or wandering – movement without any real sense of a specific objective. Of course, there remains an over-arching purpose, given that each wall of books is created for a specific project or book. Similar to Christian, there are contradictions in the imaginative space created by Johanna. It suggests both the unfocused roaming of the itinerant wayfarer and the restricted movement of one regulated by a set of clear limits. It is arguably a kind of bounded exploration. Like Christian this is not a case of Johanna’s writing practice being explained as one or the other. She is both free and prescribed, simultaneously. She traverses the precision of science and logic and the intuitiveness of the literary, both and neither at the same time. Johanna uses language connected to togetherness, cooperation, and intimacy when discussing her writing process. Her wall is a ‘security blanket’, she describes the books as being ‘they are whom I am dialoguing with’, and that her writing is ‘a kind of knitting across fields’. There is a warmth to these images – the invocation of domesticity and homeliness in the ideas of blankets and knitting, and the notion of Johanna’s writing as an intensely personal conversation with these books, protected and bounded by the wall. Her narrative recalls Back’s assertion that, ‘writing is a profoundly social activity, it connects my thoughts to yours – in short, it lets them travel’ (Back 2014: 767). This helps to understand the ambiguity of Johanna’s imaginative space a little more keenly. The wall of books is also a track of books. It is as possible to see Johanna’s building of books as coherent boundaries as it is the haphazard wandering she describes. The imaginative space Johanna makes is a line of conversation as well as a mutable space of exploration.

### **Where Writing Happens: The Everyday and the Habitus**

Johanna and Christian both draw attention to the space of their body as a central environment of writing. Foregrounding the space of the body as an environment in which writing happens, and as influential on the writing which happens, focuses attention on how disciplinary power becomes situated within the habitus, as well as being felt ‘out there’. In this section I explore and analyse how Johanna and Christian talk about their body in relation to their writing, making links between the role of everyday practices and processes of writing and the production of legitimacy in

knowledge and self. We find Johanna writing. She is utterly focused on the task, not only ‘deeply concentrating’ but also ‘meditative’. This is a ‘whole body experience’ for Johanna. As she writes she becomes further subsumed into the act, and the external world drops entirely away. Johanna exists within her writing. For her this is ‘exhilarating. It’s like I’m walking along a precipice’. This exhilaration ‘bubbles from within’ and charges through her, culminating in the words written. Johanna ‘paints’ with words; her imagination transposes the laptop screen to a canvas, while the words are ‘marks on a page, like painting’. This is very different to what has gone before. Johanna makes a distinction between the ‘period of writing’ and ‘transitioning into writing’. The transition is ‘very different in temperament to writing’ and can be difficult, dissonant, even unsatisfying. In this period, Johanna is in the process of connecting with the work and not yet pulled into the bodily and psychic space of concentration. She can be ‘bored, anxious, distracted’. But once inside the writing she remains there. This is a ‘laborious’ process – Johanna will not stop until the piece is perfect, no matter how long – ‘it might take one hour, it might take ten’. She rewrites her introductions hundreds of times, scribbling out and restructuring – which also means rewriting her plans or sketches for the piece. ‘I exhaust myself’, she says, ‘but it’s a habit. I’m addicted to the binge’. Her experience of writing is not the intellectual at the desk, transposing thought to paper. It is the adrenaline-fuelled, thrill-seeking daredevil, on the watch for opportunity to ‘binge’ on writing. As Johanna reflects, ‘God, that sounds awful! Walking along a precipice doesn’t sound good at all, it sounds dangerous!’. Johanna’s bodily practice is not narrated as a conscious choice – she refers to it as ‘habit’, calls herself ‘compulsive’, and tells me that she is ‘across the board immoderate’ with ‘a deeply addictive personality’.

This habituated writing practice reveals more about Johanna’s relationship with ideas of legitimacy of knowledge. Loïc Wacquant discusses habitus as ‘mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action’ (Wacquant 1992: 16), and further notes that Pierre Bourdieu conceived of habitus as a way to ‘restore the body as the source of practical intentionality, as the fount of intersubjective meaning grounded in the preobjective level of experience’ (Wacquant 1992: 20). This definition of habitus is useful in considering both Johanna and Christian’s relationship to their bodies in writing. As Wacquant notes, ‘by treating the socialized body, not as an object, but as the repository of a generative capacity to understand... [it is] endowed with a structuring potency’ (Wacquant 1992: 20). Reflecting on accounts of the body and the way the body is used in writing enables embodied understandings of writing, legitimacy, and sociology to emerge in participants’ narratives. Johanna is arguably in a transitional phase of her career and writing life. She carries with her an inculcated sense of her own inability and unworthiness – originating in her

early education and sense of herself as a 'poor student'. She especially feels that having not completed a Ph.D. by research and submission of a thesis, that she is somehow not a 'proper' academic. This perception returns to the idea of consecrated spaces and academic rites of passage into them, outlined in Chapter Three. Johanna's lack of a Ph.D. thesis is tacitly equated to not having undergone the correct rite; her admittance to the space of the university and the position of lecturer or sociologist is therefore uneasy.

At the same time, Johanna narrates herself with certainty and sureness. As much as she feels she doesn't belong, she also strongly claims her space in the discipline as legitimate. Reiterating often, 'I've been doing this for twenty years', Johanna was clear that her work is meaningful and that she is authoritative when it comes to writing. She asserts herself: 'I've done the work; I've earned my stripes'. In addition to this, Johanna has also recently been promoted to Professor; upon doing so, she chose her Chair title as 'Professor of Sociology'. Johanna relates to me how she had thought to create a title in relation to gender or class work but chose instead to mark herself as 'Sociology' in order to claim space in the discipline. For Johanna, it is, 'a "fuck you"' to disciplinary power. The duality of Johanna's actions and reflexive narrations reveal the complexity of hegemony and marginalisation in relation to disciplinary power. Johanna is increasingly not peripheral; she has taken ground in the 'mainstream' through her promotion and arguably undergone Bourdieu's 'rite of institution', crossing the line and becoming consecrated. Equally, Johanna increasingly recognises her ability as a sociologist and that she has done the work necessary to claim the disciplinary title and space. But still, she stresses that 'disciplines are disciplining', and her account of her writing process given earlier shows how she feels the weight of disciplinary power and expectations.

Johanna's writing practice – and her telling of it – show her negotiating this new consecration in the mainstream, her struggles with stigma and disciplinary power, and her internal conflict regarding her own power and elite status. She recognizes her privilege and yet the feelings of shame surrounding her educational trajectory remain. Johanna repeatedly separates herself from the world, both in writing practice and bodily process. This separation is indicative both of the disjunction she feels between herself as a sociologist and the 'normal' route to becoming an academic sociologist, but also between herself and the space of traditional intellectual legitimacy represented by formal schooling. Moreover, Johanna openly asserts that she is 'a writer first, not an academic'. Her meditative pulling away – achieved through sensual writing processes – and inhabiting another non-worldly space parallels with the gap she sees between herself as 'a writer

who cares about social justice issues' and the plodding bureaucracy of the professional sociologist (Burawoy 2005). Part of the physicality of Johanna's writing practice exists to demonstrate – to others, but mostly, I think, to herself – that she is not the same as other sociologists. Her concerns are different, and the system of value against which she judges herself is different.

Like Johanna, the physicality of Christian's writing process indicates the embodied quality of his early education. Christian asserts that the way he works – the precision, the logic, the meticulousness – is a 'bodily practice' rather than something which stems from 'inner life'. A whistle-stop tour of his early education reveals more. Christian is Danish and his schooling – in a system similar to the old grammar school system in the U.K. – foregrounded intellectualism across multiple fields. For this reason, Christian – though he would rather not have – undertook compulsory education in Mathematics until he left school. Unfortunately for Christian, he wasn't especially adept at Mathematics. Where 'everything else was a fly-away "A" grade', he 'really had to work hard to do well in maths'. Christian recounted to me how every evening he would sit for hours with his Mathematics homework, going over again and again the equations, drawing them out until they were perfect. Christian was set upon understanding how the equations worked – the inner logic of the numbers and letters. This nightly activity, repeated over the course of several years, gained Christian his A grade – but it also instilled in him a certain bodily practice and an emergent orientation to logic and rationality. Moreover, it instilled a notion that drawing, equations, and repetition is how to achieve logic of thought. This practice has not always been one Christian has been conscious of – he only began doing the equation-style sketches for his work in his late twenties, towards the end of his Ph.D. Before then, it had not been part of his writing. Christian, though, is emphatic that it is the intensity of his Mathematical work in his late teens which prompts his material practice now. He very clearly makes the link between that work as inculcated into his habitus, and its drive in his current practice. On the one hand, the time taken for this practice to filter through – to become embodied – stands as a demonstration of how habitus functions as the slow, silent socialization of the body over time, and is something generative and interactive. It is also an indication of how Christian wants to portray himself and his writing practice. This is Christian looking back and narrating his own history, making it fit with himself now and drawing convergences between his formative self and his current realisation of himself. Partly, this is Christian using his own experiences in order to narrate a fitting between himself and the spaces of sociology in which he finds himself.

Christian's focus on logic and tenability buys into the invocation of science in the dominant symbolic, identified by Bauman (2011). The complexity of his drawings and diagrams resonate with the authority and legitimacy Beer notes as gained through showing yourself as being able to master incredibly difficult skills. The sketches – and the way Christian talks about their necessity to logic – also demonstrate both a psychic and physical internalisation of the notion that something needs to be hard in order for it to be intellectually legitimate. The arduousness of the labour plays into both the privileging of difficulty by elites, identified by Mills but also the concomitant demonstration of virtuosity noted by Beer (2014: 44). This is analogous to Becker's comment that 'Sociologists... [use "classy" writing] ...because they think (or hope) that being the right kind of person will persuade others to accept what they say as a persuasive social science argument' ([1986] 2007: 31). Tapping into these sorts of authoritative behaviours and associated assumptions of validity affects the reception of the written work and the reception of the writer/sociologist. It builds a performance as someone who is legitimate within the field and functions to shape you as an elite – to yourself as much as anyone else. Slowly these factors become self-propagating – a perpetual motion machine of legitimation: our knowledge claims are legitimate or authoritative because we are legitimate scholars, and we stand as legitimate scholars because our knowledge claims are authoritative. Our ability to make knowledge claims which are widely regarded as legitimate, or even credible, becomes trapped in our own ability to align with the dominant symbolic of intellectual knowledge.

### **Fitting and Unfitting in/with Spaces of Sociology**

The accounts above show Christian and Johanna's relationship with spaces of sociology as one of simultaneous fitting and unfitting. This is especially evident in the way both reach out to multiple value systems at once. The way they narrate their writing processes, practices, and embodied engagements shows Christian and Johanna trying to be scientific sociologists (logical, precise, detailed, neat, tenable) whilst also claiming space for creativity (drawing, knitting, sketching, identifying as a writer) and the personal (biographical narrations and choices). This reaching out on the part of Christian and Johanna draws attention to the existence of different spaces of sociology, with different value systems, different aims and practices as privileged across these spaces, and different ways of being in each of them. It also indicates that sociologists do not operate in one space at a time, but are always camping out across these spaces – cementing themselves incrementally, and gaining traction in contradictory spaces by contradictory means. Furthermore, the way these practices gel in Christian and Johanna's accounts indicates that the

spaces of sociology are also at times aligned and mutually constitutive. For instance, Johanna's prestige as an intellectual and her institutional power as a professor are subtly shown as supporting one another. Her laborious and precise writing practice draws on underlying notions of what it means to be an intellectual, and her correct performance of this figure gives justification for her institutional power. As she says, 'I've done the work; I've earned my stripes'. Likewise, the consecration performed by her promotion is a recognition that she is correctly inhabiting the role of the intellectual sociologist. Though Johanna attempts to change her writing practice, she is often unsuccessful or reluctant, precisely because the environments of Johanna's writing – her isolation, her wall of books, the full body pain – is a rite of passage in itself and supports her in positioning herself within the different spaces of the discipline.

This chapter shows that there is no clear narrative to either Christian or Johanna's accounts of their writing environments, processes, or practices. There are attempts at providing a linearity to their accounts – most especially Christian's relation of his sketches to his education in Mathematics. However, for the most part, there is no unambiguous sense of self. Johanna's claims to being a writer before a sociologist are juxtaposed with her bent to scientific precision and theoretical tightness; Christian would like to present himself as a logician and not a writer, but he cannot help introduce doubt regarding his equations, and argumentatively asserted that work does not have to be lyrical and avant garde in order to be imaginative. Attentiveness to the mundane aspects of their writing lives has, in the spirit of the sociology of the everyday, shown the fascination behind the small and the ordinary. Most especially, it shows the emergence of the uncanny in their creation of writing environments; these environments position them in multiple spaces at once, both familiar and unfamiliar, and show Johanna and Christian as fitting across these diffuse spaces but also being out of sync. Johanna wants to position herself as different to other sociologists – as a writer rather than a social scientist. And yet, she constructs a wall of books so that she can be in conversation with others, so that she can knit these conversations together. Christian denies that sociologists can be writers because sociologists should be bound to the logic of the argument rather than any internally-driven or embodied notion of the case – but he filters his logical position through himself via an intricate embodied practice. Christian and Johanna's accounts here show that the spaces inhabited across sociology are not just or only spaces born from sociology. There is an uncomfortable and sometimes jarring blending of the personal and professional, the intimate and institutional. Christian's determination not to acknowledge the presence of the intimate or 'inner life' in his work recognises the putative boundary between the personal and the professional. Katherine Dashper tackles the difficulty of seeing yourself in your

professional work. Commenting on the responses she received to a highly personal, autoethnographic article, Dashper writes that,

When people I interact with regularly on a professional basis brought up this article I found myself changing the subject in a way I do not do for other articles I have published. The personal nature of my narrative paper left me feeling more exposed than my other writing has done (Dashper 2015: 520).

Dashper's discomfort hangs on the assertion that the personal and professional are not 'supposed' to mix –and yet this separation is challenged not only by the minutiae of Johanna and Christian's accounts, but also throughout the narratives in the entirety of the ethnography which informs this thesis. The access provided by writing narratives shows the interaction between the institutional and the intimate, but also the way in which contradictory and enmeshing forms of legitimation are enacted through both practices and processes which are at once both personal and professional. Through this, it is possible to understand the sociologist writer as an ambiguous and ambivalent figure – diffusely legitimated across sociology, but at the same time having incorporated various practices and behaviours of legitimacy into themselves. These sit alongside tendencies to, and positions of marginality – showing the complexity of inhabiting spaces of sociology.

## Chapter Seven

### Writing Yourself in to Sociological Spaces

This chapter focuses on the theatrical aspects of participants' narrations of their writing practices, processes, and styles. Here, I show how two participants story themselves into particular spaces of sociology. This telling – a storying of a person – is a dramaturgical act: it brings something into being. I expand on this idea, and show how writing choices themselves often work as a type of performance – demonstrating the writer attaining or accepting a certain professional or disciplinary role, as well as at times manipulating this or showing themselves in friction with it. These stories show personal and professional tactics at work, often in acutely practical terms. These include making alterations to writing style, or choosing to writing in one form over another – favouring a journal article over a co-authored book chapter for instance. Practices of 'telling yourself in' reveal the strategies developed to negotiate institutional structures and audits such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF). As such, telling yourself through your writing becomes a way of agentively positioning yourself within the discipline – of working both with and against disciplinary power. These strategies develop an original understanding of legitimacy as being connected to hegemonic boundaries and biases, but also of this hegemony as something sociologists can play with. The accounts in this chapter do show the long and forceful reach of hegemonic power and its interpolation through disciplinarity, but they also indicate Naomi and James knowingly engaging with or employing this power. The chapter thus shows sociologists' relationships to legitimacy as both ambiguous and ambivalent.

Naomi is a professor of sociology and edits a U.K. sociology journal, but began her academic life studying history at Cambridge. Through a circuitous series of twists in research focus, personal identifications, and writing preferences, Naomi found herself in sociology because, in her words, 'no one else would have me'. She expanded: 'Sociology...does tend to be a bit of a rag-bag. It's kind of woolly-round-the-edges'. Naomi identifies both as a 'working class English girl' and also as a woman of colour. Having grown up in a predominantly white area of the U.K., it was not until Naomi got to Cambridge that she met other people of colour. This meeting prompted a certain ambivalence in Naomi, who having been raised largely inside a white English culture, found herself deemed 'really not brown enough' by other people of colour at Cambridge. Thus, Naomi has a deeply unsettled and tentative experience of both hegemony and marginality in terms of class, gender, and ethnicity. James, too, is a professor of sociology. Like Naomi, he went to Cambridge – however, James describes himself as being white and from an upper middle-class background,

and notes that he was privately educated. James retired during the course of the ethnography and this move from an institutional to semi/non-institutional status influenced much of his pronouncements on sociology writing, and his concern for ‘playing the game’. Whilst our conversations demonstrated that James has always felt a certain degree of safety, security, and independence within sociology and academia, the fact of his retirement appeared to lead him to a certain devil-may-care attitude – this shift showing the affect of career stage and age on both attitudes to, and production of, privilege. Indeed, James has always been an academic and secured his first lectureship before he finished his Ph.D. Before retiring, James edited a major international sociology journal. James feels tensions between himself and what he sees as mainstream sociology, often designating this as ‘quantitative’ or ‘boring’. Nevertheless, James’s reflections are shot through with levity and mischievousness; it is often apparent that James does not care to engage with what he sees as the ‘mainstream’.

### **Firm or Fuzzy? Bending Boundaries of Sociology**

An important beginning point for this chapter is in showing how and why Naomi and James engage with hegemonic space and the different reasons they have for doing so. Agentively engaging with hegemony presents a very different experience when you are a woman of colour rather than a white man, and Naomi is vulnerable in a way that James is not. Though James tells as story of himself as ambivalent to the mainstream, his perception of this friction does little to shake his professional security. In presenting an analysis of legitimacy which claims it as liminal and ambiguous it is equally important to accurately show how spaces of sociology are structured along lines of gender, class, and ‘race’. The intersections of these structures affect individuals’ ability to exploit, navigate, and utilize the ambiguity of the hegemonic. As a woman of colour Naomi is hyper-visible within academia – indeed she spoke to me of how she is ‘dragged onto institutional panels in order to give the “brown woman perspective” and seal of approval’. Naomi related this to the audit performed by the REF and her very cautious and thorough preparation, telling me that ‘BME academics are always under more scrutiny’ and because of this it’s necessary to obtain the standard levels of achievement, but also show how you go ‘above and beyond’ these. Her experience of sociology and academia is one of being marked, questioned, and compelled to account for herself, her research, and her validity. James works in a very different sociology, where he is – for the most part – left alone and enabled to do the work he pleases. Naomi has a strategy for doing well in the REF is because she *needs* a strategy for doing well in the REF. James possess no such scheme for several reasons. As a white man, James can fly below the radar. If James’s

work receives low scores he might feel aggrieved or disappointed but he is not scrutinised and policed in the same way that Naomi is as a woman of colour. No one demands that he continually proves his right to occupy space in sociology.

This situation is remarked on by Dorothy Smith, who notes that it is ‘not enough to supplement an established sociology’ by ‘making women’s issues into sociological issues’ because this ‘does not change the standpoint built into existing sociological procedures’ (Smith 1990: 398). The differing attitudes and concerns of Naomi and James show this. James’s presence in sociology arrives along well-trodden lines of men – founding fathers and canonical authors – who map out the terrain of the discipline. Naomi’s arrival is novel, it draws attention – and that attention is relentlessly visited upon her in everyday professional life. Hers is felt particularly acutely because of the intersection of ‘race’ and gender in the body of a woman of colour. Patricia Hill Collins outlines this succinctly:

Because elite White men control Western structures of knowledge validation, their interests pervade the themes, paradigms, and epistemologies of traditional scholarship. As a result, US Black women’s experiences as well as those of women of African descent transnationally have been routinely distorted within or excluded from what counts as knowledge (Hill Collins 1990 [2000]: 407).

Having been systematically excluded from academic knowledge formation, at levels of ontology and structure, women – especially women of colour – are positioned at a greater distance from the (imagined) centre than white male colleagues. Further to this, Katherine Sang identifies that, ‘Black women academics are less likely than white women academics to reach senior academic positions, and more likely to report sexual harassment’ (Sang 2016: 2). This situation is exacerbated by a contradictory condition in which the very presence of women of colour in academic spaces is often viewed as the end-point in equality and diversity achievement: their very existence silences the racialised structures of the institutional or intellectual space. Sara Ahmed discusses institutional whiteness and the debilitating affect of reading the appearance of black and brown bodies in education as a sign of successful diversity. She explains that ‘We are in trouble. Any success is read as a sign of an overcoming of institutional whiteness: “Look, you’re here!”, “Look, look!”’ (Ahmed 2012: 203). These are the conditions under which Naomi tells herself into spaces of sociology. To story herself is both to externalize a perception of herself as obeying the rules of the (racialised,

gendered) game but also to draw attention to herself as storied. Here, she shows the gap between her preferred writing practice and what is compelled of her professionally. Her multiple narratives of self and writing show that this is as a way of dealing with racism and sexism in spaces of sociology.

This negotiation of space is complex because of the intersection of identities and ‘acceptable’ modes of practicing these social locations. Katherine Sang’s research shows that ‘ethnic minority women academics feel marginalised as women in the Academy, and further marginalised as black academics within academic feminism’. Her participants described a ‘distancing’ between the position of ‘feminist’ and their identity as women of colour. The ‘structural racism of the feminist movement’ is further elaborated by Alison Phipps (2016: 3). Phipps details how privileged feminists assert authority over experiential stories of oppression and in doing so silence women in more marginal positions, such as women of colour, trans women, and sex workers. Phipps focuses on how political action has coalesced around telling stories of the self, but notes that these stories – and their emotional affect - are often co-opted as capital in political movements antithetical to their original telling. Indeed, Phipps explains that, ‘Experience is deployed by privileged feminists (frequently in association with conservative agendas), who wield particular narratives to generate emotion and make political gains’ (Phipps 2016: 6). As Phipps says, ‘These dynamics also flatten out lived realities so they cannot be appropriated by the other side...Those with differing experiences of the same phenomenon are unable to co-exist, and there is also little space within the individual for mixed or ambivalent feelings to endure’ (Phipps 2016: 11). Though Smith and Hill Collins both point to the creation of other sites of practice – women’s studies, feminism, black women’s studies – more attuned and welcoming to white women and women of colour, it is necessary to recognise that intersecting oppressions also operate in these putatively progressive spaces.

Furthermore, the different ways that different women are able to enter and use these spaces draws attention to the mobility of spaces – darting in and out of accessibility. It also shows the dynamism of the hegemonic, in that what is commonly understood as located with and of white men, is also present and active in spaces of women/feminism. It is this complex patterning of sociology spaces, born from the influence of social structures, which leads me to conceptualise these boundaries of spaces as both firm and fuzzy. The boundaries holding spaces in place can be bent and shaped – but the extent to which this is possible, and the risk of a stinging ping back, is shaped by the minutiae of your personhood. James is able to use his ambivalence to the hegemonic institution in

‘mainstream’ sociology as a way of narrating himself as open, kind, imaginative, exploratory, and egalitarian. He can do this because he inhabits a body perennially secure in academia and sociology. Naomi is pressed to narrate herself through the hegemonic institution in order to secure professional safety. But Naomi is not lacking in power – she is a Professor, and a journal editor, and well regarded by her peers. I am not arguing that Naomi is either wholly oppressed or totally helpless. Both James and Naomi bend the rules similarly, and to suit themselves. The fact they do so for different reasons and to secure different positions demonstrates the concomitant ambiguity and forcefulness of the hegemonic value paradigm across spaces of sociology.

### **Writing Yourself into Sociology: A Process of Legitimation?**

The stories of writing told by Naomi and James show the role of writing style in how sociologists understand their own disciplinary belonging. Here, I use the concept of belonging as a way of describing the need participants articulated of showing that you fit – even if this is through a deliberate not-fitting. This is a reading of belonging as connected to a sense of self; to belong in one space of sociology does not mean to belong in others, and sometimes power is gained through deliberately *not* belonging – *not* fitting. Belonging travels, but it is diluted, pummelled, and sustained by the context(s) in which you move – as different value paradigms operate with more or less legitimacy in different spaces. As such, belonging is both structural and psychic – it is a category of the ‘inner self’ - an agentive mode of being – but also inflected by structure and the power relations of a particular space. Belonging also reminds of longing – a want, desire, or need; this is important to the central work of storying in this chapter. To position oneself involves first projecting an idea of where you want or need to be. The longing of ‘belonging’ is a first step in knowing how to navigate the discipline and tell your story. This section covers participants’ understanding of ‘hegemonic’ writing style. Their narratives reveal this as motile and unfixed in any one institutional or theoretical location; further to this, the accounts of participants make clear that even implicitly deploying this style is a way of asserting oneself and gaining traction across different sociological and intellectual spaces.

During the ethnography, complex accounts emerged of a type of sociology oriented to grandeur, sophistication, exclusivity, and even celebrity. One participant, Euan, noted with some degree of archness that it is, ‘the high-falutin’ stuff that’s meant to show how great you are’. It reveals itself in religious language – disciples and gurus, jargon, complexity of sentence structure, density of prose, and always picking the difficult word where a plain one will do. Participants understood this

as gaining credibility, status, and capital through writing style: prestige is asserted by the author through multiple discursive attempts at confusing their audience. The writing itself dramatizes the honour of the author and brings it into being. This style of writing was further associated with overt displays of over-intellectualism and tacit assertions by the author of being far cleverer than their colleagues. It is important to mark the difference in perception of 'being intellectual' – which few participants found objectionable – and this noted bombastic and arrogant display of intellectualism, which was criticised by all as exclusionary, unproductive, and elitist. The 'hegemonic' was more understood in terms of this style of writing, than it was related to any particular university institution, journal, school of thought, or group of people. Ultimately, the central space of consecration in sociology is arguably here, in this writing - rather than belonging to any one group or another. Importantly, the dislocation of this writing style means that it can be found anywhere in sociology; it is not the preserve of whiteness, masculinity, or dominant class position. This thesis makes clear that hegemonic positions wield great power within discipline-specific value paradigms; further to this, hegemonic positions are shown as associated with an overly complex and difficult writing style. However, the writing style itself can be – and often is – adopted by those outside of these hegemonic locations.

James and I were discussing disciplinary locations, and whether there was greater security in being understood as operating wholly within one discipline, instead of interdisciplinary traversing. He gave the example of a particular social theorist – for ease of expression, I'm going to call him Bob. Crucially, James noted that despite his 'home base' being in philosophy, Bob possesses the ability to move with ease between disciplines; indeed, James told me that, 'he spoke at a sociology conference recently and was cheerfully referring to himself as "part of the guild"!'. This notion of being 'part of the guild' and steering an easy course between disciplines is central to understanding the permeability of disciplinary boundaries. The key questions here are who can pass these boundaries and how do they do it? James and I spoke about how Bob's writing conforms in some degrees to that 'classic' hegemonic style: it is complex, markedly erudite, and uses the jargon of each discipline. It is not that Bob writes 'like a sociologist' or 'like a philosopher', but that his writing style aligns him with the dominant symbolic *across* disciplinary territories. Bob's success in simultaneously being unquestioned as part of the guilds of sociology and philosophy suggests that the boundaries of discipline are less related to what you research or your theoretical position and more connected to wider social positions of power. Bob follows a line of hegemonic practice through sociology and philosophy, and it is this which enables him to move with ease. James's account of Bob indicates that the space of consecration and legitimation in sociology is not

particular to sociology itself. Passing boundaries and rendering them permeable is potentially about being able to *position* yourself as hegemonic.

Naomi's experience demands further consideration of these routes to, and boundaries of, hegemony. The negotiations Naomi feels compelled to make between her preferred writing style, and what she thinks will get published, show how the style of the hegemonic in writing becomes a consideration for her. Naomi frequently complained to me that stories were pushed out of sociology writing in favour of up-front spoilers about the content of the text. Naomi told me that, 'You can't work your way through a narrative [in a journal article]. You've got to have spoilers at the beginning'. Naomi privileges stories as part of sociological knowledge production; not only do they provide texture, richness, and depth, they also allow you and your reader a more intimate access to the data. One aspect of the ethnography done in this thesis was a type of 'peer review' of a well-cited and read article in a prominent U.K. sociology journal. Naomi asserted of this article that it had forgone stories in favour of neatness of argument. She told me that, 'I'd have preferred some illustrative examples from the interviews and ethnography - they give more sense of complexity. But this is tidied up, quite rigid'. It seemed to her no coincidence that a well-cited article would eschew narrative or the personal.

Indeed, on a previous meeting, Naomi had told me that the journal article form 'strips the life out of things'. One of her recent writing projects just prior to being part of my ethnography had been to rewrite a piece of her own from a chapter to a journal article, and in doing so felt compelled to entirely alter the way she approached the piece, so that it could fit easily into a major U.K. sociology journal. This involved conforming to conventional article parts, such as literature review, methodology, and findings – instead of the more discursive and pondering piece it had previously been. This marks a moment in Naomi storying herself, both in terms of our conversation and also in a larger scale conversation with sociology itself. Naomi's major journal publication tells of her to a wider audience; it positions her as a person whose work is significant and influential. Naomi went through a process of re-telling herself and her work in order to secure a 'fit' with this journal. Finally, Naomi's telling of herself to me reveals the detail of the strategy. It shows a deliberate and agentive act on her part – aligning her work with what she considers the mainstream, through altering her writing style and chosen form. Further, it demonstrates that this is an option for her – she can fit inside hegemonic spaces of sociology.

However, it is also evidence that she has made compromises. Naomi has changed her writing, and told of herself in a way that she would not ordinarily wish to. This is the crux of an ambivalent relationship with hegemonic values and the associated consecrated spaces. Naomi's account shows the complexity of working to, or engaging with, the hegemonic. The style of writing that she identifies as acceptable - rational, logical, methodical, quantitative - is tacitly related to the overarching conception of hegemonic writing detailed above. Naomi also problematizes a particular form - the journal article - as being aligned with this style of writing; that the style and form are connected. This is a multifaceted and convoluted relationship, and partly to do with the role of institutions and audits in academia - particularly the prized place a large number of sociology departments have awarded to the article form in their Research Excellence Framework returns. These relationships reveal more about the multiple overlapping spaces of sociology and how these function. Particularly, it demonstrates a certain clarity and streamlined quality to the hegemonic: not only do dominant symbolic values track across disciplines, they also appear to replicate themselves in the value paradigm of major centre-space journals. There is, then, an overlapping and variegation of different hegemonic spaces as well as a distinct manner of being hegemonic.

### **Performing a Part Through Writing**

Naomi's writing practice is strongly influenced by her sense of not belonging, but she uses writing as a stage on which to perform a version of belonging. She feels that her preferred way of writing - story, narrative, and imagery - is not an acceptable style within what she conceives of as the boundaries of 'mainstream' sociology. She understands her writing as performing two functions: one is her own political endeavours, her sense of duty to her participants, and her desire for social change; the other is in securing her professional position within her institution. This, for Naomi, is tied to the REF. For each of these functions, Naomi uses a different style of writing. As such, Naomi ends up playing a dual game: personal and professional. Her tactic is to 'write to the REF' initially, after which she is 'free to do my own thing'. Part of writing for the REF involves altering her writing style so that she more closely fits the parameters used to evaluate work in this type of institutional audit.

Often, the REF writing is writing that Naomi would not produce but for the fact of the audit, and it loomed oppressively throughout my conversations with her. The REF dictates the form and content of her work, as well as the pace and organisation of her writing. Speaking just after the

results of the 2014 REF, Naomi confided in me that she is already preparing her submission for the 2020 exercise. She framed this conversation in terms of ‘timetables’ and ‘deadlines’ – a process of ‘getting ready’ and working to a ‘strategy’. The language used here designates the REF as implacable - a potentially destructive force which must be strategized and prepared for. The tone of our conversations indicated Naomi felt the parameters of the REF reflect those of the mainstream of the discipline. Succeeding in the REF was therefore about performing the centre-ground of the discipline. Naomi – as above – saw overlaps between intellectual and institutional hegemony. This is a type of performance on a (disciplinary) stage: it is undertaken both through a particular pose – the writing – and a type of dramaturgy which comes in the labour involved. In order to play this dual game, Naomi must write twice as much as she otherwise would; indeed, Naomi identifies that ‘the REF forces writing and the amount that you write’. Naomi feels compelled to write her pieces for the REF *and* to continue with her ‘own’ work in parallel. This performance of belonging is not superficial or fleeting – it is solidified through the labour and the resulting publications, both of which demonstrate different aspects of Naomi’s position in sociology. They show that Naomi is capable of writing herself in, but also that she feels compelled to do so; this succinctly encapsulates both her vulnerability and her power.

An example of this is a co-authored book Naomi was part of writing, as something which would be part of her 2020 REF submission. By the time of my ethnography, Naomi was writing the final chapter of this. She expressed deep discomfort at the content and style of this chapter. It brought forth feelings of personal and professional ambivalence – connected to Naomi’s experience of ethnicity as well as her concomitant positions of powerful and peripheral within sociology. Naomi’s co-author, Meera, is a fan of stories and narrative and wanted to pursue this style within the book. Though this sits well with Naomi in terms of her writing practice, she felt extremely uncomfortable with it in terms of *sociology* writing practice. The tension came via the status given to narrative writing within their respective disciplines. Meera is an anthropologist – a discipline, according to Naomi, with a bent towards description. The finely detailed narrative descriptions which open each chapter in their book are at ease in Meera’s discipline, and apparently pose no difficulty for her in an institutional audit. Conversely, Naomi again noted her own pragmatism regarding stories in sociological writing, owing to her identification that sociology demands ‘spoilers’. Naomi told me how sociology has a ‘fixed format’ where ‘everything is signalled’. No stories, only spoilers. Meera returned a version of this final chapter in which she had excised the theoretical interventions and references; Naomi explained that ‘anthropologists apparently don’t do theory in this way, it instead happens in the background’. This lack of clear and obvious

theoretical staging and signposting unnerved Naomi. She declared the chapter ‘under-theorised’ and discussed how she might get the theory back in. ‘I’m quite un-theory anyway’, Naomi told me, ‘so if I think it’s under-theorised then it really must be lacking!’. Naomi felt panicked about the lack of signalling and lack of theory because she worried that this meant it wouldn’t be taken seriously by sociologists - a particularly sharp tension given that she intends this to be part of her REF submission. Naomi’s concerns with this piece demonstrate her awareness of the privileging of complexity and erudition associated with theory, and linked to the type of ‘grand’ writing style detailed earlier.

The concerns Naomi expressed about this chapter show how she tries to practice across – and do justice to – different but concomitant spaces. Naomi appeared conflicted: she does not support the conventions of ‘mainstream’ sociology writing and yet she is determined to reproduce them. She wants to reproduce them in order to secure her position within her institution and guard against surveillance and policing – something acutely felt as a woman of colour. No matter how Naomi writes, in this instance, she retains a sense of it not being ‘good enough’: the linear, spoiled version satisfies the REF but it doesn’t satisfy her or her co-author; the nuanced, detailed narratives are potential problems for the REF, but are far more in line with her personal and political convictions and the underlying aims of the research. Naomi is in a position where she both cannot win and cannot lose: whichever style of writing she chooses will conform to the value paradigm of a particular space, and as such her work is likely to be evaluated on these terms. Equally, whichever style she forgoes represents a space in which she is less likely to be credentialised and legitimated. Through this dilemma it is possible to see the complexity of sociological spaces, and their relationships across disciplines. Because Naomi does not have the overarching credentialisation of being white or a man she is pushed into making either/or choices regarding which space she legitimates herself in. Whilst she has choice, she has very little flexibility. This is in direct contrast to James who, as an upper middle-class white man, arrives pre-ordained into almost all spaces of sociology. Even in those spaces where his social identifications are less likely to designate him as ‘natural’ – such as black feminist spaces – he still retains the security of whiteness and masculinity.

James feels a similar tension between himself and sociology. Like Naomi he aligns himself far more with an arts and humanities interpretation of the discipline and he dislikes quantitative work when it lacks narrative. However, he rejects any pressing need to conform and consistently asserts that throughout his career he has ‘gone my own way’ and not allowed – or even noticed – the

disciplining aspects of discipline. Unlike Naomi, James does not make a conscious attempt to use writing as a way of belonging to sociology, or agentively positioning himself in disciplinary and institutional safety. In fact, James's account shows him as remarkably unconcerned regarding his position in sociology. James recounts a tale from his early career in which the department he worked in was restructured – 'if my research cluster had ended up in European Studies instead of Sociology I'd have been happy enough, it wouldn't have made much difference. Either is fine by me'. I prompted him further – would he feel as comfortable in politics or philosophy, or is it important to be in sociology or a related discipline: 'Oh I don't care. I don't think I'd ever apply to a politics job – well I didn't have to because this one [his current role from which he is retiring] came up and I moved. Anyway, Politics are always fighting with each other!'. He laughed sheepishly.

James happily defines himself as a sociologist but his sense of security and belonging is not explicitly mediated through positioning himself within a particular value framework, nor does he openly seek to align himself with the type of consecrated space outlined above. Unlike Naomi, James does not feel his deviation from the mainstream as something to be compensated for. Indeed, he does not even feel the need to consider deeply his status in sociology or how he might be judged by his peers, much less be concerned with shoring up his position. His reference to the theorist declaring himself 'part of the guild' is particularly illuminating – the phrasing connotes majesty, significance, entry to an elite set, and most of all comfortable belonging in that group. James has this too – he moves easily within sociology without having to assert or prove himself. This relaxed attitude appears in James's discussion of writing. He classified social science writing thus: 'anthropology is more personal, politics is more formal, International Relations is highly structured, and sociology is quite diverse'. Conversely – and in stark contrast to Naomi – James is 'open to people being in their writing'. Though this is also the style of writing privileged by Naomi – personal, intimate, lively – she feels that it is too risky for her to submit this form of prose to the REF. James sees no such danger. Though James feels out of step with sociology it does not affect how he chooses to write, where he chooses to publish, or how much of himself he is comfortable sharing in his work. Discussing one of the pieces he was writing during the course of the ethnography, James noted that he was being 'encouraged by the publishers to ask questions of the reader, to put my own position in the text'. Further to this, James demonstrated an awareness that his age and career stage shape the kind of personal engagement he can employ in his writing. On this, James feels little of the sense of risk or shame indicated by Johanna in Chapter Six – he stated to me that, 'the only thing I have to risk now is my narcissism!'. James is able to move through

sociology writing as if there is no problem – he laughs, jokes, and makes the formal ridiculous. Yet still, he feels an ambivalent relationship to the discipline – part of why he ‘goes my own way’ is because he feels slightly out of sync with most spaces of sociology.

James’s relaxation in regard to his position within sociology is further demonstrated in his everyday writing practice. The manner in which he describes his working environment and writing process indicate a substantial level of comfort and intellectual safety. James’s approach is calm and measured, and he tells me that he experiences ‘no dark night of the soul’ when it comes to writing. There is, James says, ‘no especial reverence of the act. I don’t think of writing as a holy activity’. Nevertheless, there remains a certain tincture of affective colour in the clarity of his perspective. James described his writing space:

I have a desk – a working space [and here he demonstrated the size in comparison to the table we were sitting at in the university café] with a laptop, paper spread out in piles, which are removed and tidied and grow again. Books in arm’s reach. I have a dedicated space in a corner of the house on the first floor landing, with a window, bookshelf space. No one intrudes except the cat, who might jump up on my lap. Francesca’s [his partner, also an academic] more peripatetic, she can work anywhere. I don’t work on the move much.

Note how James describes his working space and desk: the space itself is ‘dedicated’; his papers ‘grow’; only the cat ‘intrudes’. Though James does not consciously think of writing as a ‘holy activity’ the language he uses to talk about his space is that of sanctuary, nature and serenity. Despite this, James’s lack of concern for the pace of neoliberal academic life described by scholars such as Gill (2009) and Billig (2013), shows a *laissez-faire* attitude to the potential sanctions ahead. Describing his daily routine to me, James says that ‘I’ll take a break for lunch, do something else for an hour or two, end at about 6pm. Or I might get distracted by the other thing, end up gardening for the rest of the day and not go back to it’. This is partly in relation to his career stage and, having gained his first academic position in the early 1970s, the fact that James has a very different experience of the academic terrain to most other participants. As such his routine is built around his lack of concern for audits, managerialism, and institutional rules, as well as his quiet confidence in his own ability. Nevertheless, in reflecting on his experiences before retirement, James was clear that ‘I might have worried a bit more in the past, but not that much’.

The similarities and contrasts between Naomi and James prompt questions regarding how power is distributed across the numerous spaces of sociological practice. Why is it that both Naomi and James feel ambivalently towards sociology, but only one of them detects a demand to conform to the hegemonic and to write themselves in to the discipline? James declares above that styles of sociology writing are diverse – much more so than the styles present in related social science disciplines. James’s comfort and lack of concern to perform a particular role is, in some ways, the correct performance of hegemonic writing anyway. As with the earlier analysis of the ‘competent academic’ in Chapter Five, James displays sophistication, dexterity, and comfort. His unconcern is a tacit declaration of belonging and ownership. A refusal to conform is a statement of authority. By not altering his writing so as to ‘correctly’ position himself in the different spaces of sociology he inhabits, James shows the mobility of hegemony. Naomi, by contrast, shows the permeable boundaries of hegemony through a certain level of exploitation of it. She uses hegemonic styles to position herself within the discipline, but is also disciplined by these styles. Both practices of (not) writing yourself in to sociological spaces show the interconnectedness of these spaces and the ambivalent quality to the boundaries which delineate them.

### **Belonging and Writing: The Role of Gatekeeping**

James and Naomi’s roles as journal editors positions them as gatekeepers; they judge the writing sent to them by other sociologists and their criteria for publication demonstrates how they apply key tropes of sociology writing in order to police the sociological boundaries of their own journal. The discomfort sometimes present in their narratives to me does much work in revealing the gap between their outlook and what they demand of others. Naomi and James both resist the role of elite gatekeeper and visit it on others. They want change but continue to uphold convention.

James sat thoughtfully, hands cupped under his chin, and outlined his list of requirements to writing being ‘publishable’. ‘There are three elements really’, he noted:

A publishable article provides a decent report on research and makes sense. Then the next level is does it say anything original or new? And then does it fit the journal – the editors happily prompt you to say this, they don’t want to reject something outright, so they’ll send it out to peer review and your “no” legitimates their rejection.

This list appears innocuous but unpicking it is fruitful: what does it actually mean to ‘make sense’ or to fit into the already-organised system of literature represented by journal – and how can these elements be married to the idea of producing new and original work? The requirement of sociologists to write work which looks like work which has been written before itself undergirds the reproduction of elite positions within knowledge production by ensuring that the requirements for being published are that you subscribe to the hegemonic method and style for writing. Like Christian’s overture to science as the legitimate way of making an argument, James’s superficially bland requirement that one ‘makes sense’ is also a way of asserting the dominant position of science. Sense is conceptually connected to logic and rationality. Whilst we may desire a coherent argument in work we read, questioning where the standard of logic, coherence, and sense emerges from is important. It enables us to understand how sociology writing is diffused through processes of legitimation which, like the affable James, doff their cap to the values of science. Following these precepts is a way for James to legitimate himself – position himself authoritatively within sociology. Through conforming via writing – and the philosophical foundations inscribed in the notion of ‘publishable’ – James succeeds in showing that his natural status within sociology. James asserts that, ‘I’m not trying to impose myself [on the writing]’. Critically, James does not make these impositions because he does not *need* to act this way in order to claim or maintain his elite position. James is aware that he possesses a great command of theoretical material and the written word, and when pushed to consider his status and hegemonic position he does recognise his structural advantage. However, his continual bashful diffidence as to his power is itself a form of disavowal.

James’s comments on style further set the framework for publishable sociology writing within the values of dominant structures and culture. He discusses aspects which mark writing as not ‘publishable’, particularly noting, ‘writing that is plodding’. James infers a preference for writing which displays sophisticated dexterity with language, writing which is a pleasure to the reader because it has rhythm, flow and harmony. He continues this:

You want that certain...well you know, the Italians call it *bel canto* – as if you’re singing it. A piece has to be readable, have an approachable style. I don’t just mean you have to be able to read it, I mean it has to be agreeable to read.

James's identification of 'agreeability' as important to publishable work pertains to style rather than content. James expresses no wish to curtail specific perspectives, and he notes that much lauded work is 'very badly written'. However, he asserts that the pinnacle of written work is that which is agreeable and harmonious. Apparently innocuous, this valuing of 'agreeability' suggests privileging accord between reader and writer, and further to this, between subject positions. Discussing the feminist killjoy, Ahmed writes that,

When accordance in sentiment is a goal of social and political life, it would require you to accord with what already exists. Harmony would be a demand for accordance. This is why I would argue that the powers-that-be might want their subject happy rather than sad (2010: 213).

Read in this light, James's requirement of 'agreeability' hints at a requirement not to disrupt writing with discordance or disagreement. Enmeshed in this guidance is strong placement on cultural capital. Making your writing 'sing', making it 'agreeable' to read, involves not only individual effort but the inculcation of what constitutes agreeability in prose: how to use syntax, word choice, and punctuation in order to produce the subtle rhythms which set writing to song. James's focus on 'agreeability' is arguably linked to upholding dominant conventions of what counts as 'agreeable', setting it as implicitly classed, gendered, and raced. The cultural capital necessary to write in this fashion requires familiarity with language through reading. This familiarity subtly informs the reader what words can do and how to make words do things. This inculcation of cultural capital comes through access to literature of all forms. Being able to write in the way James suggests denotes quality is a matter of mastering literature and writing as a field.

In Chapter Three, I discussed Bayard's analysis of the concept of being 'well read' – that it is 'above all, a matter of orientation' (Bayard 2009: 10; italics in the original). Sociology is similar; *bel canto* writing does not come from reading a particular text – and most especially is unlikely to be prompted by reading one of the many 'how to write' guides which proliferate the genre. Instead it is fashioned through familiarity, not just with sociology texts but with a much broader range of literature and cultural engagement. This is born of privilege: the *opportunity* to read widely is part of what inculcates cultural capital, but crucially the opportunity also comes about *through access* to cultural capital – and is further controlled by economic capital. James's criteria show allegiance to dominant conventions of sociology. These conventions privilege science, but also a very particular extension into culture and literature – one which is predicated on a middle-class understanding of

reading and language. As such, the unremarkable and mundane criteria given by James as to what allows writing to pass through the gatekeeper to publication are revealed to be infused with judgements of class, 'race', and gender.

Naomi's views on what makes an article publishable demonstrate a conflicted – even contradictory – perspective. She initially expressed antipathy to the strictures of publishing, in particular those of the journal article form. Naomi lamented the 'death of the essay', telling me that the essay provides space for 'a series of reflections'. The essay is allowed to be 'meandering and pondering', and therefore provides a more open and fruitful space for exploration – particularly as relates to novel approaches, methodologies, or theories. By contrast, Naomi characterized journal articles as 'formulaic and constraining'. She expressed anger at this - 'there's no room for the discursive' in articles, 'the form strips the life out of things'. Naomi further notes that 'journals can be personal fiefdoms' – journals are structures which control knowledge; as Naomi identifies, editors are able to control who and what is published – though reviewers are important, Naomi asserts the 'ultimate discretion' of the editor. Under these conditions being able to demonstrate, through your writing, that you belong to that particular structure is vital. Naomi is also a journal editor, and the structures of power and domination she identifies are also problems she acknowledges in her own practice. Telling me that she is trying to alter the scope of the journal, Naomi pinpoints that 'there's always the question of how to shift the structures when you are the structure'.

Despite this acknowledgement, during our conversations Naomi appeared resigned to the system in its current form – though she expressed frustration and dissatisfaction with the control exerted over writing and knowledge production, she seemed not to see great opportunity to change the system. Indeed, when I asked Naomi what sorts of things I should be doing to secure an academic job she recommended 'playing the game' – focusing on publishing in major journals with a high Impact Factor, and side-lining public engagement and teaching. This ambivalence is important because it suggests how academics who understand themselves as marginal negotiate their position(s) in spaces of sociology. Pulling on Naomi are concomitant but diverging identity positions: she is a woman of colour in an institutional and intellectual system which privileges whiteness and maleness, but she is also – as she notes – 'the structure'. She holds positions – Professor, journal editor - where she acts as a gatekeeper, and is partly using these to attempt to alter the rules of the game. Naomi is concomitantly vulnerable and powerful, in control and controlled. Strategizing her writing for success in the REF is an action which can be seen both as

a victorious 'beat them at their own game' as well as a disappointed and disappointing acceptance that the game is what it is.

### **Troublesome Telling: Agency, Writing and Sociology**

Naomi and James both strategize their stories of themselves. Through doing so they invoke particular images which serve to create a strong external identity. However, approaching this through ethnography also reveals the personal stories of why both of these sociologists choose to narrate themselves thus, and to tell particular versions of their sociological selves through their writing styles, practices, and choices. Their narrations also show them using stories as a way of sorting through their experience of different spaces of sociology and the competing demands made on their work and personhood. The exposure of multiple tellings of the self and the work that these do shows the lack of coherency within sociology and reaffirms it as a site of manifold, overlapping fields and value systems. Stories are invented and tailored for particular institutions, people, journals – the boundaries which separate these are traversed and incorporated into the narration. This practice of storying indicates the nuance of the task – Naomi and James are engaging with boundaries and spaces which are liminal and strong at once. If they were not liminal, they could not be crossed at all, but if they lacked strength there would be no reason to bend to them in your tale. This analysis avows the messiness of these spaces and of sociologists' methods for living in them. Naomi and James's stories of themselves emphasize a troubled relationship with sociology – to a greater or lesser extent. Naomi's narrative invokes particular unease, with its combination of agency and coercion; this is only accentuated by her re-telling to me in which she demonstrates acute awareness of the problematic co-options she makes and her longing to live otherwise. Writing – as something both personal and profession – reaches into the messiness of this ambivalence. The way we tell our writing, and tell ourselves through our writing, reveals the spaces and boundaries against and with which we move.

## Chapter Eight

### Spaces of Sociology and Placing Prestige

In this chapter, I track a piece of writing from its inception to publication. Through doing so, the ethnography shows the emergence of the multiple fields of sociology in action – how these connect, juxtapose, contradict, and intersect. The writing choices made demonstrate the different fields sociologists work in, between, and across – including disciplinary, sub-disciplinary, personal interest or vocation, institutional, networks, and friendships. Within these different fields exist diverse and competing ideas of ‘the mainstream’ or ‘the hegemonic’; indeed, narrations of writing choices and practices reveal that the dominant value system in one space often does not translate its dominance to other spaces of sociology. I approach these fields through the experiences of two of the participants, Ben and Sebastian. Ben and Sebastian are co-authors, and here I examine their writing choices made during the production of two pieces: a journal article and a book chapter. Through focusing on these I show the different spaces they encounter, work within, their different concerns across spaces, and ways of negotiating the diversities of the spaces they encounter. Further to this, I bring out how prestige works contrarily in these spaces, and the choices they make in regard to this. The chapter demonstrates that spaces of sociology are not static; they are dynamic and alter in relation to one another, but also in relation to the particular inhabitant(s). Spaces of sociology are gendered, racialised, and classed; this strongly affects the way they are – and are able to be – experienced by different sociologists.

#### **Ben and Sebastian: Their Writing Strategy**

Ben and Sebastian were Ph.D. students together; they work on similar topic areas and shared a supervisor. Both are in the early stages of their careers, having gained their doctorates within the last five years, and both are currently lecturers at Russell Group institutions. Where Ben secured a permanent full time job immediately after submitting his thesis, Sebastian spent several years in temporary teaching posts. At the time of the ethnography, Sebastian was in his first year in his first permanent full time lectureship, and still in his probation period. This meant he had several ‘professional development targets’ to fulfil in order to meet probation requirements. Ben and Sebastian are both young, white men. Ben describes his family as ‘upper working class’, whilst Sebastian gleefully notes himself as ‘a prime example of downward social mobility’. His family is extremely wealthy and own their own business – though notably, as Sebastian is Italian, his

experience of class-making does not fit neatly into models of stratification or struggle which emerge in the UK-oriented literature. Sebastian is also gay; it was clear from our conversations that he had experiential knowledge of being not-hegemonic, having the value frameworks of a heteronormative dominant class applied to judge him, and the practices of exclusion which come from this. However, he rarely brought up his sexuality in terms of experiencing discrimination and exclusion *within sociology or academia*; it was apparent, though, that he read his sexuality as one of many differences between his identity and that of an imagined ‘mainstream’ other, where no single difference makes a particular impact, but the compound differences set apart a ‘marginal’ from a ‘mainstream’ experience.

Ben and Sebastian are regular writing collaborators as well as fast friends, but Sebastian’s relatively less secure position directed some of their writing and publication choices. Ben and Sebastian both broadly define themselves as social theorists, and they share an interest in particular areas of social theory. Ben was approached to contribute a book chapter on the theoretical work of Georg Simmel – a theorist on which he and Sebastian had previously collaborated - and ‘proposed to co-write it with Sebastian partly for fun/intellectual coherence’. Ben told me that it quickly became apparent that ‘we wanted to do slightly different things’ with the material. Given that, at this time, ‘Sebastian was in a more precarious employment situation...and extra publications would help him’, they agreed to co-write two pieces and split the authorship in such a way as would benefit Sebastian. Ben would be first author on the book chapter, and Sebastian on the article. They split the authorship in this way because, according to Sebastian, ‘an article would matter more to me, for my institution’. Importantly, the decision to write two pieces was based primarily on the fact that they had diverging ideas regarding the content of the piece; the decision of how to split the publications and assign authorship was related more closely to Sebastian’s career position. The fact of writing together in itself emerged from their enjoyment in collaboration and a sense of doing justice to the material. As Sebastian noted, ‘we have very different ways of thinking about Simmel, but we complement each other. I think it gives a more comprehensive approach’.

They divided the work along responsibilities of authorship. Ben told me, ‘I’d be first author on the book chapter, so would produce a draft which Sebastian then commented on and Sebastian would first author/draft an article, which I would provide comments on’. Ben sent me various copies of both the book chapter and journal article, drawing attention to the practical elements of their construction: ‘The [third] document is then my comments on the revised draft Sebastian produced post-reviews. In this document, Sebastian’s changes are in red font, my additions are in blue and

my subtractions in yellow (all the comments are mine)’. This highlights the way Ben and Sebastian write together – rather than writing in the same space at the same time, they write separately, each taking control and responsibility for separate tasks. They use comments and Track Changes in Word as means of co-producing. Their different responses and attitudes to the journal article compared to the book chapter showed an early confluence between forms of writing and spaces of sociology. Similar to a number of participants, both Ben and Sebastian held that book chapters offered a space which tended to more exploratory writing. Both enjoy this form but each commented to me that the status of a book chapter has been diminished in institutional terms owing to particular institutional responses to the REF, which have privileged journal articles and monographs above book chapters or other forms of publication. In the following sections, I focus on the production of the journal article, for which Sebastian is first author. The affective relations between Ben and Sebastian, and the journal article – including how they respond to peer review, the decisions they make regarding writing style, and their emotional response to the article acutely demonstrate a number of spheres of sociology being considered and negotiated. Their reactions to the demands made on them during the course of producing and publishing the journal article show their interaction with an institutional space of sociology. The disappointments and frustrations expressed, by contrast, further reveal their experience of the space of their sub-disciplinary field, and the value system therein. The choices they make – and are able to make – as they traverse these different spaces of sociology show the reciprocal relationship between bodies and spaces.

### **The Warp and the Weft of Sociological Spaces: Experiencing Gender, ‘Race’, and Class**

Sebastian and I were at a conference in Cambridge and took the opportunity to catch up. It was a sunny day and we wandered down from the conference venue to the river; this is a central space in Cambridge geography and many of the Colleges and university buildings back onto the river. Sebastian commented on the number of punts being driven up and down the river, full of tourists. Knowing that I studied at the institution, he asked me about ‘the Backs’ – how far you can walk, if it’s possible to explore the famous bridges and so on. I explained to him that paying for a punt tour is the only way of seeing the entire stretch of river, owing to the Colleges owning the particular sections of river that they back onto, and limiting access for people who are not members of the College or the University of Cambridge. I elaborated that several of the bridges across the river are gated in the middle and locked – so that even if you gain access via one College you cannot walk freely into another because the passageway is barred. Sebastian looked increasingly agitated

throughout our conversation - in my field notes I comment that he was ‘incensed’, and repeated ‘I just don’t agree with that at all’.

The above recollection from my field notes typifies the central themes of this chapter: multiple spaces, power relations across these spaces, and the qualities of bodies as they both delineate spaces and are affected by different spaces. The complex set of spaces summarised in this description of the institutional space of Cambridge shows the interaction of manifold spaces within one overarching field – and moreover, demonstrates the boundaries which delimit and proscribe the movement of bodies across these spaces. Sebastian and I considered the relationship of the university’s architecture to the mobility of different types of bodies within this space. At first it seemed symbolic of a classic understanding of exclusions and hegemonic elitism in academia – that Cambridge stood for the dominant symbolic, judging, testing, and denying entry to those who do not quite fit. This understanding brought to mind Nirmal Puwar’s notion of ‘the psychic power of architecture’ (Puwar 2004: 36). Puwar suggests that there are crossovers in the design, fabrics, clothing, and styles of elite buildings, which enable boundaries of power to be drawn between them. These tropes or symbols denote a specific type of body – what Puwar terms, ‘the somatic norm’ (Puwar 2004: 2). Here, Puwar makes a connection between spaces and the types of body which can correctly inhabit particular spaces, or appear natural within them. She contends that, ‘Westminster builds on and contributes to the flows of cathexis established in other places, such as specific public schools, Oxbridge, certain professions, men’s clubs, trade unions, and pubs and bars’ (Puwar 2004: 36). In making this connection, Puwar is able to assert that the architecture of Westminster – its ‘timing...rituals, bodily performances’ is shared across other elite institutions, and because of this, draws ‘specifically classed notions of masculine Englishness’ (Puwar 2004: 36) across these spaces, designating this as the somatic norm. It is helpful to think of this as a form of mapping: Eton maps on to Oxbridge, which maps on to Westminster; the routes drawn and pulled between these spaces are routes of travel, along which certain bodies may move. Through this process, bodies which are not the somatic norm are pinpointed, watched, and potentially excluded.

This initial interpretation is useful in terms of understanding the replication of spaces and the way bodies (re)produce spaces around themselves. Adding more texture to our initial response to the inclusions and exclusions of Cambridge university buildings brings further clarity to an understanding of power relations across spaces. One of the key aspects Sebastian reacted angrily to was the sense of exclusion - the gatekeeping, the judgements on personhood and whether you count as eligible to enter a sanctified space. On reflection, however, there is something more

nuanced occurring. Two considerations are important to more precisely understand the complexity of multiple connected spaces, and to apply this to sociology. Firstly, it is possible to have power within one space but, notably, this does not always travel with you. Power is not immanent to the body, but rather constituent on your interaction with a particular space. A closer look at the architecture of Cambridge provides an analogy: it is possible to be credentialised by one College but not another – to have power and elite status within one space but not have that power carry with you to another. As such, you may move freely within your ‘home’ space but be unable to pass the locks to another space. Related to this, it is necessary to consider the nature of the exclusions made. Returning to Puwar, it is possible to see how exclusions are made in ways other than a clear and overt denial of entry. Puwar describes the experience of black MPs in the House of Commons, and notes what she refers to as ‘The Look’ (Puwar 2004: 39). Puwar describes this as an act of Empire, geared towards showing the out-of-placeness of black bodies in a white, upper class/upper middle-class space; the gaze of Empire, here, Puwar asserts ‘put into play a corporeal racial schema of alien other(s) which helped glue collectivities of whiteness with a superior sense of their “natural” right to occupy privileged spaces’ (Puwar 2004: 40). Exclusion does not only denote the lack of ability to enter a space. It can also denote the lack of ability to occupy and use a space in the same way as a different – more privileged - type of body. Exclusions come through tacit and supercilious policing of spaces; an exclusion does not have to be made through open rejection, it can also come through repeated subtle indications that you jar within a space. What this analysis demonstrates is the ambiguous quality of power relations within institutional spaces. There is a dialectical relationship between bodies and spaces: spaces control the action and movement of bodies within them but at the same time, these spaces are shaped by the types of bodies considered ‘natural’ inhabitants. Thus spaces police, and are policed by, the bodies which enter them. The presence of particular bodies in institutional spaces may also incrementally alter the conventional power relations within. Puwar notes how ‘the arrival of women MPs is opening up the space, however slowly, for “a different inhabitation” (Grosz 2001: 9)’ (Puwar 2004: 39). The boundaries which demarcate spaces are, to some extent, permeable.

### **The Emergence of Fields of Play: Discipline, Nationality, and Institution**

Having set out above the mutable and ambivalent conditions of institutional spaces, the chapter moves forward to consider these in terms of sociology, and how Ben and Sebastian’s writing practices develop understanding of these. There are a number of fields of sociology in play, across their writing decisions: disciplinary, nationality, and institutional. Attentiveness to Ben and

Sebastian's experiences of writing their joint journal article, and the affective relations they indicate demonstrates awareness of how different forms of prestige operate in different spaces of sociology. This section focuses on three of these: institutional versus disciplinary prestige; the role of language in revealing an underlying value paradigm; and the function of peer review and reviewers in legitimating writing.

A number of tactical decisions were made regarding the journal article, but the most crucial – and the one which had the greatest impact on the style and content of the writing – was to which journal Ben and Sebastian should submit the article. This was emphatically influenced by the internal institutional rules of Sebastian's university department and his probation targets, which dictated that all employees must, in the first instance, send their articles to 'Q1' journals. These are journals whose Impact Factor is distributed in the top quartile – the top 25% - of journals within their subject. Impact Factor itself is a measure of the yearly average number of citations to recent articles published in that journal. Ben and Sebastian were thus compelled to chose their intended journal from a particular selection that were legitimated not only through the metrics of citation, but by Sebastian's institution. This affected the content of the article as well as the argument made. During one of our conversations, Ben drew attention to the difference between what they would have liked to do with the writing and what they ended up doing, asserting how it affected the originality and novelty of the piece. He noted that the Ph.D. programme they met on was interdisciplinary, and that Sebastian approached research from a philosophical rather than sociological tradition. As such both often spoke of their research as interdisciplinary or 'fringe'. Ben drew attention to how this sort of work is 'often not at home in a mainstream journal, much less a Q1 journal'. He elaborated that, in his perception, many Q1 journals are based in the U.S.A. and, as such, operate within a different national tradition of sociology and that this is apparent in the types of topic, methodology, and theoretical frameworks they are interested in. Ben saw these interests as running counter to the sociology he and Sebastian were co-writing. Thus, they strategized that submitting the article to a non-U.S.A. journal would likely produce a friendlier reception. The writing decisions made here demonstrate awareness of the differing forms of prestige offered in contrary sociological spaces. Ben's account of how they altered the tone and content of what their argument to fit more neatly with the Q1 journal demonstrates mindfulness of their (implicit) intention to work towards an institutional legitimacy and prestige in this space, rather than wholly towards the more niche prestige offered by a publication in a specialist journal, where they would be speaking to an audience of disciplinary peers.

Sebastian was also alert to the difference between institutional and disciplinary spaces, and openly aligned the values of his sub-discipline or niche with his personal vocation to sociology. He described the audit culture in his current institution, in particular the vision of targets for publications and grant income, seeing his institution's enactment of these as a form of symbolic violence. Sebastian confided that he feels the the constant audits and targets of academia as 'blockages' to his intellectual and professional progression. At the same time, he rejected the idea that he does work which is intended to fulfil the requirements of the REF or internal audits on publishing and productivity. He seemed to find this prospect antithetical to his relationship with writing and research, telling me that, 'There's already so much I do that I hate with a passion – admin and marking. If the writing didn't mean something, alienation would kick in big time and I wouldn't want to be in academia'. In asserting such a strong gap between his reason for writing and the parameters of institutional writing, Sebastian demonstrates an understanding of the existence of concomitant but connected spaces which also operate divergently. Within this is a further recognition that spaces of a (sub)-discipline, the personal, and the institution value different things in writing, and to be legitimated in one space is not to be legitimated in another. Sebastian's invocation of alienation also suggests an awareness of the relationship between bodies and spaces: there is the idea therein that he is not the somatic norm in an institutional academic space; he perceives a sense of dissonance between himself and institutional space, which potentially results in alienation.

A further way in which different types of prestige in different spaces is shown emerges through comments made regarding Sebastian's writing style. Throughout the ethnography, Ben made repeated reference to Sebastian as writing 'like a philosopher'. Despite the fact that both had completed the same Ph.D. programme (which crossed disciplines of politics, sociology, and philosophy), and Sebastian has been consistently employed in sociology departments, Ben repeatedly drew attention to Sebastian being of a different discipline and that this philosophical bent affects his writing style. He would make these assertions in broad strokes, as if it were obvious and factual that different disciplines produce different writing styles and that a 'philosophy style' is readily detectable. I pushed Ben on this – what does he really mean when he says that Sebastian 'writes like a philosopher'? He unpacked this somewhat, clarifying that a philosophical style is one that is winding, circuitous, loquacious, and heavy with multiple clauses. Ben's catch-all term for this is 'flowery'. In conversation with Sebastian it was clear that he too approached analysis of his writing style in much the same way, and made several humorous and self-deprecating references to Ben's notion of him being 'flowery'. Ben even intimated that this style of prose had been

something of a barrier to being published in the Q1 journal. What Ben saw as flowery or overwritten, the reviewers noted as ‘repetition of ideas’. The article was criticised for being too long, and Ben suggested that some of this was because Sebastian had ‘over-explained’ in parts. Though Ben draws attention to this writing style as being associated with discipline, I suggest that it is closely related to language and the role of cultural linguistics. Sebastian is Italian, and over the course of the ethnography we discussed in detail the specific processes of writing associated with producing prose in a second, or additional, language.

Sebastian has been bilingual since the age of fourteen, having attended a school in which English and Italian were both used for teaching. However, he is still mediated by recourse to the Italian language, and his relative instinctive and embodied distance from English. He described to me how, when he writes, he writes in English – he always has ‘a vague idea’ of what he wants to say, but when it comes to structuring his sentence in the precise way he feels is required in academia, his embodied grasp of English is sometimes insufficient. Unlike ‘native’ English speakers, Sebastian does not have a grasp of English syntax learned implicitly, slowly, and through lived experience; it is not embodied and inculcated in the same way as it is for a ‘native’. Indeed, Sebastian told me that syntax and precision in English ‘doesn’t come naturally’. Furthermore, Sebastian identified the ‘cultural aspect of language’ as important to understanding a piece of writing. In a discussion of translated works, he noted how ‘in the original language you see more of the personality of the author’, in the tone and formulation. Equally he noted that the ‘humour, especially, doesn’t translate as well’. Whilst I do not want to suggest that Sebastian struggles with writing in English, it is clear that he has a very different relationship to the language than someone who speaks English as their first language. Sebastian’s most embodied experience, particularly his early experience, of language is in Italian – a language with different rhythms, cadence, musicality, structures, forms of expression, and approaches to sense-making than English. Sebastian’s ‘flowery’ language, understood from this perspective, is less an overture to philosophy and more a presence of his embodied ‘Italianness’ expressed through prose. The identification of this style of prose as overblown, wordy, not quite right, is a tacit assertion of the hegemony of English in academic spaces, and a demonstration of sociology as structured through Anglocentrism. Further to this, we can recognise Anglocentrism as a structure of whiteness, and consider again Puwar’s somatic norm. Delores Delgado Bernal, focusing on the U.S., writes about the racialization of capitals and the ‘alternative’ capitals possessed by people of colour, but unrecognised by the white-structured education system. She notes that the bilingualism of Spanish-speaking Mexican pupils is not recognised as a proficiency or asset because it is viewed as “un-American” and considered

a deficit and an obstacle to learning' (Delgado Bernal 2002: 112). Delgado Bernal refers to this as a 'political tool used by local and state officials to... maintain a colonized relationship between Mexicans and the dominant society' (Delgado Bernal 2002: 112). Sebastian is white and not subjected to this form of colonization in the same way as an academic of colour. Indeed, there are constructions in which a combination of whiteness and Italian-speaking function to denote high cultural capital. In this instance, however, the stricture from both the peer review and Ben indicates an understanding of sociological spaces as being trained along lines of Anglocentrism and demonstrates the way English – as a tangent of whiteness – has colonized sociology. In this instance, the small admonishments and attentiveness to Sebastian's affective relations with language and writing are able to show how a particular type of privilege emerges within sociological spaces.

In addition to the above, the production of Ben and Sebastian's journal article shows the role of peer reviews and reviewers in legitimating writing in different spaces of sociology. The reaction of Ben, in particular, to the peer review comments demonstrates a dissonance between his disciplinary location and the location of their article in a 'mainstream' journal approved of by Sebastian's institution – and further institutionalised by its status as a Q1 journal. Here, again, it is possible to see different spaces of prestige and different types of prestige across these spaces: what is lauded in by the value system of the sub-discipline and specialist audience is not the celebrated concern of the institutional space. It was clear, during our conversations, that Ben felt frustrated in having to write for a general audience. He often attempted to cover or suppress this frustration – noting frequently that he was happy to co-produce in this format because it supported his friend. However, in discussion of what might have happened had they been able to submit elsewhere – to a niche or specialist journal - it became apparent that he felt this could have led to a more thorough and robust engagement in the article and with peer reviewers. Ben pointed out that 'this sort of diktat [to publish in Q1 journals] ignores that different journals reach different audiences, and it may be better for the article to speak to the audience of a more minor journal'. Further to this, he felt that submitting to a Q1 journal resulted in them getting a particular type of peer review comments – that these focused on generalities, pushing the piece into having a broad scope connected to contemporary issues and relationships to other theories and concepts - rather than embracing the argument as valuable in the context of historical sociology. Sebastian, too, held that the peer review process felt tense and fraught, sharing that, 'the article got a revise and resubmit, and then [on the second round] one of the reviewers went a little bit bonkers and started seeing problems they didn't mention in the first review. It was a bit petty'. Ben asserted that these

comments were ‘very different’ in focus to what he predicted would have come from a topic-oriented journal. Owing to this, Ben seemed to feel that the article provided less space for both him and Sebastian to learn, push, and refine their argument via engaging with a review process. The emotional reactions of Ben and Sebastian to their review comments – which they also note as creating a better article – demonstrate their continued location within their sub-discipline of historical sociology. They continue to evaluate their work based on the mores and values of historical sociology, rather than attending to the value system of the journal itself. The friction between these aptly demonstrates two contradictory value systems in contention. Through Ben’s identification that the strictures of the peer reviewers prevented the article from being refined in the way he might have liked, we can detect the emergence of different forms of prestige. Ben and Sebastian, in attaining a publication in a Q1 journal, have brought themselves institutional prestige. However, what Ben seems most focused on is the disciplinary prestige which could have come from a sophisticated and well articulated article in a niche journal oriented to the correct audience. Here, the peer reviewers work to legitimate Ben and Sebastian within a particular space of sociology (the institutional) whilst (somewhat) preventing them from gaining the niche prestige they would like from their sub-discipline.

The legitimation of peer reviewers works in another manner, in Ben and Sebastian’s relationship. During revisions, Ben used the peer review comments as a way of gently negotiating Sebastian out of his ‘flowery’ prose - rather than asserting authority as co-author and openly admitting to finding it over-written and too long. In my field notes, I observe that Ben is,

very measured, even pulling back on the tone of his comments. Where he really does seem to feel a change is necessary, he couches his recommendation in terms of what the peer reviewer said or wanted. This seems to provide a kind of protection – an external authorization of Ben’s views, as well as a buffer to their friendship.

I later asked Ben about this and he confirmed that the peer reviewers’ comments provided a helpful and non-aggressive way of channelling his views on Sebastian’s writing without directly criticising his friend and co-author. For Ben, this forms a useful strategy in negotiating the affective aspects of an intellectual, professional, and practical relationship. He maintains a position of diffidence and submissiveness – using phrases such as ‘if you want to’ in his in-text comments to Sebastian – but simultaneously co-opts the authority of the external peer reviewers to subtly push the writing

style into one legitimated by the dominant symbolic. He leans on the peer reviewers as arbiters of ‘mainstream’ sociology writing and uses their criticisms to make the changes he wants to see in the text. Ben doesn’t have to engage in difficult conversations with Sebastian, he can use peer reviewers instead. Ben takes part in a form of othering: the peer reviewers can be cast as bogeymen; their anonymity means they are nebulous and shady – they can take on the darkest aspects of the value paradigm which underpins this space of sociology. By using them, Ben can exert his authority without having to seem to fall into line with the value frameworks of this space – he can continue to align himself with their preferred space of their sub-discipline. This was not something Ben did alone. Sebastian showed great awareness of Ben’s method, laughing with me that he had ‘clicked’ that this was happening. He said nothing to Ben, but instead made the changes necessary.

These accounts from Ben and Sebastian’s writing process has shown the emergence of spaces of sociology, each with their specific value system, but in particular terms of their joint writing enterprise. This section concludes by returning to the general, and showing awareness of how different bodies always already have differently mediated access to spaces of discipline and institution. Puwar notes, that when a racialised body enters academic places, the norms of ‘race’ and ethnicity which exist in these spaces mean that it is always already othered. Turning to the experiences of the women of colour sociologists – Naomi and Lara - involved in the ethnography is helpful here. Significantly, the times at which Naomi and Lara discussed their personal experiences of institutional racism tended to be outside of clearly designated research conversations. During lunches, breaks at conferences, the walk back to the train station, they would tell me about the commonplace ways that racism is done in sociology. They mentioned being on the receiving end of ‘the look’, of insidious ‘reply all’ departmental emails challenging their identifications of inequality – but in which they themselves were not included, and of the exhaustion of constantly having to restate and re-argue the structural conditions supporting exclusions of people of colour from the sociology curriculum. These informal conversations recollect Les Back’s identification that institutional racism is structural, systemic, and sedimented. He speaks of stories from black colleagues about being ‘routinely undermined, cut out of the loop of academic communication and subjected to crude racism inside and outside the classroom’ (Back 2016: 143). (Micro)aggressions build upon yet more (micro)aggressions and produce conditions in which people whose bodies do not conform to the somatic norm are unable to successfully negotiate the walls and blockages (Ahmed 2013).

Lara shared a specific instance of this – one which points to how institutional racism arrives as casual and, for some, unremarkable. Lara recounted how she had been invited to give a talk at a U.K. university about the dominance of white supremacy in academia. The reason for this keynote, Lara told me, was that the university in question had held a conference on the British Empire but invited only white, male, Anglophone speakers to contribute. Lara’s keynote was intended, by the sociology department, to provide a postcolonial perspective to both the conference’s orientation and the institution’s decision. Lara’s invitation indicates a confrontation to hegemonic whiteness; the institution’s action did not go unchallenged, and moreover, the challenge came from within the university. Arguably, this shows the ambiguity in the value paradigms of hegemony – that these are contestable even with the institutional spaces supposed to uphold dominant power. However, it also represents another instance of institutions perpetuating a white, Western, Eurocentric narrative as the one key reading important for new undergraduates. This action of the institution makes a clear and open statement that it privileges white knowledge – that it legitimates white perspectives and will present them as the only, or best, option. Additionally, it is noteworthy that it is a woman of colour who must undertake the labour in challenging this system of white supremacy and oppression.

This institutional racism has two effects. It designates academia as a place in which black and brown bodies should not naturally appear and places these black and brown bodies as – to use Puwar’s term – ‘space invaders’. This dialectic of space and bodies compels attention to the experience of being a racialised ‘other’ in a space of education. Heidi Mirza and bell hooks have both produced extensive scholarship on this, chiefly focusing on the double-bind of ‘race’ and gender and the particular intersected oppression visited on women of colour. Mirza asserts that ‘Young black women bear all the hallmarks of a fundamentally inegalitarian society’ (Mirza 1992: 189) and describes an especially powerful instance of experiencing racism during her field work. Commenting on the account of a young black boy in a history teacher’s class she notes that

Mr Davidson’s obvious dislike of black pupils was not confined to verbal abuse of black males. Females were not immune from his disdain, which I discovered to my cost, when I had a door knowingly and sadistically slammed in my face (Mirza 1992: 57).

Mirza’s experience occurred in a school rather than a university, but the institutionalisation of racism bears out across the multiple places of education. Further to this, it demonstrates the way

in which Mirza as an academic researcher – with all the symbolic capital and credentialism that should be afforded her, owing to her intellectual and professional status – remains subject to racial violence, both physical and symbolic. It demonstrates that her status as an academic or intellectual does not afford protection against discrimination but rather, both in field work and everyday professional life, brings her into intimate proximity with it. The prevalence of the somatic norm and its regulatory action is further demonstrated in the scholarship of bell hooks. Her account identifies the subtle ways in which racism is practiced and how these racialising and racist practices shape places of academia:

they [hooks' professors in graduate school] did not make direct racist statements. Instead, they communicated their message in subtle ways – forgetting to call your name when reading the roll, avoiding looking at you, pretending they do not hear you when you speak, and at times ignoring you altogether (hooks 1989: 57).

The scholarship of Puwar, hooks, and Mirza adeptly shows that spaces are not neutral, and the gendered, classed, and racialised structures of spaces command and shape the ability to occupy or move within a specific space.

### **The Importance of Networks to Writing: Capital and Affective Relations in Sociology**

One form of writing in which the different spaces of sociology exist within the text is the Acknowledgements section of a book (to a lesser extent, a journal article). These show the emergence of networks, the way sociologists position themselves within and across spaces, and how they locate themselves within the discipline. Indeed, as Paul Hollander notes, 'They all conjure up a world of unsullied devotion to ideas, unsurpassed collegiality, the warmth of intellectual bonding, the glow of supportive family ties, human generosity and kindness at their best, and redeeming authorial modesty' (Hollander 2002: 63). Acknowledgement sections frequently do significant work in vocalizing attention toward all the diverse and wonderful spaces an author is capable of inhabiting at once – that they are not only automaton academics, but also replete with grants, supportive colleagues, friends, partners, and children. They also indicate the affect of inhabiting these different spaces – personal, professional, institutional, disciplinary – on the writing itself. Acknowledgements further intimate the types of prestige a sociologist is *trying to gain* – the spaces they are attempting to reach and secure themselves within. Like citation practice – outlined

in Chapter Two – Acknowledgements are a way of marking out territory and showing where you, as a sociologist, fit. Here, I suggest that networks themselves constitute a space of sociology. Networks are linked but mobile: a connected mass or body of people that together form a cohesive space which concomitantly remains fluid, undemarcated, and unbordered. Gaining prestige through a network occurs through a dual process of being legitimated by the correct network for the correct space, and the general accumulation of social capital. The role of a network in mobilising yourself across spaces of sociology can be seen simply in Ben and Sebastian's relationship itself. As noted earlier, Ben suggested this particular collaboration to Sebastian. Owing to Sebastian's institutional responsibilities, they were pushed to publish in a Q1 journal, which enables them to gain prestige within their institutions. Without the push of a co-authorship it is unlikely that Sebastian would have decided to write the article alone, and without Sebastian it is likely that Ben would have produced a book chapter only.

Forming networks – which in the ethnography were shown to be both research focused and socially oriented – increases your social capital. Though it has been suggested that simply knowing more people is enough to mark high social capital (Savage et al 2013), for this to be suitably understood as symbolic capital, it also matters *who* you know (Bourdieu 2010). Through association with others who are already credentialised, a sociologist may attempt to demonstrate themselves as being similarly legitimate(d). This was often raised in the ethnography, with participants discussing strategic moves of (often unnamed) colleagues in citing 'big name sociologists' in their Acknowledgements, when the reality is that they only loosely know these people. Some of the function of Acknowledgements is in their social function as 'opportunities for affirming and re-affirming the values of one's profession, marital bonds, collegial ties, and a sense of community within the academic setting' (Hollander 2002: 73). Related to this, their structure is readily familiar and understood across the field – participants often recalled that there is a standard formulation for writing your Acknowledgements. Moreover, though, participants saw them as a way of ostentatiously performing one's value – a kind of academic bragging designed to arouse awe. This awe is important – it reaches back to the invocation of the sacred outlined in Chapter Three and is a key aspect of forms of capital being misrecognised as talent or prestige (Johnson 1993). Networks, then, can work as a primary method of strategically embedding oneself in the discipline.

However, not everyone forms or performs their network in this sort of instrumental way. Discussing the Acknowledgements to his monograph with Sebastian, it became clear that his externalisation of his support system is not designed to demonstrate high profile allegiances, nor

to demonstrate himself as having high social capital, even in the sense Savage et al would recognise. Sebastian's Acknowledgement section was very brief and listed only 'the people who had a real, tangible impact'. He felt the time writing his monograph – which was based on his thesis – was very intense, owing to the workload of his teaching fellowship and the lack of time for research and writing within this type of role. Because of this he felt the need to limit his thanks: 'I wanted it to be really tangible...to be really genuine and honest. I mean it doesn't mean no-one else had an impact indirect or whatsoever, but ultimately I didn't want to go on and on and on'. Nevertheless, despite the lack of guile shown by Sebastian, he still benefits from the connections he has formed throughout his academic career – most notably the relationship with Ben. The ethnographic data shows Sebastian's network as more social than intellectual, despite him co-producing academic work, and discussing research with colleagues in and out of his institution. It was apparent that his network exists less to place himself in terms of symbolic capital, and more to secure affective connections to people in sociology which allow him to feel emotionally secure in the discipline. Having his particular set of friends enabled Sebastian to weather the often-fraught conditions of his early career precariousness. Notably, the co-authorship discussed here is an offshoot of this – it is the close, emotional relationship between Ben and Sebastian which creates the conditions in which Ben cares to suggest such career-supporting opportunities. Sebastian's account of his professional network demonstrates that affective and emotional relationships are not antithetical to symbolic capital as an end-product.

Ben's main consideration when writing Acknowledgements was similar, noting that Acknowledgements are about 'paying debts'. However, he saw his thesis and monograph Acknowledgements differently, conceptualising the thesis as a 'life stage' event and the book as a 'side-line project to teaching, admin, and other research'. For this reason, he oriented his Ph.D. Acknowledgements around the question of 'who has helped me get here?' and those of the book around 'who helped me write the book?'. Ben was very clear that the former was a personal exercise showing his passage as an academic and the latter was far more instrumentally driven. Curiously, one of the people Ben thanked in the Ph.D. Acknowledgements is a 'big name sociologist' who he has never met. Unlike the braggers noted above, Ben tells me that he thanks this sociologist in the context of having inspired his work and being a significant – if non-corporeal – presence in his academic life. Does this sort of 'big name' citation have the same effect as the show-off version noted earlier? Though it is not (necessarily) designed on the same motivation, it nevertheless serves to align the writer with a particular field of thought, or a specific thinker. In this context the 'big name sociologist' stands a personification of prestigious place in the discipline, be it a school of

thought, a collective of thinkers, or an ideology. Because of this, citing them functions as place-making. The acknowledgement can show the sociologist's proclivities – are you a feminist, a constructionist, a postmodernist? It can also demonstrate the extent to which someone's work connects with contemporary concerns, and if the cited thinker is particularly celebrated it demonstrates that the sociologist in question feels affinity with the mainstream of their discipline. In short, citing sociologists who have inspired you – as Ben did – helps to mark your place in the discipline. It is you showing, even obliquely, that this topic area, ideology, school of thought, or political bent, is where you fit in. This action may not be intended as glory-seeking via coattails but creating the association subtly produces convivialities in the reader between you and the 'big name': the proximity enables a sociologist to wear a little of the prestige of the place marked by the fame of the thinker (Burton 2015). Acknowledgements represent a tricky form of symbolic capital: just because you claim it through your networks, doesn't necessarily bestow it upon you – and the way in which participants were clued in to the tactics often used indicates that perhaps Acknowledgements may not be a form or site *of* symbolic capital or prestige. However, they do demonstrate that social capital is valued in sociology, and that sociologists (and academics more generally) have developed written social acts through which it is understood that one can make these claims. In short, attentiveness to Acknowledgements enables us to be mindful of how the value system for consecration is constructed and maintained – and that sociologists are key to creating and upholding structures of value in the field.

### **Place, Prestige, and Writing**

Attentiveness to the writing decisions made in this chapter shows how Ben and Sebastian have engaged in subtle moments of a gendered, classed, and racialised sociology. Lara's account indicates the ongoing dominance and taken-for-granted-ness of whiteness. Ben and Sebastian's experience has shown the interactions of friction and coherence between spaces of sociology, and their relative ease of movement – especially compared to that of Naomi in Chapter Seven – emphasises the smoothing quality of whiteness and masculinity as a currency for passing across competing value systems. This runs through sociology in sites like the canon but is equally harshly felt in the concrete institutions – graduate school, journals, and offices. Returning to Puwar's description of 'the look' - the sharp, piercing, directed glance which signals that a body of colour has entered a space in which they do not 'naturally' fit, we can see how operation of this shows the disjunctions and cohesions in academia. Puwar attacks the putative notion that academics are automatically trained towards equality and justice:

Regardless of how amicable academics are to other cultures and people, the sharing of the seat of power (knowledge) with those one studies can be an experience that very easily “throws” institutional positionalities and runs the risk of causing ontological anxiety (Puwar 2004: 45).

Puwar’s analysis demonstrates the gap between what academia says it does, and what actually happens within its spaces. It also shows how academic spaces cohere around whiteness and masculinity. The attentiveness to small, unremarkable writing practices and decisions in this chapter have shown this in action across spheres of sociology. In showing the texture of these different spaces and the way they are suffused with conditions of gender, ‘race’, and class, the chapter demonstrates that spaces of sociology are not – and cannot be – experienced or lived in the same way by different sociologists. The experiences of Ben and Sebastian are starkly different to those of Lara and Naomi. Recognition of this enables a perspective which understands spaces of sociology and their related prestige and privilege as deeply mediated by the bodies which engage with them. There is no single or coherent conception of a particular space, or spaces.

## Chapter Nine

### How Do You Solve a Problem Like the Mainstream? Sociology and the Rules of Writing

Euan: I'm really, really against the academic cultivation of power through a cult where someone sets up their writing as difficult to understand. They create a cult, and then you get a pile of followers who try to gain power for themselves by being the ones to decipher these texts.

This chapter looks at the purported rules of sociology writing and how these work to demarcate spaces of sociology. The most frequently recurring idea throughout the ethnography is that sociology writing gains traction through being complex and difficult to understand. This emerges through a review of the relevant literature and reveals itself in conversations with participants and gatekeepers, such as Euan, quoted above. There is a paradox present here. Participants – and sociological scholarship – consistently asserted that these ‘classy locutions’ (Becker 1986: 31) gain power for sociologists. On the other hand, no one would admit to either i) writing in this way, ii) enjoying or valuing this style of writing.

The contradiction poses a potentially fruitful avenue of exploration: what is the relationship between legitimacy, disciplinary power in sociology and this often-repeated rule of writing? The repetition that complexity in writing is tantamount to rigour of thought and the worthiness of the knowledge produced, suggests a single, identifiable, centre-ground of sociology, with hard boundaries and clear routes of trajectory towards it: you write in a certain way (complex, dense, jargon-ridden) and you become legitimated through that. This would broadly cohere with Bourdieu's framework of consecration that I set out in Chapter Three – that a sociologist uses this style to undergo a ‘rite of institution’ which then produces a consecrated state within the discipline. However, previous chapters demonstrate a far more multifaceted and intricate understanding of the spatial mapping of sociology. They show numerous spaces, co-existing and interacting, being crossed and used, each with their particular value systems – which alter over time and in line with trends and changes in both sociology and higher education. The ethnography supports a reading

of legitimacy which sees it tied, as a mechanism, to disciplinary power (which is drawn from the hegemonic), but also as having a set of parameters far more adaptable in character.

The very possibility of a ‘mainstream’ also exists paradoxically – in conversations with participants the ‘mainstream’ consistently emerged as ‘what people who aren’t me do’. The mainstream was always elsewhere – for a literary oriented sociologist, it was policy and quantitative oriented work (Andy, gatekeeper), for a Science and Technology Studies background sociologist it was Bourdieu (Kate), for a social theorist, it was empirical research (James, Lara), for a sociologist attentive to history, it was postmodernism and modernity (Ben, Euan). This chapter understands these concomitant paradoxes as connected, and addresses them together. Here, I use Euan’s above declaration, and the problem of writing he describes, as a central point to investigate this ‘rule’ of writing. How it is used to assert the existence of a hegemonic centre in sociology, and what tropes of academia are relied upon in this construction? How do sociologists respond to this as a rule of writing – specifically, how is awareness and wariness of it woven into the everyday writing practices of sociologists? Furthermore, what does it reveal about repeated understandings of U.K. sociology existing as a dialectic of centre and periphery? In exploring these questions, the chapter points to the relationship between fields of sociology, and how these fields intersect with structures of ‘race’, class, and gender, as well as the implications of higher education policy. Through this, the chapter connects the craft of writing to narratives of self-positioning and spatial understanding of sociology to draw out the function of ‘the mainstream’ in contemporary U.K. sociology.

### **Resisting and Obeying the ‘Cult of Complexity’**

Euan identifies that cults of complexity exist in order to demarcate power: by deliberately staging writing as difficult, the subject matter appears similarly erudite. The process of unpicking, understanding, and making sense of writing functions as an initiation rite: the procedure one must undergo in order to enter the space of consecration and be legitimated by ‘sociology’. Euan was not the only participant to note this particular mode of sociology and I want to consider how this practice is part of the everyday lived experience of sociologists – how it is diffused across spaces, perspectives, and people. In doing so, I draw attention to the ways in which this practice of deciphering and being credentialised exists in multiple spaces of sociology, and is imbricated into daily practice as well as being denied, refused, and ridiculed. Euan’s relationship to the centre/periphery of sociology is formed by his personal and professional context. He grew up in a working-class area of Edinburgh and was one of the very few pupils at his school who applied

for university. He achieved a place at Oxford to read Social and Political Sciences but found himself ‘hating everything at Oxford that wasn’t academic study – the excess, the claustrophobia, the snobbery’. Euan’s early experiences of sociology as elitist shape the way he engages with writing styles. Further to this, Euan’s first institutional posts were in Scotland, and he felt distant from a perceived institutional centre in London and the South-East.

Euan tells me that his aim in his own writing is for it to be as clear as possible. Recounting his experience as ‘an undergraduate student and then a Ph.D. student, and then as an early career scholar, [where] I read so much stuff that I struggled to get through, and was very difficult to understand’, he tells me that he is ‘determined not to reproduce [this complexity] in what I do’. Euan understands the demands for deciphering complex texts as ‘a form of symbolic violence’, and identifies that sociology which is written in a difficult and obtuse manner often has very little of significance to offer, lamenting ‘could you not have just said it clearly?!’. He is resolute that he would not ‘inflict’ this on his own readers: ‘I’ve been so annoyed by making so much effort for so little return, that I’m horrified that anyone would do that with my writing’. As Euan comments, ‘so many times, the outcome of those difficult processes of understanding was me realizing, “oh, is that it, is that all you’re saying?”’. He continued his analysis, declaring that, ‘writing in a fancy way is basically to disguise the vacuity of what’s going on’. Euan clearly understood this as a power play – a text riddled with jargon, opaque in sense, and a challenge to the reader to decode the mystery, is one way of creating unequal power relations between reader and author. It allows the author to remain in control, able to assert that their critical readers simply haven’t understood properly the substance of the text.

Euan was adamant that writing in this way is an agentic decision, designed to encourage a field of study around one’s own work. By making your work into something which requires ‘deciphering’, you set a tantalising challenge for ambitious colleagues, who set about trying to ‘unlock the mysteries’ of your work. Euan noted this as a ‘network of keen disciples’ whose decoding work tacitly intimates that the original text is worthy of decoding: the result is worth the labour. In Euan’s depiction, this consecrates both text and author; the disciples also gain legitimacy through vying for the author’s approval, whereby it is distributed more or less. This is a powerful form of consecration, in that it comes via both the willingness of followers to devote their time to deciphering, and also that the author, writing, and ideas within are so incredibly learned and advanced that they require decoding in order to be generally understood. It places the author above and beyond their peers. This is the type of writing raised in Chapter Two, that C. Wright Mills calls

‘socspeak’; Mills asserts that it is geared to raising the academic sociologist above other social commentators as well as their direct peers. It is, Mills says ‘unrelated to any complexity of subject matter or thought’ but rather ‘used – I think almost entirely – to establish academic claims for one’s self’ (1959: 220). Privileging complexity in writing is also connected with the correct performance of the intellectual. This is a style oriented to exclusivity, and to an ornate display of cultural capital.

Indeed, Christian and Johanna’s writing practices, outlined in Chapter Six, both recall some of the ideas behind this privileging of complexity in writing. Johanna’s writing practice is laborious and done in such a way – she says – to guard against flimsy or inaccurate theorising. Johanna reads large amounts of literature and distils this into subtle and refined prose. Christian sketches his reading material in convoluted mathematical equations until it can fit on one page – again filtering and condensing knowledge so as to present his findings in the most sophisticated and dexterous way possible. These processes share commonalities with both ‘ends’ of the complexity/decoding dialectic above. Both Johanna and Christian privilege the complex – indeed, this is not unusual in sociology. As Sayer notes, in relation to being ‘critical’, to take a counter position is to effectively admit that your work is ‘not critical’, that it is ‘in effect, naive and gullible’ (Sayer 2007: 768). To return to the work of Chapter Three, a number of gatekeepers suggested participants based on the fact that they did not produce ‘simplistic’ understandings of the social world. The place of complexity at the summit of sociological values is widespread, and whilst it may not be so obviously felt elsewhere, it remains a constituent part of sociological judgement. Christian and Johanna also both show traits of deciphering, having worked into their writing processes various ways of unlocking the coded mysteries of the texts they use in their own work.

Though this style of writing was frequently identified as rampant, few participants could cite specifics in their colleagues or recall moments in which they had written in this way. The latter may be unsurprising, but the former prompts the question of why this jargon-ridden prose is seen everywhere in the discipline except the parts that are proximate to the particular participant? Why is it always ‘over there’ and never ‘right here’? This construction of disciplinary writing suggests that participants perceive that becoming consecrated in sociology remains contingent on showing adherence to hegemonic power – showing very clearly that you already arrive with privilege. The foregrounding of complexity hints at ideals of intellectual sophistication being privileged in this writing style, indicating how consecration within the field of sociology is tightly linked to performing correct constructions of class and culture. Chapter Two showed how certain

hegemonic structures are seen across styles of prose which connote different disciplinary fields – and certainly the blanket recognition of ‘complexity’ and dense writing made by participants and gatekeepers would suggest that this is an element of hegemony which cuts across sub-disciplinary location or ideology. This draws out some of how these centre-periphery debates work, in that it highlights the multiplicities in which these occur. Participants discussed both how they are relegated or included based on sub-disciplinary field, and how their social class, gender, and ethnicity affected their position. These in/exclusions tend not to happen in isolation, or to be discussed as separate entities. Rather, position in the field and the perceived structure of the field is imbricated with classed, gendered, and racialised narratives.

There is, though, a small disconnect here. Participants repeatedly asserted the force of disciplinary power whilst also scoffing at the rules, mocking writing which was overly complex, and showing that they had achieved status within sociology by either using disciplinary power on their own terms or placing themselves in opposition to this disciplinary power. Neither of these positions is invalidated by the existence of the other. Instead, I argue that they point to how disciplinary power strongly shapes the criteria for legitimation, but that the value paradigms underpinning disciplinary power undergo a clear but slow shift over time. This shift is shaped through the agentive engagement of sociologists shown in this thesis.

### **The Existence of a Powerful ‘Centre’?**

Does a ‘mainstream’ space really exist in sociology? In this section I focus on how sociologists conceptualise the mainstream and the affect this space and the assumptions made about it has on their writing styles and practices. I look first at the accounts of Euan and Lara – how they understand the mainstream as regards institutions and journals – before moving on to look at the mainstream in terms of writing style. In doing so, I show that there are particular ways of writing which are understood as ‘centre-ground’ and ‘authoritative’ but also that the very ability of participants to identify and ‘decipher’ this style of writing shows their own foot in the mainstream camp, in terms of either an allegiance to it or a recognition of its authority. When I asked Euan and Lara where power resides in sociology their replies were swift: departments and journals. Both Euan and Lara’s testimonies converged in an assertion that there are certain sociology journals and departments in U.K. universities which drive and shape the spaces of sociology and the particular topics which are in vogue at any given time; these departments and journals are often associated

with certain 'big names' of the discipline – who are not necessarily canonical, but are people whom the discipline coheres around. Euan, however, did reflect that,

The nuanced response is that, well of course, power is dispersed and probably everyone in every part of the field walks to other parts of the field and thinks there must be more power over there...the grass is always greener, the power is always somewhere over the horizon and it's not here.

This idea of power as diffuse correlates with the textured responses participants made to their own position(s) of power within the discipline, which are shown in earlier chapters. Naomi, for instance consistently recognised that she wields various forms of power within sociology: institutional - in terms of her role as a professor and journal editor, symbolic – in terms of her largely secured place within the intellectual field, and social – in terms of her network and other sociologists of 'value' to whom she is connected. At the same time, Naomi was clear regarding her marginalisation as a woman of colour and that her more literary and humanities oriented writing style sets her apart in sociology. Both Euan and Naomi show how power is spread out – it is both 'over there' and 'over here'. Their narratives also indicate the way that they feel different locations in sociology are valued. Both asserted that, whilst literary and humanities oriented thought carries high cultural capital in some spaces, it is not equally legitimated within the field of sociology.

Euan's recognition that 'probably everyone thinks...the grass is greener over there' is a tacit understanding that he also operates in a space of power and is able to command some of that power himself. In noting that everyone is likely to be making this mythical claim, Euan goes some way to openly stating power as resting across spaces and practitioners of sociology, including himself. Euan points to the value ascribed to products of publishing in sociological spaces – owing to the long-reaching affect of a culture of audit which compels competition through the (over)-production of certain forms of written work. He told me that,

There is almost no power in the post-1992 universities. They have no power in the field whatsoever, they are the victims of how things are set up. The sociology that happens there is primarily teaching oriented, the research bases are very weak because there's just never been the

investment, the recruitment, [so] you don't get people who will be able to have research careers because they are just not given enough time.

Euan is not advocating this situation – his claim that 'post-1992' institutions hold little disciplinary power is not one of triumph or approval, but rather an identification that the 'mainstream' of sociology has little interest in the discipline as it is taught.

This recognition does something to throw light on what the 'mainstream' might actually be. There is a difference between being legitimated intellectually and being legitimated institutionally. Euan appears to be aligning the centre-ground of power with the institutional space of sociology. He asserts that power is linked to money (in terms of post-audit investment) which is attracted to departments through success in audits such as the REF, which is itself based on the published work and 'research excellence' generated by a department. If an institution does not have funds to recruit sociologists who will add high profile publications to their audit, that institution is unlikely to build a strong research base. In a mechanism where research is tied to institutional funding, departments which cannot 'get on the field' because they lack the financial resources to compete in the first place are caught in a value trap. Euan's account of power as based in departments and as related to the results of audits, suggests a 'mainstream' of sociology which is institutionally oriented and populated by sociologists who produce work which sits well within the modes of valuation enacted by audits such as the REF. This does not necessarily indicate a particular topic or type of sociology or sociologist, but it does suggest that the 'mainstream' space produced through institutions, in terms of university departments, is also reflected in the intellectual spaces of institutions – in particular sociology journals. There needs to be a convergence between spaces in order for them to work in tandem like this.

For Euan, the powerful spaces of sociology are the 'rich' departments that succeed in the REF because their academic staff are afforded time to write. This returns us to the figure and occupation of the 'intellectual', particularly in its connection with writing and common assumptions of writing as an intellectual rather than practical activity. It is possible to see, in Euan's differentiation between the legitimation accrued through research and writing and the lack of such as regards teaching, that writing and thinking are privileged roles in sociological knowledge production. The activities of a researcher are aligned with the cultural capital imbricated in the figure of the intellectual – erudition, sophistication, competency, flair, and dedication. Teaching, by contrast, was often discussed by participants as a practical activity. Though all expressed interest in their

students and saw teaching as an important facet of their job, they did not always connect this activity with their legitimation as sociologists. Equally, only one of the gatekeepers - Tim - made his selection based on prowess in teaching as well as writing or publication, indicating that the centre-ground of sociology is one oriented to certain activities, as well as disciplinary locations. We can think here about the intersections with higher education policy which arguably affect some of these judgements. At the time of the ethnography, the main audit system – and consequently the central means of organising university funding – was through the REF. Given that this is an activity based on published work, writing and research were held in high esteem in both institutional and intellectual terms. The further connection between writing, research, and large grant applications buttresses the already apparent role of economic capital in securing the centre-ground. Underneath judgements claimed as primarily intellectual, lurks a great deal of institutional pragmatism. Added to this, within cultural capital focused rubric of the intellectual as privileged, the activities of teaching-focused departments are understood to lead away from intellectual progress. The prizing of research over teaching reveals how cultural capital operates in the structures of the university system, and the implications of this for gaining legitimation through writing are profound.

It is also important to note how institutions function to control and delineate the kind of writing which ‘counts’ as sociology. Lara was forceful on how general-audience sociology journals take part in this act of disciplinary gatekeeping. She confided that, ‘I’ve never had an article accepted for a sociology journal, when I’ve submitted on spec. So whenever an article I wrote has been published in *Sociology* or similar, it’s always because it’s been an invited contribution or something’. Lara’s experience of publishing indicates that although she appears to have been legitimated in the field and gained status, her intellectual position remains an outlier to the ‘mainstream’. Lara openly recognises her legitimation within the field, noting that her position as Professor of Sociology demonstrates her as ‘externally validated’ and that in this position, she has attained ‘the pinnacle of what you can achieve as an academic’. Despite this, Lara feels that her writing – her disciplinary position – is tangential to the mainstream. She noted that in the peer reviews of her work, ‘all of them said that it wasn’t really sociology’.

It is noteworthy that Lara’s work is perceived differently when it is anonymous, versus when it arrives attached to her reputation, status, and position in the discipline. Lara is invited to numerous high-profile publishing and speaking engagements – implying that her sociological position is valid(ated) and of central concern. When considered in tandem with her name and reputation, her work is deemed sociological – this is demonstrated in her being invited to submit to special issues

of sociology journals and to speak at sociology conferences. However, when she submits articles anonymously she is rejected as ‘not sociology’. Lara’s experience emphasises how crucial symbolic power is to one’s writing and ideas being understood as legitimate. In context of her professional identity – her professorial status, her networks, her publishing record, her education, her departmental location, and her ability to perform as a sociologist, Lara’s writing is judged highly. Taking away these facets of symbolic capital and focusing on the writing alone appears to negate the legitimacy of her position as a sociologist; her writing is not critiqued for being flawed but for being ‘not sociology’. This suggests that it is Lara’s departmental location and her institutional and intellectual networks which allow her to be classified as ‘sociology’ by the ‘mainstream’, rather than the specific content or angle of her writing. Lara’s own identification of her disciplinary matters too; she consistently set herself as a sociologist, and within these institutional and intellectual spaces. Though she told me her work is more readily valued by other disciplines – politics, international relations – and that she feels marginalised because of this, Lara nevertheless continues to be adamant that she is doing sociology and is a sociologist. Her self-identification adds an important layer to understanding centre-periphery narratives: that arguably part of legitimation in a discipline is agentive, and as part of this, feeling marginal does not preclude you from also having strong disciplinary identifications.

Lara perceives journals as key in deciding what counts as sociology. However, it is not so much the journal itself - as a monolithic entity - as it is the peer reviewers for the journal who make these decisions. The journal controls entry to the field, but the machinery for this is dispersed among the individuals who judge colleagues’ work. To be published in a particular journal is a rite of consecration (Bourdieu 1991), but it is not the journal as a coherent body which bestows this consecration. Rather, a number of disparate and anonymous individuals are involved in the decision, which is then enacted through the journal. It would be erroneous to separate the agentive acts and judgements of our familiar colleagues from the faceless monolith of the journal, and to imagine that the struggle for, and contestation of, power is a matter of structures *versus* the individual. Lara’s account, whilst placing responsibility on the journal, actually shows how individuals become part of structures – how we can work *as* the structure - guiding their action and demarcating territory. Other participants – Naomi, James, Johanna – also experienced this phenomenon, with their work being more often classed as sociology when it arrives attached to their name and credentials as opposed to anonymised through the peer review system. It was further noted by participants such as Naomi and Johanna that ‘mainstream’ or generalist journals have a very canonical conception of what counts as sociology.

Perhaps, then, it is possible to say that the ‘mainstream’, as well as being a space produced through institutions, is also connected to a particular space of intellectual endeavour. Struggles within the field for institutional credentialism are always also struggles over intellectual authority – and this is something in evidence in the history of the discipline in Chapter Two. The accounts of participants in this study would suggest that this intellectual space is aligned with the canonical scholarship discussed in Chapter Two, and its associated values of whiteness and masculinity. The relationship between participants and the ‘mainstream’ provides further substantive ground for considering the role of disciplinary power in producing legitimacy. Neither Euan nor Lara expressed a specific desire to be seen as ‘mainstream’ or for their work to reach a ‘centre-ground’. Lara, however, did assert that she wants to see the contributions of global south scholars, people of colour, and ‘race’/ethnicity oriented schools of thought seen as central to sociological debates rather than as representing ‘alternatives’ or ‘difference’. Lara and Euan demonstrate a conceptualisation of the ‘mainstream’ which is contradictory. Euan viewed it as exclusionary – particularly on class and cultural capital grounds - but also dull and plodding. Lara understands it as elitist in terms of ‘race’ and gender. They both assert that it coheres around hegemonic power and produces privileged status for those who attain that ground. And yet, part of Euan and Lara’s claim to legitimacy came from not being part of the centre; characterising themselves outside of this does significant work for participants. Being in opposition to power is arguably a key aspect of sociology, and so to frame oneself in this way becomes another means of securing disciplinary legitimacy – an appeal to the conceptual foundations of the discipline. This positioning by Euan and Lara enables them to claim a form of disciplinary power without also being hegemonic, and therefore part of the elitist top-down power problem they identify.

### **Writing the Mainstream: Styles, Perspectives, and Content**

At the outset of this chapter I noted Euan’s assertion that complexity and jargon in writing is a way of claiming power; throughout the ethnography, other participants made analyses of writing which link to this claim. Building on this, I asked participants to read an article published in a major general U.K. sociology journal; I chose the ‘most read’ article of the month, as an example of a sociology article which has demonstrated its popularity. The article was co-written, but the first author was a prominent white male sociologist, working at, what was perceived by participants to be, a prestigious institution. It concerned a well-known large-scale piece of research. Participants read this piece and produced a ‘peer review’ focusing on the way the article made its argument, the

methodological tools used, the sociological content, and the style of writing. This exercise demonstrated participants' ability to identify the qualities of writing in terms of how these designate it as 'mainstream'. It also indicated the different assumptions driving the creation of a 'centre-ground', and the way in which this exists as much as an imaginative idea as a real and tangible space. Here, I focus on the reviews of three participants – Naomi, Sebastian, and Kate.

The discrepancy between the first reaction participants had to the piece, and their eventual opinion on unpicking it during conversation with me, sheds light on the co-options sociologists make with 'mainstream' spaces. A few days before we met to discuss it, Naomi sent me written notes on her review of the article. In these she said that the article was 'very good' and 'it should certainly be published'. She noted that, as a journal editor, this sort of 'famous' research is the kind that is now welcome, given that judgements are made about journals in terms of their citation metrics. Naomi made further positive comments – noting that the piece is 'clearly structured, and had a clear argument – there's a clear statement of position from beginning to end, and it took you through the things you needed to know'. This evaluation again shows convergence between tenets of the 'mainstream' and those of a dominant symbolic in sociology which privileges positivism and science. The instruction to be 'clear' and set out your argument in specific stages is one which initially seems neutral and even value-free, but on closer inspection aligns with values of rationality and objectivity. Owing to this, it is even possible to make links between the authority of this clarity and the prestige of overly-complex writing: both work off a premise of scientism – the latter in relation to Bauman's (2011) claim that sociologists can only assert scientificity for their research by making their subjects 'dumb' through the silencing affects of complex language.

However, the more we talked the more Naomi began to (almost violently) disagree with the article, and find places to critique its content and writing style. She noted of the article's treatment of the particular social phenomenon in question that it 'doesn't deal with the intersections with ethnicity and gender'. Naomi emphasised that article had not developed the nuance of its argument. It is worth considering here why an article can be published, well read, and considered excellent, whilst not discussing the implications of 'race' or gender in its model of the social world. This recalls the identification made by scholars such as Santos (2014), Yosso (2004), and Hemmings (2009) that gender and 'race' are never always already present as key structures for consideration or bodies of scholarship to be acknowledged. It positions the 'mainstream' as primarily concerned with the ideas and scholarship of white people and men. Naomi brought this out neatly, developing the idea that the article was not primarily oriented to converse with diverse bodies of literature and

bring together complex ideas in a nuanced manner, but was instead geared to a debate with another male scholar and his body of work. 'It's simply trading off [with him],' Naomi said, 'I think they had a particular target in mind and it not really an article set to engage with feminist or race studies scholars'.

Underscoring this was 'extraordinary self citation'. She expanded this as a particularly masculine activity, asserting that: 'It's basically penis-waving: "who has the biggest penis?"'. Here, Naomi identifies that credentialism in 'mainstream' spaces of sociology is deeply structured along patriarchal lines, and that male networks are important in sustaining this. The writing here is less geared to the production of novel and intriguing information and more about building and sealing your institutional and career power base. Importantly, this is connected to knowledge production and the legitimation of that knowledge. Naomi asserted that this 'penis-waving' and self citation is about 'how you get your citations up, and those of your friends. It's all about whose knowledge counts and who gets to be visible. It's a self replicating circle and it's deeply gendered and raced'. Sociologists can claim space and power through a number of practices which assert that their knowledge is the stuff that 'counts'. Because these central or 'mainstream' spaces are structured along lines of gender and 'race', the knowledge that 'counts' in these spaces tends to be structured and legitimated similarly.

These identifications of a lack of engagement or interest with 'non-hegemonic' bodies of literature are also discussed by Sebastian, in his review. Like Naomi, he identifies the writing style as 'simplistic' and 'descriptive' – noting further that the authors have 'given definitions of the types [of social phenomenon] but it's the way they relate to one another that's important, and that's missing'. He countered this by saying that the amount of data gathered in the study was so vast that 'you'd need to be intelligent to put it together', but nevertheless asserted that the article is 'boring'. Together with Naomi's comments above, regarding the clarity of the text and that it is straightforwardly argued, these reviews indicate that 'mainstream' writing style tends towards simplicity. This simplicity, however, is described by participants as the simplicity of necessity rather than being chic or elegant. I pushed Sebastian on this – why is a descriptively written and simplistically argued piece both well-read and well-regarded? He expanded on this, and his comments brought us back to Naomi's assertions regarding the masculinity and positivist outlook of the article. Sebastian argued that the project itself 'looks sexy' because it deals with a social phenomenon everyone can engage with, and the research was conducted in a very public manner. He further noted that being in receipt of government funding, the project was given 'a certain

authority'. But Sebastian paused, and said, 'I have a speculative reason for its authority'. I encouraged him and he continued: 'It's because it's quantitative' – and here Sebastian used air quotes – “and therefore true”. It deals with a lot of data and there's authority in that'. This identification that quantitative research carries more authority underscores the previous ideas that positivist and scientifically oriented research is the authoritative centre-ground. Further to this, both Sebastian and Naomi argued that the article would be greatly improved through the addition of qualitative interview material and stories from participants. Both felt that this would add 'texture'. The success of an article, its ability to be initially viewed by participants as 'excellent', and its seemingly solid hold on the centre-ground of sociology, is arguably achieved through the straightforward recourse to long-held and historically ingrained ideas of authority – similar to those set out in Chapters Two and Three.

Sebastian brought up a very similar idea to Lara, and her assertion that her name and reputation support her work in being seen as 'sociology'. Sebastian connected the reputation of the article to the reputation of its authors. They are, Sebastian noted, 'established, and in positions of power'. This credentialism, Sebastian said, is ingrained and travels with the authors – 'it's hard to fall off that pedestal – you attract illustrious institutions and grants'. This recognition supports the previously established connection made earlier in this chapter between institutions, the 'mainstream' and the interaction between an institutionally-produced centre-ground and its creation and sustainment through publications and writing style. These analyses of an apparently 'mainstream' text, indicate the boundaries and routes drawn in regards to demarcating the disciplinary centre-ground or 'mainstream' of sociology. They suggest that underlying preference towards masculinity and whiteness sits at the centre of the 'mainstream' but simultaneously presents itself in terms of 'what should be done' or 'the way the discipline looks'. None of the participants who reviewed the article found the writing style or techniques for making the argument surprising; indeed, participants reflected the idea that this style and approach is – almost quintessentially – sociological. Along with analysis of the white and male composition of institutions provided by Sang (2016) and Ahmed (2012), it is possible to draw the routes of patriarchy from the canon (Marshall and Witz 2004; Outhwaite 2009), to the university, to the 'mainstream' of sociology writing, and the epistemological techniques for asserting knowledge.

This is underscored by Kate, who also initially replied that the article is 'excellent'. I pressed her on this and she noted that 'the tone is convincing...it's kind of a view from nowhere, it's a masculine tone'. Kate's response shows a conflation of 'masculine' with 'universal'. She thinks that

because the tone is masculine it represents a perspective which is unencumbered by identity politics or bias. This demonstrates the success with which masculinity and whiteness has hidden itself in the dominant symbolic of sociology. As I pushed further, Kate acknowledged that her initial response represented an ingrained assumption that masculine, detached tones are not only value-free but assumed to be more convincing. Talking further revealed how the authors of the article use other elements of the (white, masculine) dominant symbolic in order to convince their audience of their legitimacy and competency. Kate argued - in a similar way to Sebastian - that the article must have some worth because the survey from which their data is drawn is very large, telling me that, 'the volume of people surveyed is convincing'. Pinning legitimacy on numbers and volumes rests on positivist notions of validity and evidence. These are oriented to practices of the physical sciences and imply that the verifiability of data correlates with how extensive your survey is. Kate linked this mode of research to the type of writing, asserting that 'only people doing quantitative work can get away with that writing style'.

Here Kate draws out a relationship between positivist scientific methodology and (exclusionary) masculine writing styles. Kate elaborated on this, particularly in terms of the role journals play in demarcating this space and policing the tone of writing. Identifying that the dominance of this masculine tone is 'a problem for researchers who wanted a more exploratory article', she noted that it is often necessary to alter how you write in order to place your work successfully in the major journals of the field. Not only do you need to write as 'a view from nowhere', you are also required to include specific sections – literature review and methodology – which conform to a particular notion of what legitimate sociology is. Ultimately, Kate's review uncovered how, through tone and content, the article positions itself as legitimate sociology. The choices of tone and content themselves draw on consecrated structural and conceptual positions, thus enabling the authors to connote themselves as legitimate and credentialised by the discipline.

This analysis shows a hierarchy in action in terms of what will get you published in a centre-ground journal, and what 'counts' as mainstream sociology in terms of institutions like departments and journals. However, it also points to a certain level of reticence by sociologists to be associated with this ground. Frequently participants preferred the legitimisation of their immediate disciplinary peers and the credentialism attached to intellectual performance, over that which comes from institutions. Though the 'mainstream' exists in a hierarchy, underpinned by modes of supremacy such as whiteness, masculinity, and dominant class position, it is not necessarily the space that everyone aspires to inhabit. It is structurally powerful and affects the lives of participants because

its power is codified within institutions they are compelled to engage with as part of their careers. However, in terms of intellectual practice participants expressed little desire to engage with this space, nor did they privilege the work seen as part of it.

### **Mainstream: Centre, Periphery, Imaginary?**

If the centre-ground or mainstream of sociology is indeed structured along lines of whiteness and masculinity, then what does it mean to inhabit this space and – crucially – what does it mean to claim marginality? Most participants in the ethnography could not understand themselves as doing ‘mainstream’ sociology, but at the same time, they arrived into the study having already been legitimated by people of status within the discipline. Within this context, what does it mean to be ‘legitimated’ – what routes of consecration are drawn and what spaces are/can be claimed by the participants? What work is done for participants by claiming a peripheral disciplinary status? Further to this, do these claims erase the experience of those made marginal by structures of racism, sexism, and classism – or does there exist a more complex and ambiguous mode of co-presence in multiple spheres of sociology and diffuse forms of holding power? Euan narrates his position in sociology as deliberately and consciously marginal, noting a congruence between the ‘mainstream’ and what is currently in fashion in terms of topic or approach. He sees his deliberate renunciation of the centre-ground as a way of engaging with debates which will have longevity. Euan, though, also asserts that this decision to take a purposefully peripheral position came about through being ‘unable to play the game; I’m almost silenced by that game’. This game, he tells me, is one of how sociologists narrate themselves as concomitantly scientific and sociological. Euan relates that most sociologists like to,

narrate the story of how they got into sociology by demonstrating that they’ve a huge amount of knowledge about something else. A lot of people that I’ve worked with like to say “Oh I actually started off in Physics or Biology or something”. Basically that’s to show you that they know all about the natural sciences...they’ve got a lot of cachet. A lot of people I’m thinking about like to demonstrate their scientific capital but at the same time reject positivism.

Euan elaborates that he cannot do this because he’s been in sociology ‘since day one’. His identification here again returns us to the claims of Bauman (2011) and Santos (2014) that a

preoccupation with the putatively more legitimate credentials of science suffuse sociology and train the value system to one of 'scientific rigour'. Euan's note that others identify themselves as having both scientific capital and make a rejection of positivism suggests a scheme whereby sociologists attempt to hold on to the traditional legitimacy of the scientific method whilst at the same time trying to hold a more nuanced and sophisticated position than straightforward positivism. Like Euan, Lara tends towards describing herself as marginal. Her position on the periphery is different to Euan's; as a woman of colour, she lacks his immediate validity as a white man. Her experiences indicate that, unlike Euan, her situation is less agentive – where he has imposed his marginalisation on himself, Lara often has it imposed upon her. We talked about how 'included' she felt in the mainstream of sociology – did she feel her work was taken seriously, and does she feel she is recognised as a credible and legitimate sociologist? Lara owns her high status in the discipline, noting that, 'people think that what I'm arguing has something to contribute to the way in which they are also thinking about these sorts of issues'. However, she tempers this, telling me that her legitimacy and security in sociology 'varies'. Her position may seem one of relative strength and stability, but this does not prevent her from *being* marginalised and ignored by others. 'Take citations,' she says:

I think I probably was one of the first people to bring in the [specific argument] in as direct a way as I did...But often when I read stuff and when people are talking about who does work in [this area], I'm not mentioned at all and there are a couple of guys who do stuff and their stuff is subsequent to mine and they use my work - not always referenced -but they definitely use my work and I know that they know of it and *they* get cited. But I mean that's a general case, people always cite men over women. That's always a battle.

Lara's marginalisation through not being cited for her own work is indicative of the sites of power in sociology; as Sara Ahmed note, citation is 'a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies' (2013). In the 'mainstream' space of sociology, these bodies are white and male. Ahmed's assertion of the dominance of white and male bodies in sociology demonstrates how we are taught to credentialise ourselves through recourse to white male thought. Lara's work – being that of a woman of colour – does not do this work of credentialisation in mainstream sociological spaces. Lara herself is perhaps unable to consecrate 'mainstream' space, but she can draw on already-consecrated spaces to legitimate herself, such as her professional position, the institutions in which

she is invited to speak, the journals with which she publishes and her strong publication record. Lara's power within the discipline, whilst strong, is more paradoxical and liminal than Euan's. Though her research itself challenges the validity of taken for granted narrations, conceptions, and structures of the discipline, she is tacitly compelled to draw on many of these structures in order to create legitimate space for her research.

Lara and Euan present two versions of a marginal or fringe position; what they share in common is that both of them are able to assert a level of disciplinary and institutional power. But what work is being done for Lara and Euan by narrating themselves as marginal? Is this a fair reflection of their security and status? And what boundaries of power and demarcation are drawn in this claims of marginality? 'Probably everybody feels marginalised,' says Euan to me. 'So much of the rhetoric of sociology is about occupying a marginal position to look at things from the side of things rather than from the centre or from within'. This suggestion implies that there is a connection between a 'correct' performance of the sociologist and the occupation of marginal ground. Sociology is oriented to analyse inequalities, and the discipline itself assumes a 'side' entry position - so to work from any other place arguably positions your research as not sociological. Euan neatly identifies how this is a power play in itself:

We all want to present ourselves as marginal because we probably think that's a good thing to be. Because to say that you are marginal is to set up a - probably imaginary - centre of powerful people that you can present yourself as being against.

However, there are instances in which this powerful centre of people actually does exist. The marginality caused in relation to this is real and it draws boundaries of legitimacy across certain bodies of work, excluding voices which are not of the centre ground. Sharon M. Meagher deals with this neatly, in terms of feminist philosophy. She describes an incident at a conference in which Barbara Freeman responds to a male questioner in the audience who listened to her paper on feminist philosophy and then asked, 'So what does this have to do with Hegel?':

Freeman got up from her chair, walked around the table to the very edge of the stage and leaning hard toward the questioner, screamed "WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH HEGEL? WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH HEGEL? FUCKING NOTHING!" Freeman

then calmly returned to her seat, took the microphone, and answered the man's question in tremendous detail, proving that she could pass his test while at the same time exposing the absurdity of having to engage in such a translation project (Meagher 2012: 206).

The above quotation shows how feminist scholarship is insistently required to speak to and acknowledge a (putative) supremacy of the male canon. Meagher's article tackles a situation in which feminist philosophers are unfairly and unequally compelled not only to have expertise in feminist philosophy but also a full command of the 'mainstream' canon. Meagher writes of the 'extraordinary and unfair expectations that were being placed on us' and the 'utter lack of reciprocity' from mainstream, usually white male philosophers, who feel no responsibility to have any knowledge of feminist theories (Meagher 2012: 205-206). Taken together, Euan and Meagher's analysis shows that the 'mainstream' is a handy by-word that can be used in order to place oneself in opposition to a powerful 'other', and show oneself, by contrast, as noble or progressive. It is also a space of sociology (and other disciplines) which commands a great deal of power, given that it is connected to and structured by, already dominant social positions of whiteness and masculinity.

Across Euan, Lara, and Meagher's depictions, the 'mainstream' is not viewed as a positive space. No one wants to be associated with it, but concomitantly, it does wield power and influence. The fact that sociologists tend towards a narration of themselves as marginal and of others as repeatedly claiming marginal space indicates that the 'mainstream' is also often diffuse – spreading out into other spaces and quietly colonising these through continual contentions that the work being done and the position being held is 'fringe'. This effectively silences the positions – women, people of colour, disabled and working class scholars - which are pushed to the margins of the discipline – if everyone is claiming peripheral status then the political and affective power of resistance through marginality is lessened or lost. Ultimately the complex narrations regarding the 'mainstream' reveal the ambiguous and ambivalent quality of the spatial configuration of sociology. They show that it is possible to be both 'mainstream' and marginal – Euan, and Lara especially, show how you can be institutionally mainstream in terms of departmental status and journal publications, but also feel yourself to be pushed out of those spaces and conversations. Their accounts develop a rich understanding of how discussions of centre and periphery relate to disciplinary legitimacy. These draw out the ways in which topic area, ideology, institutional position, and social location are woven together in judgements sociologists make of each other, and the way they analyse their own

place within the field. Problematically, however, claims to being marginal when you in fact are positioned within powerful disciplinary spaces, diminish the potency of the politics of the outsider. In a deeply variegated and intersectional configuration where people are structured both through positions of hegemony and inequality, it is increasingly difficult to conceptualise the landscape of sociology – and academia more widely – as one of a simple in/out boundary.

## Chapter Ten

### Reflections on Sociology Writing: Power, Strategies, and Futures

This thesis is about sociologists' processes and practices of writing, their emotional relationship with writing, and the way these factors influence how sociologists understand themselves, and the knowledge produced in the discipline, as legitimate. I began this thesis by asking whether there is a relationship between a sociologist's craft of writing and the production of legitimate knowledge. Chapter Two set out the interplay between disciplinary power and forms/styles of sociology writing; my initial expectations in undertaking this research were that sociologists' accounts of their craft of writing might broadly reflect the arguments made in this scholarship – that one could reasonably expect hegemonic power to be felt and acted in fairly clear-cut ways. What the ethnography actually shows is a relationship between hegemonic power, inequality, and disciplinarity, which is far more complex.

The stories which emerge enable the thesis to make a strong new theoretical contribution: the dynamic and intricate interplay of individual agency and structural power challenges current understandings of hard boundaries between hegemony and inequality in ways which are both potentially hopeful, but also even risky. What does it mean to assert that scholars subject to structural and conceptual discrimination have access to employing that same dominant power to mark ground for the legitimacy of their own knowledge claims? Chapter Seven shows Naomi's dislocation with what she sees as sanctified forms of sociology, and the way she is continually used instrumentally to 'do diversity' for her institution. But the chapter also shows Naomi as astute and fully aware of the game – she is professionally successful and understands how to use writing to position herself with legitimacy. Moreover, Naomi also enforces this dominant power herself through her work as a journal editor. Likewise, in Chapter Six, Johanna problematizes straightforward in/out conceptions of disciplinary power by claiming the centre-ground, despite her feeling of marginality as a working-class woman and interdisciplinary scholar. In Chapter Eight, Sebastian demonstrates the reverse in his account of feeling and experiencing peripherality even though he inhabits powerful locations of whiteness and masculinity. Johanna and Sebastian are among those in the thesis who indicate the complex relationship between hegemonic and disciplinary power. The thesis shows that these forms of power are neither bifurcated, nor do they easily map onto one another: understanding yourself as legitimate within sociology does not rest

on having hegemonic power, and having hegemonic power does not ensure uninterrupted access to narrating oneself with legitimacy. The challenge presented by this is therefore to reconsider how sociologists understand hegemony and inequality – and how these factors shape the making of legitimate knowledge.

The thesis is firmly located in sociology, but has veered away from representing the writing culture of one particular location of sociology. Instead, it has used an innovative methodological approach which conceives of sociology as a field and understands different participants as different field sites – what I have termed ‘ethnographies of people’. In doing so the thesis has been able to engage with the multifaceted forms of legitimacy which occur in the field. Further to this, through tracking the writing of different participants I have also been able to track the action of disciplinary power across spaces of sociology. This original methodology allowed me to see the different points and places at which participants met with disciplinary power, the form in which they engaged with it, and the dialectical relationship with hegemonic power. I have shown in the thesis the ways in which disciplinary power slips into the everyday writing practices of sociologists – Christian and his sketches in Chapter Six, Euan’s ‘imposter syndrome’ in Chapter Five, and Ben and Sebastian’s experience of peer review in Chapter Eight. The focus of the ethnography on the everyday aspects of writing results in the thesis contributing new knowledge on the complex mundanity of writing, but equally linking this to macrocosmic concerns regarding the action of competing and overlapping value paradigms which operate within, and drive, daily academic life. The narratives which emerge from the ethnography also push to rethink the limits of Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, capital, and field – how far do these allow the complex workings of class privilege, whiteness, and gender on the discipline to be exposed and analysed?

I have, above, briefly mapped out some of the ways in which this thesis expands on, and contributes to, current knowledge. But how does the thesis go beyond a study of sociologists writing sociology? I want in the remainder of this chapter to suggest three ways in which the work here provides a substantive contribution to the wider field of sociology.

- i. Writing is a significant driver in the creation of a ‘disciplinary self’. This disciplinary self is a locus of positioning oneself with legitimacy. Sociologists use their narratives of writing to produce a ‘sociological self’ but simultaneously this sociological self is also something through which their writing is produced. There is a dialectical relationship at work. This is more complex than being simply the way a sociologist practices or ‘performs’ their

discipline. These performances are informed by, and constructed through, sociologists' social locations, and broader relationship with writing and reading. Attentiveness to the material process of writing and affective relationship with writing is important in understanding why knowledge (formatted as both written work and the writers themselves) becomes legitimate(d).

- ii. The relationship between hegemony and inequality is not a zero-sum game. Because the field in which sociologists operate is complex and multifaceted, actors within it are able to use their writing in an elastic manner to legitimate themselves in different disciplinary spaces. More broadly, the ethnography shows that positions of hegemony and inequality do not necessarily exist in opposition; rather, they are intertwined and co-operative. In order to use terms such as 'legitimacy', 'authority', and 'value' with real meaning, it is first necessary to unpack the complicated – and often problematic – relationship between hegemonic power and unequal positions.
- iii. Structural inequality is endemic within academia but it is important to mark a difference between how this operates within sociological (or disciplinary) knowledge production/legitimation, and how this impacts on people at an institutional level. The relationship between structural inequality and gaining or enacting disciplinary power is more complicated than owning identifications of whiteness, masculinity, or class privilege, and enacting domination or advantage through these. Disciplinary power functions by demarcating the correct practices of sociology. Whilst these are related to hegemonic categories of power, this is not the only variable or consideration. A sociologist's position within the field – in terms of sub-disciplines, schools of thought, and methodological practices – also have great influence on how and where a sociologist is legitimate(d). There is malleability in the way that disciplinary power may be performed in sociology.

In the following sections I expand on these provocations, before revisiting the place of this thesis within the wider landscape of U.K. sociology and higher education. Finally, I suggest some tentative conclusions on the 'value' of studying writing as a way in which to access the workings of power.

### **Creating and Positioning the Sociological Self through Writing**

This thesis offers significant access to the everyday and mundane areas of sociology writing. This is significant in revealing how self and social identity are constructed in relation to the structures and expectations of the field. Furthermore, the ethnography and analysis in the preceding chapters shows the ways in which sociologists' sense of self is also predicated on their complicity in 'playing the game' – that there is a level of interestedness and investment in the field, and this is a significant force in upholding the value systems which undergird notions of legitimacy. Focus on the theme of self in the thesis, then, has allowed a novel examination of what it means to be 'legitimate' within sociology – to be understood by one's peers and colleagues as excelling or having 'star quality'. Through accessing this question via sociologists' particular means of producing writing, the thesis has shown the gap between the public performance of disciplinary identity and success, and how individual sociologists actually perceive themselves – often in ways which contradict any sense of ease or affective proximity with legitimacy. What is especially noteworthy, however, is the way in which the ethnographic material in the thesis shows participants using writing – and their narrations of their own writing – in order to build up this outward performance of credibility and success.

Further to this, writing and the act of narrating their writing works as a performance 'warm up' for participants themselves – through doing their various processes and practices of writing, and through telling me about these, participants start to inhabit the role of 'legitimate sociologist'. This is part of them becoming their sociological self. The act of writing, and of telling about writing, produces the sociological self – brings it into being – through the performance. Here, participants also agentively engage with the multiple parameters of legitimate knowledge at play, building their sociological self in relation to these value systems. The performances of 'legitimate sociology' in this thesis indicate both the lack of stable and coherent 'core' properties of legitimacy but also that, for some, it is the opposition or tangential positioning to legitimacy that matters to their sense of sociological self. As shown by several participants such as James, Euan, and Christian, their sense of self as sociologists - indeed their very legitimacy itself – comes through a form of *laissez-faire* rebellion against the strictures of the discipline. This performative relationship with legitimacy demonstrates the layered complexity of the concept, as well as the plasticity of hegemonic power – on which I expand in later parts of this final chapter. Here, I want to return the discussion to concentrate on the creation of the sociological self through writing, and how writing is concomitantly produced through the sociological self.

Christian was adamant that you could not be a writer and sociologist: the two are incommensurable because they call on you to inhabit two contradictory roles of scientist and creative. But, as Chapter Six shows, Christian *is* creative in his writing practice and he *does* exhibit an affective relationship with his process and materials. At first glance you might think Christian's claims and actions to be untenable as a coherent whole. Considering his statements from the perspective of creating, performing, and sustaining a sociological self through writing unwraps some of these contradictions and shows their usefulness in Christian's professional practice, and personal relationship to this. In this thesis, I show that writing is not limited to being understood as a creative practice in and of itself, but can also be creative with respect to sociology. Christian asserts that he cannot – and will not – inhabit the identity of 'writer' because that is a designation that to him is fraught with implications of being guided by an imaginative self, where the work produced is driven by the internal demands of that writing rather than (what he sees as) the objective parameters of knowledge. That he has a 'creative' way of writing, with which he feels a deep, bodily connection, does not automatically invalidate his stance.

Christian uses his writing practice as a way of building his sociological self – his legitimization of logic, rationality, and replicability is folded through his practice of writing. By doing this, Christian affirms to himself, as much as his disciplinary audience, that these tenets are important to him. A significant part of the creativity of his writing practices is Christian creating his understanding of sociology within his own writing. He uses both his perception of his writing practice, as well as the scientificity of his writing, as a way of positioning himself on the sociological stage and correctly (for him) performing his sociological self. It does not matter that his writing practice is rarely seen by others or not openly discussed. Christian knows how he writes, why he writes this way, and his personal relationship to the identity of 'writer'; these form his sense of self as a sociologist and shape the way he interacts with the discipline and other practitioners. Indeed, this is apparent in my comments in Chapter Six on how Christian engages with me throughout the ethnography – particularly his repetition of Goldsmiths as only artistic, and this forming a disjunction between our points of view. He very clearly thinks we are undertaking sociology from vastly different ontological places – that we have very different sociological selves. Christian uses his writing as a way of claiming a scientific, ordered, and logical sociological self – and, likewise, writing in this way is a key part of him performing this self. Christian's position here – and his interactions with me – go some way to demonstrating the complexity of 'field' within sociology, the ways this functions to legitimate (or not), and how this is related to one's habitus or academic subjectivity. In Chapter Two I indicated that competition between sub-disciplines, topics, and schools of

thought within sociology has been important in structuring the field, and has resulted in the possibility of being consecrated within one space of sociology, and remaining very much not consecrated in another. The apparent gulf of perspective between Christian and I is indicative of this: operating within different schools of thought, disciplinary background, and methodological practice, we do not appear to value the same precepts of knowledge formation. Our notions of legitimacy are built upon our experience of our sub-discipline or methodology, and our (sociological) habitus has inculcated and strategized from this place. What we consider ‘worthwhile’ in playing the game – and our expected or desired eventual outcome – is therefore different.

Where Christian’s disavowal of being ‘a writer’ comes a little unstuck is in its slightly flat understanding of what writing is, and what it means to sociology and sociologists. Christian makes an assumption that ‘writers’ are bound by their text. He leaves scant room for understanding writers and writing as flexible, idiosyncratically-oriented, or for thinking of writing as a verb in the same material ways as we might approach writing as a noun. This is countered by the work within this thesis which shows that writing is significant as part of academic practice – and, importantly, in a way which goes beyond the instrumental concerns of ‘publish or perish’. Writing (verb and noun) is an active agent in bringing about a sense of disciplinary self. Because it is an ongoing aspect of academic life, writing is also vital to *sustaining* this disciplinary self. It provides tangible means by which sociologists classify themselves, map themselves with respect to others (a form of psychic citation practice), and change themselves as sociologists. To alter how you write and what you write is to reorient yourself within the discipline.

This dialectic relationship between creating a sociological self through writing, and that sociological self shaping your writing is shown well in Naomi’s account. Naomi narrates a situation in which she can strengthen her sociological self through her writing choices, and use these to position herself with value. As such, Naomi chooses to shape her writing according to what she understands as the legitimate style of the discipline – a focus on methodology and literature review, showing the robustness of your claims, and giving up front ‘spoilers’ rather than a more story-focused rhythm. By doing so, Naomi has successfully managed to place her work – and so, herself – within respected and prestigious sociology journals. Part of creating the performance of a legitimate sociological self is shown to occur within the actual decisions made regarding writing style. As previous chapters make clear, there are multiple spaces of sociology and attendant value paradigms in each; Naomi’s action here legitimates her only within spaces (such as the mainstream

and the institutional) which privilege this hegemonic value system. However, Naomi also wishes to be understood as legitimate within other spaces of sociology and she uses her writing to reach into these as well, choosing to make interdisciplinary collaborations or to produce book chapters in which a more narrative and essayistic style of writing is credentialised. Naomi's professional practice is aimed at legitimacy in multiple spaces and the fractured quality this is reflected in the discrepancy shown between herself and her accounts of writing. Further to this, it is also reflected in the ambivalence with which she speaks about her disciplinary position. Thinking back to Chapter Seven, Naomi shows herself as both uncomfortable and fixed within sociology. She is pragmatic, and often encourages pragmatism in others, but this tacit co-option into the game of the dominant symbolic conflicts her – especially when she acts as arbiter of it in her work as a journal editor.

Likewise, Naomi does not feel wholly marginal. Throughout the ethnography Naomi made it clear that she does not feel that she belongs to any group or faction, based on her 'marginality'. In terms of professional relationships, she does not align herself with any collectives of feminists, race/ethnicity scholars, or other ethnographers. In the same way that Naomi does not present as white, or always align conceptually with whiteness, her formative years mean that 'brownness' is also not an identity she feels as natural or innate. Naomi's complex and ambiguous personal identifications mean that she does not feel clearly directed to a particular 'identity'-driven space of sociology. Thus, she straddles a number of spaces based on her desire to protect herself professionally and do justice to her political and social justice aims. But writing is key for Naomi because in the miasma of this uncertainty and doubt she is able to understand the complexity of her layers of performance of sociological self by reflecting on her writing practice. Naomi can track her sociological self back to her writing decisions, or agentively use writing to shape her diffuse interventions in the discipline.

The identification of writing as bringing the sociological self into being, but also being produced by that sociological self has two important implications for sociological knowledge and practice. Firstly, it reminds sociologists to take writing seriously – as more than a representation of 'good' or 'legitimate' disciplinarity, or part of succeeding on a professional or institutional level. I have shown in this thesis that writing is a space in which sociologists make and remake themselves, as well as experimenting with what kind of sociologist they might be. Considering Johanna's reflections on sociological writing (Chapter Six) after her promotion to professor is a good example of this – in that she questions the kind of impact she wants to have on the discipline and

how she might use her writing as exploratory. As sociologists explore, question, and remake themselves they are also doing the same with the boundaries of legitimacy in the discipline; what counts as legitimate knowledge is already shown by the thesis to be mutable, but highlighting this aspect of it shows the intimate relationship between disciplinary power and individual practitioners' affective and professional engagement with sociology. As I expand below, the precepts of legitimacy and hegemonic power do change – but slowly. This interwoven relationship hints at why this is – that these are concepts created and maintained by social actors. Secondly – but linked – the contribution on writing made by this thesis compels sociologists to look more closely and sensitively at the ways sociologists develop their sense of self through their writing practices, and to acknowledge that the personal and the professional are not divisible – even when we make our own individual claims that they are. This attentiveness to sense of self and awareness that it is part of written work is a key motor in understanding a more nuanced terrain of sociology as a discipline – marking the (legitimate) presence of the personal and the affective in the practice of the discipline.

### **The Complexity of Hegemonic Power in Sociology: Malleability versus Fixity**

When I began this research I did so with a focus on 'legitimacy', and very much understood this in the singular. The discussion above has already noted that participants identified multiple spaces of sociology in which different paradigms of legitimacy worked to credentialise. It is possible to be legitimate in one space and not in another. My final provocation considers the interplay of hegemonic and disciplinary power, but before that I want to expand the conversation to think about hegemonic power more broadly – what does this thesis contribute towards a sociological conception of hegemony and inequality? Through focusing on the work in Chapter Eight, I unpick the intertwined and co-operative relationship between these positions. Having undertaken the research within this thesis, and attempted to marshal 'legitimacy', 'authority', and 'value' as useful theoretical concepts, my argument is that for these terms to have meaning, sociologists must also consider how hegemonic power and marginal positions sit in an ambivalent but sometimes also convivial relationship. My argument is that hegemonic power is not fixed or stable. This is different (but connected) to a claim that different forms of legitimacy operate across different spaces. What I assert here is that what counts as hegemonic can (and does) alter; the differing but concomitant value paradigms of legitimacy in operation go towards providing evidence for this.

The ethnography in this thesis suggests it is helpful to move from considering hegemony in the abstract and focus on how people *use* hegemonic power. Thus, instead of viewing hegemonic power as an outside, amorphous other – potentially threatening and marginalising – the ethnography in this thesis supports considering how hegemonic power sits in each of us. Access to using this hegemony is differently mediated, and for some it is easier than others. This approach shares elements in common with Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) extrapolation of intersectionality, in which Crenshaw shows the way inequalities and forms of oppression often overlap. I suggest here that privilege, power, and inequalities are also shown to overlap and co-exist. One of the aspects which made analysis of the ethnographic material in this thesis both awkward and complicated is the way in which participants operated simultaneously as marginal and central, oppressed and oppressor, agentive and subordinated. Initially, I attempted to unlace the knots to 'discover' the extent to which participants were hegemonic or not; on reflection, it is this ambivalent state of being itself which is more a fruitful site for understanding power relations. Being attentive to the theme of routes and boundaries – and how the ethnography tracks these through spaces of sociology – supports a reading of hegemony and inequality as ambiguous sites of practice and identification, rather than fixed and static.

In asserting this, I tread a difficult and problematic line: my intention is not to negate the oppression acted through dominant power by making a claim that this same dominant power resides across social actors. Nevertheless, I wish to point to a way sociologists might consider hegemonic power which does not stem from understanding particular social identifications or locations as either inside or outside its bounds. Instead, I suggest that the thesis provides evidence for seeing hegemonic power as always already part of social actors, and something which can be deployed as a *resource*. As the privileging of particular social locations shifts, so does the usefulness of the type of hegemonic power individuals are able to access in themselves. This is a reading which considers the ways in which one may have partial or incomplete access to hegemonic power – but that this in itself does not then (always) result in marginality. The research in this thesis indicates sociologists as agentive social actors who employ what power they do have to work for them. They are resourceful with their access to hegemony and use this to legitimate themselves in mainstream spaces, whilst employing their marginality to credentialise themselves in others. Lara is a good example of this. As a woman of colour, Lara undoubtedly faces structural racism and sexism. But she speaks of accessing hegemonic power in other ways, often through the cultural capital of reading and being perceived as intellectual. This is powerful currency in academia – and indeed, her intellectual dexterity was a central reason gatekeepers nominated her to be in the

research. This allows Lara access to being legitimated in the mainstream of sociology. Equally, Lara's position as a woman of colour adds dynamism and power to the political positions taken in her writing. Lara is not the somatic norm (Puwar 2004) in sociology – perhaps even not in spaces of sociology oriented to 'race'/ethnicity. But that she is marginal in terms of the wider status of social categories is partly what adds the fire of originality to the perception of her writing and her sociological status and self. I do not think that Lara is cynically using her simultaneous marginality and hegemony to make herself legitimate across sociology. However, the ethnography does indicate that considering Lara as either wholly hegemonic or not at all would be inaccurate.

Chapter Eight shows Ben and Sebastian moving through multiple spaces of sociology – their own sub-discipline or topic area, national boundaries of the U.K. and Europe (by publishing in a European journal rather than a U.K. journal), what they interpreted as a 'mainstream' space, and the linguistic spaces of English and Italian (in relation to Sebastian's embodied 'Italianness'). In this chapter we see the different value paradigms for legitimate knowledge at play and the way in which Ben and Sebastian are able to secure themselves across these, as well as maintaining a sense of intellectual self. Though the high-profile Q1 journal makes demands on them that they feel are intellectually compromising, their secure status within the value paradigm of their sub-disciplinary area enables them to meet these demands without feeling that they have engaged in serious compromise. Their experience shows the ability of different value paradigms to travel into the hegemonic and allow participants to narrate themselves with value. In the chapter I note that Ben expressed the sentiment that sending the piece to a 'niche' journal would probably have led to a more thorough and robust engagement with the topic, partly because the peer reviewers would also be specialists in the subject. Ben points out in this chapter that, 'this sort of diktat [to publish in Q1 journals] ignores that different journals reach different audiences, and it may be better for the article to speak to the audience of a more minor journal'. Sebastian also commented that the peer review process felt, at times, 'a bit petty'.

So how does this incident show the malleability and ambiguity of hegemonic power? The key to this is in how Ben and Sebastian *manage* these spaces, react to them, and narrate them afterwards. Ben and Sebastian both identified that these reviews came from a place of mainstream hegemony. However, Ben and Sebastian's writing practice shows that they engaged forcefully with this hegemonic power – strengthening their argument in subsequent revisions and using this as a positive learning experience. Indeed, Sebastian notes that their article was far better for these somewhat bullish reviews, precisely because they were compelled to think more creatively and

incisively about how their 'niche' sociology could fit into a mainstream journal. Notably, Ben uses these peer reviews as a way of negotiating his co-author relationship with Sebastian – a clear co-option of the hegemonic being put to use as a way of smoothing writing relations. Partly, Ben uses the hegemonic power of the peer reviews to assert himself over Sebastian – in a sense, bringing in hegemonic power to further his aims. But, at the same time, it is also the case that these reviewers legitimate Ben's point of view – and it is only when this occurs that he vocalises himself to Sebastian. Arguably, it is at the moment at which he discovers his power – his alignment with hegemony – that Ben feels legitimate enough to push for the changes in question. Hegemonic power, here, is malleable in that Ben's use of it shows hegemony as not only something put to use in a striking and domineering manner, but a type of power that can appear as emotionally-oriented or tentative. Ben is certainly using it as a way of not having to seem to exert his own dominance.

I think these examples provide reason for reconsidering how the concept of 'legitimacy' is used. Sociologists have already indicated that a monolithic reading of the concept is unhelpful (Reay 2009, 2000; Skeggs 1997, 2004). The research in this thesis supports their assertions, but adds a further element: that legitimacy should be understood as mobile and dynamic. Bourdieu (1991, 1988) outlines how legitimacy and consecration are shaped through symbolic power – and this is discussed in Chapter Three. The understanding of symbolic power Bourdieu puts forward rests on a view of hegemonic power which interprets it as much more fixed and stable than the ethnography here could justify. Bourdieu's analysis of legitimacy and hegemonic power is linear – your hegemonic status puts you in alignment with the dominant symbolic value paradigm and as such you are legitimated. What this thesis shows, is that social actors are far more agentive than Bourdieu's schema allows for. Participants in this study are aware of how hegemonic power works and they openly told me of their intentions and methods to co-opt it. Moreover, sometimes they also reject it, and gain legitimacy through this rejection – consider Euan's outright stance of being deliberately peripheral within the discipline. Under these conditions it is necessary to question Bourdieu's linear connection between the dominant symbolic and legitimacy. The ethnography here does not assert a disconnect, as such, but it does point to a much more dynamic version of hegemonic power. Significantly, the malleability and utility of this dynamism provides reason to hope that structural inequality can be successfully countered.

### **Doing Sociology: Interweaving Disciplinary Power and Structural Inequality**

My third original contribution is in making a distinction between how structural inequality operates as part of an institution, and how it functions in terms of disciplinary power. Within this, my suggestion is that sociological scholarship needs to move away from understanding disciplinary power as coherent or stable. The previous chapters of this thesis demonstrate that ‘the mainstream’ is a slippery and contested site – being part of it is not always a criterion for credentialising a sociologist or their knowledge claims. Further to this, the thesis has also indicated that multiple value paradigms exist within different, parallel spaces of sociology. Sociologists are not all inhabiting the same territory, nor are they attempting to do so. The different spaces, or sub-disciplines, of sociology privilege different theoretical perspectives, methodologies, writing styles, journals, and departments/institutions. My aim here is not to assert that there are not structures and practices of power and oppression at play, but rather to claim some space of relief and light – in line with evidence from participants. Nor am I saying that ‘anything goes’ in sociology – despite Naomi’s notion that ‘sociology is a rag-bag’. This is a complex situation: it cannot be ignored that participants, and gatekeepers especially, identified particular styles of writing as indicative of work being ‘sociology’, or as being especially authoritative within sociology. It is made clear throughout the thesis that these styles of writing are acutely classed, gendered, and raced. Arguably, these return to the critiques made of sociology’s keenness to be taken as a science – the attempts identified by Bauman earlier in this thesis to ‘make dumb’ the ‘objects of our pronouncements’ (2011: 163). It is hard to shake the assertion – evidenced so minutely by scholars like Bhabra (2014, 2007b), Back (2016), and Meer and Nayak (2013) that sociology’s foundations are steeped in whiteness, masculinity, and the bourgeois. This cannot but inflect the landscape of contemporary U.K. sociology. However, one of the key original contributions of this thesis is to evidence that there is a gradual but insistent pattern of change occurring in the discipline – and that disciplinary power is slowly shifting into something much more diffuse.

Disciplinary power is conventionally a way of regulating what is – and most importantly, *isn’t* – considered to be legitimate sociology. It demarcates the correct practices of sociology - the methods, theories, and styles and sites of writing which mark you out as ‘sociology’. Disciplinary power produces value in what it includes as legitimate through this mechanism of exclusion; as Bourdieu notes, the consecration performed in the rite of institution is as much about those who cannot pass over the line – who cannot take part in the rite – as it is about the line or ritual itself (1991: 118). This disciplinary power, which demarcates, approves, and censures, should result in an unequivocal central space – a set of rules which dictate whether or not you are ‘sociology’. Contrarily, the ethnography presented here shows something different. It was clear throughout

that participants contradicted one another on the existence and composition of this central hegemonic space, or disciplinary mainstream. Based on analysis of participants' narratives and experiences of the mainstream, I want to remodel Bourdieu's argument that, 'human beings are unequal in their ability to use their freedom authentically and only an "elite" can appropriate the opportunities which are universally available' (Bourdieu 1991: 149). Bourdieu makes this assertion based on his claim that exclusions made are key to rites of institution conferring power and prestige on individuals. Returning to the themes of routes/boundaries and spaces present in the thesis, I think the work in this thesis shows how sociologists create new means of being legitimate within the discipline – but that they are doing this, still, within a hegemonic framework. Recognising the paradox that that this framework can change and be contested, but it is nevertheless oppressive and dominant, is key to reconsidering what it means to be 'legitimate' in sociology. This contradiction can be explained with recourse to the ethnography.

James and his experience of sociology writing demonstrates how embedded masculinity and middle-class whiteness is in the discipline – and how important holding these identification is to negotiating the discipline. James' convergence of social privilege enables him to move within sociology whilst feeling a sense of control – of his trajectory, and his sense of self. Consider how James is freely able to insert himself into his writing without fear of censure; he neither expects to be rebuked for this, nor does he anticipate the sting of symbolic violence if he is. Further to this, James is relaxed about writing – his account is suffused with serenity and calm. His focus is on the intellectual puzzle of sociological thought and he rarely wonders or worries if he is meeting the 'standards' of the discipline. Though James identifies that structural racism and sexism are problems within sociology, and avows that the discipline needs to change, these are the very elements which allow him such a seamless disciplinary fitting. Moreover, his age and career stage mean that he is far less encumbered by the ways hegemonic power is acted through neoliberal audit culture – which I look at in detail in the following part of this chapter.

Compare this to Lara, whose fitting with the discipline is far more liminal and tenuous. She points to instances of institutional sexism and racism, and details how her work has been derided because of its orientation to ethnicity and gender. Lara also openly states that she finds herself in a situation where her writing – style, content, and approach – is viewed as more 'naturally' belonging in a different disciplinary location. The recognition of sociological legitimacy afforded to Lara cannot be understood in the same terms as that extended to James. But despite this, it would be erroneous to read Lara as without power – she is not a vulnerable dupe, needing cossetting or protection.

Lara is able to draw on various aspects of hegemonic power – and she is very clear that she recognizes that she holds privilege in the discipline. Her reputation, networks, associated prior publications, departmental location, and other sociology-based positions, develop the context in which she is more concretely understood as ‘sociology’. This action itself is partly problematic and partly hopeful. The former, in that Lara is arguably being legitimated as a woman of colour through white, male institutions: can Lara viably use the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house (Lorde 1984)? The latter, because the more that women of colour like Lara (and Naomi) appear as respected, visible thinkers – as their inclusion in this study shows they are understood – the more that race-, class-, and gender-aware perspectives, positions, and theories come to be understood as unquestionably ‘sociology’, rather than as examples of ‘difference’ or ‘diversity’. This is a slow and incomplete process, and the evidence of this thesis reminds all sociologists not to be complacent – and not to allow this to be the responsibility solely of ‘diverse’ scholars (Ahmed 2012). Lara’s sticky negotiation of ‘the mainstream’ prompts sociologists to be mindful that disciplinary spaces do not arrive as *a priori* hegemonic; they become hegemonic by association.

Disciplinary power is shown in this thesis as diffuse. There is certainly a powerful – and oppressive – core, mobilised especially in connection with university and departmental institutions. At the same time, the standards of sociology are not coherent across sociologists. The assertions made in Chapter Two, concerning the friction and competition between sub-discipline topics, schools of thought, and method, also emerge in the ethnography – particularly in Chapters Seven and Eight. In addition to contending with the role of structures such as gender, ‘race, and class on legitimacy within the field, we must also be attentive to the affect of (sub-)disciplinary allegiance on a sociologist’s legitimacy. Moreover, it is necessary to comprehend how these work in tandem. Naomi’s testimony in this thesis provides a powerful example of a sociologist attempting to negotiate her way around the contrasting and contradictory forms of legitimacy available within the field. That she is also a woman of colour places her in that much more of a visible position, so that choices made regarding ‘internal’ disciplinary legitimacy in the field (writing an article for a centre-ground journal versus a chapter for a niche sub-topic book), also affect how her legitimacy is read within the university institution and the REF audit.

This is why it is vital to comprehend how narrating oneself through writing becomes useful as a way of positioning oneself with value. This tactic offers the flexibility to engage productively with the multiplicity of spaces operationalised through different sociological practices. Like hegemonic power, disciplinary power can be oppressive and exclusionary – but this thesis indicates areas of

scholarship in which non-hegemonic theories, perspectives, and debates thrive, as well as the subtle ways in which these arrive into hegemonically constructed spaces. There are also far more overt demonstrations of this – Johanna’s claiming of the title ‘Professor of Sociology’, her “‘fuck you”” to the idea that she cannot and should not hold the centre-ground of the discipline, represents a bleeding-in of the practices and values of feminist and class-aware scholarship to the patriarchal space of hegemony. The canon of sociology is undoubtedly white, male, and Eurocentric. However, participants in the ethnography showed little evidence that they felt any necessity to engage with it. Certainly, the canon colours the spaces of sociology, and hegemonic power is dominant in the way it regulates expectations of, and orientations to, the discipline. Sociologists in this study balked at the idea that the canon – and the hegemonic positions of the discipline – were the only ways of creating and sustaining legitimacy; though they each narrated some sense of an oppressive white, male intellectual tradition, they also indicated the ways in which they mark their value in the discipline outside of these parameters.

It is vital to the ongoing dynamism of sociology not to represent the discipline as embittered and tied by a stale, static hegemony. Sociologists must recognise the complexity of the diffuse spaces which exist in the discipline and the modes and mobilisations of power within these. It is difficult to speak precisely about the disciplinary power of sociology, given the manifold practices and forms of sociology itself. An overarching, linear, and all-encompassing disciplinary power simply is not found in this study. Naomi asks, in Chapter Seven, ‘how do you change the structure when you are the structure?’. Her question poses a troubling dilemma for sociologists in its recognition that, by your very presence in the institutions and writing of the discipline, you have already become ‘the structure’. Bourdieu may assert that only some have access to becoming ‘elite’ – but Naomi’s perspicacious comment serves to underline that hegemony is always already present in each of us – there are no ‘clean hands’. An original contribution of this thesis arrives through the identification of the complexity of disciplinary power – that it is malleable, transient, context-dependent, and agentively used. Given this, the thesis does important work in problematizing sociologists’ own complicity in upholding hegemonic power in the discipline – but it also foregrounds the means through which this is being countered, challenged, and resisted.

### **Implications within U.K. Sociology and Higher Education**

Despite having argued for the malleability of hegemonic power, in this section I want to reinforce the problems and oppression of structural inequality in sociology, and reflect on what this means

for sociology as a part of higher education. The research questions with which I opened the thesis asked how far personal, professional, affective, and institutional processes and practices of writing work in friction or cooperation with one another. During the ethnography, participants made it clear that the institutions of sociology – particularly universities/Sociology departments, but also journals and subject associations – were key sites of upholding white, male, middle-class hegemonic power. The scholarship in Chapters Two and Three (Santos 2014, Bhambra 2014, Leonardo 2004) assert a strong relationship between this structural inequality at an institutional level, and the unequal positions inhabited in sociological knowledge making, through the way that concepts, histories, theories, and thinkers are gendered, classed, and racialised. This is an important identification of the way hegemonic power has become woven into the fabric of institutional academic life. Kehinde Andrews, for instance, describes how,

British higher education is an overwhelmingly White space, both physically and theoretically. As one of the fortunate 1.1 per cent to be employed as a British academic I can personally attest to the difficulties in getting alternative ideas and concepts heard, debated and considered (2015: 30).

In Chapter One I outlined how this thesis sits in a changing landscape of higher education, presenting arguments which claim that academia, as a sector, is increasingly neoliberalised and audited (Shore 2008; Gill 2009) and that these conditions are profoundly affecting sociology as a discipline – in its writing (Billig 2013), and what are understood as the core values or practices of the discipline (Osborne et al 2008; Holmwood 2010). Where other scholars have noted the Research Excellence Framework as a problem in itself, I want to turn this to emphasise the way that the higher education institutions in which sociology sits use the REF as a means of control, censure, and oppression – and that they do this through wielding hegemonic structural power.

The ethnography in this thesis evidences serious structural inequalities around gender, ‘race’, and class. Reflecting on Naomi’s strategizing around the REF is useful here. Naomi’s extra work – publishing specifically for the REF and then completing her own politically and socially motivated work – is part of her tactic to remain safe within her institution. Though participants frequently took to task the work of the REF, drilling down into these analyses showed that the problem was not with the REF itself but with each institution’s policy regarding the REF. The necessity of publishing in a Q1 journal, discussed by Sebastian in Chapter Eight, was not a stricture of the REF

but of his university. His decision to publish in this way was part of making himself ‘REF-ready’, but the specifics of it were almost wholly driven by the rules of his particular department. There is nothing in the REF documents themselves to suggest that only Q1 journal articles can receive three or four star marks (HEFCE 2011, 2012). My suggestion, based on the ethnography, is that institutions and departments are using the REF as a tool of control – taking the neoliberal framework of audit culture and using this as a means to surveil and manipulate employees. In a context in which working-class, non-white, and non-male academics are already too-visible within their institutions, the REF provides even greater means for enacting institutional sexism, classism, and racism whilst disguising it as higher education policy.

This is supported by the radically different experiences of REF along gender, class, and ‘race’ positions represented in the thesis – compare, for instance, Ben’s rather laissez-faire attitude with Naomi’s more fearful approach. Sociologists have so far been concerned with whether the REF will make sociology obsolete. Given that this thesis demonstrates an already changing discipline, I think these are not the primary concerns at hand. What is more pressing, is engaging with the links that Andrews (2015) sees between disciplines, institutions, and structural inequality. Andrews’ assertion that university spaces remain white is buttressed by reports which show higher education as discriminatory to BME students (Tatlow 2015) and working-class students (Loveday 2015). This is supported by experiences in the ethnography – particularly the stories that this thesis cannot tell. Throughout the ethnography participants related things that were too identifiable and too risky to include – the numerous instances in which participants asked me not to record or relay a story, but wanted me to know of the racism, classism, or sexism they had either experienced or seen done. It is a weakness of the discipline, of the institutional form of the thesis, and perhaps of this thesis itself, that sociology cannot provide public ground for revealing the most egregious offences of higher education. The implications of this thesis for higher education, and sociology specifically, is in being vigilant of complicity in structural oppression and discrimination, as well as being mindful of the sleight of hand through which this is enacted with regard to higher education policy.

### **Wilful Writers and Sociological Selves: The Future of Sociology Writing?**

Having undertaken an ethnography of sociology writing, what do the stories and observations gathered have to say about the future of sociology writing? I think firstly, that sociology’s demise is greatly exaggerated. Though the discipline and its writing is represented here as diffuse, participants nevertheless agreed that sociologists are linked through attentiveness to the

sociological imagination (Mills 1959) – this was raised innumerable times by gatekeepers and participants. Further to this, I argue that the ethnography here shows sociology as a space in which imaginative thought and new connections occur, and that sociologists are acutely experimental and variegated in their approaches. I also think the ethnography shows that sociology is making progress in regard to structural inequality – but this progress is protracted, painful, and laborious. It is also being largely left to sociologists outside the dominant symbolic to lead and sustain this change. While the ethnography shows that white, male sociologists are unhappy with structural inequality, it also shows how they benefit from it, even if they do not intend to. Intentions are good, but effort is lacking.

The ethnographic data also prompts me to question whether sociology might see new styles and forms of writing emerge – and whether these might ever be understood as legitimate *within the discipline*? Perhaps the return of the essay that Naomi desires, or a loosening of the scientific hold on the discipline, that Tim notes in Chapter Three as making poetry and unsuitable sociological form. And, if so, would this still be ‘sociology’? Carol Smart notes that sociological writing needs to ‘find ways to make the personal lives of the people one encounters in doing research much more multi-dimensional and layered, but equally vivid and evocative’ (Smart 2013: 69). The evidence of this ethnography is that sociologists are willing to engage with writing *qua* writing – even when they don’t (like Christian) think of themselves as writers. The participants in this thesis were greatly attentive and open to ways they might experiment with writing in order to render their sociological insight more pressing and potent. The most forceful barrier to doing so is not disciplinary expectations but institutional disapproval and the affect of this on careers – the ‘publish or perish’ scenario noted by Back (2016: 209).

Despite this, I think participants show that optimism is viable – and this optimism is less about a creative, artistic, or experimental sociology, and more oriented to an emerging new form of sociology, increasingly distant from its colonial origins and white, masculine, bourgeois hegemony. Sara Ahmed opens *Willful Subjects* (2014) with the story of ‘The Willful Child’ from the Grimm brothers’ fairy tale compendium. The child is buried, but time after time, her arm shoots up from the ground, reappearing through the soil. Ahmed notes this as a rejection of authority – ‘If authority assumes the right to turn a wish into a command, then willfulness is a diagnosis of the failure to comply with those whose authority is given’ (Ahmed 2014: 1). I would like to suggest that the participants in this ethnography all, to some extent, demonstrate wilful tendencies against authority – they repeatedly push through and against disciplinary and institutional expectations.

This is never coherently or totally achieved, and as in the Grimm tale, sometimes they are beaten back. There is evidence here for understanding legitimacy as fleeting: that it can be achieved but not held on to; that some bodies are more able to grasp and keep it than others. Drawing on the work in Chapter Two on academic subjectivities – and the way this emerges across the ethnography in terms of ‘sense of self’, the thesis demonstrates how some bodies have greater access to inculcating the unconscious strategies of the habitus which place them well for negotiating legitimacy in the sociological field (Bourdieu 1988: 91).

The ethnography here is cause for asserting sociology writing as both a site, and tool, of power – of resistance and of oppression. The research demonstrates the intricacy and vulnerability of this relationship, and in this final chapter I have outlined how the thesis contributes on original theorizations of hegemony, disciplinary power, and the creation of sociological self through this relationship. The research questions which guided the research oriented the thesis to the relationship between the personal, professional, affective and institutional aspects of writing; the ethnography itself demonstrated the extent to which these are co-related and contextual. A focus on the key concepts of legitimacy, authority, and power in sociological writing and practice has revealed the intricate ways in which consecration is produced in and through writing. Further, it has shown how this affects external perception of a sociologist, and their own sense of self. The work here clarifies some of the structural aspects of sociology, and shows that these are often upheld through the *illusio* of actors within the field. In doing so, I add to current scholarship with a more fine-tuned contribution of how power and prestige are produced in and through writing. This contribution offers sociology - and sociologists - an opportunity to reflexively engage with these macro-level issues of hegemony in our everyday disciplinary writing practice. C. Wright Mills notes that, ‘[t]o overcome the academic prose, you have to overcome the academic pose’ (1959: 219). Narratives of writing processes and practices reveal the subtle means through which power – and legitimacy – are enacted, but also the incremental shifts in prose which occur following significant shifts in pose.

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## Appendices

**Appendix A)** Notes on the Text: Anonymity and the Research Excellence Framework

**Appendix B)** Further notes on Methodology and Research Design

**Appendix C)** Dramatis Personae

# Appendix A

## Notes on the Text

### **Anonymity of Participants**

All individuals in this research – gatekeepers and participants in the ethnography – have been anonymised. In addition to use of pseudonyms, personal details such as location, institution, and research topics have been altered. Gender, social class, and ethnicity have not been altered.

### **The Research Excellence Framework**

Throughout the thesis, I refer to the ‘REF’; this is the Research Excellence Framework, conducted by the U.K. government through the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, the Scottish Funding Council, and the Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland). It is conducted every six-seven years, and is the successor to the Research Assessment Exercise.

The Research Excellence Framework assesses research done in U.K. higher education institutions. It is framed around a benchmark of ‘excellence’, and ranks written outputs of researchers from ‘Unclassified’ (‘Quality that falls below the standard of nationally recognised work. Or work which does not meet the published definition of research for the purposes of this assessment’, HEFCE 2011: 43) to 4 Star (‘Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour’, HEFCE 2011: 43). The Research Excellence Framework further assesses the quality of the research environment (i.e. of departments and institutions), as well as the ‘impact’ of research – the extent to which it has had an effect on, benefited, or made a change outside of academia.

The exercise is conducted across ‘units of assessment’ or panels – these broadly map on to disciplines, and each department or subject area must choose which unit of assessment they will submit to. These units of assessment are judged by a panel of senior academics in the discipline who read and score the submissions.

Full time researchers are required to submit four ‘outputs’ to the Research Excellence Framework exercise. In preparation for this, many departments run a ‘mini-REF’ in which colleagues grade one another’s outputs.

## Appendix B

### Further Notes on Methodology and Research Design

In this appendix I give further detail on the methods used in fieldwork.

#### Recruitment

As noted in Chapter Four, I used gatekeepers to recruit participants. The gatekeepers themselves were chosen as representatives of (putatively) powerful or legitimate(d) positions within the discipline – especially as connected to writing. Gatekeepers were selected from those holding, or who had held, editorial positions on sociology journals, from Heads of Department (as lead recruiters for jobs in the discipline), and from those holding professorial chairs. There were nine gatekeepers in total. Gatekeepers were asked to nominate sociologists for the study. The criteria given were that all nominees must be based in a U.K. sociology department, and that gatekeepers should select sociologists whose work they felt showed the nominee to be either ‘arriving’ or to have ‘arrived’ as a legitimate producer of disciplinary knowledge.

From this I ultimately received 48 nominations. These nominations were dominated by sociologists identified by the specific nominating gatekeepers as ethnographers and social theorists. Nominations were split fairly evenly between men and women, but included more white people than people of colour, and no men of colour were nominated (though my gatekeeper selection did include a man of colour). I selected from the 48 to include 8 participants across categories of gender, ‘race’, and career stage. Everyone I initially contacted from the original 8 sociologists agreed to be in the study. I then recruited James from the gatekeeper pool (see Chapter Four for further explanation of this), and Sebastian joined approximately halfway through the fieldwork, owing to his close writing relationship with Ben. Sebastian was discussed so often in conversations with Ben that I felt that it was important to also include his account and perspective of the co-authorship. All the sociologists taking part were on full time, permanent contracts – though Sebastian had only recently moved into such a position.

## Methods Used:

As noted in Chapter Four, I used a range of methods in fieldwork. These included:

i) participants keeping a diary or sending reflective accounts of work/writing by email: Many participants found this too onerous on top of their existing writing commitments. The diaries and reflections I did receive informed the ethnographic vignettes in the thesis and supplemented my own observations and conversations with participants. This was done sporadically by some (Naomi, Johanna, Kate) and not at all by most other participants. Owing to the infrequent use of this method by participants the data gathered via this technique comprises a small fraction of the whole data gathered. I combined the diaries/reflections with other forms of written and oral data, interpreting these as part of a rich and varied style of ongoing conversation that occurred across various forms and spaces.

ii) email contact and discussion of writing projects: Generally, these were more practical updates than the diaries/reflections. Participants often sent works-in-progress, sometimes with co-author/colleague/their own editorial comments on them. Some participants sent a final published piece with the series of drafts that formed the trajectory of that piece. Participants would include shorter or longer explanations of work done, plans for the future, and their own analysis of their work/their feelings about it. These updates often formed the basis for our in-person discussions.

iii) interviews with participants: these were generally done in person, though I had occasional discussions by telephone with Euan and Ben, owing to their distance from my home in London. The majority of interviews with Lara were done via Skype because we lived a considerable distance apart. We did meet in person during the ethnography at some academic events and used these times for an in-person conversation. Notably, we already knew each other professionally before the fieldwork and this prior relationship supported our Skype interviews. For in-person interviews, we met at a location of the participants' choice – usually a university office, their home, or a local café. In regard to the format of interviews, these were informal and conversational. Opening interviews were recorded and later transcribed. These were semi-structured, with all participants being asked to reflect on a) how they write, b) how they conceptualise sociology as a discipline, c) their perception of their own legitimacy as sociologists, and d) reflections on the system of higher education, academia, and publishing more broadly. I also made notes in my fieldwork diary at a later point in the day. Subsequent interviews were conducted as conversations, and the topics were

distinct to each participant. Generally though, these were focused on writing practice, relationship with writing, works-in-progress, and relationship to sociology/academia. These were not recorded. I took scribbled notes during our conversations and wrote these up in my fieldwork diary later the same day. When writing the thesis I primarily used these field notes and the audio recordings of interviews so as to take note of the tone of voice and temper of the conversation, which is not always reflected accurately in transcriptions – but were things I noted in my diary.

iv) participant observation: As noted in Chapter Four, I observed participants during conversations and made detailed notes on these the same day. Because we also shared professional spaces, I was able to observe some (but not all) participants at conferences or social events, and on social media. Again, I made notes on these encounters in my fieldwork diary.

v) photographic/visual material: with a number of participants I visited their homes and/or offices, and so was able to observe their writing spaces. With these participants I often photographed their desk, to act as an aide-memoir during writing descriptive passages. For those who I met outside these spaces, I asked for a photograph to be emailed – again, for context when writing about their desk space. In Chapter Six I discuss Christian's 'sketches': these were shown to me by Christian, who allowed me to take a photograph for my records, ensuring I was able to write accurately about them later on.

vi) journal article analysis exercise: throughout the thesis, but especially in Chapter Nine, I refer to discussions of a published article I had with participants. In order to get a sense of how participants respond to 'legitimated' sociology writing I asked them to perform a version of peer review on a published article. I chose the 'most read' article for that month from a centre-ground sociology journal and sent it to participants ahead of our next scheduled meeting. A number declined to take part – some because they were too busy, others because they had strongly negative responses to the article, and ultimately this was completed by around half of the participants. The reasons for negative responses, though pertinent, were too identifying to be included in the thesis itself, and so I focused on those who did complete the exercise.

## Appendix C

### Dramatis Personae: The Ethnography Participants

#### Johanna

Johanna is a Professor of Sociology – newly promoted during the period of the ethnography. She is white, in her forties, and has a cleft relationship with her class position, recognising both her working-class upbringing and her middle-class life now. She works at a university in the north east of England, and is broadly interested in feminism and gender studies, but with an interdisciplinary twist. Johanna received her PhD by publication, and began her formal career in academic in a role where her duties were in administration and teaching only; both of these early experiences had significant affects on how Johanna feels about writing, about her ability, and about her position within sociology and academia. Johanna’s difficult school years combined with a self-diagnosis of dyslexia were things she pinned as important in relation to her writing: she thinks that being dyslexic makes her a different kind of reader and writer – oriented to reading for gist, making connects, and thinking sideways. For Johanna reading is ‘like doing a really hard puzzle, but I enjoy it’. However, this has less positive elements too: Johanna lacks confidence with spelling and grammar, and so uses close co-writers and her partner as ‘safety valves’, and never sends any written work for review without having a trusted someone read it first. She feels that she would be shamed by being caught up in simple mistakes. Related to this, Johanna has received reviews criticising her use of northern English dialect – using ‘whilst’ instead of ‘while’. She was surprised at this and didn’t even realise it was a northernism. We agreed between us to bring ‘whilst’ back onto the academic page. Johanna is quiet, thoughtful, introspective, and open. She talked easily about her writing practice, as if it was a topic she often considered alone and with others.

#### Kate

Kate is a Senior Lecturer at a university in the south of England. Originally from Canada, she began her academic career studying anthropology at various universities across North America before securing a permanent position in the U.K. Kate identifies anthropology in North America as distinctly different in disciplinary terms to its U.K. compatriot, and for this reason notes that she is comfortable in sociology in a U.K context. Kate therefore is happy to call herself a

sociologist, ‘but a bit of a strange one’. Kate is in her early forties, white, and identifies herself as middle-class. She works within the field of Science and Technology studies, and has won a number of scholarly prizes for her written work. Kate is an ethnographer and her writing practice – particularly in terms of drafting and experimenting with ideas – is closely tied to the anthropological method of ‘memos’. The memos are notes to herself – ideas, books or authors to check, theoretical positions which might be useful – and they can be as short as one line or longer and more detailed. Using them means Kate never starts a piece of work with a blank page; she always has a memo (or several) to work from. Kate was just coming back from maternity leave as the ethnography for this project began; many of our conversations discussed the difficulties faced in combining parenthood of a very small child with the expectations of academia. Part of Kate’s impetus for joining the research was as a space for being able to think through her new work and writing practice with a new interlocutor. Kate is part of a writing group, which meets monthly to discuss and share work; she was always forthcoming about her writing, and any hindrances she encounters. Kate is extremely reflexive and contemplative, but also pragmatic, assertive, and witty.

### **Lara**

Lara is a Professor of Sociology at a university in London. Her educational background is in the humanities, and she completed a Ph.D. in the social sciences. Lara’s parents moved to the U.K. when she was very young. She recalls her childhood as one in which education was very important, and she was always encouraged to read and talked passionately to me about her love of books and the importance of libraries. During the ethnography Lara and I also discovered a shared childhood love of Enid Blyton stories. Lara’s background, particularly the intricate social, economic, and cultural status of her parents, means that she has an especially complex narrative of her social class position. Lara also navigates academia as a woman of colour, and she talked at length during the ethnography of issues which arise from this. Lara sees her sociology as political work, and connected to forms of activism. She advocates new and open methods of sharing written work, especially blogs. She listens to music as she works – usually Nina Simone, at a ‘homeopathic’ level. Lara is astute, measured, and fearsomely well-read.

## **Naomi**

Naomi is Professor of Sociology at a university in the north of England. She tells me she grew up in a working-class family in the south of England, attending comprehensive school and then Cambridge, where she read history. Naomi was raised in a very white area of England, and the first time she met other people of colour was at university, in the international societies. Naomi works on ethnicities and their intersection with social class, is widely published, and also edits a journal in this area. Naomi is artistically oriented to writing; she loves stories and narrative, and leading the reader on a journey. During the ethnography, Naomi lamented to me the ‘death of the essay’. As a woman of colour, Naomi also relayed numerous experiential accounts of sexism and racism in the academy. Naomi is acerbic, pragmatic, incredibly funny, and open, but also sensitive, empathetic, and introspective.

## **Ben**

Ben is a Lecturer at a university in Scotland. He’s in his early thirties and completed his Ph.D. within the last five years – indeed, he describes himself as being ‘early career’. He began his academic career in Law, hated it, and took a gap year before beginning a sociology degree. Like a number of participants, he undertook an interdisciplinary Ph.D., spanning politics and philosophy. Ben describes his background as white and ‘upper working class’, noting that his parents had a ‘decent income’ but that the family home was not attuned to ‘high cultural capital – reading, museums, art, things like that’. Ben works largely in social theory, but also looks at how theoretical positions relate to issues of social policy. When he writes, he begins with a blank page and a scribbled list of items to cover. He writes to think, to sort through the puzzle, and repeatedly redrafts until the piece works. Ben is a committed teacher as well as writer, and a great many of our discussions centred on the writing done as part of teaching, and how teaching supports research and writing. Ben is generous, open, and perennially enthusiastic about sociology and academia.

## **Euan**

Euan is a Professor of Sociology at an institution in the south east of England. He describes his background as white working-class, and was the first in his family to go to university. He went to a school where it was rare to apply to university, and ever rarer to apply to a Russell Group

institution; however, Euan tells me how a teacher recognised his intellectual capabilities and encouraged him. After leaving school, Euan attended Oxford and read sociology. He hated the pomp of Oxford, but loved ‘the intellectual life’ and sociology, and carried on to do a Ph.D. in the subject at a different institution. Though having always been formally in sociology, Euan is geared to the literary and cultural, and it is in these areas that he finds his primary research focus. Euan is a true raconteur and gregariously related his writing practice, experiences of higher education, and opinions on academia and sociology. Euan is also thoughtful and reflexive, and continually problematized himself in these accounts.

## **James**

James is a Professor of Sociology, but retired during the course of the ethnography and now holds an Emeritus position. He is white and ‘probably upper middle-class’. James attended an independent school, followed by Cambridge. He moved to another institution for his Ph.D. and gained a lectureship at the same institution before submitting his thesis. James often reflected on how different the academic landscape is now, from when he began his career in the early 1970s. James writes in a nook on the landing at the top of his house. His desk is cluttered with papers, though he clears these away after each project. Though ostensibly in the open, ‘no one really comes up and only the cat ever disturbs me’. His partner is also an academic, and James would often compare their work, making wry comments on the nature of sociology – that it will never be as ‘thrilling a read as work on a novel or French cinema’. James abhors a deadline and will do all work as soon as possible. However, since retiring, he has taken a particularly relaxed approach to writing. He is an early riser and writes in the mornings – though he tells me that if he gets distracted in the afternoon, by gardening or similar, that he is quite happy not to return to the writing. James is self-deprecating and very funny; he would often tell me ribald jokes and anecdotes.

## **Philip**

Philip is Professor of Sociology at a university in the north of England. He told me about a difficult journey into academia. Having ‘not applied myself’ at school, he went to Sixth Form College to do sociology, precisely because it was a few miles from home and he felt ‘un-locate-able’ there. His mum bought him a copy of Goffman’s *Presentation of Self* which inspired a journey into sociology. Even after this, he wasn’t sure about university and spent a year temping before finally gaining a place at university to study sociology. After his Ph.D., he worked on numerous temporary

teaching contracts, and spent several years unemployed, but eventually gained a role as a Research Fellow. Philip works broadly on cultural and social theory, but is particularly interested in how it can be applied to contemporary life. Philip is passionately engaged in the future of sociology. He is quick-witted, well-read, and incisive.

### **Sebastian**

Sebastian is a Lecturer at a university in the south of England. He is in his mid-thirties and received his Ph.D. within the last five years. Sebastian was born in Italy, to an upper middle-class family, and described an upbringing of economic privilege. He moved to the U.K. to study, with the intention of becoming a diplomat. However, Sebastian discovered Karl Marx during his undergraduate degree and his world perspective shifted entirely. From here, he decided to pursue a career in sociology – though with a philosophical bent. Sebastian is a committed and laborious writer – secluding himself for days, not eating, forgetting friends, and focused solely on the task at hand. Sebastian came into the ethnography because of his co-writing with Ben. He works on social theory, but is moving into an intersection with policy and political activism. Sebastian is extremely open, kind, and generous; he is contradictorily confident in his theorizing but beset by ‘imposter syndrome’.

### **Christian**

Christian is a Lecturer at a university in the south west of England. He’s in his mid-thirties, white, and comes from a wealthy background in Denmark. Christian moved to the U.K. for his undergraduate degree and stayed as he pursued his academic career. He has some particularly idiosyncratic techniques for drafting and writing, oriented around the production of mathematical equation-style drawings which summarize the logic of the argument. Christian’s work covers various forms of inequality. He is eminently practical about writing: during one conversation about finding space for writing and an environment conducive to thinking and connecting with the work he commented that, ‘I find shelving is a bit of a problem’. Christian is wickedly funny, opinionated, and sharp. He always thought carefully about the ideas and concerns of the project before replying, but often noted that, ‘this is what I think today; come back on another day and you might get a different answer’.