Race, Religion and Worldviews:

An Autoethnographic Exploration of Coloniality in Modern Secular British Organisations

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Despite decades of sociological research, there remains little consensus around how scholars, practitioners and activists might think about and interrogate the complex relationship between race and religion as colonial categories. Yet, especially in the employment sphere, the continual reproduction of race and religion gives rise to a range of oppressions which we require shared language to recognise, name and challenge. Adopting a multi-sited auto-ethnographic approach, this thesis is based on my work as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) practitioner and explores issues of race, religion, and coloniality within a selection of modern, secular British organisations where I have undertaken work and research between 2018 and 2023. Drawing on decolonial theory associated with a dispersed and multi-disciplinary body of literature from critical sociologies of race, religion, organisations, management and law, this thesis explores a range of ways that coloniality is sustained and reproduced with respect to race and religion and worldviews in British organisational life. Taking seriously the difficulties of disentangling race and religion, a dilemma that lies at the heart of my investigation, the thesis commences with a detailed exploration of the historical processes that have shaped contemporary understandings of race and religion and worldviews, and synthesises literature with data from the field to advance a new conceptual framework which serves as a lens through which to analyse organisational cultures. This framework forms the basis of my exploration of three key themes: First, I look at race, exploring issues of everyday racism, surveillance and the policing of organisational space among those visibly marked as other and subject to racial discrimination. Second, I explore organisational culture, theorising how the organisations I have studied are shaped my majority groups and give rise to what I term 'Judaeo-Christian-Secular White(li)ness'. Third, I consider the impact of these organisational cultures for racially and religiously minoritised groups, focussing particularly on the experiences of those professing 'nonmodern' perspectives. These are groups broadly subject to forms of silencing and nonrecognition. Finally, thesis concludes with a discussion my core themes, and considerations of the emerging gaps that may constitute fruitful avenues for future research.

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Abbreviations

NR	Network Rail
MFN	Multi Faith Network
F&BF	Faith & Belief Forum
RFWG	Race and Faith Working Group
HRM	Human Resources Management
EDI	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
MD	Managing Director
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
GMH	Global Majority Heritage
MSE	Multi Sited Ethnography
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths
APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
BLM	Black Lives Matter
BVWs	Beliefs, Values & Worldviews

Vignette 1: *'Ke Lapile!'*

5th March 2019, London

They're a familiar feeling, these knots of anxiety. They leave me exhausted. Fatigued. Drained of motivation.

'Ke lapile!', as we say in Setswana. *'I'm tired!'*. And mostly to the depths of my soul.

I'm also almost always preoccupied. But my body knows the drill. It can spring into action with practiced ease. Flip the switch into academic voice. Or practitioner voice. Facilitate and dialogue in familiar, well-trodden cycles and affectations.

Same shit. Different day.

New faces. Almost always a sea of entirely disbelieving White faces.

I am here. But yet not here.

I am in 'the space between'. The liminal space. At the borderline between worlds.

First, there is the world of my body. With its pressed shirts and pencil skirts. Beige blazers and carefully chosen oxblood brogues. A world of well-worn performances, masking sweaty palms, quickened breaths, and an irregular heartbeat. A world of dark, sleepless eyes concealed in expertly colour-matched hues of Warm Sand, and what my *mokapelo* – 'the one who owns my heart'– has mockingly dubbed 'the Malcolm X frames'.[1] It is a world of plots and scripts and characters I know

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[1] In Setswana, the term *'mokapelo'* generally refers to one's lover or romantic partner and can be translated as "the one who has captured my heart". Like Mathonsi (2021), I employ the term to signify an entanglement in a toxic and patriarchal romantic relationship.

vexingly well… yet cannot escape. A world of roles I never signed up for. Endless voids into which I scream, but never feel heard.

And then… there is the world beyond. That otherworldly place in which I take refuge, from where I sometimes observe the world of my body, and all the happenings that happen there, like a spectator to my own white, professional life. I feel like a soul adrift there. A kind of dead-alive. Or, as Gérald Toto evokes through my headphones, a kind of vacant, staring *Away Alive*.[2] This world beyond offers sanctuary. A space from which to appear *there,* even as I shield myself from being *fully* there*. A world of spirits. A world of ancestors. A world of entities that offer protection. *A world of… my God(s)…?!*

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They warned me at induction, 'Life will happen during the course of this PhD!'. And *'life'* has *definitely* happened.

The little micro decisions look different now. Once upon a time, they were heels… or flats?'; 'fro out… or hair sleeked back?'. Answers now firmly settled.

Always flats. *Always* 'fro out.'

The 'fro represents a tiny act of defiance. A conscious middle finger display of pride, adopted in 2014, following a Managing Director's performance of monkey-like gesticulations, across an entire open plan office. But mine was not a unique experience. …Throughout the course of my research, I encountered many Others like me, each with their own unutterable stories of humiliation, needing only the right moment or person, to finally find their voices.

…And the heels?! Well… as my dear friend Grace recently lamented, in her characteristically blunt-poetic, New Yorker fashion, 'We don't see *men* contorting and twisting their ankles and arches into

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[2] Written and performed by the pan-Africanist lyricist and composer, Gérald Toto (2018), the haunting and ethereal riffs of the song *Away Alive*, reflect something of the transcendental and liminal space of my internal world. It is one of the many songs I have listened to on repeat after facilitating more challenging workshops and sessions in the field.

all kinds of shapes just to achieve four inches more respect!'. So the heels went. No more wasted energy on trifling small stuff.

Perhaps, after all, these carefully chosen oxblood brogues are *also* a tiny act of defiance.

An as yet unsettled question remains: to wear or not to wear my awkwardly gleaming rings? I'd like to think that people won't notice my bare fingers. That they won't ask questions.

These rings belong to the past life of a once-engaged, once-married woman; in the here and now, they offer protection: gifts of once unimaginable credibility and capital. Glimpsing them, people implicitly read me as 'more mature', 'more serious about life', a perception once voiced by a former Manager. And I sense too that their presence is interpreted to mean that I am somewhat – though not entirely! – less fuck-able with. Less open to uninvited propositions; less tolerant of strange hands casually resting upon my knee, mid-meeting – a memory of a moment during my early career.

These rings shield me, making them harder to relinquish than I'd ever imagined.

…So, 'Rings on, it is!'. In the end, an easy decision made, before I rush out the door to begin my journey through the City – Shoreditch to Southwark – on this icy, overcast March morning.

'Another day, another…'

Actually… in this case… not 'Another dollar'!

Not for this worker.

But perhaps… 'Another round of free emotional labour…?! For yet another institution apparently intransigently resistant to change?!'.[3]

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[3] I refer here to the notion of gendered and racialised emotional labour theorised in the literature by Evans & Moore (2015) and frequently undertaken by Black and women of colour within White institutional spaces. See also Campbell (1994) and Warhurst & Nickson (2009) whose theorisations of emotion work are also relevant.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The 5th of March 2019 was like many other days of my PhD research project. It was typical also of my days working as an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) consultant, a post I'd held since 2014. Trudging through the wet streets of gentrified Shoreditch, dodging the army of suits trooping to work in the towering skyscrapers of London's financial district, I strode hastily towards my destination: the tenth floor of an unremarkable corporate building in Southwark. My day's agenda was similarly unexceptional: delivering *Religion, Belief and Inclusive Cultures in the Workplace,* a free workshop attended by a 25-strong senior executive team at one of the public institutions that had consented to participating in my research study.

While the workshop provided a rare opportunity for the majority of attendees to reflect critically on issues of religion and belief at work, the everyday events of the session were anything but unusual for me. Instead, my involvement in the leadership team's Away Day constituted an opportunity to "make the familiar strange" (Jong, Kamsteeg, and Ybema 2013:1; Ybema and Kmasteeg 2009:102–3; Van Maanen 1995:20); a pivotal moment to delve deeper into my auto-ethnographic exploration of race, religion, and coloniality within modern, secular British organisations. In keeping with much organisational ethnography, my task as a researcher was thus to immerse myself "'in seeing [the] familiar landscapes [of my life as a practitioner] with new eyes (Marcel Proust, quoted by Bate, 1997:1148)" – achieving a new distance and perspective on "the mundaneity of everyday organizational life" [sic] (Brannan et al., 2007 in Ybema and Kmasteeg 2009:102–3).

In this chapter, having explored my life as a practitioner through new eyes over several years, I introduce the focus and context of my research project, starting with an outline of the professional and personal motivations driving my study of race, religion, and worldviews in organisational life. This is followed by an overview of the decolonial theory that became the core conceptual lens through which I made sense of familiar phenomena anew. In the penultimate section of my chapter I provide an overview of the diverse range of literature on which I drew to analyse and interpret my findings; in the final section of my thesis, I provide an overview of my argument, indicating through a summary of each chapter how coloniality is sustained and reproduced in modern secular British organisations.

1.1. Research Focus & Rationale

1.1.1. Motivation for Study

The inspirational seeds of this project were sown years before I set out on my research. On the professional level, the story began in 2011, on my recruitment as the first Training Manager of a fast-growing, private-sector food retailer in London. Responsible for learning and development, and heavily enmeshed in the work of its newly-established Human Resources Management (HRM) team, my observations of the workplace identity-dynamics meant I brought an at times unwelcome critical edge to my practice. This edginess was largely informed by my involvement in anti-racist organising, but also through my sociological learning as a part-time evening student at Birkbeck College, where I was simultaneously pursuing a Master's degree.

Despite this unique vantage point and occupying a position of relative privilege in Head Office, there was much that troubled me over this period: first, there was the broader context – the policies, procedures and contractual arrangements that governed a business powered almost entirely by migrants. The workforce comprised mainly second-language English speakers on zero-hour contracts, and was bolstered by the casualised labour of international students on restrictive right-to-work visas. Second, I became attentive to the way in which ethnicity and gender played out across the organisation, structuring labour relations, dictating employees' roles and positions, and frequently dictating the limits and possibilities of their progression. With few exceptions, managers tended to recruit in their own image, hiring people of shared or similar backgrounds, and hence reinforcing existing ethnic hierarchies simply because it was "easier that way". Finally, and perhaps of greatest relevance to this thesis, I was drawn to understanding how issues of race and religion were addressed in the day-to-day life of the organisation when challenges arose.

I was perplexed, for example, to discover on joining the company that my 'highest priority' deliverable was to design and implement, not a company induction, but something called *Station Security Training*, for roughly 15% of personnel. Legislated under the code-name Project Griffin, it emerged that *Station Security Training* represented a significant element of the UK's counterterrorism strategy, and was mandatory for all staff working in Network Rail's major stations

(HMG 2018). Significant commuter zones, these large public spaces were deemed 'high risk', potential targets for terrorist attacks, and accordingly, required elevated degrees of protection. In principle, the idea behind the training policy was simple; in practice, delivering these sessions to over 200 staff − all within my first six months of employment − proved something of a baptism of fire. Because of the conflation of terrorism with religion in public and media discourses, the sessions frequently opened space in which ignorant, and often racially and religiously discriminatory sentiment was explicitly expressed. Untrained as I was then, to appropriately respond to these potentially inflammatory provocations, controversial moments slipped by unaddressed, with islamophobia disproportionately impacting staff of South-East Asian and/or Muslim descent. In addition to increasing workplace incivilities (Burrell 2019) and everyday racism (Essed 1991, 2008), such incidents visibly undermined relationships, psychological safety, and workplace equity; those most affected remained silent, while staff members who were not (perceived to be) racialised as Muslims anxiously avoided and ignored key incidents, waiting for a moment when they could finally escape the session.[4]

Keen to learn how to effectively navigate the charged, polarising, and unspoken dynamics of race and religion at work, my stealth attempts to implement EDI principles throughout our training, were frustrated by the slow pace of change. I left the company after three years with more questions than answers. There followed a two-year stint working for 3FF, a leading UK charitable organisation operating in the field of interfaith and intercultural relations. At 3FF − since renamed the Faith & Belief Forum (F&BF) − I seized opportunities to advance my thinking and experience around 'faith and belief', issues I considered insufficiently addressed within the secular framing of my sociology degree (Walker 2015:38), despite the ongoing presence of religion in public life (Habermas 2006; Woodhead and Catto 2013), and in the lives of religious adherents.[5] In the years that followed, in part frustrated by the failure of F&BF and the broader interfaith field to reckon explicitly with issues

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[4] Despite observing numerous incidents of discrimination, which I reported back to Head Office, and the Department for Transport, not a single formal or informal grievance was raised by those encountering hostility in my workplace during this period. This reflected a pattern I observed throughout my time in the field in which most experiences of discrimination in organisations went unreported via formal channels and thus existed as silences.

[5] This failure to engage fully with faith and religion was also common in the secular, liberal, and left-leaning activist spaces in which I was involved in anti-racist organising, and served as a sharp contrast to the forms of anti-racism I had encountered growing up in an apartheid adjacent context in Southern Africa where Black Consciousness was promoted through the Church (e.g. Biko 1987).

of race, racism and blackness (discussed in Chapter 5), I struck out as an independent consultant, working across EDI and policy issues, and attempting to bridge the gap between my two core areas of interest.[6]

My curiosity about issues of racial and religious inequality and my growing experience as a practitioner, led not only to this PhD project but also prompted realisation that the seeds for this study had been planted even further back than I had initially appreciated. In the context of my upbringing within a mixed-race and mixed-faith family – specifically as I travelled between Botswana and Belfast for my education – I first developed an interest in how both race and religion shaped and structured not only my own experiences of the world, but also the relations of my extended family. Today, as I outline in this thesis, I understand these largely unspoken and unaddressed dynamics of race and religion to bear the hallmarks of coloniality – a shadowy side to my family system that bore striking resemblance to those I have since encountered and observed in organisations and workplaces. In this sense, then, my home life and upbringing unwittingly provided the fertile ground in which to nurture the interests that inform my working life, ultimately becoming the foundation for the auto-ethnographic study that follows.

1.1.2. Research Focus, Questions & Method

Building on the foundation of my personal and professional background, this PhD project offers a multi-sited, autoethnographic account of organisations in which I have undertaken both paid and unpaid work as an EDI practitioner-researcher since 2017. Taking an explicitly decolonial stance,[7] my thesis represents a reflexive and embodied exploration of how coloniality is reproduced and

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[6] As noted by Grayson (2018:13–16), F&BF is one of UK's leading interfaith charities. In its contemporary form, the field of interfaith, which comprises "a varied ecology of organisations and initiatives" emerged from the 1970s and 80s onwards, and was advanced in the context of multicultural policy-making as the state invested in work that would promote community cohesion on the basis of shared faith values (ibid.; see also Cantle 2008:62 & 194, 2012:91–92 & 112; Bluck et al in Woodhead and Catto 2013:85–155; Inter Faith Network 2012; Department for Communities and Local Government 2008; Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007).

[7] In recent years there has been significant scholarly debate around the terminology associated with critiques of coloniality, with some moving away from the language of the 'post-colonial' in favour of terms such as 'decolonial' and 'anti-colonial' (e.g. Bhambra 2014; Grosfoguel 2011; Hiraide 2021). While acknowledging the importance of language, in this thesis I follow from Young (2003:29) and others who adopt the terms interchangeably to signify a broader commitment to scholarship which advances a common aim of anti-racism, liberation and the radical critique of (neo)colonialism and imperialism.

maintained with respect to race, religion and worldviews within modern, secular British organisations.[8]

The chapters that follow address these key questions:

1. What drives and/or inhibits engagements with race, religion and worldviews within modern, secular British organisations?

2. How do differently positioned professionals interpret and construct organisational cultures in relation to ideas of secular modernity, and how do these constructions impact their engagements with race, religion, and worldviews at work?

3. In what ways do racial, spiritual, and epistemic hierarchies' function within, shape, and influence the lives of those within modern, secular British organisations?

4. How should we understand the relationship between various forms of marginalisation, discrimination and oppression associated with race, religion and worldviews in organisational life?

5. How might we theorise the impacts of these forms of oppression for those from ethnically minoritised backgrounds?

1.1.3. 'Race' and/or 'Religion': A Persistent Problem

Underpinning my investigation and at the core of these guiding questions has been one persistent problem: namely, how to think about the relationship between race and religion, and their associated categories and constructs (e.g., ethnicity, culture, faith, belief, worldviews, spirituality etc). This dilemma has been the subject of increasing debate both within EDI practice, anti-racist and decolonial activism, and academic scholarship over recent decades; and has been central in transforming the overall framing of my research project, and its emerging lines of enquiry throughout

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[8] While I primarily focus on traditional workplaces as organisational settings, I adopt a range of other terms such as institutions, networks, and collectives. This wide-ranging terminology reflects the wide variety of organisations, formal and informal, that I engaged with throughout my project and includes looser collectives and subcultures both within and beyond formal institutions – e.g. union representatives, staff networks, and staff and student societies, which were often heavily involved in work related to race and religion.

my time in the field (Bryman 2001a:470).[9] Within sociology and political theory, for example, the question of how we should understand the relationship between race and religion has become so vexed that the majority of researchers have often resorted to undertaking their analyses as though each were self-evident and uncontested categories; or, conversely, resisted the temptation to wade too far into troublesome debates, offering a cursory and intellectually unsatisfying nod to the complexities of disentangling the two constructs.[10] Bucking this trend has been a small but growing number of scholars who have wrestled more robustly with this unresolved question, debating whether these constructs should be thought of as 'the same' i.e. interchangeable, or proxy concepts – or distinct, but interrelated identity markers (Alexander 2002, 2004, 2017; Meer 2008, 2013, 2014; Nye 2019). These scholars have intervened in debates about 'new ethnicities' (e.g. Back 2017; Gilroy 1990, 1993, 2002; Hall 2009; Hall 1990 in Rutherford 2009), and heavily involved in the work of identifying, defining and theorising contemporary forms of 'cultural racism' such as islamophobia and antisemitism – both of which are arguably grounded in aspects of racialisation (i.e. stereotypical negative understandings of race, religion and/or culture).

In this thesis I resist the temptation to side-step this controversy and locate my research focus and questions firmly at the centre of this dilemma. My project thus offers a new contribution to knowledge in two ways: 1) by advancing understanding of how ethnically and especially 'religiously' minoritised groups experience so-called secular organisations; and 2) by developing a conceptual framework which offers new ways of understanding the multiple, intersecting dynamics of race and religion, and their associated forms of oppression within British social life. As I discuss in my concluding chapter, this process of theory-generation has applicability beyond the organisations and workplaces included in my study, and potentially offers a framework for thinking through the

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[9] My project was initially framed as a multi-sited autoethnographic study of 'religion and belief in the workplace'; it quickly became evident, however, that treating 'religion and belief' as wholly distinct from 'race' was misguided. This shifted the framing of my study towards a more holistic focus on 'race' and 'religion and worldviews' in organisations, creating space to probe the relationship between each construct, and their associated systems of oppression. For a fuller discussion, see Chapter 3.

[10] Exacerbating this problem has been a siloed approach to the study of race and religion in the academy: Broadly speaking, within the sociology of race, religion has been ignored or treated as a proxy for, and thus interchangeable with the idea of race or culture (Nye 2018, 2019). By contrast, in sociology of religion, race has been treated as a troublesome construct to be engaged in other disciplines, or as an outdated mode of thinking in the context of 'post-racial' societies where a 'new ethnicities' discourse privileging faith had become dominant (For discussions see, for example, APPG on British Muslims 2018:46–47; Nye 2018, 2019). This latter approach, while strong at the outset of my research in 2017, has receded considerably in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement and subsequent calls to 'decolonise' the curriculum.

entanglements and intersections of race, religion and worldviews across the social sciences and humanities in general. Critical to arriving at this framework, however, has been my decision to move beyond contemporary, taken-for-granted understandings of both categories, instead centring literatures that theorise the emergence of both categories within Britain's centuries old histories of conquest, colonialism and imperialism (see Chapter 3).

1.2. Conceptual Foundations

This project is predicated on existing canons of knowledge dedicated to the theorisation of 'coloniality' and its related ideas – a body of work which I argue has ongoing relevance for understanding contemporary organisational life. Of particular value here, and centred within my conceptual framework (Chapter 3) is Walter Mignolo's (2011b) *Coloniality: The Darker Side of Western Modernity* and Tomoko Masuzawa's (2005) *The Invention of World Religions*. Both texts theorise coloniality as coterminous with a universalising, European, and Protestant-secular vision of modernity. In particular, I draw on the articulation of the racial and religious dimensions of the 'colonial matrix of power' first advanced by Quijano (2000), and developed by Mignolo (2011b), and other theorists including Grosfoguel (2011), Maldonado-Torres (2007), Mbembe (2016), Mignolo and Walsh (2018), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007, 2018; 2021; 2021; 2018), and Wynter (2003, 2014), whose scholarship is invaluable in exposing the ongoing workings of coloniality in the modern world.

Alongside other literatures theorising processes of identity-making at the height of European expansion, conquest and empire (Gilroy 1993, 2002, 2004; Hall 1992; Hall et al. 1996; Said 2003; Spivak 1988; Young 2003),[11] these theorisations of coloniality and identity have illuminated the processes through which Europeans came to understand themselves through discourse and the discursive practices they employed to construct self-serving dichotomised, fictive imaginings of 'the

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[11] See also Davis (1995a) and Levine (2017) for the relevance of eugenics and constructions of normalcy that accompanies these processes within secular scientific thought

West and the rest' (Hall 1992), and 'the Other' (Bhabha 1983).[12] Furthermore, they shed light on how processes of racialisation have historically contributed to the making of race and religion as colonial categories, resulting in the construction of racial and religious, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies which continue to shape the lives of marginalised and dominant groups alike. Together, these concepts represent the foundational stones of my theorisation of how coloniality is sustained in British organisational life – often through dominant cultural threads which dictate who is seen as 'professional' and worthy of belonging.

1.3. Overview of Literatures

The literatures which form the conceptual foundations of my project derive from a range of cross-disciplinary scholarship, primarily from critical sociologies of race, religion, organisations, management and law, in order to make sense of data collected and analysed in the course of my EDI work and practice. In keeping with my methodology, rather than offering the standard chapter dedicated solely to a review of relevant literature on organisations, I have chosen to allow my ethnographic material to lead, synthesising and integrating relevant theory into the discussion of my data and core questions throughout each chapter. Additionally, in accordance with my adoption of auto-ethnographic principles and 'undisciplinary' decolonial scholarly approaches (Mignolo 2011a, 2022), in which disciplinary siloes are ignored and transgressed as and where the data calls and allows for, I have drawn on theories from Black and decolonial philosophy, literature, psychoanalysis and psychosocial studies. This core body of theoretical work – and that outlined below – has enabled me to make sense of the experiences of those on the margins of organisational life.

1.3.1. Race, Racism and Whiteness in Organisations

The first contemporary body of knowledge integrated into my thesis explores race, racism, and whiteness in British institutional life. Here I have drawn on empirical research which centres lived experience alongside theory – for example, Sara Ahmed's (2012) *Race and Racism in Institutional Life*,

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[12] As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) notes, a significant limitation of literatures related to post-, de- and anti-colonialism has been the marginalisation and exclusion of African intellectuals from debates that have privileged works by diasporic scholars from the Middle East, South Asia and South America.

and Nirmal Puwar's (2004) *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place.* By synthesising these empirical literatures with more theoretical and conceptual scholarship outlining longer-standing processes of identity-making (see section 1.2.), I have been able to outline how discriminatory practices in organisations – rooted in skin colour and visible ethnic markers of difference, for example – can be traced to colonial stereotypes that evolved in the 1600s (Chapter 4). Read alongside other empirical works on race and institutional racism within organisations and critical management studies (e.g. Arday and Mirza 2018; Bell 1990; Bennett, Kalathil, and Keating 2007; Bhavnani 2001; Bhavnani, Mirza, and Meetoo 2005; Dar 2019; Elliott-Cooper 2023; Evans and Moore 2015; Luthra and Oakley 1991; Mirza 2018; Nkomo 1992; Tate and Page 2018), and synthesised with the work of scholars such as Tate & Page (2018), Di Angelo (2011) and Hunter, Swan & Grimes (2010), this has allowed me to advance an understanding of how whiteness manifests alongside Christian-Secular culture within the organisations I have studied (see Chapter 4).

In taking this approach, I have aligned my analysis with a far longer trajectory of scholarship that insists on the uncoupling of whiteness and white identities from colonial ideas of neutrality, superiority, and normalcy (Dyer 1997; Frankenberg 1993; McIntosh 2003; Nakayama and Krizek 1995; Tate and Bagguley 2017; Yancy 2005, 2012b, 2012a, 2015, 2021), and shown how the universalising assumptions of whiteness powerfully shape understandings of what it means to be seen as 'professional', or worthy of recognition and belonging in working life .

1.3.2. Religion, Religious Discrimination and Secular Modernity in Organisations

My arguments around race, racism, and whiteness in organisational life are synthesised with a further body of knowledge – that concerning religion, religious discrimination and 'secular modernity' in organisations. Amongst the empirical literature, three core areas of focus are of relevance: first, is a collection of contemporary sociological studies outlining how 'religion and belief' has come to the fore as an equalities issue within public services provision and the employment sphere, since the drafting of the Equality Act in 2010; in recent years, EDI policy has attracted attention within sociology of law (Edge and Vickers 2015; L. Vickers 2007; Vickers 2010, 2011), and increasingly, has become critical in driving organisational EDI engagements with religion and belief. The second collection represents a body of work concerned with institutional responses to religion and the management of religious diversity. I have drawn on this knowledge to explore interpretations of the

secular within organisational culture, and their intersection with issues of positionality and power in Chapter 4. Especially significant here has been the work of Adam Dinham (2022; Dinham and Francis 2015; Dinham and Jones 2010; Dinham and Shaw 2017), which focuses on interpretations of secular culture within higher education, and the development of religious literacy across a range of policy and practice settings in Britain – an issue also addressed by McFadyen & Prideaux (2011, 2014) within the police force, Lindsay (2015) within British foreign policy settings, Freeman (2019) in relation to the INGO, Tearfund. My focus on organisational cultures and responses to religion is synthesised with a smaller body of work surveying the management of religious diversity in organisations and public spaces (e.g. Burrell 2019; ComRes 2017; Mitchell and Beninger 2015; Schaeffer and Mattis 2012).[13]

Paying attention to the experiences of those professing a religion or faith, throughout my data chapters, the third collection of knowledge I draw on is a body of empirical studies concerned with 'workplace spirituality' (Byrne, Morton, and Dahling 2011; Cash and Gray 2000; Robert A. Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003; Robert A Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003; Justina Victor 2008; King and Franke 2017; Miller and Ewest 2013; Mitroff 2003; Mitroff and Denton 1999; Poole 2009; Schaeffer and Mattis 2012; Webley 2011). These studies also investigate the experiences of particular faith communities within organisations; Muslims, Black Christians and (white) Catholics, per the examples of Pio & Said's (2018) poetics on the Muslim workforce in the West, Willis's (2006) study of how Black Christians 'cope with racism through faith at work' and Power & Baker's (2018) study into the experiences of Catholics and Catholic social teachings in British workplaces. This decision to centre faith perspectives has been a critical component of my commitment to rebalancing the epistemological scales, and decentring dominant and so-called 'secular' approaches to the social scientific study of religion – e.g. methodological atheism or agnosticism – in favour of a pluriversal approach which pays due attention to the worldviews of especially minoritised people of faith (Van Klinken 2020).

Finally, just as my focus on race is supplemented with scholarship concerning whiteness and white identities, my considerations of religion and religious identities is supplemented with attention to the literatures surrounding concepts of the 'secular' (i.e. 'secularity', 'secularism', 'secularisation' etc.)

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[13] ComRes has now rebranded and is called Savanta. Their full report on religion and belief at work, which was previously available on their website has been heavily reduced; however, digital screenshots can be made available on request.

and nonreligious identities, sometimes referred to as 'secular' identities. Much like the focus on whiteness in the sociology of race, these are ideas which I argue to be worthy of scrutiny, and in need of uncoupling from their Enlightenment-rooted, colonial associations with neutrality, universality, and 'rational' or 'scientific' superiority within the modern secular organisations included in my study. Of particular relevance here, I have drawn on Lois Lee's (2012a, 2012b) research investigating non-religion and non-religious identities as dominant and 'powerful cultural threads' – concrete phenomena and constructs, often defined in binary opposition to 'religion', which I argue to be heavily involved in shaping workplace cultures and power relations (see also Woodhead 2016).[14] Undergirding this exploration is my engagement with key concepts and debates concerning 'the secular', 'the post-secular' and 'modernity' (e.g. debates on secular modernity introduced by "classical" Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke, Kant, and later nineteenth century philosophers and political theorists including Durkheim, Marx and Weber, and more recently, by thinkers such as Habermas (2006), Eisenstadt (2000), Asad (2003). I have drawn heavily on these ideas to offer an historicised account of how 'religion' came to be constructed by dominant groups as 'a private matter'– an aspect of identity to be split off and checked at the door of the workplace; or alternatively, to be managed, confined and contained to dedicated arenas and contexts of organisational life according to the worldviews of dominant actors.

1.3.3. Psychoanalytic & Psychosocial Theory and Mental Health

Having brought the literatures on race, racism and whiteness into conversation with those on religion, religious discrimination, and secular modernity, I have woven into my analysis of organisations a further set of ideas and concepts from Black and decolonial psychoanalytic and psychosocial theories. Chiefly, this has involved close readings of the works of scholars such as Fanon (2002), Cesaire (2000), Memmi (2003), Senghor (1964a & 1964b in Peters 2018:256–57; see also Washington Bâ 2016), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), Gilroy (1993, 2002, 2004) and Hall (1992), alongside thinkers from afropessimism, a branch of Black philosophy (Hartman 1997, 2008, 2016, 2018;

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[14] For further texts naming and paying attention to nonreligious thought as worthy of scrutiny see also Carroll and Norman (2017), Copson (2017), McAnulla et al. (2018), and The Religious Studies Podcast with McCutcheon and Coleman (2014), Schaefer (2016) and Woodhead (2012). It is notable, however, that most of these texts stop short of a decolonial analysis that would name these worldviews as dominant in the context of European conquest and colonialism, as I do in this thesis.

Hartman and Wilderson 2003; Sexton 2008, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2019; Sharpe 2016; Wilderson 2010). This approach has enabled me to make sense of the experiences of participants from racially and religiously minoritised backgrounds and to elucidate the psychological and emotional impacts of marginalisation and oppression on both their − and my own − journeys navigating organisations in the field. Drawing loosely on notions of self-hood, double consciousness, and internal colonisation, for example, this has allowed me to advance fresh understandings of how minoritised individuals and groups are disciplined into 'splitting off' aspects of their identity, keeping private, hidden, and masked manifestations of faith or culture that might render them as less 'rational', 'competent', 'professional' or worthy of belonging than counterparts from more dominant groups.[15] Analysed through a decolonial lens, my focus on mental health and wellbeing in organisations contributes to the limited body of scholarship on race, racisms and wellbeing in institutional life already acknowledged by Arday (2018, 2021).

Finally, in progressing my arguments around skin-colour racism, cultural racism, and what I term psycho-spiritual oppression in organisational life, I have drawn heavily on literatures that take up issues of representation, recognition and redistribution (Fraser 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001; Fraser and Honneth 2004), as well as silences, silencing and epistemic injustices (Dotson 2011, 2012, 2014, 2018; Fricker 1999, 2007, 2017; Mbembe 2016; Medina 2011; S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007, 2018; Ndolvu-Gatsheni 2018; Pohlhaus 2012; Turner 2020). These literatures become especially important anchors in my discussion and conclusion chapters which reflect on my overall argument, and its implications for subjugates' ways of knowing and being.

1.3.4. A New Contribution: Decolonial Theory & Contemporary Organisations

Collectively, my far-reaching synthesis of existing literature and theory has enabled me to address two key problems and gaps in the field. The first relates to often cited challenges named by British sociologists: that is, the difficulty of understanding and disentangling the complex relationship

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[15] These common assimilation strategies have been theorised as forms of 'code-switching' in which people from minoritised groups attempt to assimilate into dominate culture (e.g. McCluney et al. 2021; Santiago, Nwokoma, and Crentsil 2021; Socarraz-Novoa 2015). As noted by McCluney et al (2021), although "codeswitching is [often] presented as an impression management strategy" it often reinforces professional standard dictated by dominant group (i.e. White) culture, and frequently involves significant "social and psychological costs for Black [and other minoritised] employees".

between race and religion as colonial categories and concepts (e.g. Alexander 2002, 2004; Meer 2008, 2013; Nye 2019 etc.). As Grayson (2018:204) notes, intersectional analyses have tended to locate religion and faith within the sociology of race, and or disciplines such as cultural studies, which typically "…focus on 'master categories' such as gender or race" (Reimer-Kirkham and Sharma, 2012: 123). Sociological approaches to the study of race and racism have tended to be marked by Enlightenment thinking which invariably reduces religion to a matter of mere 'culture', an interchangeable proxy for 'race' or 'ethnicity', at the neglect of a deeper and more critical engagement with faith, spirituality, theology, or worldviews, which were once imagined to be in decline and thus of increasing intellectual irrelevance as European vision of modernity emerged (Cox 2003; Horii 2017).[16] This status quo has gone virtually unchallenged in the context of a discipline and broader academic culture (Dinham and Jones 2010) which remains steeped in Enlightenment philosophy and Eurocentric epistemologies (Horii 2017; Masuzawa 2005; Van Klinken 2020).

In contrast, race sits precariously on the margins of the sociology of religion and theology, virtually ignored until the 2020 murder of George Floyd sparked 'a racial awakening,' amplifying activists' calls to decolonise the curriculum. As some scholars have noted, studies of faith, belief and spirituality often occur "in isolation from ethnicity, race... and class" (Reimer-Kirkham and Sharma, 2012:116 in Grayson 2018:204). Siloed approaches to race and religion inhibit collective thinking, solidarity-building, and work to dismantle intersecting forms of oppression enacted against marginalised groups within and beyond the workplace, a consequence of the persistence of coloniality. My handling and synthesis of the literatures has therefore been informed by the dilemma highlighted above in section 1.1.3, and promoted: 1) a close and sustained engagement with race and religion as distinct, albeit entangled and intersecting constructs and categories, and 2) a theorisation of the intertwined but distinct hierarchical arrangements and systems of oppression associated with whiteness and (*Judaeo*)-Christian-Secularity (discussed in Chapter 3).

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[16] As Cox (2003) notes, the study of religion within sociology has tended to be associated with "a particular form of rational discourse", which can be traced to the founding of the discipline in the Enlightenment era. As a result, the discipline is steeped, even today, in an "intellectual tradition... [that] has been deeply embedded in the religion-secular distinction (Horii, 2015)". For a fuller discussion of the development of the sociological study of religion (or 'religious studies') as a field see Slabinski (2023), Masuzawa (2005), Asad (1993) and Chidester (2014).

The second significant contribution of my thesis has been to advance a critical account of diversity in British organisations that goes beyond mainstream neoliberal or corporate paradigms which tend to emphasise bottom-line returns. In *Postcolonial Theory and Organizational Analysis: A Critical Engagement* (2003) Anshuman Prasad noted the paucity of scholarship in organisation and management studies which directly reckon with contemporary organisational racisms as legacies of European histories of colonialism, imperialism and empire, much less to forms of anti-racist activism and decolonial thinking that framed responses to oppressive conditions (2003:7–9). Thus, in this thesis I build explicitly on trenchant analyses advanced by Prasad and a small but growing number of decolonial scholars within critical management studies (e.g. Dar et al. 2021; Nkomo 1992; Tate and Page 2018 etc.) and critical EDI (e.g. Ahmed 2007a, 2007b, 2009, 2012, 2015; Ahmed and Swan 2006; Kirton and Greene 2009; Kirton, Greene, and Dean 2007; Swan 2010; Swan and Fox 2010; Zanoni et al. 2010) who take as self-evident the ongoing realities of coloniality, neo-colonialism and racial capitalism as a starting point for their work.[17] In resolving this second problem, my synthesis of empirical and conceptual literatures has proven invaluable to my endeavour to make explicit how the aftermath of violent and dehumanising European histories of racial and religious oppression and persecution inform contemporary organisational realities. Though complex and challenging, my synthesis offers a cogent argument detailing how coloniality is sustained and reproduced in modern British organisations.

1.4. Core Message & Thesis Overview

Within this thesis I synthesise theory, literature, ethnographic data (e.g. interviews, focus groups and participant observation), and lived experience to demonstrate how coloniality is sustained and reproduced through dominant organisational cultures characterised by 'Judaeo-Christian-Secular White(li)ness' (Chapter 5). These cultures are shaped by intersecting constructions of 'race' and

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[17] Common to these scholars is an acceptance that former colonial rulers subtly, through the propagation of socio-economic and political activity, reinforce capitalism, neoliberal globalisation and the cultural subjugation of those in the former colonies and their descendants in the diaspora (see Young 2016:4 for a definition). Additionally, there is broad support for the idea, as Mbembe (2017) articulates it in his co-authored book, *Critique of Black Reason*, that an accurate "genealogy of modernity… places racial capitalism at its heart… as the cauldron in which the idea of Black, of blackness, was produced". Following a tradition of Black Marxist scholars (e.g. Cedric Robinson 1983), this means that "there is hardly any way in which we can think about capitalism without having to account for racial slavery and its aftermath" (Mbembe 2018); or in other words, racism in organisations today is not merely a by-product of capitalism, but rather, central to and constitutive of capitalism in ways that are worthy of further study.

'religion' – and associated processes of racialisation and what I term religionisation – which have their roots in the colonial encounter (Chapter 3). The impacts of these environments can be especially adverse for employees from ethnically minoritised backgrounds resulting in workplace incivilities and discriminatory treatment for those marked as visibly other (Chapter 4), and broader experiences of marginalisation and inequity for those holding and/or manifesting subjugated worldviews and epistemologies (Chapter 6). Even among individuals within these groups who have attained significant professional power and influence, the experience of navigating organisational cultures predicated on white(li)ness and (Judaeo-)Christian-Secular dominance frequently exacts emotional, psychological, spiritual, and material costs (Chapter 7).

Each chapter that follows is preceded by a reflexive autoethnographic vignette, offering glimpses into my inner world, as I go about the business of producing and making sense of my data, identifying its core themes, analysis, and constructing my final argument. I begin Chapter 2, *A Spirited Auto-Ethnographic Investigation of Organisational Life*, with an overview of my research strategy, explaining my adoption of multi-sited ethnography to trace my engagements and observations of race and religion and worldviews across time, space and a range of social actors and organisational settings. A summary of the qualitative research methods I adopted flexibly while in the field, and an account of how I applied autoethnographic tools and strategies within my analysis and write up, concludes the chapter. Throughout, I integrate my reflections on key ethical challenges encountered, focusing particularly on issues relevant to questions of equity, justice and decoloniality, and drawing out how my own positionality as a Black mixed-race woman born and raised in the former colonies shapes my analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 3, *Race and Religion & Worldviews: (Dis)Entangling the Dilemma*, opens with a personal reflection on the race-religion conceptual dilemma introduced in section 1.1.3., a controversy that bubbles under the surface of my entire thesis. This dilemma is the entry point for my conceptual framework, and builds on the foundational theories of coloniality and 'the colonial matrix of power' (Mignolo 2011b; Quijano 2000),[18] to explore in detail the historical processes that shape contemporary understandings of race and religion and worldviews. Specifically, I outline how British

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[18] See also related concepts of coloniality by Grosfoguel 2011; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018; Ndlovu-gatsheni 2021; Quijano 2000; Wynter 2003)

and American sociologists and political scientists have variously theorised ethnicity, race, and religion as entangled categories. I draw on this literature to show how processes of racialisation and what I term 'religionisation' construct racial religious, spiritual, and epistemic hierarchies from which various forms of oppression and discrimination continue to flow. Breaking down siloed approaches across sociologies of race and religion, my own conceptual framework is offered as a critical lens through which to analyse dominant culture – a lens I adopt as part of my unfolding argument in the data chapters that follow.

In Chapter 4, *Everyday Racism, Profiling, and the Policing of Organisational Space*, I explore data gathered inside organisations which were revealing of experiences of racism based on visible racialised characteristics and differences that lead to the creation and reproduction of derogatory and harmful stereotypes. To begin, I discuss incivility as rooted in European assumptions about an innate relationship between markers of difference such as skin colour, phenotype, body and, degree of humanity, civility, intellectual ability, to chart the evolution of racial theorising that reach back to the sixteenth century's histories of European expansionism, conquest, mercantilism, colonisation, enslavement and imperialism. There follows an analysis of my data, and discussion of what it can tell us about everyday surveillance, profiling, and body-policing – a phenomena which I argue disproportionately impacts those visibly marked as Other within organisations in ways that reflect a wider culture of inequitable policing and surveillance. The final part of the chapter discusses both themes in relation to my conceptual framework, to illuminate how these forms of oppression can be distinguished from those based on religion and worldviews.

Having clarified this distinction, Chapter 5, *The Dominance of Judaeo-Christian Secular White(li)ness*, explores organisational cultures with respect to religion and worldviews and interpretations of the secular. Taking as my starting point the fact that race and religion and worldviews are frequently constructed as distinct categories and protected characteristics within equalities legislation – and thus issues to be handled separately within EDI policy and practice – in this chapter I tease out how religion specifically is responded to within organisations deemed 'secular' and nonreligious, or religiously neutral. I begin with two case studies exemplifying how references to religion and 'God talk' were handled within the organisations where I had formalised research collaborations (see section 2.2.1. for details), and demonstrate how responses to religion, subjugated worldviews, and God-talk frequently mirror and parallel those associated with race and race-talk. The latter part of

the chapter builds on this discussion to theorise Judaeo-Christian-Secularity as an intersecting ideology to White(li)ness, raising the question of the possible impact these cultures may have on racially and religiously minoritised groups navigating organisational life.

These ideas are further extended in Chapter 6, *Nonrecognition and the 'Nonmodern'*. I start with some general observations about how the world religions paradigm, with its discourse of plurality, is typically institutionalised within EDI initiatives. These observations provide context to a case study of Network Rail's interfaith week campaign – an initiative which promoted 'religious inclusion', while simultaneously excluding the Norse heathen 'pagan' perspectives of one of its chief advocates. The experiences of this pagan participant serve as a gateway into my own reflexive exploration of how African indigenous beliefs have tended to be similarly ignored within EDI, and interfaith related engagements with religion and worldviews across a range of settings. Together both the campaign case study and my own reflexive account of indigenous beliefs are discussed in relation to the literature on silences, silencing and nonrecognition, and related more broadly to issues of epistemicide (de Sousa Santos 2014)[19] as a form of colonial violence.

In Chapter 7, *Conclusion*, I employ an autoethnographic strategy to discuss how issues of silencing, nonrecognition, and epistemic injustice are intimately bound up in coloniality, a theme threaded throughout my thesis. This is followed by a more in-depth reflection of these themes in relation to my key research questions (see section 1.1.2.), the wider conceptual and empirical literatures (see section 1.3.), and the data addressed in Chapters 4 to 7. Finally, as suggested by Alvesson, Gabriel and Paulsen (2017), my thesis concludes with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of my contribution. I argue here why my subjective and authentic autoethnographic account of the field should be seen as a valid, relevant, worthy and timely scholarly contribution in the context of calls to decolonise the curriculum, and in light of the significant backlash faced by academics and activists theorising and seeking to address issues of institutional racism in recent years (e.g. the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities 2021; commonly referred to as 'the Sewell report').

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[19] Credited for advancing the term 'epistemicide', which refers to the 'cognitive injustice' experienced by those in the global south, de Sousa Santos is one of several male scholars accused of sexual misconduct within academia (Viaene, Laranjeiro & Tom in Edwards 2023). I have made the difficult decision to potentially bolster the profiles of and include the works of scholars both publicly and privately accused of sexual harassment through 'whisper networks' (ibid.). This is in recognition of the fact that patriarchal violence, like ethnic violence, is so normalised and widespread that it would be virtually impossible to write a thesis without knowingly and unknowingly including possible perpetrators.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced my research project, outlined my early inspiration and motivations for my work, and clarified the focus and questions underpinning my analysis. In offering a clear articulation of the conceptual foundations of my work and outlining the wide-ranging and interdisciplinary literatures on which I draw, I have firmly located this study within critical, decolonial scholarship on organisations and management studies, reckoned with the broader histories and legacies of empire that continue to shape the contours of marginalised people's workplace realities, and shown clearly the significance of my project and its contribution to knowledge. In the chapter that follows I outline the methodology I have adopted to advance my argument, making transparent the ethical and political commitments that have influenced my research design, data collection, analysis and write up. Like all others in this thesis, the following chapter is preceded by two vignettes; the first, *'Unmoored in the Black Gaze'*, reflects on how I negotiated, and was impacted by the research journey itself; the second, *'I Write What I Like'*, making apparent some of the values and commitments that shaped the process of authoring this text.

Vignette 2: Unmoored in the Black Gaze

9ᵗʰ July 2018

This morning I experienced the strangest juxtaposition of 'the Black experience'.

A young, dark-skinned boy and his mum sat in companionable silence on the Kings Cross bound tube. The mother – I'd guess of Central or East African descent; "Maybe Congolese?", "Maybe Kenyan?", I wondered – was tranquillity embodied.

I noticed them in a way I don't normally notice people. Despite being stressed and absorbed in updating my research journal.

It was something about the meditative quality to their sitting. The understated demeanour of a mother, reading nonchalantly, as her son read equally at ease beside her.

Part way through the journey, the 13-maybe-14-year-old boy tore himself from his book, leaned into his mother, kissed her cheek. An uninhibited expression of tenderness halted, not because of watching eyes, but simply by the desire to return to his adventure novel.

...A few minutes later, shunted back to reality by the screeching of train wheels, he looked up again, and gently nuzzled his Mum. A few more words were exchanged, before he once more lost himself in his fictional adventure.

I'm transfixed by the exchange, but trying not to be obvious. Because I know the feeling of hypervisibility... and that I'm at risk of perpetuating that nonsense.[20]

Though, in truth, I'm not thinking about that right now…

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[20] Hypervisibility refers to how members of marginalised groups are more visible, and often tokenised and/or subject to greater scrutiny across a range of social settings, on account of their numerical scarcity and marginalised status. For discussions and definitions see, for example, Dickens et al. (2019), Settles (2019), Newton (2023), and Reddy (1998).

Because my hardened heart feels like it's melting…

And I am overwhelmed. And overcome.

* * *

I've been like this, constantly at the edge of tears, for a while.

Awash with negative feelings. Anger. Resentment. Hopelessness. Confusion.

But, I'm welling now up for precisely the *opposite* reason… though there may *also* be a tinge of sadness.

A wishing that I too, could know this mother-child bond.

A bond made perhaps *more* remarkable, because it is between an African woman and her African teen son.

And, let's face it, this is not the story that is frequently told. Not the image usually on display.

It is *exactly*, as I see it, the *opposite* of 'social death'.[21]

It is two people being *fully* alive.

Undefined and unconstrained by stereotypes imposed on those designated 'Black'.

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[21] Coined by sociologist Orlando Patterson in 1982, the term "social death" is used to describe the condition and treatment of Black people of African descent whom, since slavery, it is argued, have not been afforded acceptance as fully human by wider society, and are thus treated as if they were dead or non-existent. See Sorentino (2016) who explains the adoption and misunderstanding of the concept, as argued by key thinkers within afropessimism as a scholarly movement including Orlando Patterson, Jared Sexton, Frank Wilderson, Saidiya Haartman, and Fred Moten.

Two people living and *loving*; proud and *out loud*.

Like they'd never been told who they were 'supposed' to be.

Two people – mother and son – simply *being.*

Being human.

* * *

…When they depart the train, I reflect on the moment.

How a banal act could be *so* profound. And how two people can impact your day, or perspective. Without even knowing.

I can understand, I think, why notions of 'social death' emerge. Because such natural expressions of love and aliveness can feel *so* out of reach.

We wear masks. And protections. Armour up to fight. And sometimes simply *survive* systems of oppression. Systems many of us internalise to breaking point.

…But 'social death', I don't know…! It gives too much control to the dominant. A power to define us. When the point is to transcend: personally, collectively, and systemically.[22]

…I know how unpopular this idea might be to my most enthusiastically afro-pessimistic friends.

 And, perhaps predictably, just a few moments later, I'm given good reason to doubt my musings.

* * *

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[22] In this sense my perspective is more aligned with Lewis Gordon (2018b:32–33) who critiques the concept of 'social death' on the basis that it is "premised on the attitudes and perspectives of antiblack racists", this denying "blacks among each other and other communities of color… [equitable capacity to contribute their own] social perspectives".

Green Park station. Another African woman enters the carriage. Her decidedly Southern features tell me she's one of my own. I'd bet money on South African though; even if she's almost certainly Motswana....

In the telling of her cheekbones, are the remnants of skin-bleach – and trying to cover blemishes, she applies foundation to her face, to the rick-rock of the moving train.[23]

…I wonder: does she regret the decision, as the shade-or-two-darker suggests?

...And I wonder too: Am I maybe *assuming* too much… even though I *feel* fairly sure. It's in her build. And her energy. Plus, I just know my peoples' vibe…

Of course, I could be *completely* wrong...

But I'm *not* wrong about my sadness.

...I notice *that*.

How I've gone from profound peace. To overwhelming despair. In the space of five minutes.

If even that.

* * *

...I suppose this is what research does. It makes you notice.

Everything. Including stuff you'd rather ignore. And the feelings you'd rather suppress.

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[23] The use of skin-lighteners remains common across the continent, including in South Africa almost thirty years after the official end of apartheid and the success of Biko's Black Consciousness movement. Many have discussed, for instance, skin-lightening practices and their adverse health impacts as aftermaths of colonialism and white supremacy (Carnie 2022; Dlova, Hendricks, and Martincgh 2012; Jacobs et al. 2016; Julien, Nahomie 2014; Thomas 2020).

…The juxtaposition of these 'Black' experiences.

And their impact, side by side.

Snapshots and fragments.

Frozen in time.

…It's not surprising; my study, and concurrently my life, feel so untethered. Just when I think I've got my head around an idea, the rug is pulled from under me.

And it starts all over again.

The thinking.

The Instability.

The always asking.

And forever wondering.

The always being unsure.

And never really knowing…

...What exactly should I believe about this crazy world we live and love in?

Vignette 3: 'I Write What I Like'

16th September 2020

Like everyone I admire and draw inspiration from, I write for myself. I write with and for Black people. And 'I write', as Biko put it, 'What I Like'.[24]

I am *supposed* to write with the examiner and their notes and questions in mind. According to the confining conventions of a colonial academy. Where disciplinary siloes rarely make sense, and often reinforce the problems I seek to disrupt.

I am *supposed* to write in stiff prose. And 'proper' English. Full sentences that do not start with conjunctions. Like 'And'. Or 'But'. Or 'Or', for that matter.

I am *supposed* to write in ways that show I know how to jump through hoops. With endless citations that demonstrate my attention to detail. That show my work is 'rigorous'. And 'good'. And 'enough'.

I am *supposed* to learn and embrace academic practices. To join dots in ways that withstand a certain kind of scrutiny. And that uphold the expectations of a very conventional enquiry.

But, this is not how I choose to write. Because to write *that* way is to conform. To write for a 'White gaze'. Perhaps a male gaze. A secular gaze. A straight gaze. An ableist gaze. And... well, you get the picture!

Instead, I choose to write for the young child inside of me. The child of an education system divested of an interest in her developing sense of self. Divested of an interest in her people, or her communities.

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[24] This stance is inspired by South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko (1987) who published a collection of essays in his book, *I Write What I Like*, based on works he published under the pseudonym Frank Talk, as President of the South African Student Organisation from the late 1960s. It reflects an orientation to a form of writing shared by many Black writers who centre the experiences of their communities in their work – for example, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, and Claudia Rankine.

Neglectful when it came to talking or teaching about race or life on the borders of an apartheid state.

Neglectful in matters of religion, and of life at the centre of a sectarian storm.

I write for my unborn child, who I hope, will have a different future. A different kind of education. That speaks truth to their soul.

I write for my mother, who had to figure it out on her own. Without a therapeutic process, nor giant academic shoulders on which she could stand.

A Black African woman – seventh born of fourteen.

Who overcame bitter odds, to qualify as a doctor, at the age of fifty-three.

I write for *her* parents, and those on the other side. Those whose lives go unreflected, and whose stories are rarely told. Grandparents and great uncles – like *Omponye* and *Rasedibelo Beleng*.

Forbears who crossed borders. Just to toil in plundered mines.

Perspiring in precarity. For a pittance as pay.[25]

Most importantly, these days, I write in my authentic voice.

Increasingly, the words arrive in Setswana. Resistant to translation.

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[25] Though this side of my family's history remains undocumented in written form, my grandfather and great-uncles' were posted to South African mines which were most likely under British colonial control from 1870 onwards, as the 'diamond rush' era commenced, and the country "evolved into a major supplier of precious minerals to the world economy" (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2023). Their deployment to South African mines likely occurred through the mining company De Beers – bought in 1871 by Cecil John Rhodes, a financier, statesman and empire-builder. Rhodes linked the mining industries of South Africa and Bechuanaland (now Botswana), allowing for the movement of the goods and 'cheap labour' over this period (ibid.). McClintock's *The White Family of Man* (1995) offers a haunting exposition of the extreme precarity, poor pay, and absence of basic health and safety regulations, characteristic of the working conditions endured by Black miners.

Spitting themselves out, with the disgust of my ancestors, still struggling to get free. But still claiming my body. And holding my pen.

They reclaim my Mother Tongue. Even when it is fractured, and broken. When it is fragmented. And split. Like tiny, shattered pieces of a heart and mind, broken by trips across far-flung borders.

I assert this as more than a desire. But a need. And compulsion. A need that has academic merit. But, more importantly, personal necessity.

I write this way, because it is my right.

A right to write the way I like.

And a right I am prepared to defend.

In an exam, if I must.

Chapter 2: A Spirited Auto-Ethnographic Investigation of Organisational Life

Since the 1960s, when feminists and other marginalised scholars first entered spaces of higher learning, debates have raged over the nature of knowledge, and approaches to its generation. These philosophical arguments have typically concerned the tussle between 'feminist' research strategies – often qualitative in nature, and emphasising subjectivity, positionality, and reflexivity; and more 'traditional', 'masculinist' research founded on claims of objectivity, rigour, and neutrality. These debates have been referred to as 'the paradigm wars' (Bryman in Alasuutari, Bickman, and Brannen 2008:13–25; Gage 1989; Griffiths and Norman 2012; Knappertsbusch 2023; Munoz-Najar Galvez, Heiberger, and McFarland 2020).

For early career researchers, a significant component of initial training involves grappling with these different paradigms, determining where and how to position one's work within these debates. In my case, while my project is now firmly situated within a critical research paradigm – and heavily influenced by my adoption and synthesis of multi-sited ethnography (MSE) and a selection of auto-ethnographic tools and strategies common to decolonial, feminist, queer, critical race, and disability studies[26] – the process of executing my work in alignment with these values was not straightforward, prompting significant reflection for the duration of my project.

In this chapter, I detail the results of this reflection, explaining my adoption of multi-sited ethnography as a qualitative research strategy appropriate to my study of race, religion and coloniality in organisations. I start by discussing existing literature on organisational ethnography, outlining how my research approach built on my networks and practice as an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) practitioner, and aligned with my ethical and political commitments to anti-racist and decolonial organising. There follows an overview of my multi-method, auto-ethnographic approach

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[26] See, for example, research strategies employed by scholars of critical race theory (e.g. Camangian, Philoxene, and Stovall 2023; Chávez 2012; Hayes 2014), black feminism (e.g. bell hooks 1984; Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991), queer theory (e.g. Given 2012; Grace 2008), and mad/disability studies (e.g. Beresford 2020; Faulkner 2017; Ingram 2016; International Mad Studies Community 2022), all of which emphasise similar orientations and methodological approaches both within and beyond the study of organisations.

to data collection at the Faith & Belief Forum (F&BF) and Network Rail (NR), two organisations where I was permitted to conduct my study, as well as within my involvement in EDI consulting work more broadly. Next, I describe my field and data collection techniques, before moving on to an explanation of my data analysis strategy, and the auto-ethnographic tools and strategies I adopted for the design, analysis, and write-up of my study – an approach that has allowed me to go beyond paying lip service to issues of reflexivity, and to transparently locate myself within my final account of the field. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of some ethical challenges I encountered, especially my decision to draw on memory and personal stories as part of my analytic strategy.

2.1. A Multi-Sited Organisational Ethnography

In this project, inspired by the approach pioneered by Marcus (1995), I have employed multi-sited ethnography (see also Coleman and Von Hellermann 2013; Falzon 2009a; Nadai and Maeder 2005) – a methodology well-established within the study of both religions (Lee 2012a a; Graham Harvey in Stausberg and Engler 2011:219) and organisations (Neyland 2008a; Ybema 2009) and strongly associated with the postmodern turn towards interdisciplinary and feminist research strategies.[27] Situated within a qualitative and interpretivist research paradigm, MSE emerged as an anthropological method in the 1980s, and represented a shift away from the conventional study of single-site locations towards "multiple sites of observation and participation" (Marcus 1995:95). At its core, the method is rooted in an emphasis on "follow[ing] people, connections, associations, and relationships across space" (Falzon 2009b:1–2), with the "ethnographer establish[ing] some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association among sites" (1995:106–7). In the context of this research project, MSE has been critical to advancing my understanding of how a diverse set of differently positioned organisational actors – for example, Human Resources managers, equalities professionals, staff and student network members, senior leaders, union representatives

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[27] In his article, *Ethnography in/of the World System*, Marcus (1995:97) traces the emergence of MSE, and some of the controversies associated with the method through media studies, feminist studies, science and technology studies, and various strands of cultural studies, arguing that many adopting the approach employ ideologically anti-disciplinary rather than merely interdisciplinary approaches. This perspective on the method means MSE can be seen as having strong ideological compatibility with the 'undisciplinary' decolonial approaches I have adopted in the synthesis of my literature (discussed in section 1.3.).

etc. – engage with issues of race and religion and worldviews as common concerns within and beyond their organisations (Falzon 2009a:1–2; Nadai and Maeder 2005).

My adoption of MSE offered two core benefits. The first of these has been flexibility, a characteristic of the method which allowed me to design my project around my work as an EDI practitioner, responsively tracking how both race and religion and worldviews were engaged with and discussed across organisations and networks where I had pre-existing relationships. This included both F&FB and NR, where I held formal research partnerships (discussed in section 2.2.), and other settings to which I had access as part of my involvement in the wider world of EDI consultancy (discussed in section 2.3.). In this sense, my project design is built on the work and precedent set by Ahmed's (2012) scholarship on race and diversity in organisations.

In contrast to traditional ethnography (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1976; Malinowski 1929), which was originally pioneered by anthropologists at the height of Empire and typically emphasised extended periods of immersion within a single setting (Bryman 2001a:432; O'Reilly 2009:3) – usually among 'traditional societies' in the colonies (Mohan 2002:827–36; Salemink 2003a:1; Sanjek 1993:13–18)[28] – MSE was well aligned with the focus and themes of my research. Since engagements with both race and religion and worldviews remained low priority endeavours relative to the core work and mission of the vast majority of organisations in which I undertook my field research – generally, considered only reactively, when 'diversity challenges' arose within the workforce, or when social events forced these issues to the fore (see sections 5.1. and 8.1.1.)[29] – MSE allowed me to plan my data collection using a flexible 'follow the bodies!'-style approach (Scheper-Hughes 2004:32 in Bryman 2001a), tracking the circulation of my core ideas across time and space, and gathering the perspectives of a range of key informants (Coleman and Von Hellermann 2013:2) via informal conversations,

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[28] The 'traditional' Malinowskian ethnographic tradition has strong colonial roots and has been historically associated with attempts to impartially and objectively represent 'exotic' and 'indigenous' groups, as part of "Western European colonial endeavours" (Neyland 2008b:1; Salemink 2003b:9–18). Such representations have typically aimed to offer "'authoritative' account[s] of the group or culture in question", with the researcher typically written out of the account and positioned as a distant and impartial observer imparting a 'definitive', 'confident' and 'dispassionate', third person perspective of the research setting and 'subjects' under study (Bryman 2001b:462–64). This colonial approach serves in stark contrast to the highly subjective postmodern approach I employ in this thesis.

[29] F&BF, and similar organisations, can be thought of as an exception to this rule since 'faith and belief' and 'interfaith and intercultural relations' are core to their mission and day-to-day work (The Faith & Belief Forum 2022).

interviews and electronic communications (e.g. email, WhatsApp, and occasionally social media messaging).[30]

This flexibility was important for two reasons: First, my study involved working with a highly mobile workforce (Gorz 1999), and included several participants who a) changed their primary site of employment during my research project;[31] and/or b) held roles that involved working across several organisations and networks.[32] In these instances, adopting MSE allowed me to sustain my research inquiry as participants moved across different settings, continuing to develop and exchange insights and perspectives on issues of relevance to my research questions using the data gathering techniques discussed in section 2.2., as participants navigated significant changes in their own working lives. Second, since the method allowed me to centre race, religion and worldviews, and coloniality as key *themes* in selected organisations, I was able to consider the relevance of my research questions *beyond* traditional understandings of the 'organisation' or institution as a field, or unit of analysis. This prompted me to think about the relevance of my research questions across a range of more informal networks and entities – for example, within the anti-racist and decolonial collectives, staff and student societies, and stakeholder panels and working groups discussed in Chapters 5 & 6, all of which existed adjacent to, or as sub-cultures of formally incorporated organisations, and were heavily

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[30] Marcus (1995:106–7) describes the flexibility of MSE as rooted in research "designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association among sites". Several modes of constructions are associated with MSE, which include following 'the people', 'the thing', 'the metaphor', 'the plot, story or allegory', 'the life or biography', or the conflict (Marcus 1995:105–13). In this project I adopted a loose combination of many of these strategies following 'the thing (i.e. 'engagements with race and religion and worldviews') across a range of organisational settings, but also key 'people' (i.e. 'EDI workers' and employees who were responsible for said 'thing' because they held roles as EDI champions, union representatives or even as lawyers working across a range of organisations). At times too 'the conflict' associated with disentangling race and religion as categories was followed across different settings to unveil new insights and phenomena around emerging lines of enquiry, with my adoption of autoethnographic strategies amounting to an approach that might even be described as following 'the thing' by adopting an approach of following 'the life or biography' as part of my own journey across time and space (e.g. in Vignette 4).

[31] Several of those who moved on from their roles at Network Rail and F&BF during my time in the field expressed interest in remaining in touch, with several following up to provide new research insights and/or seek EDI consulting support having moved into new organisational settings.

[32] This was especially the case for fellow EDI professionals and peers who participated in my study. In this sense, my research design was in part informed by Ahmed's insight that "the diversity world [of which considerations of race and religion are a part] is a world of mobile subjects and objects, [and] of... networks and connections that are necessary for things to move around" (Ahmed 2012:11).

involved in race and religion-focussed activities and forms of activism aimed at challenging dominant group culture.[33]

In addition to flexibility, MSE offered a further benefit: namely, it was aligned with the critical, activist-leaning, and praxis-focussed orientation of my project (Marcus 1995, 2011).[34] As such, MSE supported my commitment to a research strategy that allowed me to go beyond 'intellectual activism' (Contu 2018), addressing and/or rectifying issues identified as I went about my work as an EDI consultant and researcher, and actively creating space to reflect on, shift and deepen my own ethical and political commitments throughout the study. As discussed below (sections 2.2.2. and 2.4.), I continued to undertake my usual EDI work practice, while adopting a range of auto-ethnographic tools and strategies within my research design, analysis, and write-up to embed principles of reflexivity. The result is a thesis strongly focused on praxis, values and the development of an account of the field, which is firmly situated within the postmodern paradigm characteristic of ethnographic research since the 1960s (Bryman 2001a:462–64; Holman Jones, Adams, and Ellis 2016:30).

In taking this approach, I have built on the work of postcolonial scholars and critical race theorists (e.g. Camangian, Philoxene, and Stovall 2023; Chávez 2012; Hayes 2014; Dutta & Basu and Pathak in Holman Jones et al. 2016:143–60 & 595–608), including Holman Jones et al. (2016:30) who assert that "who you are, how you are classified, and what you believe and desire impacts how you are perceived by society, how society perceives you, and, as a result, how you can move in, and act on the world". In practice, this has meant ongoing reflection on my positionality as a Black mixed-race, queer woman born and raised in a mixed religion and worldview landscape, and offering a critical and transparent interpretation of both my data, and the professional and personal processes of navigating British organisational life. This approach is informed by my decision to locate my work within the critical, 'feminist' research paradigms referred to earlier, foregrounding decolonial theory

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[33] By formally recognised and incorporated organisations I refer here to government-registered and recognised entities across the private, public and voluntary sectors. These can be seen as distinct from looser collectives and networks involved in organising work, e.g. fringe groups and activists networks often involved in initiatives to challenge elements of dominant group culture and pursue forms of recognition and representation in organisational life.

[34] The emphasis on practice potentially also aligns my approach closer to approaches adopted within action research, and builds on approaches common to critical ethnography (Nyberg & Delaney in Jeanes and Huzzard 2014: Chapter 4).

and methods (e.g. Chilisa 2011; Mignolo 2011a, 2022; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007, 2020; S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021; Ndolvu-Gatsheni 2018; Tuhiwai Smith 2012); and centring the experiences and perspectives of racially and religiously minoritised research participants within my analysis. Thus, my selection of MSE has been essential to building my practice and activism, creating the context and foundation to flexibly pursue a multi-method approach to data collection as I went about my daily life – as outlined in detail in the next section.

2.2. Data Collection Settings & Methods

2.2.1. Collaborating Organisations as 'Micro-Ethnographic Studies'

Although MSE allowed me to conduct my study across a range of settings in which I undertook EDI consultancy work, my most sustained data collection occurred within two organisations – the Faith & Belief Forum (F&BF) and Network Rail (NR) – where I held formalised research agreements over my 18-month period in the field (March 2018 – September 2019).[35] These organisations constituted significantly different settings through which to generate 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) of the dynamics of race, religion and worldviews, and coloniality in organisational life.

F&BF was a small charitable organisation based in London, employing 21 – predominantly white – staff members.[36] It operated in the field of interfaith and intercultural relations, with most staff describing the organisation as 'faith-friendly' but 'secular'.[37] A focus on 'faith and belief' was core to its work and mission, though during my fieldwork, the organisation rebranded in a strategic effort to diversify its revenue sources, reduce dependency on faith-based funders, and attract interest from

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[35] The negotiation of these research partnerships was largely possible due to my pre-existing relationships with both organisations, which date back to 2014, and are discussed in more detail in sections 1.2. and 2.5. of this thesis.

[36] The predominantly white staff demographic remained throughout my research; it was in many ways reflective of the racialised dynamics of the charity sector, addressed as part of the Charity's So White Campaign (2023) launched during my research. While the charity made efforts to increase its racial diversity during my time in the organisation and increased its representation beyond just 1 full-time Black staff member when I commenced my project, the organisation's lack of racial diversity was a source of contention among staff throughout my time in the field.)

[37] Just one of the seventeen staff I interviewed at F&BF – a senior with significant influence, who was himself nonreligious – described the organisation as 'faith-based'. This served as a contrasting perspective to most staff of faith in the organisation who described the organisation as going through a process of secularisation and was an indication of how positionality shaped interpretations of modern secular organisational cultures (see section 5.3.2. and 8.1.2.).

donors reluctant to support organisations with an explicitly religious mission. This indicated a shift away from the organisation's positioning as the Three Faiths Forum – a Faith Based Organisation (FBO) since its incorporation in 1997 – towards a more 'professionalised' rebranding as 'secular', and inclusive of 'people of all faiths and beliefs', including those professing to be non-religious (see section 5.3.2.). Despite its declared secularism, F&BF nonetheless offered a unique location from which to study my research themes, since issues of identity – especially religion and worldviews – were core to its work, and thus more of a priority than was typical within most organisations I studied.

By contrast, Network Rail's profile was that of an unambiguously 'secular' public sector organisation. As discussed in Chapter 5, while Network Rail had a stated commitment to diversity and inclusion (2023), its culture differed markedly from F&BF; it prided itself on its inclusion of different faith groups, which it isolated as an important strand of diversity in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Yet, religious belief was perceived by many as a private matter, that was in some ways at dissonance with the 'rationality' of its Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) focussed activities and culture. Employing just under 45,000 people across the UK's transport industry, Network Rail acknowledged that despite 8.51% of its employees identifying as 'BAME', the organisation continued to fall short on racial and ethnic diversity. 76.21% of staff members identified as white, a further 13.66% were unknown, and 2.12% preferred not to disclose their ethnicity (Network Rail 2019a:6–7, 2022). As with F&BF, 'BAME' representation at Network Rail was significantly lower than the overall UK population (13% in the last census), with racial stratification remaining high year on year according to the organisation's ethnicity pay gap reports (Network Rail 2019b, 2020, 2021, 2022). In 2022, for example, the organisation reported an ethnicity pay gap of 6.4% - greater than the UK average of 2.3 per cent (Office for National Statistics in Network Rail 2019a:6–7) – with management positions dominated by white people, and 'BAME' staff disproportionately represented in 'technical and clerical' roles (Network Rail 2022, 2022).

While there were significant similarities and differences between F&BF and Network Rail as micro-ethnographic sites, my investigations within both organisations contributed significantly to the development of the exemplifying and revelatory case studies (Bryman 2001a:70–71) included throughout this thesis. As such both partnerships offered significant benefits to my study. First, the collaborations allowed me to probe gaps between how both organisations formally depicted themselves via their websites, policies, EDI strategies, and recruitment and marketing materials, for

example – and what happens in practice (Bryman 2001a:439–40). Second, they enabled me to explore how differently positioned members of each organisation responded to issues of race and religion and worldviews, theorising how power, agency and hierarchy play a part in these interactions (Bryman 2001a:6 & 432). Third, by allowing me to build sustained relationships with members of each organisation over time, they supported my observations of how organisational cultures constitute dynamic entities "in a constant process of reformulation and reassessment as [*various*] members of the organisation continually modify …[them] through their practices and through small innovations in how things are done" (Bryman 2001a:6). As demonstrated in my data and discussion chapters, each benefit has illuminated how racially and religiously minoritised participants perceive the discrepancy between formal organisational rhetoric and PR around diversity and inclusion – what Sara Ahmed (2012:10 & 72) refers to as 'mission-based' "happy talk" (see also Ahmed 2007a) – and their generally more critical reflections on their lived experiences of the organisation's management of matters concerning race and religion.

Having negotiated access to each organisation (discussed in section 2.5.), data collection in both settings focused primarily on HRM and EDI strategy-related activities, in line with my interest in better understanding manifestations of coloniality within the organisational culture. This involved participating in agreed activities, meetings and events connected with race and religion and worldviews – a process I systematically documented in my research journal, as advocated by Adler and Adler (2008), Sanjek (1990, 2000), and Lofland and Lofland (1995 in Bryman 2001a:393). At Network Rail, the process of participant observation was brokered by members of the organisation's Multi Faith Network (MFN), especially by Imran, the network's Chair; while at F&BF my existing relationships with staff members at all levels provided numerous points of entry into relevant work, with Gemma, the HR and Operations Manager, and members of the organisation's Race and Faith Working Group (RFWG) playing particularly significant roles.

As is common in ethnography, participant observation was supplemented with a range of other data collection methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seventeen of F&BF's twenty-

one staff members;[38] and six interviews were undertaken with members of Network Rail's Multi-Faith Network (MFN) (see the interview schedule in Appendix 1).[39] I also reviewed a range of relevant organisational documents in line with consent and data-sharing agreements established with each organisation. These included websites and EDI policies and strategies at both organisations, as well as diversity and pay gap monitoring data, internal communications, meeting notes, newsletters, selected screenshots of staff intranet pages, and anonymised staff survey data.

Finally, as agreed during the negotiation of formalised research agreements, I provided significant unpaid research, consultancy, and training support at both organisations during my fieldwork period. The trading of organisational access in exchange for specific researcher inputs is typical of organisational ethnography, where researchers are often expected to offer collaborating organisations their skills, knowledge and/or experience in return for their support (Ybema et al. 2009). At F&BF this process was more involved, requiring work with the HR & Operations team to support 1) the development of the organisation's first formal EDI strategy; 2) the design and implementation of staff-focussed diversity and pay-gap monitoring systems; and 3) the design, implementation and analysis of staff surveys around EDI issues in the organisation. At Network Rail, I was consulted on a more emergent basis – for example, as the MFN launched and implemented a new initiative to promote faith inclusion as part of its Inter-Faith Week banner campaign, discussed in Chapter 6. Within both organisations, I delivered several focus groups, workshops and/or facilitated sessions (see Appendix 2 for details) – something which solidified the practitioner orientation of my research and, at times, even pushed my methodology closer to participatory action research (e.g. as outlined by Sykes & Treleaven in Ybema et al. 2009:215–30) as we moved through various iterations of diversity monitoring implementation at F&BF.

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[38] The remaining four staff members at the Faith & Belief Forum did not get involved in interviews due to time limitations rather than any active resistance to the project. However, they were involved in other ways, and shared reflections over informal conversations which I recorded in my research journal.

[39] This significant disproportionality despite Network Rail's much larger scale was largely down to the relative enthusiasm of staff across F&BF's organisation where I had both longer standing and closer relationships. The discrepancy was likely also due to the relative comfort among staff at F&BF engaging with religion and worldviews as a core theme of my research, which served as a stark contrast to staff at Network Rail outside of the MFN – including, for example, several members of the HR and EDI team who seemed reluctant to get involved. This reluctance was also reflected more broadly in the culture of the organisation as I discuss in Chapter 5.

2.2.2 Supplementary Data from 'The World of Diversity'

In addition to data sources obtained from F&BF and NR, I decided to build a more auto-ethnographic component into my research design, gathering supplementary data sources as I went about my work as an EDI consultant. I was strongly influenced by Sara Ahmed (2012:11), whose immersion in "'the diversity world' (meetings, conferences, workshops on diversity and equality… as well as some events…)" became central to her research into race and racism in institutional life. Borrowing from Ahmed, this approach created the context for me to chart my own "ethnographic path [amongst] …an infinite variety of pathways that could be taken" (Coleman and Von Hellermann 2013:3) to my research, resulting in a project that might be hard to replicate. Nevertheless, charting this pathway enabled me to offer a unique contribution by building on my positionality as a practitioner-researcher (Buoro 2015; Cox 2012; Coy 2006; Lunt, Shaw, and Fouché 2010; Sternberg and Horvath 1999), explicitly making use of my embeddedness within a wide network of EDI & HRM practitioners, as well as policy professionals, scholars and activists similarly interested in issues of racial and religious equity and inclusion.

Embedding this auto-ethnographic practitioner-oriented approach into my work, enabled me to triangulate 'thick description' and in-depth case studies generated over my time at NR & F&BF, with additional insights uncovered through a combination of interviews, focus groups, and participant observation from the wider world of diversity. This approach allowed me to "combine theories and [a wide range of] methods carefully and purposefully with the intention of adding breadth and depth to… [my] analysis" (Fielding & Fielding 1986:33 in Flick 1992); while also generating a fuller picture of how race and religion and worldviews interact and are engaged in organisations via a process of "perspective triangulation" (Flick 1992).[40] My immersion and participation in 'the world of diversity' – conducting participant observation at public and closed-door events, workshops, and webinars – provided a valuable "opportunity to listen to the ways [religious and racial] diversity gets talked about" (Ahmed 2012:7), and to observe at first-hand how differently positioned organisational and social actors related to my core areas of focus. This engagement across a much wider range of settings has been especially fruitful in advancing an understanding of the broader backdrop and

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[40] For a fuller discussion of how multi-method approaches to data collection generate knowledge of "a kaleidoscopic kind" (Flick 1992) within ethnographic and autoethnographic research, see Ocejo (2013) and Cooper & Lilyea (2022:197).

context out of which engagements with race and religion and worldviews emerge in the organisations studied.

As I went about my EDI consultancy work, I supplemented participant observation with two further methods. The first was a series of interviews with twenty-five professionals beyond F&FB and NR. Participants were recruited via snowball sampling in the course of my consultancy work. Of these twenty-five participants, thirteen agreed to have their interviews recorded and transcribed, with the remaining thirteen speaking to me informally on the understanding that I may include insights and notes from our discussion in my final project. As shown in my interview schedule (Appendix 1), these interviews facilitated the involvement of research participants from a range of roles, professions, and sectors, including seven participants drawn from Central and local government, and a further six from public and private sector organisations (i.e. higher education institutions, management consultancy and legal firms, and a civil society organisations). Each participant had expressed interest in my research once they understood its purpose as a study into 'religion and belief in the workplace', and/or or because of their broader interest in EDI issues.

The inclusion of these additional interviewees had several benefits for my study. First, it allowed me to actively embed principles of diversity within my research design in keeping with the suggestion by Sara Ahmed (2012:9) that "a project on diversity needs to think from and with a diversity of institutions". Second, it allowed me to ensure a representation of views across particular demographics, thus deepening my understanding of how 'standpoint' (Haraway 1988; Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2007) and positionality impacted participant perceptions and experiences of issues associated with race, religion and worldviews in organisations. Finally, the inclusion of additional perspective also played a critical role in testing the validity and transferability of the insights developed over my time at F&BF and NR, allowing me to follow up on significant issues and findings that emerged in both organisations (Beardsworth and Keil 1992:261–62; Bryman 2001a:470). This involved sharing anonymised insights and phenomena uncovered at F&BF and NR with participants from other organisations where appropriate, assessing points of resonance and dissonance, and adjusting and developing my thesis accordingly so I could make stronger claims around the significance, relevance and transferability of key findings (see Chapter 7).

Finally, in addition to participant observation and interviews, I conducted four focus groups, each of which was also recorded and transcribed for analysis. I also facilitated and delivered several EDI sessions (see Appendix 2). These sessions explored how participants responded to issues of religion and worldviews in organisations, with focus groups taking a series of real-life case studies as a stimulus to explore how differently positioned participants felt about ideas of 'freedom of expression' in the context of discussions on 'religion and belief' within workplaces (see Appendix 3 for details). My four focus groups were all held in London and included a total of 64 participants from 1) a small London voluntary sector organisation (9 participants), 2) central government and civil service departments (The Cabinet Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; 14 participants), and 3) two further sessions with 16 front-line staff and 25 senior leaders at Network Rail. Other facilitated sessions included participants across a range of settings and locations including several charities and legal, finance and management consultancy firms in London and the South-East of England; an adult education college and a university in the North of England; along with work with NR staff in their Milton Keynes office. All participants were recruited via word-of-mouth and convenience sampling from within my network, with the majority based in diverse – or 'superdiverse', in the case of London (Cantle 2012) – cities with highly globalised if racially stratified workforces.

My use of focus groups and facilitated sessions have been critical to my theorisations of how the social context frequently drives and shapes engagements with race, religion and worldviews in organisations (RQ1) – which I discuss in my concluding chapter (see section 7.1.1.). Both approaches served as "a potent tool for [my] research into collective identity" (Munday 2006), significantly advancing my understanding of "the ways in which individuals discuss a certain issue *as members of a group*, rather than simply as individuals" (Bryman 2001a:501). By way of example, the process of studying inter and intra-group interactions through these methods was critical to my theorisation of (Judaeo)-Christian-Secularity and Whiteness as dominant cultural threads in Chapter 5, since they revealed how varying interpretations of organisational culture – or indeed 'secular modernity' and its implications for inclusivity – was often correlated with peoples' personal, group and professional identities and positions (Barbour 2008:Chapter 10; see also Bryman 2001:501–4). Additionally, since group-based discussions and interactions revealed through these methods could be followed up with individuals in interviews or other 1-2-1 conversations, both methods helped to uncover trends and patterns in the way minoritised groups respond to less inclusive cultures – often by 'splitting' their private and professional selves and self-silencing to conform to dominant culture as I discuss in

Chapter 6. Overall my adoption of these methods has allowed for my analysis of 'complementary and argumentative interactions' (Kitzinger 1994:107 & 113–15) across differently racialised and religionised participants, thus advancing an understanding of how participants' privately held opinions on their experiences of inclusion and exclusion so often remain 'unsayable' or unsaid in collective discussion (discussed in Chapter 7).

Taken together, through data collection at F&BF, NR and within the wider world of EDI consultancy, this thesis integrates insights from 48 interviews, 4 focus groups, and numerous facilitated discussions and workshops, and is based on written and/or recorded contributions from participants across a range of roles, sectors, settings, and backgrounds. Supplementing these contributions are the participant observations recorded systematically in my research journal, and the perspectives of many others with whom I came into contact through my day-to-day personal and professional life – people who undoubtedly influenced my thinking and observations through their engagement with the issues under study at public and open events, though they would likely not have been aware of my role as a researcher. In the following section, I provide an overview of how I processed and analysed these contributions and data to generate the findings included in the chapters that follow.

2.3. Data Management and Analysis

2.3.1. Overview of Data

Over eighteen months of fieldwork (March 2018 – September 2019) I gathered a large volume of data, including 821 electronic research journal entries based on participant observation at F&BF and NR. These field notes were supplemented with: 1) a collection of relevant images, website links, organisational strategy documents and internal and external-facing communications, training resources, and policy documents gathered at collaborating organisations and events; and 2) 39 transcripts of the semi-structured interviews and focus groups.[41]

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[41] I transcribed a third of these sources of data myself and secured funding from the White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities and the School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science to have the remaining sources of data transcribed professionally.

The volume of data generated, and the significant range of methods I adopted, presented several challenges as I exited the field. Most significant was the question of how to organise my data and approach the analysis given the time and word limit constraints associated with a PhD project. In the end, I took pragmatic decisions, grouping and analysing data first according to the method of collection, before flexibly applying the most suitable analysis strategy in line with the approach suggested by Cooper & Lilyea (2022:202) who emphasise the "blending of multiple analytical approaches… [to] generate more validity, depth, and richness in research findings and outcomes".

2.3.2. Thematic Analysis of Data

I started with a more systematic thematic analysis of my participant observation notes in Nvivo in line with the time-bound, open coding process described by Strauss & Corbin (1998 in Marjan 2017:30–31; see also Cooper and Lilyea 2022:201). This allowed me to identify important themes and patterns related to both my observations of the field, and my own experience of the research process. I used a process of emotion coding (Cooper and Lilyea 2022:201), which enabled me to reflect more deeply on how my biography and story were relevant to the data, identifying how disclosures from research participants mapped onto my own lived experience – an issue I unpack further in section 2.4 of this chapter.

This was followed by a thematic analysis of my 35 anonymised interview transcripts, and my 4 focus group transcripts in Nvivo. I was able to set up a coding framework based on my original research questions and topic guide (see Appendices 3 and 4), and to adopt an even more systematic approach to open-coding my data, according to key areas of focus established from the outset – 1) 'Factors driving and inhibiting engagements with religion in organisations'; 2) 'The Construction of Workplace Cultures'; 3) 'The influence of 'identity and positionality' in perceptions and experiences of engagements with race, religion and worldviews; and 4) The Implications for Equality, Trust and Cohesion'. Due to the volume of data coded at each major theme, however, it quickly became clear that I would not have time to systematically code all my data within the constraints of a PhD project. Consequently, I opted to pursue a second round of selective coding based only on the first two themes, identifying salient sub-themes and emergent lines of enquiry, following the process outlined by Strauss & Corbin (1998 in Marjan 2017:30–31). By chance, my analysis of the first two themes inadvertently ended up generating findings connected with my second two areas of interest, and also generated some new themes and lines of enquiry connected with the entangled relationship of race

and religion and worldviews as constructs, for example – an issue that resurfaced throughout my study and became necessary to address, as discussed in my introductory chapter (section 1.3).

As is common in qualitative research, the process of writing up my data also became part of my 'method of inquiry' and a key component of my analytic process (Braun and Clarke 2022:117; Richardson & Golden-Biddle 1997:4 in Holliday 2016:128). This stage required me to consider my presentation of the data and reflect on how to tell the story of my time at F&FB and NR: I followed a process of axial coding, "putting back data in new ways... by identifying relationships between categories" and themes to generate new theoretical insights (Marjan 2017:30–31; see also Strauss and Corbin 1998, Ch 12). In this phase of my analysis, I organised and reflected on my data in three ways: First, I ordered the data by organisation to better understand the reality of each context and generate exemplifying case studies. Second, I grouped data by the personal and professional identity characteristics of interview participants (see Appendix 1 for details) to ascertain how the subject positioning of participants influenced their perceptions and experiences of race and religion in their organisations, and in particular how they reflected on their organisational cultures in relation to these issues.[42] For example, I explored their perceptions of how religion and race were responded to in their organisations and how they and other colleagues interpreted the 'secular' in their organisational contexts. Third, I re-grouped the data once again according to my major write-up themes (i.e. chapters), breaking down these sections into manageable sub-themes (i.e. chapter sections). In this way, major themes like 'organisational culture', could be re-analysed and presented in case study forms related to sub-themes such as 'whiteness', 'secular culture', and 'workplace activism' at both F&BF and Network Rail.

2.3.3. Analysis of Silences

In the final analysis and writing-up stages, I became more acutely aware of how a failure to engage with silences might potentially inhibit my construction of a meaningful and honest account of the field (Kawabata and Gastaldo 2015:1). My growing cognisance of the literature on silences led me to focus not just on those ideas, thoughts and feelings that were made *explicit* in the field, but also those

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[42] Since I was interested in the complex lived reality of identity, I did not want to capture participant demographic data using a reductive 'tick-box' style form. Instead, I asked participants directly how they self-identified, using an autobiographical interviewing technique to understand their ethnic identifications. This was combined with my observation of their visible characteristics and markers of difference, which I included in my field notes.

which remained unspoken, muted, or implicit.[43] Adopting this stance aligned my work more deeply with critical, decolonial and feminist research approaches, which typically seek to "deal with the presence of the "elephant" in the room" (Harel-Shalev 2020:434–35 & 439–40), and emphasise surfacing the perspectives and voices of those less likely to speak up or be heard (Charmaz 2002; Virloget and Alempijević 2021). This was especially important in the context of a project centring issues of race, religion and worldviews, and coloniality since "silence can signal a form of oppression, produced by the forces that exclude certain ideas, people and words from being spoken, visible, attended to or even thought about" (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:417).

Armed with these insights, I focused my analysis on two types of silences: 1) those manifesting within individual or interpersonal interactions, such as within interviews, focus groups and other one-to-one conversations (Basso in Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:419; Sue et al 2019 in Murray and Durrheim 2019) and; 2) those 'social silences' (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:417–18) – also referred to as discursive or conceptual silences – that exist about power, coloniality and/or the suppression of collective traumatic memory (Patterson 2022:8–9; Virloget and Alempijević 2021:1–3). This dual focus on silences required me to make sense of data that defied explicit articulation – that which could be "sensed and experienced viscerally as well as narratively" (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:417), and interpreted through the lens of my positionality, worldview and embodied responses "in the face of potential unknowability" (ibid.). [44]

This latter focus on social, discursive and conceptual silences became especially important as part of my argument in Chapter 5 where I have focussed on the silences, and the processes of silencing most often adopted by dominant groups, i.e. the kinds of silences that, according to Spiller et al (2021:81) "can be [seen as] a running away from discomfort, a covering up of trepidation and anxiety". These are silences I have analysed and discussed, for example, within my case study of a session on religion and belief conducted with Network Rail's Senior Leadership Team – silences that emerged as attempts at "dis-engaging [from] and avoiding [the] discomfort" of difficult conversations about race

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[43] For discussions of silences in research see Charmaz 2002 & 2004; Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021; Harel-Shalev 2020; Virloget and Alempijević 2021.

[44] Many researchers note how studying and making sense of silences is an inherently difficult task, fraught with challenges (e.g. Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021) – a matter I discuss further in Chapter 6.

and religion (ibid.; see also Di Angelo 2011). Similarly, it has been critical in Chapter 6, which explores silences from the perspective of those professing subjugated 'nonmodern' worldviews.   This approach allowed me to 'trace' issues of coloniality and power relations in ways that ethnographers, anthropologists and historians have been encouraged to include as a legitimate aspect of their ethnographic representations (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:417–18; Patterson 2022:8–9; Virloget and Alempijević 2021:3). Ultimately, this allowed me to pay attention to topics and themes that have been marginalised or absent in the sociology of race and religion – e.g. the contemporary focus on pagan, Norse Heathen and African indigenous beliefs and practices I include in Chapter 6. In doing so, I have undertaken the decolonial work of excavation, surfacing and reflecting on issues that have been "drive[n] underground" and are "resilient and resistant to exposure…, difficult for fieldworkers to observe as a phenomenon" (Patterson 2022:8–9). To undertake such excavation work as part of my analysis has meant taking seriously the way silences are often the "result of repression... within [a] given socio-political framework" (Virloget and Alempijević 2021:1), reflecting "unuttered and suppressed individual or collective traumatic memories" (Kawabata and Gastaldo 2015; see also Kidron 2009; Lovell in McLean and Leibing 2007:56–57) which I argue to be inherently bound up in the experience of colonial violence.

In addressing individual silences, I built on the precedent of Patterson (2022:5) to consider how individual and interpersonal silences in interviews and focus groups frequently manifested as an unwillingness to verbally articulate thoughts or feelings around topics deemed 'controversial' (e.g. race, class, or religion). This enabled me to interpret communication transmitted in more implicit, nonverbal or embodied ways (e.g. through facial expression, or body language) (ibid.). Likewise, it allowed me to interpret those louder silences that were "indirectly spoken... characterized by imprecise, obfuscating language and indirect, euphemistic word choices" (Patterson 2022:1); or masked by 'awkward laughter' or 'unusual conversational moves' such as anxiously talking around rather than directly addressing a potentially sensitive topic (Morison and Macleod 2014). These kinds of silences are especially reflected in Chapter 4, where I probed beyond awkward laughter and the flippant retelling of traumatic stories connected with race and racism, to provide an exposition of the real (and normalised) harms associated with discrimination.

By focussing on these kinds of silences within my analysis, I have thus taken seriously the call to reflect upon and make sense of "the intrapsychic world of a person" (Bohak 2012:40–51; Tojnko

2014:72–75 & Hrobat Virloget and Logar 2020 in Virloget and Alempijević 2021:1), and drawn on my position, location and embodied knowledge to make sense of the minoritised experience, which I discuss further in the following section.

2.4. Applying Autoethnographic Tools & Strategies

2.4.1. A Warts and All Account

Post-modern interventions into ethnography have tended to emphasise critical reflexivity, and making obvious how 'the self' acts as 'the instrument of knowing' (Ortner 2006:42) within research. Typically, these approaches advocate sustained and meaningful engagements with how researchers are implicated in the generation of research questions, unfolding events and interactions in the field, and their resulting interpretations of social reality (Holliday 2016:15–16). Somewhat less agreed upon, is the extent to which scholars should integrate their own experience within their written accounts of the field (Bryman 2001a:462–64; Van Maanen 1988).[45] While some researchers prefer to offer a brief and cursory account of their positionality as part of a methods chapter – an approach critiqued by Van Klinken (2019:23) – others provide 'warts and all' accounts of their fieldwork experiences (Adler and Adler 2008). The latter of these approaches tends to be especially common within critical ethnography (Nyberg & Delaney in Jeanes and Huzzard 2014: Chapter 4), and amongst scholars leaning towards practice, activism, and social change work (Contu 2018).

Inspired by several scholars offering highly reflexive and critical accounts of race, diversity and workplace incivility in organisations (Ahmed 2012; Chávez 2012; Ackah in Christian 2012; M. H. Vickers 2007), I have drawn heavily on the post-modern tradition, and also adopted tools and strategies common to auto-ethnography. This has allowed me to actively use my personal experience to examine and critique cultural experience (Chang 2008:43; Cooper and Lilyea 2022; Holman Jones et al. 2016:22; Poulos 2021:4–6), treating my research journal reflections, personal stories, and memory as legitimate sites of excavation to be mined for data. The analysis of personal reflections and feelings from my research journal, for example, has supported systematic reflection on how my

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[45] This was a matter over which I wrestled for an extended period in the early stages of my PhD, including as part of a blog I was asked to write for Leeds Centre for Religion in Public Life titled *Integrating Your 'Self' Into Your Research: Transparency, Truth or Pure Navel Gazing?*

worldview and situated knowledge mediated my experiences in the field (Fricker 1999; Haraway 1988; Harding 2004; Hartsock 1983, 1998); while my focus on autobiography and personal history have allowed me to make the most of both 'theory of consciousness reporting' (Ronai 1995:396–97), and "memory as an investigative tool" (Holman Jones et al. 2016:407; & ibid.:54 & 248-249). This is the case, for example, in my conceptual framework chapter, which is preceded with a series of illuminating memories from my childhood-adolescent years, and contributed to the development of a layered, narrative-based approach to my writing – one that prioritises "systematic introspection and emotional experience (Ellis 1991)... [in order] to make accessible to the reader as many "ways of knowing as possible"" (Ronai 1995:396–97).[46] [47]

2.4.2. Auto-Ethnographic Vignettes

Like others employing auto-ethnographic approaches (e.g. Behar 1997; Ronai 1995; Van Klinken 2019), I found that "excluding or obscuring the personal in research felt uncomfortable, [and] even untenable" (Holman Jones et al. 2016:21). As a result, I determined that "embracing vulnerability with purpose" (ibid: 22) should be an essential part of my research strategy and took the decision to purposefully integrate a series of highly personalised autoethnographic vignettes throughout my thesis. These vignettes have become one of the key mechanisms through which I have offered a transparent account of both my identity and my sense-making processes, and have revealed even more of myself in my written account than I initially anticipated at the outset.[48] Taken together, they serve as an important reminder of how "our stories, our identities, our commitments" (Holman Jones et al. 2016:19), relate not only to the work, but to others encountered in the field. Additionally, they go some way to accounting for my personal growth throughout the project demonstrating: 1) how I made sense of my research journey; 2) how my worldview and positionality have shaped and

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[46] See also Chapters 9, 10 and 13 in Jones et al (2016) for a discussion and examples of the deeper and more sustained approaches to reflexivity adopted within autoethnography - including the idea of 'spinning' between the self and the worlds being studied (ibid:209-227), sketching subjectivities and creating space for material that "rises up and demands to be written" beyond the writer's control (Gannon in Holman Jones et al. 2016:229–31) and drawing on lived experience (ibid: 281-299).

[47] For a more in-depth discussion about the use of memory, including associated challenges and limitations, see Chang (2008 in Holman Jones et al. 2016:409), Vickers (2007:224) and Bochner, Berry, Gannon and Giorgio (in Holman Jones et al. 2016: Section 1 Introduction and Chapters 9, 10 and 20).

[48] It was not my original intention to include these vignettes, which often started as spontaneous Facebook posts, journal entries, or private reflections from the field in my final thesis.

influenced my interpretation of the data and resulting thesis; 3) how I came to an understanding of my audience and began to hone my voice as an early career researcher and writer; and, 4) how the process of autoethnography has also changed me, allowing me to reclaim my voice and break many long-held silences (discussed in Chapter 6).

By way of examples, I commenced this thesis, with my first vignette, *Ke Lapile!*, which translates as *'I'm Tired!'* in Setswana, and gives readers a sense of the context of my research and the paradigm, ontological approach, and autoethnographic methodology in which it is situated. For the close reader, this opening vignette provides clues as to my practitioner-researcher status, and my identity: a Black mixed-race woman of British and Tswana descent, ancestry and worldviews, being transparent from the outset about myself, as heavily implicated in, impacting, and even emotionally impacted by the process of navigating the organisations that constitute my field. My second vignette, *Unmoored in the Black Gaze,* which precedes this chapter, began as a journal entry turned Facebook post written five months into my field research, and builds on this. It reflects my growing sense of self as a researcher, and how my shift towards auto-ethnography blurred the boundaries of the field, such that all of social life became subject to scrutiny. Additionally, it makes clear how, for me, researching race and religion was an inherently emotional, embodied experience (Bager-Charleson and Kasap 2017; Hokkanen 2017; Lorde 1984, Conquergood 1991 & Stoller 1997 in Holman Jones et al. 2016; Sinclair 2019; Tyler 2019); I felt 'unmoored', ungrounded and overwhelmed, with only a shaky grasp of theories such as afropessimism to help me make sense of the world around me. This sense of ungroundedness and alienation was exacerbated, in my view, by the Eurocentrism of an academy, which frequently leaves Black researchers without the right conceptual tools to make sense of their experience (Arday and Mirza 2018:143–254; Christian 2012; Doharty 2020; Johnson 2020) – a matter on which I elaborate in section 2.4.3. of this chapter.

My third vignette, *I Write What I Like*, a private essay written in September 2020, just over three months after the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent *Black Lives Matter (BLM)* uprising, also precedes this chapter, and extends this theme. Inspired by, and mimicking the title of anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko's seminal text, it represents the cumulative experience of grief, anger and frustration that accompanied the process of studying race and religion and worldviews within organisational spaces I experienced as hostile and constraining at times – a process I had been processing privately in therapy and which I discuss in sections 2.4.4. and 6.2. Overall, the piece

represents something of the political commitments I brought to the study, and encapsulates my insistence on speaking truth to power where possible. This is a theme I continue in my penultimate and final vignettes, *Born Precocious* and *My Job Is Not To Make You Comfortable*, both of which reflect my increasing insistence on 'breaking silences' as acts of liberation in both my personal and professional life, even when to do so may come with real costs. These are themes I discuss in greater detail in my data and conclusion chapters, where I reflect on how the themes of silences and silencing are intimately related to questions of coloniality in organisations.

2.4.3. Challenges of Positionality

My decision to study issues of race, religion and coloniality in organisation, and my choice of auto-ethnographic tools and strategies, presented several challenges. Like many scholars who have chosen to study difficult and/or personally affecting issues, my project came with an emotional toll that was undoubtedly exacerbated by my positionality.[49] For many – and especially minoritised participants – I came to be seen as a safe person with whom to discuss matters of discrimination, a dynamic that intensified as the BLM movement brought issues of race to the fore. While many of the disclosures I received were disturbing in and of themselves, the fact that so many were close to home, and frequently triggered difficult memories and experiences of my own, required consideration. This is common among students and academics who research phenomena related to their minoritisation, as is now well documented in the literature (e.g. Ahmad 2022; Arday and Mirza 2018; Doharty 2020).

While I had been highly cognisant of discrimination before commencing the research, the process of systematically tracking and analysing these experiences, drawing inferences around how my world collided with those of others, brought me into contact with these realities in new, embodied and often painful ways (Ahmad 2022). As is common in auto-ethnography, the process forced an intense reliving of emotionally charged experiences from the more recent and distant past (Sims, 1987 in M. H. Vickers 2007:223–24). Like Sim (2005:1629 in M. H. Vickers 2007) and Vickers (2007:223–24), I found that the process of 'reliving' these difficult events was not conducive to writing an academic

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[49] For a discussion of the challenges associated with studying sensitive topics, especially related to gender, race, sexuality and mental health, see Ahmad (2022), Bager-Charleson and Kasap (2017), Boden et al. (2016), Dickson-Swift et al. (2008, 2009) and Doharty (2020). These articles also argue for the importance of treating emotion within research as important data.

text since memories triggered in the field held a strong visceral component which interfered with my capacity to regulate and bring focus to my work. This introduced another challenge: what kind and degree of personal reflection to include in my writing, which generated significant anxiety around the prospect of over-exposing myself in a more authentic and vulnerable account of the field, through which I might also risk being unsuccessful in my attempts to convey my process of meaning-making to examiners.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the holistic nature of my study and the blurred boundaries of the field that resulted from my auto-ethnographic approach meant I could not escape the ways that my experience of navigating institutions of higher education was itself bound up in my study too. My journal revealed far more challenging incidents than I can address in this thesis. To give just a few examples, these included: the experience of attending a summer school during the first year of my PhD programme and being mockingly referred to as 'the diversity person' after I challenged a Professor's statement that 'Anyone who studies race is not a proper researcher.'; the sense of isolation I experienced realising I was the only Black or visibly minoritised woman both within my department and Doctoral Training Partnership the same year; the early realisation that there were precious few mentors and examples of success to look to for someone from my background (discussed further in Chapter 7); the realisation that mainstream university wellbeing services were not fit for purpose when the emotional impacts of the research accumulated and I sought support; the significant challenges I faced in advocating for change on race and wellbeing issues within the context of my institutions and their bureaucracies; or, the destabilising experience of hearing senior leaders refer proudly to the diversity of the Faculty of which I was part, or indeed defensively to how much was 'already being done' to address challenges as calls to decolonise surfaced in the wake of BLM. These issues were intensified by my awareness of how teaching, learning and curricula – in terms of theory, concepts, and methods training – are so often race-blind, and rarely consider the unique challenges encountered by students from minoritised backgrounds. As such, the application of auto-ethnographic methods brought into sharp focus "the scientific imperialism (Pathak 2008) of the academy [and the need for] a disruption of the intellectual training that most of us have received" (Dutta & Basu and Pathak in Holman Jones et al. 2016:30 & 5). Likewise, it brought into sharp focus how my experiences of the academy aligned with those of other Black students (Stoll et al. 2022).

The reality of these challenges meant that I had to address not only the emotional and well-being impacts of the research, but also consider if and how to speak to these experiences as part of my write-up of the organisations with which I came into contact. Concerning the latter issue, as already discussed in section 2.4.2., the inclusion of my warts and all autoethnographic vignettes demonstrates my decision to opt for transparency and frankness, even if this was not easily arrived at. In writing up this account, I have had to consider the risks of exposing myself, and possibly others, to the potential repercussions of 'speaking truth to power', an issue discussed in the literatures on auto-ethnography (Holman Jones et al. 2016). This meant having to reflect on: 1) the potential for partners with which I had research agreements to pull out of the project if I presented unflattering depictions of their organisational cultures, or perspectives with which they disagreed; 2) a potential loss of clients and earnings related to my EDI consulting work in the future; 3) the potential for responses from some of my participants, or indeed my funder and the academic institution in which I undertook the research; 4) the potential to be seen as an unsafe person to whom to divulge organisational 'secrets'; and 5) the potential for the work to be seen as 'not proper research', insufficiently 'rigorous', or 'too polemical', given my adoption of a methodological approach (i.e. CRT, autoethnography) which has faced significant criticism by media commentators, public intellectuals and policymakers in recent years (Liu et al. 2021; Mutua 2022).

The former challenge – related to the mental health and well-being issues that surfaced by my study – was addressed in two ways: first, by deepening an existing spiritual practice rooted in a blend of meditation and African indigenous ritual; second, by undertaking a private therapeutic process with a Black feminist therapist who understood the challenges of navigating academic spaces. Together, both practices resourced me to persist with and complete my study, allowing me to develop the necessary skills to process difficult emotions and memories surfaced by the research. Though I was not aware of this at the time, my commitment to both activities was very much in line with the 'self-care practices' and 'pre-established support systems" that (Cooper and Lilyea 2022:204) encourage auto-ethnographers to implement given how the "journey... can lead [the researcher] into highly emotional, vulnerable, and even unresolved parts of ourselves" (ibid). Furthermore, as I discuss in the following section, both were critical in my processes of meaning-making and have, in my view, helped to strengthen my thesis overall.

2.4.4. Methodological Innovations

As with many challenges encountered in life, there were some unanticipated gifts associated with the difficulties I experienced in the field. My reliance on spiritual and therapeutic practices directly benefited my research, contributing to both methodological innovations and new forms of knowledge. At a theoretical and conceptual level, for example, both practices facilitated sense-making around how my internal world was connected to the intra-psychic worlds of participants, enabling me to bring psychoanalytic, psycho-spiritual, and psychosocial lenses to my interpretation of the data, and filling a gap in the literature by linking manifestations of coloniality to issues of mental health and wellbeing. This is the case in Chapter 6, for example, where I draw on my own experience to consider the emotional and psychological impacts of navigating organisations for those holding subjugated epistemologies and worldviews.[50]

Additionally, at a methodological level, applying a spiritual practice to my study of religion – one that also created space for the indigenous and African aspects of my worldview and enculturation – allowed for a somatic and embodied processing of my data as part of my self-care and analysis strategy. Approaching the work in this way meant I came to see the research process as a deeply spiritual process of sense-making, and also pushed me to develop my voice as a writer by drawing on and integrating the subjugated knowledges of my childhood to offer what is, to the best of my knowledge, one of, if not the first, indigenised perspective on contemporary British organisations concerning religion. As Van Klinken notes (2020:149), this integration of the indigenous alone potentially "enables alternative ways of conceptualising 'religion' and the study of it, see Johnson and Kraft 2017)".

Beyond serving a healing function for me, this approach stands as a significant and potentially transgressive contribution to knowledge, given the intellectual context of my work. As discussed in section 1.3.4., this is on account of the fact that sociology as a discipline is steeped, even today, in an "intellectual tradition… [that] has been deeply embedded in the religion-secular distinction (Horii,

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[50] Even before the completion of my PhD, I have been able to apply these insights into my professional research work – for example, through my work at Black Thrive Global, where I have led qualitative research around issues of mental health and well-being for people of African descent; as part of my recent work on Global Majority Heritage clergy and wellbeing in the Church of England (Stone 2022); and through my WRoCAH-funded research into the pathologisation of African indigenous beliefs within public health systems.

2015). Within this context, the study of religion has predominantly been approached according to "dominant Western, Eurocentric, colonialist and racialised models of thought that have historically shaped the field, and continue to have ongoing legacies for its key concepts (including that of 'religion' itself), methodologies and theories (e.g., Chidester 1996, 2014; King 1999; Masuzawa 2005; Nye 2019)" (Van Klinken 2020:149). Primarily, this has involved an emphasis on one of two dominant approaches to the sociological study of religion. The first of these, "methodological atheism" (Berger, 1967: 100; 1974: 133 and 1979: 36 in D. V. Porpora 2006), suggests that "the scientific study of religion must bracket the ultimate truth claims implied by its subject" (Berger 1974: 133 in D. V. Porpora 2006:60) and is broadly 'secular' in orientation; while the second, "methodological agnosticism", was popularised by Smart (1973) and seeks to toe a line between secular and confessional modes of research by adopting a stance that "remains open to a consideration of supernatural realities, [though] neither asserts nor precludes them" (Porpora 2006:58).[51]

While scholars such as Porpora (2006:67) have argued that *methodological agnosticism* should displace *methodological atheism,* and represent a form of "genuine neutrality", decolonial scholars of religion have been somewhat more reserved about these claims, noting how "methodological agnosticism can be… based on (the abstinence from, rather than a critique of) a particular Western, originally Christian, and often exclusivist notion of 'truth'" (Van Klinken 2020:150–51). Thus, to have adopted a stance of spiritual, or even spirited enquiry, reclaiming my voice, as well as the perspectives, worldviews and languages of my ancestors within vignettes, this text can be seen as having gone beyond the forms of 'rational discourse' so often associated with Sociology as a discipline (Cox 2003), while also pushing the boundaries of more confessional studies that have tended to centre Christian and Abrahamic perspectives within Theology as a discipline. To do so has been to embody, through my work, writing and scholar-activism, an emergent praxis of epistemic and 'psycho-spiritual liberation'.

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[51] Other scholars in my department such as Lindsay (2015:52–54) have advocated for a 'secular' approach to the study of religion, which 'chooses to interpret, understand and explain religion in non-religious terms' (Geertz, 2000) rather than offering a phenomenological or theological account." Such approaches, however, are often predicated on claims to neutrality, objectivity and/or amount to the "automatic privileging of dominant Eurocentric perspectives" (Van Klinken 2020:150). To follow such a path , and can be seen as limiting alternative approaches based on the kinds of indigenised accounts of research that Van Klinken (2020:150) proposes and envisions in a more inclusive 'pluriversity' which might critically interrogate the "automatic privileging of dominant Eurocentric perspectives".

2.5. Ethics & Consent

2.5.1. Ethics & Informed Consent

In line with standard university procedures, as part of this project, I embedded a comprehensive framework to address issues of ethics and consent, taking advice from the University of Leeds legal team and the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures Research Ethics Committee at the University of Leeds at the outset. Central in this process was the development and implementation of formalised research and data-sharing agreements with F&BF and Network Rail – agreements which governed commitments and expectations related to my more sustained relationships and data-gathering activities discussed in section 2.2.1. – as well as informed consent procedures which were implemented with participating individuals. These informed consent procedures included scope for participants to review transcripts following interviews and to exercise their right to withdraw from the research within two weeks of any interviews, and prior to data anonymisation. Further, for both F&BF and Network Rail, research agreements included the provision for key personnel who signed the research agreement to have sight of relevant sections of my draft thesis prior to publication.

To mitigate against any potential conflict of interest, as part of this process, I also took the decision not to undertake any paid consultancy work at F&BF and Network Rail if I were offered it. The exchange of payment for services rendered, in my view, would have made me more partial as a researcher and perhaps fuelled feelings of debt or obligation that might have impacted the integrity of the research and represented a conflict of interest. Though I was offered training and consultancy work beyond both of these organisations, I ensured that any activities and observations made were done with full consent, addressing any arising ethical conundrums per the process described in section 2.5.3. below.

2.5.2. Negotiating Access

Overall, gaining access to organisations and research participants was not too challenging, largely due to my networks as an active practitioner in the field. In general, I found that I had more interest expressed in the project than I was able to respond to as a sole researcher; however, I did encounter challenges at Network Rail as I sought to formalise a research agreement that would govern ethical considerations across the entire organisation.

Since Network Rail was a much larger and more bureaucratic organisation than F&BF, the process of formalising a research agreement was hampered by my lack of direct relationships with senior managers, and my very weak ties to the organisation's HR and EDI teams at the outset of my research. Additionally, since it was not immediately obvious who should provide overall sign-off on my project, a protracted negotiation ensued – a process that required persistence and perseverance (Bryman 2001a:435 & 438) through both face-to-face and email exchanges with staff network members and Chairs, senior management, and members of the organisation's Human Resources, Communications, Ethics, and Legal teams respectively. This was not unusual to encounter within organisational ethnography, where there is often no set formula or approach to securing access (see Bell 1969, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, Lofland and Lofland 1995 all in Bryman 2001a:433), and where negotiations of this nature frequently persist for the duration of a research project (Bryman 2001a:435 & 439; Neyland 2008a). Nonetheless, the degree of hesitancy and reluctance I encountered amongst senior leaders and HRM/EDI personnel before my agreement was eventually signed off proved illuminating and pointed to the public anxiety surrounding religion at work (Dinham 2022; Dinham and Francis 2015) and the ways organisational bureaucracy can become something of a 'brick wall', inhibiting efforts to advance racial equity and inclusion (Ahmed 2012) – discussed in Chapter 5. Thus, gaining consent to conduct my study at Network Rail relied heavily on my pre-existing relationships with members of the organisation's Multi Faith Network (MFN) who championed and advocated for my involvement, as well as "credentials from [my]… past work and experience" (Bryman 2001a:439) within the organisation and sector (see also Van Maanen and Kolb 1982:14 for a discussion of the challenges accessing organisations).

2.5.3 Autoethnographic Conundrums

Despite embedding rigorous informed consent practices from the outset, the inductive and autoethnographic nature of my project resulted in several ethical conundrums. Most significant among these was the difficulty of predicting and ascertaining the individuals from whom I needed to secure consent at an early stage – a challenge common to ethnography per se and many auto-ethnographic studies (Holman Jones et al. 2016:244 & 248–49). While it was possible to gather written and verbal consent from those at F&BF and NR, along with all those participating in formal interviews and focus groups, more complex dilemmas arose when I had to consider how to manage disclosures made at public events and invite-only EDI sessions. In these spaces, many people

informally approached me outside of the informed consent procedures I had implemented, and willingly shared their perspectives and experiences of navigating race and religion and worldviews in organisations. I attempted to be transparent about my role, and sought verbal consent to anonymise any relevant stories included in my research, but I cannot be entirely sure that such people fully understood the finer nuances of my role as a researcher, or the implications of their conversations with me if included in what would become a public document. In these instances, I therefore recorded peoples' testimonies, and anonymised and/or wrote their stories in more general terms.

More challenging were the research-relevant disclosures that emerged when my personal life collided with my research role, blurring the boundaries of my fieldwork in ways I could not have anticipated. This resulted in a situation where, knowing about my area of study, people in my personal life – friends, romantic partners, family, fellow students and academics, mentors, current and former clients and colleagues, social media contacts, and even strangers – spontaneously disclosed their experiences outside of informed consent procedures, in many cases actively advocating for me to write about and even name them. Especially challenging were instances where I was approached by people seeking my help and support as part of real-time, unfolding grievances related to race and religion in their organisations – a dynamic that became especially common in moments when there was significant public conversation around issues relevant to my research (e.g. following the BLM uprising, after terrorist attacks, or during the launch of Obe's (2022) report into discrimination in the London Fire Brigade. Though I did not originally intend for these spontaneous disclosures to be addressed in detail within my thesis, I did habitually record and reflect on them within my research journal, realising only at the analysis and write-up stage how important they would be in the context of my emerging auto-ethnographic approach, and my growing focus on issues of race and racism (see discussion of data in Chapter 4.). Thus it was only at this much later stage that such disclosures presented the considerable ethical dilemma of who should be considered a research participant, and how issues of consent, safeguarding and autonomy should be navigated.

Fortunately, this issue has already been addressed within the literature on autoethnography. Tullis's chapter, *Self and Others: Ethics In Autoethnographic Research* (in Holman Jones et al. 2016:244–56), for example, includes a lengthy discussion of the ethical quandaries facing auto-ethnographers; writing about oneself – or indeed one's professional and research practice – inevitably involves writing about others. As noted by Ellis (2007:13) and Cooper & Lilyea (2022:204), autoethnographic

writing invariably makes others increasingly recognisable, and potentially even reveals their identity. This is especially the case in texts which draw on memory, and experiences within one's family of origin, as I have done within some of my vignettes, chapter introductions, and as part of my discussion and conclusion chapter.

Yet there remains little agreement amongst academics and ethical review boards about how such issues should be resolved, and even less guidance for researchers adopting these approaches. While some have suggested securing retrospective consent in these scenarios (e.g. Cooper and Lilyea 2022:204; Rambo 2007 discussed in Holman Jones et al. 2016:244–56), others have suggested that this is not necessary, and advocated instead for a common sense approach which takes into account that retrospective consent is frequently impossible, unwarranted, overly bureaucratic, and at times, counter-productive and undermining of ethics. Under the circumstances, I chose to be guided by Tullis (in Holman Jones et al. 2016:244–56) and Cooper & Lilyea (2022:204), and sought in-the-moment verbal consent and/or retrospective consent wherever possible. In cases where this was not possible and/or where family or other personal contacts were referenced, I have adopted a pseudonym, a composite figure, or found another suitable means to obscure the identity of those to whom I have referred.

I chose to reflect transparently on the process and my decisions here as suggested in the literature on autoethnography, so that my examiners and other readers can determine whether my approach meets the expectations of a PhD project, and so that I can be guided to pursue an alternative approach if needed. This, again, is in line with the approach outlined by Tullis (ibid.) who "makes clear that best practice is to allow consent as early as possible in the process, but retrospective consent is a reality that must be contended with after the full text is drafted (if allowed by IRBs)."

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined how multi-sited ethnography (MSE) served as a flexible method for my exploration of race, religion and coloniality in and beyond organisations and un/related networks – one which aligned well with my work as a practitioner, and the ethical and political commitments I brought to my project. Additionally, I have described the compatibility of the method with my desire to generate thick description of organisational cultures, allowing for 18 months of sustained data collection at both F&BF and NR, as well as the collection of supplementary data through my work as

an EDI practitioner working across a range of other types of organisations and settings. As discussed in section 2.3., the volume of data produced through my adoption of MSE required a pragmatic and rigorous approach to analysis, one which combined thematic analysis in Nvivo with a reflexive engagement with forms of individual, collective, and discursive silences I was able to observe and experience viscerally over my time in the field. These were silences that became increasingly possible to name and discuss as I incorporated a range of autoethnographic principles, tools and strategies into my analysis, especially personal story and memory, which I integrated into a series of vignettes placed purposefully throughout this thesis to generate the warts and all account of the field. As noted in section 2.4., the application of these autoethnographic approaches, along with transparency about my positionality, created several challenges during this PhD, and required me to integrate spiritual and therapeutic practices into my approach. Ultimately, however, there were also some benefits; chiefly, the introduction of psychoanalytic, psychospiritual and psychosocial lenses into my interpretation of data, and the development of a methodologically spirited and indigenised perspective on contemporary organisations. As discussed in section 2.5, while innovative, this approach raised some unique ethical dilemmas and difficulties, both in terms of determining the boundaries of the field, and who should be considered a participant – a matter I have reflected upon transparently and addressed in line with the body of literature around autoethnography and ethics.

In the following chapter, I build on my articulation of the conceptual foundations of my project offered in my introduction chapter (section 1.2.), to explore and introduce my conceptual framework. In it I outline how race and religion have been constructed, reproduced, and understood since the colonial encounter, considering the relationship between the two constructs and their associated systems of oppression to outline the theoretical starting point for my exploration of coloniality in modern British organisations.

Vignette 4: The 'Border' Troubles: Are We Talking About Race or Religion?

Incident One

Dad: You are going to a mixed-faith school, so hopefully there won't be any problems. But if anyone *does* ask your religion, it's perhaps best *not* to tell them you are Catholic. ...or Protestant, for that matter!

Me: *[perplexed]* Why...?

Mum: Well, what should she say...?

Dad: *[laughing]* ...Perhaps tell them you're Muslim?

Advice imparted by my parents; Botswana, 1997, shortly before leaving home for Northern Ireland

* * *

Incident Two

Stranger: Oi!! Get over here, you Paki!!!

White male, late teens to early twenties, Belfast, sometime between September 1997 and June 2000

* * *

Incident Three

Mrs Lavery: Awk, Ava, don't cry love! Look at that poor, wee girl from Africa. Sure, she's not gonna see her daddy for three whole months!

A mother's attempt to comfort her daughter on separation, Belfast, September 1997, first day of boarding school

* * *

Incident Four

Caregiver: How does it feel being the only... *[whispered] Black*...person in your school...?

A caregiver's well-meaning attempt to understand how I was navigating the transition from Botswana to Northern Ireland, Belfast, 1998

* * *

Incident Five

Caregiver: Do you use... *normal* shampoo...?

Me: *[genuinely perplexed]* Normal? How do you mean...?

Caregiver: I don't know... *normal*. Like Pantene or something of that sort? Or do you need something...?

Me: Something *ab*normal...?!

Caregiver: ...something... *special...* for your hair?

Same caregiver's well-meaning attempt to reconcile my Blackness with white, European norms and ideas of normalcy

Chapter 3: Race and Religion & Worldviews: (Dis)Entangling the Dilemma

In 1997, about a week before I left my Botswana home for the first time, I sat at our small laminate-covered kitchen table, scraping away at its tattered edges, as my mother and father anxiously imparted wisdom about my impending departure. Aged 11, I was preparing to leave for Belfast, where my parents had decided that I should attend a state Grammar school, at which I would receive an apparently 'superior' British education. Their anxiety, tempered with heavily racialised attempts to inject some humour, was *intended* to help me navigate my new environment; I would be the only Black or student of colour attending one of Northern Ireland's few mixed-faith schools.[52] Instead, the exchange left me perplexed: first, because I knew nothing of the social context to which the 'joke' was related, and second, because the apartheid adjacent context of my youth did not prepare me for a society organised and divided by religious rather than racial segregation and conflict.

What was originally planned as three months in Belfast became a three-year stay; in those years, I soon learned how ideas of race, religion, nationality, continent, ethnicity, and politics are almost always interwoven, and rooted in histories of conquest, colonialism, and empire. My father 'joked' that my brown skin would allow me to 'pass' as Muslim, in his misguided imagination, ensuring my safety and lending me protection from harm spilling out from 'the Troubles' between Catholics and Protestants. To a stranger on the street, I was perceived as a *darker-hued rarity;* one who closely resembled the Pakistani immigrants regularly satirised and made the subjects of derision, ridicule and racism on British television and media throughout the 1990s. To a mother comforting her distressed daughter in the face of impending separation on her first day of boarding school, I was an object of pity: 'the poor wee girl from Africa' – that distant, dark continent of which my peers knew little beyond the annual BBC Television charity fundraiser, *Children In Need; an* extravaganza which employed images of starving, pot-bellied children, immune to the flies that buzzed about and settled

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[52] Northern Ireland's school system remains highly segregated with just 6% of pupils educated in a total of 61 integrated schools as of 2010 (Hayes, McAllister, and Dowds 2013) – just a 1% increase in the population since the peace process in 1997. As of 2021, there remain only 68 integrated schools in the country (Integrated Education Fund 2023) – with progress towards desegregation moving slowly (Gallagher 2022).

on their eyes and drawn, grey ashy faces, noses running, barely dressed in scraps of material: the child victims of African poverty and famine, the result of interminable warfare between warring tribes. To one caregiver, my Blackness, and my 'special' hair texture were to be tip-toed around; alluded to only in whispers, like a dirty secret; my face, phenotype, darker skin, and curly hair – the most visible markers of difference – noted, appropriated, and seized on as justification for my exclusion from Eurocentric norms of beauty and femininity. In each of these five encounters, regardless of the racial or religious construct and stereotype applied, what mattered most was my identification as Other. I was neither white, European, nor seen as fully British; and my otherness could be detected in the most apparently innocuous day-to-day interaction. I have since realised how these interactions are framed by coloniality, and, in my adult life, as a practitioner and PhD candidate, recognise their omnipresence in the life of the organisations I have studied.

Crystallised in the vignettes preceding this chapter, the memory of these five interactions have haunted me throughout the duration of my PhD. They are reflective of the memories that have surfaced at times when I have sought to process the conundrum that cuts through the heart of this thesis, and which I named in section 1.1.3.: that is, the question of how we should understand the relationship between race and religion, and indeed their associated constructs, categories and systems of oppression, both within broader social life and within the context of the organisations I have studied (RQ3 & 4). Taking this focus as my starting point, in this chapter I start by reviewing how some scholars have theorised race and religion as colonial constructs emerging in the colonial encounter. I explore these constructs and their intersection(s) with some relevant others – e.g. ethnicity, culture, nonreligion, faith, belief, spirituality, worldviews, values, politics etc. – and follow this with a discussion of how processes of racialisation, ethnicization, and religionisation led to the formation of racial, religious, spiritual, and epistemic hierarchies which stubbornly persist in modernity. The penultimate section of the chapter explores some of the real-world impacts of these contemporary hierarchies, and the forms of oppression and discrimination that structure organisational life – specifically, skin-colour racism, cultural racism, and a form of epistemic violence which I term psycho-spiritual oppression. In the final section of my chapter, I synthesise my understanding of existing theory with my fieldwork, to offer a visual depiction of how I depart from dominant theorisations in British Sociology, deploying and understanding race and religion as *distinct but intersecting* constructs within my conceptual framework.

3.1. Conceptualising Race, Ethnicity, and Religion

As outlined in my introduction chapter, this thesis is concerned with understanding manifestations of coloniality as it informs discourses and practices of race and religion, and especially: 1) how racial, spiritual, and epistemic hierarchies function within, shape, and influence the lives of workers within modern, secular British organisations (RQ3); and 2) how to understand the relationship between, and impacts of, the various forms of marginalisation, discrimination and oppression associated with race and religion in organisational life (RQ4 & 5). While these appear straightforward considerations, finding answers to these questions – and thus building the argument of this thesis – is contingent on a nuanced understanding of the concepts of race and religion, including how these historical ideas have evolved to be accepted as real and self-evident. In this section I undertake the ambitious task of summarising how scholars across a range of geographical contexts have understood and deployed race, ethnicity and religion as interrelated yet heavily contested and under-theorised categories (Lewis, Hagerman, and Forman 2019:30; Meer 2014:6).[53] This is a necessarily challenging endeavour since the study of all three concepts and categories occurs across a broad and interdisciplinary academic terrain encompassing the social sciences (e.g. sociology, politics and anthropology according to Meer 2014:6), as well as the humanities (see also Lewis et al. 2019:30–31). As such a full and expansive explication of each concept would require deep engagement with a long history of scholarship and constitute a task would go well beyond the scope of a single book, let alone a thesis chapter, and thus be impossible for any single researcher to achieve (Lewis et al 2019).

The impetus for undertaking such an ambitious task, however, is clear and strongly tied to the empirical realities of the organisation I studied. In most organisations, it was evident that race and religion were treated, as distinct categories in ways that were hard to reconcile with dominant theorisations of both categories within sociology. This included within equalities legislation (Equality

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[53] For a discussion of the difficulties and contestations surrounding race and ethnicity as concepts, see Lewis et al (2019), Meer (2014), Modood & Khattab (2016) Suyemoto et al (2020) and Siebers (2017). For similar discussions around the controversies surrounding religion see Woodhead (2011a:121, 2011b) and McCutcheon 2007; Jenson 2014; Olsen 2011: loc 158-161; Beckford 2003 in Woodhead 2011;Bruce 2011; Schilbrack 2013; Frankenberry 2014; Schaffalitzky de Muckadell 2014 all in Stausberg & Engler (2011:1). For a discussion of the relationship between and difficulties of fully disentangling race and religion, see Nye (2019).

Act 2010) where race and religion are listed as distinct protected characteristics; hence they were often handled within EDI initiatives as entirely disconnected aspects of identity and diversity praxis, and in ways that reinforced a separation and distinction between both categories, sometimes even creating splits, conflict and/or competition between individuals and groups.[54] Additionally, this was discernible among research participants, who often spoke about their race and their religion as intertwined yet distinct aspects of their individual and communal identifications, with race typically discussed as a visible marker of difference, and religion referred to as reflective of their internal worlds, spiritual lives and individual and/or collective sense-making mechanisms (e.g. Black Jews, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists I encountered often spoke about their race as distinct from their faith, and distinguished themselves from white or Asian counterparts with whom they also identified based on a shared a faith and worldview etc). As I note later in section 3.4., these empirical realities and individual identifications, while complicated, have been important to grapple with, and necessitated the fuller exploration I undertake in the sections that follow.

3.1.1. Race

The American Sociological Association (2022), defines the concept of race as "…physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant".   From the Enlightenment onwards, philosophers and scientists considered race as a biological reality (Corbie-Smith et al. 2008; Suyemoto, Curley, and Mukkamala 2020). In the wake of the atrocities of what the West terms the 'the Second World War', theories of racial difference as distinct, immutable, and biological, took a different turn. Conceptually, race is now generally theorised as 'socially constructed': that is, as a myth or fiction propagated by dominant groups to support the classification and grouping of human populations in ways that have very real implications, outcomes, and consequences for peoples' lives

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[54] At Network Rail, for example, this was obvious in the establishment of two distinct staff networks – Cultural Fusion, which attracted 'BAME' employees who broadly saw race and culture in secularised terms, and as distinct from the focus on religion and faith in the organisation's Multi Faith Network, with both networks appearing to compete over new members. Similarly, at F&BF programmes were built around the assumption that all people had a faith and belief which could be seen as distinct from race and hence scrutinised by the organisation's Race and Faith Working Group. Overall, this tendency to split race and religion can be seen as an ongoing manifestation of the ongoing splintering of political blackness, and was a dynamic articulated by several other EDI professionals I spoke to including one, Saeed, who described the distinctions of race and religion as real "a bit like colonial rule… [and] like divide and conquer" that pushed those minoritised on account of race and religion in positions of splitting and "breaking yourself up".

(Corbie-Smith et al. 2008; Meer 2014:113).[55] Understood as socially constructed, race has become detached from its biological moorings, and appropriated in the service of complex and shifting classificatory social systems, which shift across space and time (Mukhopadhyay et al 2014 in Suyemoto et al. 2020), yet remain, invariably built around notions of 'phenotype' – i.e. observable traits such as skin colour, eye colour, hair texture, etc. (Meer 2014:114–15).

Despite its inherent instability as a category, what remains common to systems of racial classification, is the general acceptance among scholars that the *idea* of race gained ascendancy from the late fifteenth century onwards, displacing religion as the key organising category dominant in pre-modern Europe (Gordon 2018a). This moment marked the start of an era of expansionism, as Europeans established their reach and power across the globe (Roberts 2011:5 in Lewis et al. 2019; Meer 2014:114–15). As they did so, they came into contact with "an unprecedented magnitude of entirely new populations" (Gilroy 1993 in Meer 2014:114) a disastrous encounter that resulted in the near total eradication of many of these groups, as Europeans conquered, spread disease, plundered, pillaged, raped and massacred, the peoples of these 'new worlds' through colonisation and imperialism (Gilroy 1993; Hall 1992; Hartman 1997; Mignolo 2011b). Yet, even as they annihilated many of the peoples they encountered, Europeans' voyages of 'discovery' stoked their curiosity about these Others,' their political, social, and cultural organisation, their sexual lives, and the supposed tangible differences of body. Above all, they wanted to situate these Others along a spectrum of *being* from animal to human. They assigned to themselves the highest qualities of humanity and human endeavour, claiming the qualities and characteristics of their racial superiority, and superiority of mind and body, were evident in their civilisation, political organisation, culture, civil society, etc. Their desire to slot Others into neat, discrete categories consolidated their sense of superiority, advancement, and power, and was advanced through the adoption classificatory systems and practices which were shaped by their existing worldviews.

The earliest iterations of these classification systems were rudimentary, of a decidedly Christian flavour, and drew on scripture and theology to provide justifications for the naturalness of schematic categories which affirmed the inferiority of 'Black', 'Eastern' and 'Other' populations to 'White'

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[55] While most scholars consider race to be socially constructed, there remain some, particularly in the field of epidemiology, that consider race to be *both* socially and biologically constructed; or even solely a biological reality. For a discussion see Corbie-Smith et al. (2008) and Suyemoto et al (2020).

Europeans (Meer 2014:114–15). In 1775, for example, German physiologist Johann Friedreich Blumenbach developed a taxonomy of five races comprising "'Caucasians' (Whites), 'Mongolians' (East Asians), 'Malayans' (South Asians), 'Negroids' (Black Africans) and 'Americans' (First Nations)" (Meer 2014:114). This system sat alongside others such as the Linnaean system of classification, which measured the bones and craniums of colonised natives, seeking to "justify racial distinction on the basis of biology" (Walton and Caliendo, 2011: 4 in Meer 2014:115). Eventually, these early pseudo-scientific systems were displaced by more sophisticated and complex classificatory practices of the eugenics movement, part of a far-reaching, Western-led leffort to develop "a universal definition of race that would stand across time and geographic location" (Meer 2014:14; see also Levine 2017). Eugenics gained popularity in the 19th century at the height of European imperial building; cloaked with scientific respectability, the eugenics movement helped to consolidate European beliefs that "there were a finite number of basic human types, each embodying a package of fixed and mental traits"; and that "physical appearance was an indication of something deeper, commonly reflecting cultural development and advancement" (Meer 2014:14; see also Levine 2017). In this way, race and phenotype became conflated, forms of representation believed to have biological reality, with Christian theology and science affirming the myth of European superiority (Meer 2014:115; Mignolo 2011b), and helping to create and reproduce the power relations and systems of privilege established between colonising and colonised populations (Markus 2008; Smedley and Smedley 2005; Tate and Audette 2001 in Suyemoto et al. 2020).

3.1.2. Ethnicity

Strongly associated with race is the concept of ethnicity, which emphasises aspects of shared culture such as language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs (American Sociological Association 2022) in addition to phenotype. Ethnicity remains a heavily contested term (Smith in Bhui 2009:14; Meer 2014:42), though scholars generally agree that ethnicity, like race, is socially constructed, reflecting both "real or imagined features of group membership" including "collective memory, ritual, dress, and religion", for example (Meer 2014:37).[56] Distinguishing the two concepts, however, is the fact that ethnicity has a much "looser definition than 'race'" (ibid) – one that signals a move beyond a sole focus on

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[56] For a discussion of the socially constructed nature of ethnicity see May (2001:19 in Meer 2014); Modood & Khattab (2016:231–38); Felluga (2015); Suyemoto et al (2020); and Smith in Bhui (2009:13).

physical characteristics and biology to constitute a much "more sociologically and culturally sensitive concept" (Smith in Bhui 2009:10).[57]

Common within most conceptions of ethnicity is an emphasis on self-definition, self-recognition and agency as key aspects of identity formation (Duncombe in Scott 2006:69). These ideas have been central to theorisations of the concept since 1925 when Max Weber characterised ethnicity as "a subjective belief in... common descent because of similarities of physical type, or of customs or of both, or because of memories of colonisation and migration" (1978:389 in Meer 2014). In recent decades Weber's theory has been challenged and developed. For example, Geertz (1973: 249 in Meer 2014:38) agreed with Weber's emphasis on subjectivity and agency, but argued that 'ethnic ties' were strongly rooted in birth "into a particular… community, speaking a particular language… following particular social practices". Fredrik Barth argued that groups were actively involved in construction and maintenance of ethnic identities and the boundaries between *themselves*, and others (1969:10-11 in Meer 2014:38–39).

Tariq Modood's theorisations of ethnicity gained prominence following the splintering of political blackness in Britain from the 1980s and addressed notions of 'ethnic self-definition', 'group pride' and 'ethnic assertiveness' (Meer 2014:38–39). These facets of ethnicity reflect the core means by which individuals and groups demonstrate their capacity to define and project positive self-representations, and resist negative attributions and stereotypes imposed upon them by dominant groups, whilst also demanding recognition within the socio-political realm. Crucially, this conceptualisation of ethnic identity is neither static nor simply externally imposed via a one-directional, top-down process; rather, it is contested, shifting, and determined by a combination of external forces, including the agency of individuals and groups themselves. This perspective treats ethnicity as an aspect of identity that is "more individualistic, choice based and 'consumed'" (Hall 1996 in Meer 2014:41; see also Hall 2009) than race.

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[57] Several Black scholars within the sociology of race disagree with this view and consider the shift from a focus on race to ethnicity to be accompanied by, and even predicated on a desire to escape, transcend and avoid dealing with issues of race and racism – i.e. reflective of whiteness within 'post-racial' order (e.g. Sexton 2008:1).

3.1.3. Religion

Associated with both race and ethnicity is religion, which is of great significance to the forms of marginalisation and oppression I address in this thesis, and represents the arena in which I propose my most significant contributions to knowledge. Perhaps even more so than race and ethnicity, religion is a heavily contested idea, hard to pin down, and conceptualised in many ways (McCutcheon 2007; Jenson 2014; Olsen 2011; Beckford 2003 in Woodhead 2011; Bruce 2011; Schilbrack 2013; Frankenberry 2014; Schaffalitzky de Muckadell 2014 all in Stausberg and Engler 2011:1; Woodhead 2011a:121).[58] While for many religion and its associated terms (e.g. worldview, faith, spirituality or belief) can be reduced to or treated as a proxy for culture, ethnicity, and even race – or indeed an aspect of racialisation (e.g. Nye 2019, McCutcheon 1997 in 2019; Winant and Omi 2014; Callum Brown in Woodhead 2011a) – for others, religion is seen as distinct, and involves substantively different considerations.

These scholars propose that religion refers primarily to the internal worlds and sense-making mechanisms of individuals and groups. From this perspective religion can be seen as distinct from race in signifying the 'Beliefs, Values, and Worldviews' (BVWs) of individuals and/or groups; religion is here perceived as the epistemological frameworks and stances adopted in relation to life's existential and philosophical questions – for example, those of life or death; of the (non)existence of God(s), deities, spirits and other entities; of the transcendental, the metaphysical, or the cosmos; of how to structure society and navigate relationships with the other, or even of humanity's ultimate purpose on earth.[59] This standpoint sees religion as closely related to, though more narrowly defined than ethnicity, which generally accounts for a much broader set of considerations incorporating phenotype, religion and worldview, nationality, ancestry, culture, language, and practice, among other things.

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[58] See, for example, Woodhead (2011a) for a more expansive account of the different ways in which religion has been conceptualised as a manifestation of: 1) culture; 2) identity; 3) structured social relations; 4) embodied practice and ritual; 5) resource or capital; 6) ideology and 7) norms and values.

[59] In reality, these sense-making mechanisms frameworks are typically heavily influenced and shaped by race and ethnicity (i.e. nationality, phenotype, ancestry etc), such that it impossible to truly disentangle religion and worldviews from these ideas. Nonetheless, in this thesis I make the case for scholarly attempts in this direction, arguing that doing so can help us develop sharper tools for the analysis of the coloniality of modern, secular organisations.

Summed up by Pargament (1992:204 in Stausberg and Engler 2011:73–83), religion can be seen, not only as a set of collective and often institutionalised perspectives, but also as being distinguished by a human "search for significance in ways related to the sacred". Critically, this search for significance and meaning is framed in recent years as encompassing both spirituality and nonreligion – two associated constructions that have come more to the fore as growing numbers of Britons cease to identify with institutionalised forms of Christianity, and declare themselves nonreligious or 'spiritual but not religious' (ONS 2011, 2021; N. Pew Research Centre 2018; Pew Research Centre 2018; Stausberg and Engler 2011:1 & 79; Woodhead 2016).

The former of these ideas, spirituality, is a fuzzy concept (Streib & Klein in Stausberg and Engler 2011:78; Woodhead 2010), though generally understood to imply a sense of the sacred and transcendental. It is characterised by: 1) a sense of connectedness and harmony with the universe, nature and the whole; and/or 2) a sense of the ethics, which determines values and morality in everyday life; and/or 3) a belief or 'faith' in higher power(s) or beings (deities, gods, ancestors etc); and/or 4) intuition of something or some being(s) that are unspecified, but higher and beyond oneself; and/or 5) an experience of truth, purpose, and wisdom beyond rational understanding; and/or 6) an awareness of a non-material, invisible world and experience of supernatural energies and beings (spirits etc); and/or 7) opposition to religion, dogmatic rules, and traditions; and/or, 8) a personal religious practice which might incorporate meditation, prayer, or worship, for example (Streib & Klein in Stausberg and Engler 2011:78). [60]

By contrast, nonreligion speaks to a detachment from the sacred tenets of religion. The U.K. has witnessed a growing trend away from organised religion, as more people identify as 'secular', atheist', 'humanist' and/or 'nones', for example. These individuals and groups are referred to by a range of proxy concepts and names, both colloquially, and within institutional, policy and legislative

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[60] This body of research offers an important starting point in conceptualising spirituality, though largely draws on Western conceptualisations of spirituality as an individualised, 'privatised' and 'experience-oriented' phenomena signalling a move away from institutional religion and the Church in the context of the secularisation of Europe (Stausberg & Engler 2016: 79). Such an approach differs markedly from nonWestern conceptualisations of spirituality which are frequently left out of Eurocentric canons of knowledge. Here, spirituality is, and has always been considered a collective phenomenon, not typically associated with institutions, but more commonly associated with embodied and collective practice and meaning-making (e.g. ancestral practices signifying and strengthening family or communal ties, reverence for nature etc) as I discuss with reference to African scholars (e.g. Chilisa 2011; Nyathi in EyeGambia 2020; Falola and Griffin 2021; Munyaradzi 2014) in Chapter 6.

settings (Lee in Stausberg and Engler 2011:84–94).[61] Generally, they hold in common critiques of religion promulgated by Enlightenment thinkers who advocated science and rationality; these last were, they proposed, the foundation stones on which superior knowledge about the world was built, doing away with traditional, superstition, myth, and religious knowledges. (Benoit, Hutchings, and Shillitoe 2020; Masuzawa 2005). Nonreligious identities were conceptualised in binary opposition to 'religious' (especially non-Christian) identities (Benoit et al. 2020; Masuzawa 2005; Lee in Stausberg and Engler 2011:84).

These ideas of religion, nonreligion and spirituality are encapsulated in the concept of 'the worldview', a term I deploy this alongside religion throughout this thesis. With a long history dating back to the 18th century, the concept of 'worldview' is currently attracting significant attention from scholars within the field of religious studies who consider the inclusivity and breadth of the term to have value given the growing diversity of the British population (Benoit et al. 2020; see also Cooling, Bowie, and Panjwani 2020; CoRE 2017). The 'worldview' takes into account a "person's way of understanding, experiencing and responding to the world"; their "philosophy of life or approach to life" and their ways of understanding "the nature of reality and their own place in the world" with reference to 'the sacred' or otherwise (CoRE 2017:4). Inherent to this definition is that idea that religion – including nonreligion and spirituality – is 'lived' and therefore an aspect of identity that has the potential to be "more or less formalised" (CoRE in Benoit et al. 2020:4); it is invariably fluid, multiple, complex, and subject to change over one's life (CoRE 2017:4) in ways that make it distinct from the immutable nature of phenotype as a marker of racial difference,[62] yet aligned with

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[61] As noted by Lee (in Stausberg and Engler 2011:84–94), these includes terms such 'beliefs' (Equality Act, 2010); nonreligious 'convictions' (Council of Europe, 2008; Jackson, 2014); 'belief system' (Ofsted 2010: 44); beliefs and values; ethics; forms of life and outlook (Gaeron 2017: 363); stances for living (Birmingham City Council 1975); life stance, ways of life or philosophy of life (van der Kooij et al., 2013; Watson 2008).

[62] The work of anthropologist Ralph Linton (1936 in Foladare 1969:53) is potentially helpful in understanding these significant differences. Linton defined ascribed status as aspects of identity "assigned to individuals without reference to their innate differences or abilities" and thus "an accident of birth"; and contrasted this from "achieved status" which he argued to be "open to to individual achievement" (ibid). With respect to religion, the implications of this theory are that if a person were to be raised within a particular religion without any choice on their part, their identity could, much like race, be seen as ascribed. However, on conversion to a different religion, one could be seen as holding an "achieved status" – one that would be virtually impossible to secure with respect to immutable characteristics such as phenotype.

understandings of ethnicity which emphasise subjectivity, agency and self-definition.[63]   Critical to this conception of worldview too, is its disruption of the dominance of the world religions paradigm, which invariably treats religions as monolithic, knowable constructs (e.g. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism etc.) in relation to their configuration during the colonial encounter (Benoit et al. 2020; Masuzawa 2005). I address this further in the remainder of this chapter, as I draw parallels between constructions of race and religion as part of processes of racialisation in the colonial encounter.

3.2. Race, Racialisation and Racial Hierarchies

3.2.1. Processes of Racialisation

Central to the construction of race and ethnicity within sociology, is the idea of racialisation, a dominant concept used to describe the processes through which people come to be seen as members of particular racial and/or ethnic groups (Delgado and Stefancic 2014:8; Meer 2014:125). As outlined in the previous section, processes of racialisation serve as the mechanisms through which individuals are "socialised into a socio-systemic hierarchy" (Suyemoto et al. 2020), in which positive and/or negative attributes and values (i.e. stereotypes) can be ascribed to particular groups, based on their real or imagined shared characteristics. Dominant groups claim possession of superior qualities, corralling power and privilege in ways that uphold their interests, while asserting the inferiority of Others, who remain subservient, marginalised and oppressed (Rollock and Gillborn 2011).[64]

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[63] The idea that religion can be subject to change over one's live course is captured in Hall's (1997 in Aune 2015) 'lived religion' thesis which sought to distinguish "between official forms of religion propagated by religious leaders and institutions, and how religion was lived out in daily life". As an idea it "is useful for distinguishing the actual experience of religious persons from the prescribed religion of institutionally defined beliefs and practices" McGuire (2008, 12), and can encompass "everyday bodily experiences—e.g. gardening, walking, or domestic work— through which some people experience the sacred. For further discussion of 'lived religion' and 'everyday religion' see Neitz (2011), Ammerman (2007: 12), (Orsi 1997: 7) – all in Aune (2015).

[64] Critically, processes of racialisation can also result in the ascription of positive qualities and characteristics – i.e. 'positive stereotyping' – of both dominant and minoritized groups. Good examples of this include stereotypes associated with 'German efficiency', 'white superiority', 'East Asian intelligence and mathematical success', Black 'creativity' and 'cool'-ness, etc. with ideas of model minorities and discourses of Good/Bad Muslim, often evident in the organisations I studied (e.g. Gillborn 2008:146 in Rollock and Gillborn 2011).

At the most simplistic level, racialisation describes the process by which groups are placed into social hierarchies according to race and phenotype. Historically, and typically, their supposed inherent superiority of white groups validates – and is validated by – their location at the apex of these hierarchies, and inferior – typically 'Black' and 'Brown' groups – are relegated to positions of lower status (Meer 2014). At a more complex level, and moving beyond conceptions of race rooted solely in phenotype (described in section 3.1.1.), racialisation has also been used to describe more sophisticated processes by which groups are placed into social hierarchies based on aspects of their perceived *culture*. This latter perspective currently dominates sociological thinking around race; it sees the structuring of groups according to skin colour and/or other aspects of physical appearance to reflect aspects of ethnicity (e.g. language, culture, family structure etc) discussed in section 3.1.2. Hence visible cyphers of difference amongst subordinated groups (e.g. phenotype, or markers external to the body such as dress), become markers of "a radical 'otherness'" – symbolic of a stereotypical association with 'backward cultures' (Modood and Khattab 2016:6, see also Miles 1989 in 2016:6).[65]

3.2.2. Black-White Binaries

Since processes of racialisation all rely to some degree on ideas of race as rooted in phenotype – even if only to signify aspects of culture – the question of how racial and ethnic hierarchies' function is of significance. As noted in section 3.1.1., race thinking emerged from the late fifteenth century as previously 'unknown' populations came into European consciousness; its evolution and reproduction over time relied on increasingly sophisticated classificatory practices, around which Europeans could project fantasies of superiority over Other populations. Foundational to all these classificatory practices was an emphasis on skin-colour, and specifically the establishment of a black(ness)-white(ness) dialectic around which European discourses of inferiority-superiority revolved (Gordon 2018b; Meer 2014:13; Sexton 2008:2; Gordon 1997 in Sexton and Copeland 2003:55–58).

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[65] While the majority of sociologists use the term racialisation, some prefer ethnicisation as a term that is argued to go beyond phenotypical and biological understandings of race (e.g. Siebers 2017). Amongst these scholars the suggestion is that ethnicisation, like its associated concept ethnicity discussed in section 3.1.2, reflects the much broader basis upon which groups are assigned values according to both phenotype and aspects of culture (e.g. beliefs, practices, ancestry, descent, religion, nationality etc.). Since this theorisation is so aligned with that of racialisation, this distinction can be seen primarily as one of linguistic or semantic preference.

Central to this dialectic is the notion of 'blackness', is understood as "a relational term to whiteness that has historically been imbued with negative connotations" (Meer 2014:13; see also Yancey 2003 in Sexton 2008:5–6). Confusingly, while the notion of 'Blackness' sometimes refers to the cultures, experiences, and aesthetics of 'Black' people of African descent specifically reflected with a capital B when this is the case), it is used by scholars of race to indicate the experiences, cultures and social arrangements of heterogenous groups racialised as 'non-white' and therefore discursively 'black'. Used in this latter way, blackness is sometimes adopted to indicate the structural position of a whole range of non-Black groups (e.g. Asian, Indian, Chinese, Latino, Jewish, members of the 'BAME' community etc.), which are racialised and positioned such as to occupy a middle-ground between Black people of African descent, who are typically placed at the very bottom of the social rung (Jung and Vargas 2021; Gans 199:371 and Lee and Bean 2010 in Lewis et al. 2019; Sexton 2008:2), and White people of European descent, who are typically envisaged at the top of the social hierarchy under white supremacy (Meer 2014:13). Within these social arrangements, groups higher or lower in the hierarchy are ascribed negative or positive attributes and characteristics in accordance with their proximity to blackness or whiteness, with colourism and "registers of colour" heavily shaping aspects of racialisation within and across various minoritised groups (Meer 2014:13; see also Gabriel 2007; Majumdar 2023). Understood in this way, groups not seen as 'white' can be referred to, and sometimes self-define as 'black', and have historically adopted 'political blackness' as a "vehicle for mobilisation and advancement… [through which] to critique and challenge prevailing inequalities" (Meer 2014:13).

Since Black people of African descent tend to be placed at the bottom of social hierarchies irrespective of time, space or context, numerous scholars have argued for an acknowledgement of how constructions of race all inevitably rely on anti-blackness directed at peoples of African descent (Gordon 2018b; Jung and Vargas 2021; Gans 199:371 and Lee and Bean 2010 in Lewis et al. 2019; Sexton 2008:2; Fanon and Gordon 1997 in Sexton and Copeland 2003).[66] Absent the idea of blackness, it is argued that whiteness and "the historical development of white supremacist capitalist

[66] This idea is perceived to be controversial and polarising among some (e.g. Siebers 2017), who consider such analyses to be overly simplistic and invested in binaried ideas of race and black-white dualism that are argued to give rise to infighting rather than eliciting solidarity among minoritised groups. Some more radical Black scholars, however, locate these very critiques as being reflective of an investment in multiculturalism and colour-blind racism (e.g. Sexton 2008:6; Sexton and Copeland 2003, Matsuda in 2003:56).

patriarchy (of which antiblackness is the ground floor)" (Sexton 2008:16) could not exist. Put another way, as Lewis Gordon (1997 in Sexton and Copeland 2003:57) notes, "although there are people who function as 'the blacks' of particular contexts'", Black people of African descent, referred to in "now-archaic language [as] Negroes" function as "the blacks of everywhere, the black blacks, the blackest blacks" and thus "the prime racial signifier". While race may be socially constructed, and "bodies are neither black nor white" in any strict sense (Wiegman 1995:9 in Sexton and Copeland 2003:30; see also p57), the imaginaries of whiteness and blackness are fundamental to the maintenance of white supremacy, and relationally contingent on each other's reproduction (Sexton 2008:25).[67]

In some interpretations of black-white dualism, Black people of African descent are theorised to be structured into a position of nonexistence and negation. This position has been described by some as a form of 'social death' (Orlando Patterson 1985 in Sorentino 2016); in essence, Black people are denied the status of full humanity, due to the construction of Black people as sub- or non-human under enslavement (Hartman and Wilderson 2003; Sexton 2010; Sorentino 2016; Wilderson 2010).This view is critiqued, however, by pre-eminent race scholar Lewis Gordon (2018b:32–33) on the grounds that an acceptance of 'social death' is "premised on the attitudes and perspectives of antiblack racists", and thus denies Black and other communities of colour the capacity to assert our own agency, social perspectives and aliveness even in the face of ongoing systemic oppression. Gordon and other critics argue that the idea can be seen as self-negating in its failure to validate the social perspectives of Blacks and other communities of colour in relation to themselves and each other (i.e. it fails to acknowledge the agency of Black and people of colour, and their will and ability to resist the dominant self-serving discourses of their inferiority and structural oppression). Despite these contestations, on which I reflected in Vignette 2, *Unmoored in the Black Gaze*, there is general consensus amongst Black scholars of race that there can be no comprehensive analysis of white supremacy or whiteness that does not contend with (anti)blackness (Jung and Vargas 2021).

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[67] Though beyond the scope of this chapter, Sexton (2008:25) takes this idea even further to argue that the "relational processes unfolding between… white supremacy and anti- blackness… rely upon miscegenation [i.e. racial mixing] to reproduce their social relations" in the context of political multiracialism/multiculturalism.

3.2.3. Whiteness, White Identities & White Supremacy

At the other end of the blackness-whiteness dialectic, is 'whiteness', a term historians and sociologists treat as both identity and praxis; whiteness is invariably aligned with beliefs of white racial superiority and supremacy. For Meer (2014:152) whiteness signifies "the advantageous material and symbolic resources" conferred upon those racialised as white, in comparison to those racialised as black. This 'advantageous material' has secured the dominance of White people globally, with the effect that white supremacy rapidly adapts to maintain the distributions of power and resources that secure white interests and white privilege (Lewis et al. 2019, see also Almaguer, 2008; Foley, 1997; Gallagher, 1997, 2003; Guglielmo, 2003; Hartigan, 1999; Lewis, 2004; Lipsitz, 1998 in 2019 in Lewis et al. Rollock and Gillborn 2011).[68]

As Dyer (1997:24) notes, since whiteness has historically been defined in relation to "the inescapable corporeality of non-white peoples'", the position and corporeality of white people and identities has received less scrutiny. As a result, theorising whiteness and white identities is a relatively recent turn in race studies, advanced over three successive waves of scholarship (Moosavi 2022; see also Meer 2014:152; Lewis et al. 2019). In recent decades, several white scholars (e.g. Dyer 1997; Frankenberg 1993) have drawn critical attention to whiteness and white identities; however, the field overall has been notably led by minoritised writers and scholars (e.g. Du Bois 2008; hooks 1992; Nayak 1997, Nebeker 1995 in Nayak 2006a), who have had to become "skilled interpreters of whiteness", calling attention to the "cultural/racial specificity" to white people and cultures in order to survive unequal systems (Frankenberg 1994:5 in Nayak 2006b:417).

Collectively, these scholars have undertaken work to call out and unseat the centrality and positioning of white identities, demonstrating how whiteness relies on Orientalist constructions of the Other (Said 2003) to at once legitimate itself and its position, and yet remain invisible and dominant through claims of neutrality and normalcy (Frankenberg 1993; Hesse 2007; McIntosh 2003; Nakayama and Krizek 1995; Yancy 2008; 2012a; 2012b; 2015 in Tate and Bagguley 2017). As has been

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[68] As Frankenberg 2001:76 notes, "whiteness as a site of privilege is not absolute but rather cross-cut by a range of other axes of relative advantage and subordination" such as class or gender, for example. These intersecting axes of privilege "do not erase or render irrelevant race privilege, but rather inflect or modify it" (ibid) – an idea that is also captured in theorisations of intersectionality advanced by black feminist scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991b), and which are discussed by various scholars of whiteness (e.g. Bhopal 2018; Garner 2007 and L Pez 2005 and in Moosavi 2022).

theorised by many within this canon, white(li)ness is a system in which the experiences of those racialised as white is taken for granted and seen as the norm or standard from which all Others deviate (DiAngelo 2012a, 2019; Dyer 1997; Hunter et al. 2010; Tate and Page 2018). The effect of this, as Dyer (1997:3) notes in his seminal work, *The Matter of Whiteness*, is that "in the West, being white is not an issue for most white people, not a conscious or reflected on part of their sense of who they are". Further, whiteness from this position is framed simultaneously as "having no content", and yet also assumed to be the standard through which the human condition and experience can be understood as white people construct the world according to their own image and sense of what is "normal" (Dyer 1997:9–10). It is for this reason that many engaged in anti-racist and decolonising efforts assert and hold to the core notion that "whiteness needs to be made strange" and "dislodge[d] from its centrality and authority" (Dyer 1997:10) – a notion on which I draw heavily as part of my theorisation of organisational culture in Chapter 5.

3.3. Religion, 'Religionisation' and Religious, Spiritual and Epistemic Hierarchies

3.3.1. Processes of 'Religionisation'

Within the sociology of race, processes of racialisation are now well theorised and reflect the broad consensus that the construction of racial and ethnic hierarchies order the world and its social relations in ways that suit dominant group interests (Rollock and Gillborn 2011). In contrast, sociologists of religion have paid much less attention to the socio-historical processes through which people/groups have come to be defined specifically by religion and worldview, and ordered into hierarchical relationships via a parallel and interlinked process, which I term 'religionisation'.[69]

A notable exception here is Tomoko Matsuzawa's (2005) *Invention of World Religions*, which describes in detail the processes through which religion, like race, came to be constructed in the European colonial encounter. In her detailed historicised account of these processes, Masuzawa

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[69] My adoption of the term 'religionisation' departs from existing theorisations within sociology, which tend to treat religion as an aspect of racialisation or ethnicisation. In this thesis I intentionally adopt this terminology as a more tightly defined concept demonstrating how religion and religious hierarchies can be seen to intersect with race and racial hierarchies rooted in phenotype – a matter on which I elaborate in section 3.4..

describes the emergence of a range of classificatory systems adopted to ascribe value to groups based on religious identity. Prior to the ascendance of race as the dominant organising construct, the world's populations were divided into four: "Christians, Jews, Mohammedans (as Muslims were commonly called), and the rest" (Masuzawa 2005:Preface; see also Hall 1992; Gordon 2018a; Mignolo 2011b; Nirenberg 2014).[70]   In earlier centuries 'the Abrahamic religions' were most concretely defined, with Christians – who later came to be Hellenised, aryanised and constructed as the dominant group (i.e. associated with 'whiteness') – and both Jews and Mohammedans becoming semitised, subordinate and increasingly associated with 'blackness' (Masuzawa 2005:Preface). Beyond Muslims and Jews, was a fourth and very significant number of other peoples – i.e. 'the rest' – both known and as yet unknown populations spread across the globe, and "variously [referred to and derided] as heathens, pagans, idolaters, or sometimes polytheists" (Masuzawa 2005:Preface).

This more rudimentary system of classification was displaced in the first half of the nineteenth century, as European colonialism reached its apex, and a greater plurality and diversity of worldviews were encountered amongst colonised populations. Much as with practices of racial categorisation over this same period, eugenicists played a significant role in developing systems which moved beyond phenotype and the epidermal terrain to focus on the inner worlds of natives. The widespread development of intelligence testing, for example, as well as the preoccupation with 'mental disorders' such as 'schizophrenia' were just two areas of focus within the sciences of 'the mind' (Davis 1995b:38; Levine 2017:5). Adjacent to these were efforts to psychologically profile colonised subjects more broadly – on the one hand, as impulsive, child-like, wild, savage, and emotional; and, on the other, as backwards, docile, slow, and 'feebleminded' (Hall 1992; Levine 2017:5).[71]

Eugenicism found fertile ground amongst scholars in the 'soft sciences'; the arts, media, cultural production, and geography also advancing understandings of colonial subjects as inferior on the basis of religion and worldviews (Davis 1995b; Levine 2017). Chief amongst these were anthropologists of

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[70] See also Mignolo (2011b:8–9) who describes how Christian theology, as far back 1492, and right up to the 'discovery of the New World in the 18th century, "located the distinction between Christians, Moors and Jews in the blood".

[71] These mechanisms of psychological profiling set the stage for both historical and contemporary methods of diagnosis within a Western biomedical model of treatment and healthcare, which I have argued elsewhere continue to pathologise normative cultural experiences of those from formerly colonised contexts (Walker 2021).

the 19th and early 20th centuries, who, in their attempts to identify "some obscure logic or arcane "prelogical" system of thought… governing all aspects of tribal life …concentrate[d] their attention on what they were inclined to identify as "religion" (Masuzawa 2005:16). Alongside peers studying the 'sciences of the mind' (i.e. modern psychology), anthropologists set about cataloguing, comparing and attempting to "systematize myths, rituals, and other noteworthy customs and habits that seemed to make a given tribal society unique and peculiar" (Masuzawa 2005:16). Thus, via a range of 'scientific' fields and methodologies, Europeans categorised and subordinated Other populations according to religion and worldview as much as race and phenotype, creating the basis upon which European interest and supremacy could be secured.

One result of the increasingly sophisticated classificatory processes adopted over this period was the emergence of the World Religions Paradigm (WRP) (Masuzawa 2005:1–21). Briefly, put, the WRP reflects 'major world religions' as the taken-for-granted basis upon which religion and religious groups are classified even today (ibid.). Typically the WRP exists as a list incorporating 'Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism, as well as Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto – often grouped together and called Chinese, Japanese, or East Asian religions (Masuzawa 2005:2). In addition to these 'major religions', which include the same three Abrahamic 'religions of the book' (Mignolo 2011b) incorporated under earlier systems of classification, is a set of "less typically but still very frequently included" worldviews including Zoroastrianism (Parsee or Parsiism), Jainism, Sikhism and Hinduism (Masuzawa 2005:2). Finally, at the bottom of the list, often ignored and left out altogether, is a collection of 'minor' and 'little traditions', which are referred to in generic, lower-case terms such as shamanism or animism (ibid: 3-4). At the height of European colonialism this wide collection of beliefs – frequently bracketed under the term 'indigenous' – were framed as "the most primitive forms of religion… observable in the lives of contemporary savages", and thus "on the brink of disappearance" (Masuzawa 2005:12) as the world marched towards a Protestant Enlightenment vision of 'civilisation'. Furthermore, these groups, which typically had strong oral traditions, were said to be without written history, and thus 'preliterate', 'primitive', and 'primal' relative to their more 'evolved' and 'enlightened' European counterparts (Masuzawa 2005:4). Thus, even within contemporary framings of the world religions, these worldviews are still referred to in colonial terms, and typically imagined to exist only in particular geographic locations with brutal colonial legacies (e.g. African, Pacific Islander, Maori, Native American, South American indigenous worldviews) (Masuzawa 2005:3–4).

3.3.2. Religion-Nonreligion and Christian-NonChristian Binaries

Just as processes of racialisation were reliant on the establishment of a black-white dualism rooted in phenotype (discussed in section 3.2.1.), processes of religionisation relied on adjacent imaginaries through which colonised populations could become 'known'. While these processes have been theorised less explicitly with respect to religion and worldviews, my reading of the literatures suggests that two adjacent binaries were established during this period of human history: first, a distinctly Protestant Christian-nonChristian binary advanced primarily by European missionaries asserting their supremacy and godliness over natives in the colonies; and, second, a religion-nonreligion binary asserted by those professing European Enlightenment values, which framed religion writ large as archaic and inevitably on the brink of decline as secular science and reason took hold. Both constructions became the basis for two very different yet fraternal civilising missions in the colonies, providing the dialectics around which notions of superiority and inferiority could be projected; in this Europeans self-described as modern, intellectual, progressive, and civilised, while denigrating Others who were constructed as pathological, traditional, backwards, and nonmodern (Masuzawa 2005:1–21). At their most extreme, these dialectics became the fulcrum around which colonised people were constructed as sub-human, and could legitimately be appropriated as a source of unfree labour to be exploited by Europeans; the enslavement of Africans from the 15th century onwards advanced and entrenched the forms of racial capitalism argued by some scholars to persist into the present (Hall 1992; Mignolo 2011b; Ndolvu-Gatsheni 2018:17; de Sousa Santos 2014).

Pushing back against the empty discourse of "plurality" said to characterise the modern WRP (Masuzawa 2005:27–29), it is important to make explicit how processes of religionisation resulted in the establishment of religious, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies which have preserved colonial power relations (Mignolo 2011b; S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021; Ndolvu-Gatsheni 2018). Central to these processes has been the negation of the worldviews of colonised people as exotic, inferior and 'nonmodern', with both Muslims and those professing indigenous beliefs becoming marginalised in ways that arguably mirror the structural location of racialised Black people (discussed earlier in section 3.2.1.).

Taking the first example, Muslims, the existing literature discusses the emergence of these religious hierarchies. In earlier phases of conquest, to be 'white' European was synonymous with Christendom, and thus Christianity (Hall 1992). Islam, "the religion of Mohammed was to be [reified and] rigidly stereotyped as the religion of the Arabs, …constrained by the Arabs' national, ethnic, and racial particularities" (Masuzawa 2005:Preface). This rigid stereotyping occurred as part of a historical process of semitisation, which "categorized Jews and Arabs as being "of the same stock," conjointly epitomizing the character of the Semitic "race"" (Masuzawa 2005:25–26). The legacy of these processes is long-reaching and damning for Muslims; from medieval times into the present, they have been framed in Christian representation as 'fanatic' adherents of an inherently 'dogmatic religion' (Daniel 2009; Masuzawa 2005:25–26) – one which continues to be associated with extremism, terrorism and forms of 'bad religion' (Stoddard and Martin 2018:23–39). A notable exception to this can be found in the framing of Sufi mysticism, which is often "valorised as a higher form of Islam" (Masuzawa 2005:26); represented as 'not really Islamic' or at times as a more 'liberal' form of Islam in ways that are representative of the good-Muslim-bad-Muslim dialectics of contemporary policy-making.

The second example, indigenous religions, have been pathologised and denigrated while being subject to forms of negation and nonrecognition by Christianity as devilish and savage (Masuzawa 2005:Preface). The experiences and structurally marginalised status of these groups have been theorised by numerous decolonial scholars – for example, by Masuzawa (2005), who critiques the WRP's failure to substantively engage with indigenous perspectives; by de Sousa Santos (2018:8 and 2016:9 in Oloruntoba, Afolayan, and Yacob-Haliso 2020; 2014) who coined the term 'epistemicide' to describe the destruction, or 'murder', of indigenous epistemologies and ontologies of the South, primarily Latin America; and by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007, 2018, 2020; 2021; 2018) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009a & 2009b in Ndolvu-Gatsheni 2018:17). These latter scholars have both employed the notions of epistemicide and linguicide to theorise the destruction of indigenous African peoples' knowledges. Arguably, those professing Islamic and indigenous worldviews are relegated to the lower rungs of spiritual and epistemic hierarchies that were constructed in the colonial encounter, and later reproduced as part of the dominant modern-day WRP.

3.3.3. Christian and Nonreligious Identities & 'Christian-Secular' Supremacy

The social construction of 'religion' as a category relied on 'nonreligion' and 'Protestant Christianity' as dual European identities constructed as more 'modern', 'enlightened' and 'civilised' than the worldviews of the Other. Scientists working on 'theory of mind' who worked to advance notions of 'normalcy' determined subjectively in relation to the worldviews of "mostly white European males" (Mignolo 2011b). Psychoanalysis as a field was especially influential, functioning according to the drive to correct 'developmental abnormalities', 'cognitive distortions' and 'maladaptive thinking' by "bring[ing] patients back to their normal selves" (Davis 1995b:38). Freud's 'eugenics of the mind', for example, was strongly rooted in his self-professed atheistic beliefs, though his Jewish background and upbringing undoubtedly played a significant role in the development of his ideas (Davis 1995b:38). Additionally, Jung, the son of a Swiss Reformed pastor, used his Christian background in attempts to "illuminate the psychological roots of all religions" (ibid), and make sense of his own experiences of what today would be considered 'psychosis' and likely diagnosed as 'schizophrenia' (Howe and Demjaha 2022). Despite a greater openness to religion and spirituality, however, Jung's work and formulations remained heavily Eurocentric, and have since been critiqued for their racism by minoritised psychoanalysts (e.g. Basia Winograd 2020; Dalal 2015). In addition to Freud and Jung, were others advancing ideas that aligned strongly with their worldviews and political perspectives: British psychologist Raymond Cattell, for example, created a rational religion called 'Beyondism', which combined eugenics and evolutionary theory to argue that aid should be cut off to 'poor countries' and 'immigration halted' from foreign territories. Collectively, the wide-reaching influence of psychoanalysts and psychologists was thus to elevate and establish the supremacy of Judaeo-Christian worldviews and cultures, alongside secular scientific thought and reason (Levine 2017:21), destroying, pathologizing and/or subordinating those 'nonmodern' worldviews with which they were less familiar in the process (Oloruntoba et al. 2020:2).[72]

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[72] As Philippa Levine (2017:18–21) notes, the eugenics movement, contrary to some framing, was not a fringe movement of right-wing groups, but a mainstream movement within health sciences incorporating a broad range of not only political opinion, but also religious belief. Perspectives advanced under the movement, whilst invariably Eurocentric, mirrored religious and political fault lines of Europe at the time, with eugenicists yoking both skepticism and support to religious principles as part of academic and policy-making and influencing processes. Paul Popenoe and Roswell Johnson, for example, claimed in their college textbook that "although every religion could accommodate eugenics, Christianity was its "natural ally"" (Ibid: 21), while William Inge, the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, enthusiastically promoted the cause in relation to Christianity in England and beyond, speaking at the international Eugenics Congress in New York in 1921.

The result of this process over many decades was the advancement, at the height of European conquest and expansion, of a 'triumphant', 'progressive' and 'modern' form of 'rational Protestant Christianity', which was heavily shaped by and eventually somewhat displaced by "a new, transcultural, objective world consciousness of science'" and secular reason (Masuzawa 2005:12–16; see also Mignolo 2011b). Together both 'modern Christian' and 'secular', Enlightenment worldviews thus came to represent the pinnacle of progress within a global civilising mission in which it was imagined that 'European cosmologies' (Mignolo 2011b, 2011a, 2022) would eventually "override and vanquish the magical, religious, and metaphysical world-views" of primitive tribal societies (Masuzawa 2005:12–13). According to this fantasy, the worldviews of "contemporary savages" encountered in the colonies were framed as being "on the brink of disappearance" – destined to become obsolete as native populations assimilated into universal principles of European thought and became "a direct extension of European Christianity, or Europe as (erstwhile) Christendom" (Masuzawa 2005:12–13).

Thus, while in contemporary Britain, Christian and Secular (i.e. Nonreligious, Humanist, Atheist) worldviews are frequently positioned as polarised within a binary which frames 'religion' as antithetical to 'nonreligion', a longer look at history from a decolonial perspective allows us to see how in reality "the struggle between theologism… and secularism… [is better understood as something of] a family feud" (Mignolo 2011b:8–9). This is because proponents of both Christian and Secular views have historically been "Christian, white, and male" (Mignolo 2011b:8–9), advancing "a knowledge configuration" and epistemic arrangement in which "an accent [was] placed on the mind in relation to God and in relation to Reason" in ways that established what I term 'Christian-Secular supremacy'. Together both Christian theology and secular reason were thus critical in establishing an epistemic, spiritual and religious hierarchy "that privileged Christian over non-Christian/non-Western spiritualities" and "Western knowledge and cosmology over non-Western knowledge and cosmologies" (Mignolo 2011b). Additionally, both were critical in advancing a conception of 'the modern subject' or 'Man' which, having been "introduced in the European Renaissance, became the model for the Human and Humanity, and the point of reference for racial [and also, in my view, religious] classification and global racism" (Mignolo 2011b).

3.4. Theorising Race and Religion: Entangled Constructs, Intersecting Oppressions

So far in this chapter I have introduced race, ethnicity and religion as contested concepts (section 3.1.), providing a brief overview of how each was constructed in the colonial encounter (section 3.2.), and has come to be defined and treated as self-evident. In this section, taking seriously the call that researchers should ensure conceptual clarity when working with contested ideas (see, for example, discussions provocations by Woodhead (2011a), Meer (2014:Introduction) Lewis et al (2019); Zuberi 2001 and Zuberi & Bonilla Silva 2008 in Lewis et al (2019)), I explain how I define, deploy and theorise race and religion and worldviews in this thesis and discuss how I understand each of their associated systems and mechanisms of oppression based on my synthesis of the existing literature, my lived experience, and my engagement with my research data. This is in line with Meer's (2014) suggestion that scholars make explicit "the intellectual frames through which we have come to understand what we name as racial and ethnic [including religious] differences amongst and across populations"; and also includes an acknowledgement of how concepts often hold a "chameleonic quality" and are often adopted and appropriated in service of different arguments (Smith 2010 in Meer 2014:3). Additionally, I explore and defend how my framework departs from dominant theorisations, stating why it might be helpful to understand race and religion as distinct and yet interrelated and intersecting categories in contemporary life, even if the boundaries between these constructs are messy, entangled, and porous in ways that mean "there is no simple place where 'race' ends and 'religion' begins" (Nye 2019:22).

3.4.1. Conceptual Framework

While I acknowledge the many scholars who have argued that the term race should be seen as constitutive of a cultural dimension (e.g. Nye 2019; Sexton 2008; Sexton and Copeland 2003 etc.), in this thesis, *primarily for analytic purposes*, I follow from Meer (2014:114–15) and the American Sociological Association (2022) in adopting a more simplistic definition of the term. At the most basic level, I, therefore, see race as synonymous with phenotype – a term referring to those fixed observable traits and inherited characteristics (e.g. skin colour, height, eye colour, blood type, hair texture, body proportions, or other physical attributes) that have been made socially significant. As shown in Figure 1, my emphasis on inherited physical characteristics means that race can be seen as distinct, and yet interrelated with religion – a term which I adopt to refer to the beliefs, values, and worldviews (BVWs) held by individuals and/or groups, and the epistemologies and/or theologies they

adopt in relation to life's existential, philosophical, and even political questions. Seen as intersecting rather than proxy categories, in this thesis I consider race to relate to visible external markers of identity – or the epidermal terrain/domains – and religion and worldviews to relate to the internal worlds and sense-making mechanisms of individuals and groups, which may or may not be reflected externally through visible *ethnic* markers of difference such as clothing, religious symbols etc. Furthermore, while race refers to inherited physical characteristics which are typically ascribed, immutable and resistant to change, I emphasise the ways that religion and worldviews can, in many cases, be inherited and ascribed and/or chosen and achieved; thus they are fluid and subject to alteration and change over one's life course (CoRE 2017:4), both as a result of external imposition, socialisation and/or on account of individual agency, choice and the capacity to self-determine. In this way, both race and religion can be seen as narrowly and tightly defined concepts relative to ethnicity – a much broader concept under which both race (i.e. phenotype) and religion (i.e. BVWs) are subsumed, along with nationality, ancestry, language, practice and culture, for example, as already described in section 3.1.2.).
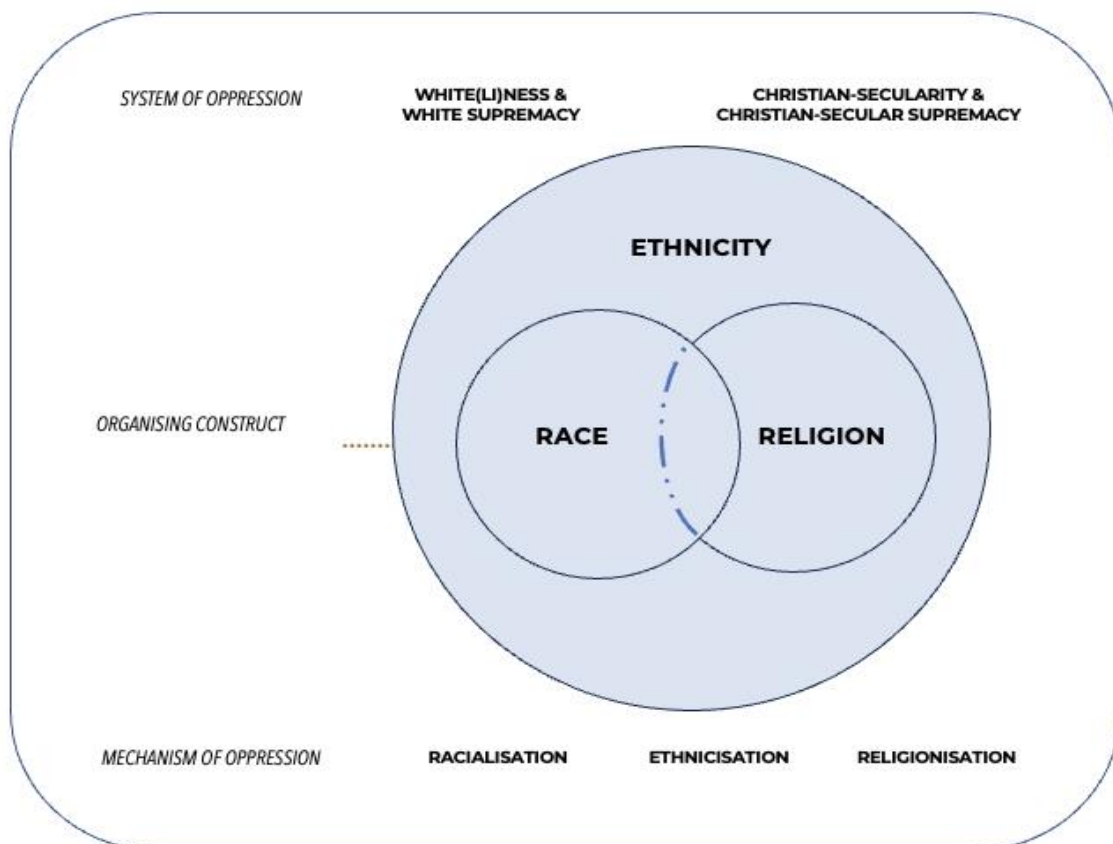
FIGURE 1: (DIS)ENTANGLING 'RACE' & 'RELIGION': AN EMERGENT CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Within British sociology, the term racialisation has customarily been used to broadly describe the processes by which groups are constructed and organised in hierarchical relation to one another, on the basis of ethnic and cultural differences, including those of race and religion (Massoumi, Miller, Mills, and Aked in APPG on British Muslims 2018:39). In this thesis, however, I take a slightly different approach, distinguishing racialisation from both ethnicisation and religionisation as a means of demonstrating how each term can be seen as relating to substantively different but nonetheless interlinked, entangled and intersecting ideas and processes. This allows me to deploy each term with slightly different meanings, treating race and religion as distinct categories, while also acknowledging the way in which both have been co-constituted (Meer 2013:389 in Nye 2019:21), and can arguably be viewed as 'conjoined twins' (Vial 2016; also in Nye 2019) on account of the deeply interrelated processes through which they initially came to be constructed in the European colonial encounter. As shown in Figure 1, this means I adopt the term racialisation to refer more narrowly to the construction of racial hierarchies rooted in phenotype as a visible marker of difference, European aesthetic norms, and black-white dualism (section 3.2.); religionisation to refer to the construction of religious, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies rooted in worldviews as a marker of difference, European cosmologies, and (Protestant) Christian-nonChristian and Religion-nonreligion dualism (section 3.3.);[73] and ethnicisation to refer broadly to the construction of differences based on a much broader set of considerations and characteristics (e.g. culture, ancestry, phenotype, worldview, dress etc) and rooted in Western-nonWestern, modern-nonmodern dialectics and binaries which have collectively had othering impacts.

Critically, in adopting these terms in this way, I advance a framework which acknowledges that *all* people, whether from dominant or subordinated groups, are at once racialised, ethnicised, and religionised; structured into intersecting racial, ethnic and religious groups and hierarchies in ways that suit dominant group interests and discourses (Rollock and Gillborn 2011), and which are

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[73] Cuthbertson (in Nye 2019:232) also adopts the term 'religionization' to describe the processes by which differences or similarities are ascribed to groups "on the basis of the category of religion"; however, he maintains that "the term religion serves power interests that rely primarily on racial constructs" and, by inference, sees the term as one that can be seen as a proxy for racialisation.

observable and worthy of scrutiny within the organisations that form part of my study.[74] With respect to processes of racialisation, as shown in Figure 1, this involves an acknowledgement that racial hierarchies are underpinned by white supremacy, with white identities and white(li)ness as the dominant ideology, systems and/or culture; while, with respect to religionisation, this involves the naming of Christian-Secular supremacy with nominally Protestant Christian and Secular European worldviews and cosmologies (Masuzawa 2005; Mignolo 2011b, 2022; Woodhead 2016) – i.e. what I term 'Christian-Secularity' – reflecting dominant ideologies, systems and/or cultures. Together, both White(li)ness and Christian-Secularity - which I sometimes refer to as 'Christian-Secular White(li)ness' in this thesis - can thus be seen as co-constituted and intersecting systems of oppression which, at least theoretically, form the basis of various forms of oppression impacting minoritised groups including skin-colour racism, cultural racism and what I term psycho-spiritual oppression (see Chapter 6).

3.4.2. Defending the Intersectional Approach

Depicting and deploying ethnicity, race and religion as I have in Figure 1 means I depart in this thesis from dominant conceptualisations, which have tended to see religion as an aspect of racialisation under the racialised religion discourse. In his article, *Race and Religion: Postcolonial Formations of Power and Whiteness*, for example, Nye (2019:21–22) draws on thinkers such as Meer, Vial, Modood, and Omi & Winant, to make clear how most scholars within the sociology of race tend to see religion as "a particular type of racial formation", a "cultural term" that is imagined, constructed and/or ideological (see also Smith 1982, McCutcheon 1997 and Martin 2013 in Nye 2019:214). For Nye, this means religion should be seen as synonymous with, and therefore a surrogate or proxy for race (2019:217 & 227), a category that, on a Venn diagram, would be entirely subsumed under and

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[74] In this way, I depart from some scholars and colloquial understandings, which apply the term 'racialisation' as though it is a process that is only applied to and impacts subordinated and minoritised groups. My contention with such approaches are that dominant groups are frequently seen as lacking in substantive content, defined as the norm and standard to which all other groups are related, and thus seen as unworthy of scrutiny. This has been the case, for example, with 'white' groups whom for many years were seen as unraced or deraced under white supremacy despite their hypervisibility to people of colour (Nayak 2006b). It has also been the case with nonreligion and nonreligious identities, which Lee (2012a) argues have often escaped scrutiny, as well as nominally Christian and spiritual worldviews which have been harder to trace (Woodhead 2016).

"contained completely within the circle for race" (Nye 2019:231). Based on this understanding, for Nye, the only unresolved issue relevant to the relationship between race and religion would be the "the extent to which religion... [should be seen as] a large or small subset of race" (Nye 2019:231). Deviating away from this, primarily for analytic purposes, I follow from the likes of Fredrickson (2002 in Nye 2019:230), Bayoumi (2006:275 in Nye 2019:230) and Cheruvallil-Contractor, Abbas, Hasan, and Karim (in APPG on British Muslims 2018), in drawing a distinction between these categories, and the processes and mechanisms by which each are maintained and reproduced, depicting race and religion as overlapping and intersecting constructs with porous borders rather than seeing both concepts as synonymous.

Admittedly, seeing race and religion as distinct and intersecting is likely to be contentious. Nye, for example, criticises such approaches for reflecting religion as something "*solely* based on issues of belief and theology" (Nye 2019:213; italics my emphasis). It is possible too that such an approach might be met with luke-warm responses by the many sociologists who have fought hard for theorisations of antisemitism and islamophobia as forms of 'cultural racism', drawing on frameworks that rightly emphasise solidarity based on the shared experience of racial and ethnic minoritisation following the splintering of political blackness (Alexander 2002, 2004, 2017, 2018; e.g. Massoumi, Miller, Mills, and Aked, Dr Omar Khan of the Runnymede Trust; Giannassi; Tell Mama, Bridge Institute in APPG on British Muslims 2018:42; Meer 2014; Modood 1994). Likewise it is an approach that would possibly be met with hostility by anti-racist scholars and activists who have vocally shared concerns that seeing religion as anything other than an aspect of racialisation might, in political life, result in the 'protection of religion' or religious belief rather than religious adherents as racialised groups (e.g. Southall Black Sisters in APPG on British Muslims 2018; Bourne 2019).[75]

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[75] As I have already argued with Deborah Grayson (2019), many of these fears about religion from anti-racist scholars and activists seem to rely on assumption and association of 'religion' as inherently bad, oppressive and undermining of secular liberal values, and appear to be rooted in Marxist and/or good-bad religion paradigms, which presume secular values to be inherently liberal, progressive and inclusive. Like the authors of the APPG on British Muslims' (2018:42) attempt to define islamophobia I consider that these fears around the protection of 'religion' are unfounded, given that legal protection of 'religion and belief' under human rights law (and its principles of Freedom of Religion and Belief, or FoRB) has always been applied to the *adherents* of particular beliefs, and protects their right to manifest their beliefs. These rights are not absolute, and do not apply when they cause harm or infringe on the rights of others.

Despite these possible critiques of my approach, I maintain the view that a framework that allows race and religion to be seen as distinct but intersecting constructs is important for two key reasons. First, such an approach allows for an acknowledgement of the ongoing salience of race as a category, which as I demonstrate in Chapter 4, continues to have real, significant and unwavering impacts for those marked as visibly Other in British social and organisational life. Second, while I accept, as Nye (2019:213) notes, that religion is never "*solely* about theology and belief" and can be seen as racialised and thus a cultural term, allowing for the category to be seen as distinct serves to acknowledge the significance and importance of BVWs as an aspect of identity that is seen by many to have primacy alongside, and sometimes even above race. This includes, within my expansive theorisation of the category, those professing nonreligious or secular worldviews who have often been cast outside the category of religion, and thus escaped scrutiny in much the same way as white identities and whiteness once escaped scrutiny in discussions of race and racism.[76]

In relation to the former, the ongoing salience of race when understood as phenotype is perhaps especially important to note given that theorisations of 'cultural racism' have come to somewhat displace the focus on 'skin colour' racism on which anti-racist struggles had been based under the banner of political blackness since the 1980s (Modood 1997 in Bhui 2009:13; Modood et al 1997:291-338 in Meer 2014:39; Modood 1994:202, 2019; Modood and Khattab 2016). These theorisations of cultural racism have done significant work in shining a light on how ethnicity, or perceived ethnicity, can subject a person or group to discrimination, not based on an "invocation of a biology, but [rather] a radical 'otherness'" rooted in "aspects of *'culture'*" (Modood and Khattab 2016:6). Furthermore, they have helped to advance an understanding of the fact that "there is no one monolithic racism but numerous historically situated racisms" (Back 1996:9 in Bhui 2009), each manifesting differently in relation to the 'multi-textured identities' (Modood 1994:859) of those towards whom prejudice is directed in a multi-ethnic Britain. This has perhaps especially been the case for individuals and groups for whom religion and religious affiliation have been argued to hold primacy over race and blackness - for example, the experiences of British Asians (i.e. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains etc.) articulated by

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[76] Here again my analysis departs from Nye (2019:232) who frames the "taken-for-grantedness" of religion as a category as equivalent to whiteness and thus escaping scrutiny. To me this makes little sense, since to logically follow this line of thinking, both race and religion ought to be seen as taken for granted with dominant groups, cultures and identities (i.e. whiteness and 'nonreligious' and 'secular' European worldviews alongside white Christian liberal Protestantism needing to be made strange and worthy of scrutiny as noted by both Lee (2012a) and Woodhead (2016)).

Modood et al (Smith in Bhui 2009:13; 1997: 291-338 in Meer 2014:39) - and other minoritised groups such as Jews, Roma, Irish etc, which also encounter cultural racism. Unfortunately, however, recent emphasis on cultural racism has tended to focus on some forms of prejudice over others (e.g. attempts to define antisemitism and islamophobia) while also at times eschewing and overlooking the ways that race and racisms rooted in phenotype remain persistent and prevalent in Britain, with scholars either implicitly or explicitly suggesting that other forms of racism have been on the decline. Modood & Khattab (2016:6; see also Modood et al. 1997), for example, have suggested that skin colour racism has come to hold "increasingly less force" in post-War Britain as greater contact and interaction between white and non-white individuals has left people "far more likely to ascribe group differences to upbringing, customs, forms of socialization and self-identity than to biological heredity" (Modood and Khattab 2016:6). The upshot of this, as I will show in Chapter 4, has been to pay less attention to the experiences of some groups, with Black participants in my research especially noting how their experiences of antiblack racism rooted in skin-colour and phenotype remaining overlooked and invisibilised, despite its persistence. What is more, amongst these groups, antiblack racism is perpetrated not only by White groups, but also by nonBlack people of colour, and includes a cultural dimension which has received less attention: a matter which several research participants described as 'hard to name', for fear of being received as divisive and undermining racial solidarity.

The emphasis on religion and worldviews as distinct in my framework is also important. Overall, taking this approach enables me to resist seeing religion *solely,* or only ever, as a proxy for race, which is seen my some as fixed, inherited and difficult to escape (Foladare 1969; Meer & Modood 2009 in Nye 2019:230, 2019:212–13). This allows me to pay sociological attention to religion as a category which has been marginalised within the sociology of race (e.g. APPG on British Muslims 2018; Meer 2014:Introduction; Nye 2019) (also discussed in section 1.1.3 and 1.3.4.) and sociology as a discipline writ large – in my view, on account of the discipline's Enlightenment roots (Cox 2003; Horii 2017) and possibly also its lack of ethnic diversity (Joseph-Salisbury et al. 2020). In doing so, I advance an understanding of thrree new religion-related terms in my theoretical framework (Figure 1) – 'religionisation', 'Christian-Secularity' and 'Christian-Secular Supremacy' – which collectively describe the processes involved in the construction of religious, spiritual, and epistemic hierarchies, and the systems from which various forms of marginalisation, discrimination and oppression to emerge in social and organisational life. Collectively, my adoption of these terms responds directly to the call of

the APPG on British Muslims (2018:47) to develop new research tools and instruments which can be "applied towards the identification of subtler forms of prejudice and stigmatisation" based on 'religion and belief' - forms of prejudice which might help to explain, for example, how groups such as Muslims can be "perceived as a social threat even by those who denounce anti-Muslim prejudice" and see themselves as anti-racist (APPG on British Muslims 2018; see also Chapters 6 for examples from my own research). While I accept that these forms of prejudice could still be seen and captured under existing theorisations of 'cultural racism' my focus on religions and worldviews, along with my adoption of concepts and methodologies from sociology of religion, has allowed me to approach my research questions and data analysis from a slightly different angle, one likely to be received more warmly by those who focussed on that ways that religion and religious discrimination is salient within theorisations of cultural racism, whether or not a person has any visible markers of difference (APPG on British Muslims 2018:46). These might include, for example, people like Islam (2018) who talks about the difficulties of even making reference to Allah (God) in her theorisation of 'soft islamophobia'; Cheruvallil-Contractor, Abbas, Hasan, and Karim respectively, all of whom especially emphasised a focus on the religious dimensions of, and the 'double disadvantage' associated with racial and religious discrimination, as part of recent attempts to define Islamophobia by the APPG on British Muslim (2018:30–31 & 40); and perhaps also those decolonial scholars and thinkers from the South who have sought to advance understandings of the marginalisation of (African, Latin American etc) indigenous epistemologies which frequently contain a spiritual dimension (e.g. Mignolo 2011b; S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021; S. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021; de Sousa Santos 2014).

Conclusion

In this chapter, starting with examples and reflections based on my own lived experience, I have explored how race, ethnicity and religion constitute entangled and contested concepts; each variously defined and conceptualised within sociology as a discipline. While an ambitious endeavour - one which, tackled comprehensively, ought to go well beyond the scope of a thesis let alone a single chapter - I have provided a brief overview how contemporary ideas of ethnicity, race and religion are interwoven, and strongly rooted in histories of conquest, colonialism, and empire. This has involved showing how each category came to be constructed through colonial encounter, with processes of racialisation, ethnicisation and what I term 'religionisation', leading to the formation of racial, religious, spiritual, and epistemic hierarchies which persist in everyday life. Taking seriously the need

to explicit about how I define and deploy (what are generally troublingly under-theorised and heavily contested concepts within my research, in the final part of the chapter I have visually depicted and advanced my own conceptual framework, providing justifications for my decision to treat race and religion as overlapping yet distinct and categories which continue to have real-world implications. This framework becomes the core lens through which I analyse manifestations of coloniality with respect to race and religion within the organisations I have studied, and the key mechanism through which I trace and explore race and religion based forms of discrimination, marginalisation and oppressions in the chapters that follow.

As a first step towards advancing my exploration of coloniality, in the chapter that follows I address and theorise experiences of race and racism that are clearly based on visible racialised characteristics and differences (i.e. phenotype and other visible ethnic markers of difference. Included in my analysis are themes of everyday racism and incivility and everyday surveillance, profiling, and body-policing on the job – phenomena which disproportionately impacted those visibly marked as Other over my time in the field, and clearly undermined esteem as well as a sense of inclusion and belonging among racially minoritised groups in organisational life.

Vignette 5: Working While Black

10th August 2018

Back in the days when my hair was shorter and supposedly inferior to its now 'good exotic' length, I was fascinated to see how the act of 'going natural' so *thoroughly* changed the game.

I'd worked through *years* of internalised racism; and all the usual hair-related traumas. The chemical relaxers and burnt scalps, the tightly pulled braids, and throbbing temples.

"I'll be whipping it all off," I told colleagues. "No more protective styles!" 🙅‍♀️ …But even after months of preparing them, they were *still* caught off-guard.

A few reactions… day one post-Big Chop…

Reaction 1 – The Second in Command

She walks in as I'm making coffee; and promptly folds in on herself, shoulders shaking. But it was the hip-hinge back upright that did it, followed by the pointing and the laughing: a *different* kind of humiliation, but one child-me knew intimately …'Was it the *state* or *length* of my hair?' I wondered. 'Or *maybe* the floral pin?' An attempt to look more 'feminine', from back in the days when I cared…? 😳🤭

Reaction 2

She runs out of the kitchen, spreading news of my 'Great Change', like wildfire, right to the heart of power…

"Tom!!!,"[77] the MD burst in, "What *happened* to your *hair*?!" …But, before I could even answer, he'd reached over and grabbed a tuft. A "playful" yank, his eyes suggested…so *why* did it leave my head

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[77] He never said my name right!

aching?! And *why* did I choose to *retaliate* by wrenching harder at a tuft of his own?! "How d'you like that?!", I asked, seething; and, honestly, I've still no regrets. 🤷🏽‍♀️

Reaction 3

Surprised and bewildered – as much by my aberrant response – the MD follows me out the door and foolishly tries me again. "But how is your hair *like that*?" he asks, this time softer, tactfully… A question that forces me, once more, to labour; and leaves me explaining the basic facts:

"My mother is Black," I say. "And my father: he's white. So, my hair's *in between* the two," I finish. Thinking that would be the end of that.

"…So, you are a *mistake*?!" he asks. I stare at him, stunned into silence… 🙄🤦🏽‍♀️

Reaction 4

We head to our local caff, myself and the HRD. We're greeted by one of the owners, who drops his jaw in apparent shock.

"Wow!! You look *different*!" he says, gazing upon my locks. "You kinda look like Bam Bam from the Flintstones!" he continues, laughing hard as he lands the blow.

I smile it off and place my order, but the guy won't let it go. He persists through the lunch hour, whispering, "Bam Bam!!" as he sets down each plate.

Eventually, I'm over it. So, I stop and give him the lecture: "You know this is *inappropriate,* right…? And let me tell you *why*…". But already I know before I'm done, I'll be told *I'm the one* that needs to "lighten up"! 😭

Reaction 5+

The Majority: they mostly give furtive looks; and awkwardly watch, their pupils darting around. …They try not to be too obvious… when it's *clear* that something has changed. …When it's obviously not an insult to *acknowledge* the change. Unless, of course, they're *actually* insulting. 🤦🏽‍♀️

…This is HALF… A… DAY… working while Black. Literally, a morning till lunchtime. And yet these five reactions, so *easily* remembered, remain etched in my soul like scars. Built up over time. Leaving a message that would define my place and value in the world if only I would let them.

Don't tell me afro hair's not political. Nor the turban, hijab, or kippah. …Even *unintended* they do work to subvert; by sitting outside the norm. By occupying symbolic space; by marking bodies out as Other.

…And this is just scratching the surface… as someone relatively privileged. …I haven't even mentioned the monkey gestures made across our open plan office! Or even, my colleague's jesting gift, on her return from summer leave. 'Spanish Conguitos chocolates', she announced, shoving them into my hand. Stifling full-chested giggles, as she watched me peruse the pack: A thick-lipped figurine and a dark skinned-caricature. A golli'-nice gift reserved just for me;[78] and one that still haunts my eyes.[79]

In any case, these are just some of the reasons you see me rocking my hair BIG and PROUD. *Especially* at work. The more conservative the space, the greater my indignance; the more I *insist* on being *myself*.

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[78] See Pilgrim (2000) and Revealing Histories (2023) for discussions of the golliwog doll and similar as anti-black imagery which remains alive and well as demonstrated in the recent case of Christopher Ryley, a pub landlord investigated for hate crime following his online hate speech and his open display of golliwogs at the White Hart pub in Essex, (Weaver 2023).

[79] Seven years after this incident, at the height of the BLM movement, I became aware of a campaign reported in the media (e.g. Ortuño 2020; Southey 2020) to have Spanish chocolate manufacturer, Lacasa, change the branding and packaging of their Conguitos chocolate which had been "represented by a small black character with large red lips" and named based on "a diminutive of the Spanish word for "Congolese"" (Myriam B. 2020). The campaign highlighted how "the very existence of such a brand, widely tolerated, shows… how long the road is" toward racial equity, and made clear how Lacasa had contributed to "the stigmatisation of the black population… and cultural racism" – much like a range of other food brands including the French chocolate drink brand, Banania (e.g. Sibeud 2016), the Spanish brand Colacao (e.g. Álvarez 2020) and, in the UK, Robertson's jam.

Chapter 4: Everyday Racism, Profiling, and the Policing of Organisational Space

In *Dark Matters*, Simone Browne draws on the work of pre-eminent scholar Judith Butler (1993:15-16 in Browne 2015:20) to argue that the Black subject is understood through a "racially saturated field of visibility"; one through which bodies marked by blackness are viewed according to a "rigid and limited grid of representational possibilities" (Wallace 2002 Browne 2015:20). For Browne, these rigid ways in which blackness is read and conceptualised – "through stereotypes, abnormalisation, and other means that impose limitations" (2015:20) – are highly prevalent within contemporary systems of policing and surveillance. So too, she goes on to suggest, are these ways of seeing and reading black bodies prevalent in everyday life, with practices of stereotyping and surveillance creeping well beyond the arenas of crime and justice, and extending into a range of public and private spaces, including the workplace, which is "shaped for whiteness" (Browne 2015:20).

In this chapter, I build on Browne's cogent analysis of how Black and blackened bodies (i.e., those marked by their proximity to blackness as described in section 3.2.2.) are perceived, categorised and framed within the predominantly white organisational spaces in my study. I address the race-relevant components of my third and fourth research questions, advancing an understanding of how racial hierarchies function, shape, and influence the lives of people in organisations (RQ3), giving rise to marginalisation, discrimination and oppression rooted in visible ethnic markers of difference (RQ4). Additionally, I outline how race continues to be influential in shaping the contours of organisational life; how it is continually reconstructed, and reproduced as a colonial category, reserving its most deleterious impacts for those visibly marked as Other.

In the first part of this chapter, I draw upon my research journal, field observations, and selected interviews to explore instances of everyday racism and workplace incivilities that are rooted in the *idea* of race (RQ3). I unpack how the deployment of colonial stereotypes dating back to the 16th century remain alarmingly prevalent in organisational life, along with the dehumanisation of black subjects and the normalisation of race-based oppressions (RQ4). In the second part, I delve into the topic of everyday surveillance, profiling, and the policing of black subjects on the job, extending Browne's argument and demonstrating its relevance in modern British organisational life. My analysis

here is made possible by synthesising literature from surveillance studies and policing with those on race and racism in organisations, constituting an aspect of organisational life that has received little scholarly attention in Britain. Finally, in the third part of my chapter, I offer an autoethnographic and intersubjective reflection on how everyday racial microaggressions serve as more subtle mechanisms through which organisational space is policed, marking out Others as imposters in ways that influence our sense of belonging.

A Note on Race Related-Data

Before expanding on these core themes, it is important to note that this chapter draws on forms of data on which I am less reliant in succeeding chapters. This is because the chapter is focused on race, as defined in my conceptual framework (see section 3.4.) – an issue I had not anticipated focussing heavily upon in the early stages of my research design. I did not therefore explicitly introduce race as a topic with research participants, either as part of formal interviews or focus groups. Nonetheless, it was a concept raised, and seen as distinct though deeply interrelated with religion by all racially minoritised research participants. Likewise, it was an aspect of identity that became especially important in the context of BLM, when research participants and people in my personal life came to see me as a safe person to whom to entrust their secrets and disclose experiences of race and racism in their working lives – a matter I address in relation to my own positionality and as a significant autoethnographic conundrum in sections 2.4.3 and 2.5.3.

Consequently, a significant portion of the data on which I draw in this chapter has emerged through ongoing reading and reflection on my research journal entries, which includes salient observations and anecdotes of race and racism drawn from casual encounters and disclosures made by people in my personal and professional networks over the research period. Alongside these more informal disclosures are two further sub-sets of race-related data for which informed consent has been gathered. The first includes interview and focus group data collected as part of my original research design and in line with the processes for which I secured ethical approval. Data was also sourced from my role as a participant observer at the Faith & Belief Forum (F&BF) where often contentious conversations about race and racism were underway; indeed, I had been explicitly asked to provide consultative support around race policy in the organisation after staff in the Race and Faith Working Group (RFWG) had raised concerns that the organisation, as one employee put it, "had a problem with blackness". The second subset includes a smaller body of data drawn from interviews and focus

groups, enabled due to my involvement in a professional research project undertaken alongside Dr Selina Stone and Rev. Dr Carlton Turner during the final stages of my PhD, and where informed consent processes were also implemented. This research focussed on race and wellbeing amongst Global Majority Heritage (GMH) clergy in the Church of England, and provided corroborating data and evidence which, in many respects, reinforced the findings of my own research, albeit in a different organisational setting and culture.

4.1. The Reproduction of Everyday Racism & Incivility

Despite the global reach of the Black Lives Matter movement, and decades of irrefutable evidence of its institutional manifestations, many in Britain – including political elites from a range of ethnic backgrounds (e.g. Tony Sewell and his colleagues in the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities 2021) – have failed to appreciate how racism is most often, as Essed (1988, 1991, 2008) has theorised, an everyday and commonplace occurrence. Rather than constituting "'relatively rare, major events'" (Deitch et al 2003:1003 Mapedzahama et al. 2012:155), Essed's research highlights how most racism manifests subtly; in ways that are mundane, routine, and familiar to those who experience incivilities. In this section, I focus on data related to everyday racism in British organisational life, taking seriously Deitch's (2003:1300 in Mapedzahama et al. 2012:155) concern that 'more traditional' and 'macro-centred' understandings of racism lead to the "underestimation of both [its] prevalence and personal consequences".

4.1.1. The Deployment of Anti-Black Colonial Stereotypes

An experience from Hudson, while far from subtle and non-blatant, constituted just one of numerous examples of everyday racism encountered during my fieldwork. Hudson was a Black male of Ghanaian descent in his mid-thirties, and a Senior Agile Project Manager remotely leading a team of other IT experts within a large tech corporation. The company self-described as "a family invested in the wider community", and an organisation committed to "nurturing differences" and "building diverse teams in which people feel safe and included". In a casual off-the-record conversation several months after the murder of George Floyd, however, Hudson relayed via an instant messaging app, an interaction amongst his all-white team members and subordinates that had occurred earlier that day. He described to me his arrival at work one morning:

"So I signed into Microsoft Teams this morning to check in with my team on how they are doing… only to find one of my team saying [in the chat] 'Stop being such a _____.' Then there's a link to a video where a cartoon game show has the question [or prompt] 'Things I find annoying', and the contestant has to fill in the blank in the word n_ggers'. The contestant has a long think… time is nearly up… then shouts 'niggers!'. Everyone reacts in shock horror and the host says, 'No, it's naggers. And then the clip ends."

He goes on to tell me more about the scenario, how "both colleagues [involved in the chat interaction] are white", and how "one team member commented with a laughing imoji [sic] and another commented with a heart". Recapping the incident, he added with an exasperated laughing emoji of his own, "🤣 …and I have to manage these people!" – the same people who had, in the preceding months, performatively posted black squares in support of BLM.

There are several points of interest to note in the interaction Hudson shared with me. First, casual anti-blackness was demonstrated using a hangman-style video containing the word 'nigger' in standard workplace communications. This language can be clearly and directly traced back to the slave trade and has been widely accepted as a racist insult, targeted explicitly and directly against Black people of African descent since at least the 18th century. Second, it is notable that Hudson's status and seniority within the team did not protect him from racism. Indeed, it was directly a result of doing the job for which he was employed – undertaking standard line management responsibilities and, as he explained to me, seeking a status update on a current 'agile sprint' as the most senior member of the team – that he experienced racial abuse from subordinates who implied he was 'nagging' or 'pestering' in terms that were clearly racialised. The interaction involved the exercise of white racial privilege by white team members in lower-status positions within the organisation's hierarchy. Third, and significantly, the exercise of whiteness by team members was framed in this instance simply as banter – or, as Hudson put it, something that was "meant to be a joke to another colleague for him to stop being such a nagger". This kind of banter, much like that I experienced and detailed in the vignette preceding this chapter, was incredibly common within my dataset and rarely, if ever, exercised by a single individual. In this case, the original injury and sharing of the offending video and slur not only went unchallenged by the wider team, but was reinforced by two colleagues who chipped in with laughter and heart emojis and were thus actively complicit in

exercising racial violence. Overall, the dynamic, was reflective of how whiteness and white supremacy is maintained and upheld by many in the wider organisational culture, either through silence or active support.

Significant in Hudson's story too was the important role of technology in tracking the incident. The use of Microsoft Teams as an electronic communications platform meant that Hudson's experience of everyday racism was clear and available for all to see. Evidence of the exchange could be gathered as screenshots so that a formal grievance could be pursued and Hudson was able to receive – albeit unsatisfactory – recognition of his experiences of discrimination from senior leaders in his organisations.[80] This served in stark contrast to several other similar incidents I heard about, where participants frequently spoke about how most racism occurred without witnesses (Mapedzahama et al. 2012:155–57), could not be proven, and therefore was not worth reporting.[81] The effect of this was that most participants normalised, downplayed, and minimised everyday racism, openly demonstrating cognisance, based on past experiences, that attempts to name racial violence at work would likely be called into question and framed as subjective or up for debate if reported to managers (Mapedzahama et al. 2012:155–57). Thus, for most participants who shared similar stories, there was broad acceptance that raising complaints would likely be more trouble than it was worth – largely because of difficulties associated with establishing the credibility of experiences.

Stories such as Hudson's were common among Black and other people of colour before, during and after my fieldwork. Often, racist incidents involved stereotypes of Others which were explained away

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[80] In the days following Hudson's disclosure, we exchanged further about the response of senior leaders in the business. Hudson described how his grievance resulted in an anxious and charged meeting with his line manager and an HR representative in which the 'problematic incident' was acknowledged, and management and HR anxiously talked around the issue, with one virtue signalling about how they themselves had a Black partner. The onus was put on Hudson as employee to state if he wished to pursue further action; however, due to his own concerns around being seen as a trouble-maker, and his strong sense that senior leaders were uncomfortable and ideally wanted the issue to 'go away', he agreed to an informal resolution. The result was that a 'quiet word' was had with the instigator of the incident, who was framed as the sole 'bad apple', made an example of, and moved into an adjacent project team in which he retained the same role, title, and position. This resolution was typical of responses to grievances around race that I have observed as an EDI practitioner where many subject to racial discrimination choose to 'let things go' for fear of adverse consequences; and those perpetrating acts of racism suffer minimal to no consequences for their actions.

[81] This chimes with the findings of the Mapedzahama et al (2012:155–57) study of everyday racism in healthcare settings, which noted how everyday racism is typically only witnessed by the person on the receiving end of the incivility and thus hard to prove.

as banter. More alarmingly, such stories were so pervasive that their retelling tended to be casual and nonchalant, barely registering surprise amongst research participants, who brushed them aside or laughed them off amongst others who understood in much the ways described in the literature on racism and silences (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021; Morison and Macleod 2014; Patterson 2022; see also discussion in section 2.3.3.). This was the case in my conversation with a friend, Kunle, who in September 2020, relayed the experiences of his wife Ayo, a Black British-born Nigerian doctor in her late 30s. Over a phone call, and without my prompting, Kunle shared with me several stories of racism he himself had encountered working in finance in the City of London. He also shared his wife, Ayo's, encounters with racism working in emergency healthcare for the NHS, at the height of the covid-19 pandemic, and in the wake of the global movement for Black Lives. This included caring for a retired naval officer who remarked casually how she looked "just like Blackie from the ships", alongside stories of caring for other sick patients who expressed overt disdain and distrust of her status as a doctor, requesting treatment from white professionals, in incidents that went entirely unchallenged by colleagues.

Another example was that of Sandra, a Black British social worker of Jamaican descent, living in Birmingham. We met by chance, and knowing about my research and area of work, she called me to offload one Thursday morning in October 2020, about an encounter with 'possible' racism on the job. She was wound up and angry from having to contain emotions. She had just left a school where she was checking up on a 'young, mixed-race, vulnerable child', and had been standing in the playground waiting to do the visit. A four-year-old white child began circling her on a bike, singing 'Baa Baa Black Sheep', which she, at first, "brushed off". "He's just singing a nursery rhyme," she told me. "But his voice just kept getting *louder and louder*, and more and more aggressive, to the point where the other teachers noticed and started looking" uncomfortably at her and each other.

Sandra continued to share how, as the child circled her in the playground, one of the teachers walked awkwardly towards her, inviting her to move inside so she could talk with the 'vulnerable child' whom she was *actually* there to see. Sandra entered the front of the classroom and proceeded with her safeguarding check. She asked the child questions, but, as she did, the child who had been circling her in the playground, cycled up towards the classroom, singing again: 'Baa Baa *BLACK* Sheep…have you any wooolll? Yes sir, yes sir, three bags fuuuullll.' Sandra seethed, as she told me how he kept emphasising the word Black, and then how she snapped, suppressing the full force of her rage and

muttering under her breath and her covid mask, "I'm gonna fucking *kill* that kid, you know!'." …When she called me, her hurried tone reflected her panic. She was afraid someone might have heard her; she might lose her job for "threatening to kill the kid"; and her fear was palpable. She told how she should have done 'something else' – how '*anything else* would have done' because she was someone who was *'supposed'* to be responsible for safeguarding children. Sandra was now wondering what she could do: whether she should follow up with the teachers to address the issue, whether it might be used as an opportunity to educate the kid in question, or whether they heard her, and she should just leave it be in case *she* got into trouble. Presumably, she called me, partly because she needed to vent, but perhaps also because she felt I might somehow know the best course of action to pursue.

4.1.2. Monkey Madness & Banana Skins: Dehumanisation & Animalisation

A further example of everyday racism came from Ezekial, a Black vicar, whose story emerged as part of the previously mentioned research project exploring the wellbeing of Global Majority Heritage clergy in the Church of England. As part of a series of disclosures around racism in his line of work, Ezekial shared with my colleague his experience of leading a session with a group of volunteers in a youth club. Like Sandra, Ezekial's encounter with racism occurred when he was in a position of power, and holding a duty of care to the perpetrator of racial violence.[82] He related a joke he had made amongst an ethnically mixed group of young people while in the line of duty – a joke that one member of the group, a 19-year-old white 'girl' did not like:

> *'She felt like I crossed the line. She just said, "You monkey!", to my face. It was in a room full of young people. Two Black girls were in the room as well. It was just like, "Wow!" …She knew how to hurt me, she knew how to dehumanise me, and she knew how to make me feel disempowered with one word. …The two Black girls we spoke to afterwards, they couldn't believe it. They were like, "But you're the vicar." The subtext is, "If they can say that to you…"'*

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[82] Like Sandra, this meant Ezekial was technically in a position of power and held a duty of care towards the perpetrator of racial violence yet was subordinated to her within wider social hierarchies determined by race. This was common within my data – for example, I heard several stories from teachers and academics who experienced racial abuse in classroom settings. Overall, stories such as these raised significant concerns around the absence of racial safeguarding measures to protect minoritised workers – a matter addressed in detail as part a discussion of Ezekial's experiences in our work on GMH clergy wellbeing (Stone 2022:48–51).

Ezekial's story is significant because it shows how the offended young woman drew on a long-standing trope that associates blackness with the status of being sub-human, animalistic; in this case simian (i.e. ape-like) (Gates 1983; Mills and Hund 2016; Panaitiu 2020).[83] Especially interesting though, were the many other disclosures of racism associated with monkey imagery and animalisation that I discovered in my research journal but had failed to identify as commonplace and interconnected phenomena during my fieldwork.[84] These included further examples from Kunle, who regularly travelled to South Africa for his job in finance, and recalled being referred to as a monkey on a work trip – an incident that went unchecked by white colleagues. Likewise, it included a story from Anton, another Black British participant who worked at the Commission for Racial Equality in the late 1990s, and was the Head of Equality and Diversity within a large central government department at the point of our interview in May 2018. Anton told me about his first case of religion and belief-based discrimination at work – a case addressed, at the time, under the Race Equality Act, and a story I was especially focussed on because of my interest in the relationship between race and religion. This was a case in which one of his clients, a Muslim man of Asian descent who worked at Morrison's, a superstore, in the North of England, had similarly experienced dehumanisation:

> *"I remember the very first [religion and belief focussed legal case I took] …the person involved was*
> *suffering really horrible racial abuse from his colleagues; the kind of thing that he just dealt with*
> *because he just thought it was the way it was. It was his wife that had brought [the case] up.*
> *English wasn't his first language, but he was living in this country, and his wife was English. …She*
> *used to hear these stories, and she said to him, 'You need to do something about this, and if you*

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[83] This distinction between man and nature, in which human life is considered to have greater value than those of animals is arguably itself a colonial configuration, and a feature of the 'colonial matrix of power' (Mignolo 2011b:10–13; see also Grosfoguel 2011; S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Quijano 2000). Indeed the deployment of animalistic stereotypes and tropes as slurs is predicated upon viewing 'nature' and 'the environment' as something separate and distinct from 'the human subject', under colonial classification and knowledge systems advanced in the colonial encounter which ushered in a paradigm in which '"nature" was "there" to be dominated by Man…, [thus] disqualifying all coexisting and equally valid concepts of knowledge" (Mignolo 2011b:10–13). This paradigm serves in stark contrast to many indigenous knowledge systems in which 'man' and 'nature' are/were not understood as separate entities, nor conceived of as being in hierarchical relationship to another.

[84] In the late stages of my write up I came across an article by Panatiu (2020) who also argued "that notions of biological racism that predate the Civil Rights Movement remain potent and continue to underlie cultural racism" in the American context. Like me, Panatiu focuses 'dehumanization-simianization', highlighting the alarmingly commonplace "depiction of racial groups (in this case African-Americans) as apes, [and] tracing its origins in Enlightenment-era scientific racism" – including in the context of Black Lives Matter marches and within "contemporary political discourse surrounding African-Americans in the United States".

don't, I'm going to'. And so, she did, with his consent obviously. When he started to talk about the things he was having to put up with: bananas being left in his locker, that kind of thing, it was horrible. It was really horrible."

In the days following Anton's disclosures, I was upset, angry and disturbed for reasons I could not fully make sense of at the time. At the analysis stage, looking back at my research journal, which was also a space for personal reflections, I was struck that I had recounted a series of memories from my personal life – memories which I now realise were triggered by our conversation. I can only theorise that, at some level, the mention of the banana skins left in Anton's client's lockers penetrated deeper than I was conscious of at the time, bringing to light my own experiences of enduring racial abuse dressed up as banter at work. One of these incidents included the company MD who made monkey gestures, and pointed and laughed in my direction across an open-plan office, where I was the only Black worker. These reflections eventually made their way into a Facebook post I published on the 10th of August 2018, a version of which is shared at the start of this chapter in a vignette titled, 'Working While Black', and which included various other examples of everyday racism and dehumanising treatment encountered in the same organisation.

The inclusion of this vignette, and my own experience thus serves as a further example of the association of blackness with simian, animalistic and nonhuman qualities while on the job. This pervasive dynamic is also clearly reflected in the broader culture of modern British society and beyond – for example, amongst Black footballers who experience monkey chants and have had bananas thrown at them on the pitch, often when representing and working for their club and country (BBC News 2019; Sky Sports 2021; Smith 2019). More interestingly, the prevalence of such incidents within my data was indicative of how, even in the context of the 'PC', 'colour-blind', and 'post-racial' culture of most British organisations (Tate and Page 2018) – where it is often imagined that the overt deployment of colonial stereotypes is a thing of the past – the exercise of everyday racism rooted in colonial stereotypes persists. Often, however, manifestations of contemporary racism are less explicit than in bygone eras; they are transmitted persistently, however, through traditional and popular arts and culture, or through everyday consumer items which continue to be marked by coloniality. Sandra's playground experience referenced the nursery rhyme 'Baa Baa Black Sheep', which is still heard across playgrounds decades after the end of Empire; or indeed, the banter directed at me for being 'just like Bam Bam' at the precise moment I stopped chemically straightening

my hair, and returned to my natural texture (see Vignette 5), were just two examples. In the case of the latter, the association of myself with a character from the animated sitcom, The Flintstones, which depicts and juxtaposes 'modern everyday concerns' as part of a Stone Age setting, reflected a sense that I was read, even if jokingly, as being much more like Bam Bam: that is, somehow pre-historic, child-like, lacking in language skills; broadly uncivilised, unevolved, and 'nonmodern'. Shockingly this occurred simply because of a change in hairstyle and the decision to move aesthetically towards a style that was less assimilative. Thus, at the level of phenotype, my new aesthetic reduced my degree of proximity to whiteness and subjected me to a higher degree of Othering.[85] Likewise, the use of consumer goods in the form of Conguitos sweets, which became the basis for the racist banter I refer to in my opening vignette, performed a very similar function, serving as another mechanism for the ongoing transmission and reproduction of race and racism.

Together, these incidents in modern British organisational life thus reflect what Ruth Mayer (in Loza 2017:109) argues in *Artificial Africas: Colonial Images in Times of Globalization*: that "the Imperial past both continues and undergoes transformations, living on in ever new guises and changing shape in the very process of being commemorated and preserved". In general, the persistence of these examples can thus be thought of as heavily racialised and reflective of the dynamics of coloniality outlined by Mignolo (2011b) – a matter I will address further in the following section.

4.1.3. The Stubborn Persistence of Race-Based Oppressions

In the preceding sections, with reference to the stories and experiences shared by Hudson, Kunle, Ayo, Sandra, Anton, Ezekial, and myself, I have demonstrated how race continues to be reconstructed and reproduced as a colonial category within organisations. Additionally I have shown how experiences of racism are rooted both in phenotype (i.e. skin colour, hair, physical characteristics and features) and other visible ethnic markers of difference (e.g. clothing, dress, religious symbols etc), remaining prevalent among those occupying bodies marked out as Other within predominantly white organisational spaces (Ahmed 2012, 2015; Arday and Mirza 2018:3; Dar 2019b; Hunter et al. 2010; Johnson and Joseph-Salisbury 2018:200; Mirza 2018; Puwar 2004). In doing so I have analysed

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[85] For a discussion of the colonial roots of the Othering based on race and ideas of womanhood, see for example, Morgan (1997).

examples of racism involving the overt deployment of racial slurs, stereotypes, and epithets directed against visibly minoritised workers. Like Panaitiu (2020), I have also drawn on examples involving the negative ascription of sub-human, animalistic and even prehistoric qualities to visibly minoritised workers as part of casual workplace interactions shaped by antiblackness, and dating back to slavery and European expansionism in the sixteenth century.

Taken together, these instances of everyday racism and incivility highlight how skin colour racism and the deployment of racial stereotypes rooted in antiblackness remain prevalent and stubbornly persistent in the life of the organisations within my study. Furthermore, they directly contradict the idea discussed in section 3.4.2., that "biological ideas [of race] have had increasingly less force" in post-war Britain, as "white people's interactions with non-white individuals in Britain [have steadily] increased" and racism has shifted away from crude invocations of biology, and skewed towards negative stereotypes of 'backward cultures' (Modood and Khattab 2016:6). Instead, the examples here seem to suggest something fundamentally different: how increasing contact between white and "non-white individuals in Britain", to use Modood & Khattab's (2016) language, have often bred overfamiliarity, giving rise to far more intimate incivilities. These kinds of racism frequently catch racially minoritised workers off guard through inappropriate 'banter' and even forms of 'play' (e.g. those experienced by Hudson, Sandra, and myself in my opening vignette), as much as outright hostility, bullying and harassment.

Similarly, these examples contradict Modood and Khattab's suggestion that biological interpretations of race "have not governed what White British people, including racists, have thought or done; how they have stereotyped, treated and related to non-whites" (2016:236) in recent decades. On the contrary, the testimony of minority racialised participants demonstrates that the overt exercise of racism rooted in biology remains prevalent, manifesting with alarming regularity in everyday life and culture of the supposedly open, liberal and inclusive British organisations I encountered as part of my study, even in the context of the forms of contact and integration advanced under state policy. This finding chimes strongly with that of Panaitiu (2020:109) in the U.S. context, who has similarly argued that despite common discourse of 'color-blind racism', "notions of biological racism that predate the Civil Rights Movement remain potent and continue to underlie cultural racism". Furthermore, it suggests how the incidence of such racism is often elevated and exacerbated in "political discourse and public opinion, as well as in literature, movies, and the media... during times

of heightened inter-racial tensions and conflict, when the dominant race perceives its privileged status quo as threatened" (Panaitiu 2020:111).

4.2. Everyday Surveillance, Profiling and Body-Policing

Extending Browne's (Browne 2015:20) broader conceptualisation of how black bodies are read and constructed according to racialised practices of surveillance, in this section I extend my consideration of the forms of stereotyping, abnormalisation and dehumanisation already described, to explore experiences of overt, explicit and disproportionate monitoring in working life.

4.2.1. Surveillance of the Other Surveillants

The story of Ali, a Muslim man of South Asian descent, aged late twenties or early thirties, constituted a very good example of this dynamic, and demonstrated how workplaces are often experienced as sites of surveillance and psychic terror by those marked as visibly other based on race and ethnicity. I met Ali in January 2019 when I was invited to facilitate a focus group for staff alongside Network Rail's Multi Faith Network (MFN). The session was optional for staff and part of the organisation's 'Everyone Week' initiative to promote EDI across the business. As part of the workshop, we discussed our responses to a series of casual workplace interactions loosely or directly connected with religion and belief, and considered their implications in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion at work. One of these interactions included a question I had crafted for workshops based on my observations as an EDI consultant of the way in which Muslim workers are frequently drawn into conversations about terrorism within workplaces. It included a question that Ali and another Muslim workshop participant both described as a common occurrence in their working lives: *'So what are your thoughts on the terrorist attacks in London Bridge / Manchester / Parsons Green yesterday?"*. By design, the question was intended to exemplify how Muslim workers are at times treated, not only as 'representatives' of their community, but also in ways which advance culturally racist discourses and stereotypes of Islam as an inherently violent religion per the approach described by Masuzawa (2005) (see discussion in section 3.3.3.).

Discussing the example, Ali – who had brown skin, long hair, a beard, and wore Islamic dress – provided a response which differed markedly from, Imran, the other Muslim workshop participant in the room. He outlined his perspective with reference to a disturbing experience in a previous workplace:

"For me [it's an offensive question to be asked by a co-worker] because I match the description. I *look* like them [the terrorists]. …I'm not copying *them*. …Our Messenger had long hair. All the companions had long hair. …So they're following that [too]. The beard. The trousers over the ankle. …I'll give you lot a story that happened to me: After the attack in Paris in 2015 I was a steward working at Wembley Stadium. There was armed police and there was armed vehicles. And I was basically doing security at the ground. …I had the trousers over the ankle. And I was wearing full high vis. I had a beard and long hair. …So, one day, me and another member [of the stewarding team], walked past the armed policemen, who was watching me. …And they came to me after and said, 'Give me your name.' I said, 'Why?'. He said, 'Give me your name.' So I gave him my name. …I was at work the next day, and they came to my house: it was counterterrorism. …They were asking, 'What's my belief?' And my mum gave them my number. And then they called me [at work]. And they asked me, 'What I was doing there? Do I have any references? What's your company called?' They asked me all of this. …So, for me, I would find it offensive if somebody asked me about a terrorist attack. …It was someone else [who was responsible]. It's not *my* problem. But if you come to *me*, then for me, it feels like there's an agenda behind it."

Much like Hudson who was called a n_gger at work (section 5.1.), Ali's experience could be seen as an outlier were it an isolated disclosure from my fieldwork. However, while his story represents one of the more extreme examples of an employee being profiled and subject to surveillance at work based on visible markers of difference – his brown skin, hair, beard, and clothing, in the first instance, before officers turn up at his home and question his mum about his *beliefs* – it is one of several such examples of workplace profiling and body-policing I encountered over the course of my research.

Another example came from Saeed, a Muslim man of South Asian descent, roughly in his late thirties or early forties. Born and raised in Tanzania, Saeed shared similar experiences of surveillance

at work and beyond. At the time of our interview in July 2018 he was Head of Diversity and Inclusion for a global management consultancy firm, working hard to advocate around faith inclusion in the organisation. During our conversation, he also spoke in some detail about his prior experiences in the Metropolitan Police, where he had established the first Muslim staff network across the forces, initially in a voluntary capacity, and later as part of a formalised role. In telling me about his time as a police officer, he expanded upon the conflicts and ironies he experienced holding racially, religiously, and ethnically minoritised status himself, and attempting to effect institutional change around faith within the context of the forces – conflicts which ultimately resulted in his decision to shift his career trajectory. This came as something of a surprise even to himself, since his entry into the Metropolitan Police was largely influenced by the "culture shock" he encountered on moving from Tanzania to London to pursue higher education; in particular, his desire to change perceptions about Muslims in the forces and wider society, while also tackling aspects of extremism. He described a sense of shock at interactions he had with fellow students in the Islamic Society on his university campus, and expanded on his initial desire to distinguish himself from what he read as the far more fundamentalist cultural interpretations of his faith among his university peers when joining the forces. As such, he wanted to be 'a good Muslim' – a visible example of something different.:

> "My faith was never about being an activist or questioning things. It was always about *logically* looking at things… you take some positive action where you make your voice heard. ...I wanted to make a difference, right? I wanted to represent the communities and show that actually, not every Muslim guy is bad. Or a terrorist. 'Cause [this was] post 7/7 and all that kind of stuff. …So I joined just after that… and yeah, it was different [to what I expected], you know. 'Cause policing's a bit of a factory. You go in one side as an independent, individual person. You come out the other end as a Police Officer. Which I did. But... it *wasn't me*. And I realised, 'Well, actually, I'm not like everyone else [in the police], right?

Contributing to his realisation that he was "not like everyone else", was a sense of the discrepancy between the way Saeed himself experienced the world relative to white officers in the line of duty and beyond. Some of Saeed's white colleagues, for example, thwarted, questioned, and vehemently challenged his desire to promote faith inclusion at work, accusing him and his colleagues of seeking special treatment, and enquiring as to why they were not permitted to establish a 'White Staff

Network'.[86] This conundrum was brought into sharp focus when travelling to Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth with a group of Christians, who he described as collectively sharing an interest in understanding more about "the relations between the Palestinians and the Israelis". It comprised an experience in which the differences between himself and his colleagues was revealed in stark clarity:

> "It's not [cool to be Muslim] when you're my age, and you're stopped by the police at the borders, or travelling anywhere. To give you an example, [when] I went to Bethlehem [with my colleagues], they didn't let me in at first. Not the Christians, but the Israelis. …The view was "But you're Muslim." I'm like, "Okaaaayyyy… where do we start with this conversation?" …I was with a [white] Christian group… I was the only Muslim there. …But they were just not accepting it. And, eventually, the Bishop I had gone with decided that he's not gonna go unless they allow me to go. [laughing] So then the 17-year-old Israeli guard decided, fine [and he let me go]. At that time, I was also in the police, so I guess he realised that he didn't really want a diplomatic standoff with the British government."

Saeed's experience of being profiled and denied entry was something he was generally protected from when in uniform or recognised as a police officer, or when white colleagues stepped in to vouch for him. However, it was a reality from which he could not escape when in plain clothes as an officer, or when off duty, and going about his day-to-day life. As he told me without prompting as our interview drew to a close, similar kinds of profiling occurred "all the time", and he could not help but reflect on these experiences, since they informed his work within diversity and inclusion; they were experiences that could not simply be checked at the door of his organisation and were integral to his work around 'faith inclusion'. As he explained it, in his own words, at interview:

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[86] This dynamic of backlash, which included claims that Muslims were seeking 'special treatment' when setting up, running or attending staff networks, was common, and disclosed in interviews with several research participants, including EDI workers and champions at Network Rail, The Cabinet Office, EY, and Kirklees Council. Within the Metropolitan Police, a fresh example of backlash against Muslim staff networks and other employee resource groups came to light as part of a right-wing political campaign launched towards the end of my write up period. This involved the publication of the report, *Blurred Lines: Police Staff Networks – politics or policing?,* written by Spencer et al. (2023) on behalf of Public Policy Exchange which "considered the role of the over 200 'Staff Networks' operating within policing". The authors suggested that "networks such as the National Black Police Association (NBPA), the National Association of Muslim Police (NAMP), the Christian Police Association (CPA) and the Disabled Police Association (DPA) risk[ed] being a significant distraction from policing's core mission" in the context of "the crisis in British policing" (Spencer et al. 2023:5–7).

"I can't run away from my race. I can say that I've got a good upbringing and everything, but I still get turned over by police when they see me, cause I drive a Mercedes, I'm an Asian guy, I've got a shaved head [so] I must be a drug dealer. …Even while I was in the police I'd get stopped. Or I go to airports and they look at my name and I get asked special questions because I fall into a special category. [chuckles] …If I go into a shop on the weekend [it's the same]. …Interestingly [recently] I was at Louis Vuitton in Shepherd Bush. …But 'cause there was a queue… I decided to have a look around. Being an ex-police officer, I've got a bit of judgment around my surroundings. I noticed the security guard was following me around everywhere. And every shop person wanted to ask me, "Can I help? Can I help?". Not because they wanted to help, but because I didn't fit the norm. So, I just approached him. I'm like, [calm tone] "Is there any reason why you're following me around?" And he's like, "No. I'm not following you". I'm like, "Uhhh, you are! Do you wanna explain why you're following me around?" His response was, "Oh, you look out of place." I'm like, "So what? 'Cause I'm not white, wearing a suit, you think I can't buy something in this shop? You've put me into a category of how much I'm valued and worth?" …And by this point, 'cause it's getting a bit loud, one of the shop assistants came along and said, "Sir". I'm like, "Actually I'd like to speak to the manager." …And, interestingly, even when the manager came along, *he* was still very rude till he looked my name up on the system, and realised that my wife likes to shop there. [chuckles]. And then suddenly it became, "Oh sir, please accept our apology," and all that, right. …So, I can't run away from that. I get that bit."

For Saeed, it was incidents such as these that raised a significant psychological conflict: his desire to advocate for diversity and inclusion within the forces seemed untenable in a context where he himself was policed, profiled and subjected to scrutiny both in his everyday life and in the course of his work duties; neither class privilege nor his status as a police officer fully affording him protection – a theme continued in relation to the experiences of several other professionals in the section below.

4.2.2. Black and Brown Bodies as Working Objects of Suspicion

Saeed's experience of being subject to profiling and surveillance whilst in the course of work-based travel was not at all unusual, and, in fact, one of several similar incidents disclosed in interviews or other casual interactions in the field. Harmeet, a London-based lawyer in his 40s, who was identifiable as Sikh by his turban, encountered a similar dynamic during business travel. He

approached me after I delivered a keynote at Eversheds Sutherland's Annual Conference in March 2019, where he was one of a small handful of people of colour in the 120-strong audience.[87] In my talk, in line with my briefing by personnel at Eversheds Sutherland, I used a mixture of my "actual experience and learning" along with census and other data as a way into the topic of religion and belief in workplaces at the global level, before providing a number of real case studies, examples and scenarios of religion and belief based exclusions and discrimination encountered both in my experiences as a practitioner and through participant stories shared over the earlier stages of my study.

At the coffee break after my talk, Harmeet approached me. He was softly spoken, seemed moved by the stories I had shared, but somewhat cautious of his surroundings; of who might be listening and how much he should say. Our interaction was brief, but pertinent: he expressed gratitude for addressing a subject he had rarely heard spoken about openly in his time as a professional, before going on to share his own experience of being read as Muslim (incorrectly, and even though he wore a turban indicating his Sikh faith) and being profiled, stopped, and detained in an American airport on business travel, while his white colleagues cleared security and border control without incident. He finished his disclosure with a question that was clearly rhetorical and imbued with a hushed frustration and despair that encapsulated a sentiment expressed by many in my study: "Do our white colleagues *know* this happens to us *all the time*?"

After Harmeet shared this experience, I reflected in my research journal on the many other similar stories I had heard both in my professional and personal life: There was my brother, Alister, a Black mixed-race athlete who played the Professional Squash Association world tour, initially representing England and later Botswana, as part of his full-time profession. I noted how I had lost track of the number of times he had nonchalantly recounted an experience of being detained on travel to tournaments, initially having been profiled on the basis of his darker skin, dreadlocks and bandana in airport queues, but then arousing further suspicion and scrutiny on presentation of a passport including immigration stamps from many 'Muslim majority countries', including Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Malaysia, where he had played international competitions. I had not paid

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[87] There were no Black people present in the audience, and very few people of colour, which was characteristic of many of the senior leadership events I facilitated, spoke at, or observed over the course of my research (see Appendix 2 for details).

too much attention to these incidents, normalising them myself, until Harmeet and Saeed's stories reminded me of one of the more recent stops that took place shortly before the commencement of my PhD programme, and on the same evening Trump signed Executive Order 13769, commonly known by critics as 'the Muslim ban' into order. On this particular occasion, Alister was returning home from a tournament, and had crossed the border from Canada into America just as the ban came into force, and officials were navigating its implementation. He was detained for four hours, despite handing over documentation and the usual information about his profession and reasons for travel. Since Alister was the holder of a green card confirming his status as "an alien with special talents", and had a public profile that was easily verifiable online, he was usually able to use what privilege he had to navigate through these systems, answering the questions required, and 'playing the game'. On this occasion it was not so straightforward, and, much as when the Bishop travelling with Saeed in Israel stepped in, it was only when fellow England Squash counterparts – all white – began to protest and ask questions of immigration officials, providing details of their own status as professional athletes, that he was finally permitted entry into his country of residence. Unlike in Harmeet's case, Alister's fellow England Squash colleagues in this case *did know*, and were aware of what he had gone through. They were incredulous and outraged, perhaps realising the disproportionality of their experience for the first time, even though incidents of this nature had occurred throughout their playing careers. My brother, however, simply shrugged their concern off: "Happens all the time" he said, "I just try not to think about it,", before carrying on wearily with his onward travel home.

As shown by the cases of Ali, Saeed, Harmeet and Alister, public venues, airports and train stations were common sites for these forms of surveillance;[88] however, it was not only in the course of work travel that incidents of profiling and body-policing occurred. Much as with Ali, who was ironically subjected to investigation and counter-terrorism measures by police while on the job, in a high-visibility jacket, and working in security and stewarding at Wembley Stadium (see section 4.2.1.), others in my study were subjected to surveillance simply on account of inhabiting bodies that were read as being out of place or a threat through a racialised and highly "limited grid of representational possibilities" (Wallace 2002 Browne 2015:20).

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[88] For discussions of airports and travel hubs as sites of surveillance for racially minoritised people see, for example, Browne (2015), Nagra & Maurutto (2016), Blackwood et al (2015) and Selod (2019).

Maria and Parimal, for example, both experienced surveillance involving state and private security powers in ways that restricted their capacity to move freely through organisational space. I overheard Maria's story by chance in June 2018 as she and her colleagues from the Race and Faith Working Group at the Faith & Belief Forum (F&BF) were chatting in hushed tones, just as I was about to start facilitating a day-long workshop for the organisation. An incident had occurred the previous night at an event to celebrate and launch the organisation's new strategy and rebrand; and Maria and her closer colleagues were dissecting what had taken place. At the start of the event something – clearly, race-related – had happened, though I couldn't quite catch the conversation. Less than a month later, I was interviewing 28-year-old Maria, a dark-skinned Portuguese woman of Bissau-Guinean descent, and the full picture emerged as she related her upbringing and migration history. She was reflecting on the different textures of racism between the UK and Portugal; how, in her view, it was rare to meet with overt discrimination in Britain. In fact, she initially found the UK welcoming: she felt that she belonged, and "didn't feel different anymore" in a context where "there's white, there's black, there's brown, there's everything… and no one cares, and everyone goes on their life". As she continued her reflections, she commented that the initially favourable impression of "multicultural Britain" had worn off over time. She had "started to understand better the British culture and... the way people interact", and had begun to read and learn more about the ways racism can so often be covert. She initially told me she could not actually remember any specific or obvious instances of racism akin to those encountered in Portugal; however, after a long pause, she recalled the incident the night before our workshop, about three weeks previously:

"Actually, I do remember a very overt way [racism] happened was in an event that I went for F&BF, where I go in [to the venue]. It's a really fancy building in Liverpool Street: This law firm, *very nice*, you know… I'm with my colleagues. Two of them are white and I'm the only Black person, and then there's two brown women of Asian descent. As soon as *we* go in, the security guy approaches *us* right away and says, "Can I help you?", but *very in your face*, very *close*, you know. There was *no space* in between us. ...I felt *really weird*. And I felt very *uncomfortable*. ...You can call that direct maybe, because he was very close to me. But you can call that indirect because he just came to us to say… well, yeah, he was just asking us if we needed any help, right? …But no -- As soon as *we* got in, you came to *us* directly. But my other colleagues that were in front of me, they were white-passing or white; he never approached them. They were in front of me. I

saw them going through. But when two brown and Black girls come by… you approach us?! [sigh] …So yeah, that's the first time ever that I've been *uncomfortable*. And I've been to like posh places – the worst places ever – and I've never been treated like that. So yes, so I'd say that's the covert, corporate way that [racism] can happen."

Lika Maria, Parimal, a clergyman of South Asian descent based in rural Buckinghamshire experienced everyday surveillance on the job, which he found similarly discomfiting. As part of a focus group, he shared an experience involving both private security and the police, with one of my colleagues and co-researchers, Dr Selina Stone (2022:39):

> "I had this interesting experience quite recently when somebody called security on me. I was in the cathedral. I wasn't wearing a dog collar, but they clearly assumed that I broke in. So, I had police turning up at the office door and I had to prove who I was."

For Ali, Maria and Parimal, the use of private and state security, surveillance and power were prevalent, in much the same way that these powers are a part of the picture in many other stories I have already shared around work-based travel (e.g. Saeed, Harmeet, Alister). Taken together they served as examples of how racialised practices of the maximum surveillance society are reflected in organisational life (Browne 2015:16–17); those marked out as Other were discursively framed, in the most extreme cases, as a threat, to be managed and contained via state policing powers, legislation, and counterterrorism strategies. Overall, these incidents amounted to practices of everyday surveillance, profiling, and body policing: efforts which contained, constrained and enacted terror on innocent black and brown bodies and curtailed the capacity to flourish in working life (Browne 2015:20, Fanon in 2015:5–8; Emerson 2019; Martin 2014; Massoumi, Mills, and Miller 2017; O'Toole 2022; Qurashi 2018; Rodrigo Jusué 2022; Sabir 2022).

4.3. Policing the Organisational Space

In the previous section, I made reference to more extreme acts of everyday surveillance and body policing in organisational life. In this section, I draw on and extend Nirmal Puwar's (2004) notion of 'space invaders', a concept which helps to make clear the hidden processes that undermine raced

and gendered bodies inhabitance of British institutional spaces. Towards this endeavour, I explore a range of pernicious ways in which those inhabiting racially minoritised bodies are framed as disruptive to the status quo. This becomes evident in organisational life through less extreme acts of surveillance and body policing – acts that manifest more commonly as microaggressions, and more subtle, negative, undermining behaviours directed towards those visibly marked as other (Sue et al. 2007, 2008).

4.3.1. Bodies that Don't Belong

Throughout my time in the field, I heard about and indeed experienced myself, many subtle interactions, which amounted to the policing of organisational space and working lives. These were interactions which conveyed in direct and subtle ways that minoritised workers inhabited bodies that do not belong; indeed, that we can be seen as transgressive simply on account of occupying organisational spaces, roles and positions that have historically been reserved for members of dominant groups.

In several instances of these more subtle forms of surveillance, it was people without officially sanctioned roles and responsibilities for security that engaged in the profiling of the Other and the policing of organisational space. A good example of this came from Ezekial – a Black clergyman of Ivorian descent, who also participated in the project on race and wellbeing in the Church of England. He shared with my co-researcher an incident that occurred as he approached the front of the Church on one occasion at work:

> "I didn't wear my dog collar that day, I wanted to go incognito…I got underneath the place to pick up these oils. This woman comes rushing to the front and she shouts over my shoulder, "If you're not ordained, you need to produce a letter from your vicar." I went, "Who are you talking to?" She didn't even speak to me, she refused to speak to me. [Someone] said to her, "He *is* ordained." She said, "Oh well, you know, he's not wearing his dog collar". …She just confirmed that, in her mind, I am out of place. I don't fit."

In Ezekial's case, the congregant drew not on the authority of the state or private security but rather that of 'the vicar' as a recognised source of institutional authority in the hierarchy of the Church to

legitimise her intervention. Further humiliation followed as the congregant refused to directly engage with or address Ezekial, choosing instead to mediate their interaction through a third party – a white man able to vouch for Ezekial and to confirm his ordained status with institutional authority to be present in the space.

Ezekial's experience resonated with many others in that his belonging and right to move freely in space was up for debate and question – or, as I have already put it, because he occupied a body that did not fully belong. Much like Maria, who was stopped by security on her way into her work event, or Saeed who was followed around Louis Vuitton, Ezekial described being approached because he looked "out of place". The only difference in his case, was that the congregant engaged in the act of policing space had no formal role, duty, or responsibility to intervene, gate-keep or manage space in this way. Instead, they were 'responsibilised' – that is, they made themselves responsible and acted as 'vigilant subjects' (Emerson 2019; see also O'Toole 2022; Rodrigo Jusué 2022) – in ways already theorised in the literature on surveillance-creep.

Another example of this dynamic came from Kunle, mentioned already in section 4.1.1., who described to me an example of the more subtle ways in which organisational space was policed in his Finance firm in the City of London. On more than one occasion, he told me, white colleagues had approached him in the basement of his firm, shoving documents in his hands and issuing hurried instructions to print paperwork. It was clear to him that, since Black staff were more often in administrative positions lower down the organisation's hierarchy and more commonly found in the basement where administrative and printing work was undertaken, these colleagues barely registered anything beyond his blackness (i.e. skin-tone). It was almost as though he was hyper-visible but interchangeable, he told me – merely the Black object there to do their bidding. This was the case despite sharing a floor, desk space, similar position in the organisational hierarchy and engaging in causal workplace interactions with some of these very same colleagues. In this case, rather than being explicitly policed, subject to scrutiny, or told he did not belong, a more subtle message was conveyed about where he – or someone in his body – *did* or *might* belong: i.e. in the basement print room, along with the majority of Black workers. This raised a question in his mind, an internal wrangling he shared only with me as a trusted person: Did he *not* belong in the more senior role he *actually* occupied? Or, was he destined to remain invisible, occupying but remaining invisible to peers he worked alongside and communicated with daily? What should he make of this? For me, whatever

the answer to the question, his experience served as an example of an everyday act of surveillance, and amounted to an act of policing space and racialised bodies.

A similar dynamic was at play in a story shared by Bettina Adesua Black (Bab), a Black queer woman in her late thirties, who was the leader of a creative skills course I pursued. I joined the course intending to learn new audio-visual production techniques so I could communicate the findings of my research to public audiences via vlogs, podcasts, and other audio-visual mechanisms. In the penultimate session of our six-week course, Bab casually and humorously recounted a recent anecdote of showing up for a day's work on the set of a major broadcaster with her audio mic and boom in hand. She was met by "the usual all white, all male colleagues" in the industry, she told us, before describing how she is typically treated: first with suspicion, and then some degree of bewilderment when announcing herself. In this instance, one person asked her, while setting up her audio kit, if she was looking for hair and make-up. It was simply assumed, she said, before laughing, that "if you are a Black woman, you must *obviously* only be there to do hair and make-up".

Like Kunle then, the micro-aggression, which superficially appeared a simple misunderstanding when viewed as a singular event, communicated something significant: Bab was an imposter, occupying a role not typically reserved for 'people like her'. Like Kunle, who was seen through the white gaze as belonging in the print room, she too was imagined 'a better fit' in hair and make-up. Unlike her white male counterparts who turned up on set and could simply get on with the job, she was thus subjected to a higher bar to entry to do a job for which she was *more* than qualified. Additionally, Bab's right to be in the space was questioned because of racialised and gendered assumptions about where a Black woman typically belongs – a dynamic which can be understood through Moya Bailey's (2021) theorisation of misogynoir, which highlights the specific forms of discrimination perpetrated against those at the intersection of womanhood and Blackness. Collectively, regardless of gender, the experiences of both can be seen as reminiscent of Fanon's account of his own 'epidermalization' through which "the white gaze fixes him as an object among objects… [and ensures] the imposition of race on the body [in spaces] that are shaped by and for whiteness" (Browne 2015:7). This imposition of race subtly communicated that both were imposters to white spaces – a matter which Bab laughed off in her public retelling of her incidents, but which, in the case of Kunle, at least, privately knocked confidence and a true sense of belonging – a matter I address further in the section that follows.

4.3.2. The Visibly Marked Imposter

Over the course of my research, I heard countless examples of stories similar to Bab's and Kunle's: stories that involved microaggressions in which it was implied that a professional did not belong, or was inhabiting space not typically reserved for 'people like them'. Johnathan, a Black academic told me how often both students and other staff members assumed him to be either a fellow student or a member of the university housekeeping team in buildings where he had a permanent role and office. His story chimed with many others confused for cleaners, admin staff, or interns despite significant positions of power in their organisations, which are already discussed in the literature on institutional racism (e.g. Johnson and Joseph-Salisbury 2018).

Within my own research journal, I too documented many similar incidents as I navigated EDI work or conducted interviews, focus groups and observations within the many organisations that made up my research field. Early in the process of conducting my research, for example, as Martin Luther King Memorial Day was broadcast across news screens in a waiting area - I journaled about the experience of visiting The Foreign & Commonwealth Office in Central London to conduct an interview with a senior civil servant:

> *I am standing in the queue – dressed in business attire, trying to appear "professional", "well put together" and like I belong with approximately eight others ahead of me. Not unusually, I am conspicuously the only Black or person of colour in the vicinity, and I am preparing for a long wait, fumbling for identification documents as part of the sign-in process that is typical when visiting a central government building, as a growing queue forms behind me. When I finally find myself at the front of the queue, purse in hand, the receptionist – incidentally another Black woman – looks up at me and asks, 'Are you here to pick up a package?'. I am caught off guard, feeling, or perhaps simply imagining the burning gaze of eyes around me, as I question for a moment my own reason for being in the building; momentarily calculating whether I should know anything about a package, and why she would ask me specifically. The gentleman to my immediate left, who has heard me respond that I am there "for a meeting" begins shuffling slightly awkwardly as I fumble in my purse for my driver's licence. As I look up from my fumbling, smiling apologetically for the delay, the*

receptionist makes eye contact and asks me again: 'Sorry… did you say you were here for a package?'. …'I didn't mishear it!', I think to myself. …I'm louder and clearer this time, as I hand over my ID, and attempt a smile, 'I'm here for a meeting. I'll be in the system under my middle name, Tamanda, though, not my first name.' …'And who are you here to meet?', the receptionist inquires. I give her the name of my contact, and I wonder whether it is a flicker of surprise that flashes across her face as she repeats it back to me in recognition. She checks the system. …But the silence as she taps away on the keyboard feels like an eternity. …My heart sinks. My name's not going to be in it. Her tone feels slightly accusatory. Or is it questioning? Or am I just being paranoid again? Either way, it feels like everyone's listening, and everyone knows I'm clearly not supposed to be here. 'People like me are not supposed to be here'. I can't believe I'm even thinking this. …She picks up the phone. It seems to dial for another eternity. 'Please let her pick up,' I think. 'God, I hope she remembers I'm coming and has it in her diary. I should have reconfirmed the appointment! Why didn't I confirm the appointment?! So stupid!,' I curse myself. …And just as I'm doing so, she answers. I look up at the receptionist, expectingly, 'Take a seat – she'll be with you shortly,' she says. …I can't lie. I'm relieved. 'Maybe I do *belong…?', I think, as I walk towards the seats at the back of the queue.*

Immediately after recounting this interaction in my research journal, I bullet-pointed out several similar experiences I had encountered in recent months. One related to an Employment Law Updates session I attended at Eversheds Sutherland concerning my consultancy work at the firm. I reflected on how the trainer in the session, who happened to be a Professor of Law, approached me kindly during the first break and asked my purpose at the session: whether I was the intern or a new trainee, perhaps. When I responded by telling him I was a consultant for the firm, just like him, and doing a PhD on religion and belief in employment settings, I was met with surprise and curiosity. This prompted another bullet point in which I contemplated a recent talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie at PEN International, in which she spoke of how often prejudice manifests as innocent surprise (Winterhalter 2018). A further bullet point noted how the professor launched into an explanation of some recent case law around religion and belief; and a further reflection which indicated how his look was a strange mixture of miffed, impressed and even more surprised when I corrected him on an inaccuracy, and built upon what he had shared.

In another bullet point, I reflected on my experience at a co-working space attached to my ex-husband's place of employment, Imperial College London, where I was working on my thesis just a few weeks earlier: I noted how I was approached by one of the bosses, a white South African man named Robert, while I was on a break and making coffee. Robert did not know me, but I certainly knew him. He approached me, irate at the coffee machine, demanding to know where the manager of the space was, and why they hadn't yet turned up to meet him in the ten minutes he'd been waiting. I responded politely, telling him that I had nothing to do with the running of the space, and unfortunately did not know the manager. Sheepishly and apologetically, he turned back towards the reception at the front of the building. Beyond the fact that I was the only Black (or woman of colour) on the floor, in yet another white, male-dominated, STEM environment, I concluded in my journal that there was very little else to suggest why he might have singled out and approached me; why he expected me to meet his demand to be seen, served and catered to over and above the other men also making coffee and working in the space at the same time.

Many of my other bullet points related to similar interactions and microaggressions both within that journal entry and well beyond. They included incidents from my personal life as much as my professional life, though common to all, was a sense of the hasty and unwitting assumptions made about what role one occupies. It was notable that in the latter two examples, in both a restaurant and co-working space, I was approached – just like Kunle in the print room or Johnathan when confused for a house-keeper – as though I was there to provide service and meet needs in ways that were both gendered and racialised. As such, even if, in these instances, the micro-aggression assumed a right to exist in certain spaces, there remained a degree of policing evident in the roles, positions, or parts of an organisation one was presumed *worthy* of occupying. As I noted in my journal, having reflected on a number of these instances, there is a way in which we were not only considered space invaders (Puwar 2004), but also *come to see ourselves* as people who do not belong: "there is a link", as I put in my journal, "between internalised racism and imposter syndrome", and this link was evident in my internal dialogue on my visit to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office described above.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on data analysis that indicates clearly how race continues to be reconstructed and reproduced as a colonial category within organisations, giving rise to racisms rooted clearly in

phenotype (i.e. skin colour, hair, physical characteristics and features) and other visible ethnic markers of difference (e.g. clothing, dress, religious symbols etc) in organisations. Contrary to the suggestion that skin-colour racism has held increasingly less force in post-war Britain, my data suggests that forms of marginalisation based on the 'epidermalization' (Fanon in Browne 2015:7) and embodiment of blackness persist and are and normalised; they are everyday occurrences amongst those occupying bodies marked out as Other within predominantly white organisational spaces, even if they may be the sole witnesses to such events as I have argued in section 4.1. At the more extreme end, as I have argued in section 5.2., race and racism is reinforced structurally in organisations through the disproportionate surveillance, profiling and policing of racially minoritised workers, and influenced by state policy and power in relation to counter-terrorism, crime and policing; at the more subtle and covert end, it is evident within everyday workplace interactions, which conveying how minoritised workers can be seen as transgressive inhabitants of 'bodies that don't belong' (see section 5.3.).

While my analysis in this chapter provides neither an expansive nor exhaustive account of instances and manifestations of race and racism as they emerged from within my data set, it does serve to demonstrate, albeit through a small sample, just two themes which make clear how coloniality is preserved and maintained within modern, secular British organisations. Both themes reflect the dynamics of race and racial hierarchies encompassed under the 'colonial matrix of power', as they were first theorised by Quijano (2000) and developed by Mignolo (2011b)[89]. In doing so they serve as a stark rebuttal of recent assertions by the Commission on Racial Ethnic Disparities that there is little to no evidence of institutional racism in Britain today (HMG, 2021). Instead, my analysis shows how a focus on race and racism in organisational life remains necessary and warranted, perhaps especially so in the current moment as political elites such as Tony Sewell – Black British and of Jamaican descent – suggest issues of race and racism are exaggerated. More importantly for the purposes of my argument, my interpretation and analysis of data here indicates the ways that race and racism rooted in *visible markers of difference* and biological notions of race might be conceptualised and understood as substantively different, though deeply interlinked and intersecting

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[89] See also theorisations of racial hierarchies in (e.g. Grosfoguel 2011; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018; Ndlovu-gatsheni 2021; Quijano 2000; Wynter 2003),

with the forms of religion and worldview-based discriminations and oppressions I discuss in the chapters that follow.

Vignette 6: Ode to the Data Debates

5th March 2019, London

I'm standing. Fidgeting. Slight tremors in my hands as I finish setting up.

In a now predictable part of my research storyline, I've been shoehorned into yet another Leadership Away Day — a one-off, 90-minute slot. Down from the originally promised two hours. Which is rapidly diminishing as diversions abound.

Imran, the Chair of the Multi Faith Network, is up.

I am due next.

He is *meant* to be doing a short intro. "Just five minutes on the MFN," he said. But already, we're *well* off-track. Stuck in a sunken place. Of familiar never-ending stats.

"Now where we are *far* behind is we are nowhere near the standard distribution of ethnic minorities or religious groups in the country", Imran says. "I'll give you some examples: about 1% Jews in the UK: We are about 0.3% here. Hindus: roughly 6% in the UK. But our standard distribution is just 1.5%. Same for Muslims. Same for Black and Asian Minorities."

"I find that stat quite concerning," chimes in one concerned member, "Because as a business, we should *absolutely* understand how we got into that position."

Numbers and figures fly left, right and centre. And people are saying words like 'McKinsey'. And 'productivity'. And 'return on investment'. And 'business case'.

There are arguments about whether the numbers are *accurate*.

Whether Imran was *himself* involved in the latest recruitment drive.

Whether *he* can account for the problem – if indeed we *do* recruit in our image, just as he's dared to suggest.[90]

We are talking about representation as if representation is all that matters. Side-stepping issues of *culture*. Or *belonging*. Or what the organisation *feels* like once we achieve this magical, rainbow vision.

And then, there is a further descent. A debate on disclosure. And how "55% chose *not* to declare their faith".

…Which means surely people aren't "*comfortable* at work"?! Or perhaps that religion "*is* irrelevant" after all…!

Then comes the handwringing. A series of even *more* familiar proclamations.

"Maybe we need more data."

"We really *have* to get more evidence."

"We're all *really* busy people here managing *all sorts of issues* on a day-to-day. …So, for this to grab our attention, we need to register the issue as *significant.* And, at the moment… I'm just not getting that."

Someone steps in with something nice and gentle to bring us back on track: A word or two on "creating a respectful environment".

Before we go in for another round…

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[90] Side Note: Imran was *not* involved in the recruitment. He was not *supposed* to be involved in the recruitment. And he absolutely was *not* part of the problem. …But the question itself is a key ingredient in a session like this. A defensive move directed *always* at the bearer of bad news: The person who *experiences* the problem, inevitably *names* the problem, and is now expected to magically *solve* the problem.

"Faith is very *personal*", says an Exec. "I wouldn't put *my* data into Oracle because it's of *no relevance* to our work."[91]

"There was no one here who feels that religion is a *massive* part of their lives…", says another.

"There was consensus that we weren't really quite *comfortable* talking about religion…", goes a third, as I encourage them to share more.

So many secular and seemingly *neutral* views spin round the room. Dizzying views I've heard a thousand times. But *still* probe as though the first…

There is talk about how people *should* be able to keep things to themselves.

A suggestion that religion "*shouldn't* make a difference anyway". They 'don't see faith', it seems. Just like they 'don't see colour'.

'We *should* be able to accommodate anything," says a Senior. "…But this *shouldn't* be a key *conversation*.'

Then, eventually, some push-back. Perhaps predictably, from Sally in HR…[92]

'So, *my* view's *slightly* different," she says, looking cautiously around her group. "…I know it's important to *some people*. And, for me, it's about creating space for *them.* So, *they* can be themselves at work.*"*

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91 Oracle was the Human Capital Management (HCM) system used by Network Rail to manage the administrative functions of their human resources (HR) function – recruiting, training, payroll, compensation, and performance management – in order "to drive engagement, productivity, and business value" (Oracle 2023).

92 Created by Kelechi Okafor (2023), the original 'Sally in HR' is a fictional character and Head of HR at Plant8Con who has her own Instagram account. The character, Sally Longbottom, is adopted by Okafor to parody and make astute observations of HR professionals "spearheading innovation" around diversity and inclusion through a series racially and culturally illiterate interactions with minoritised workers. Here – in a tribute to Okafor's work – I adopt the pseudonym; however, it is important to note that, while I met many Sallys in the field, the participant reflected through the pseudonym of Sally in this particular instance was in fact highly religiously literate; one of the few at Network Rail who was proactively supportive of MFN efforts to advance faith inclusion at work.

An important intervention, I think. And one to jump in on right away: "Can religion *ever* really be a private matter?", I ask, real-time theorising what I've observed. "It's an idea I've seen play out, to all manner of adverse effects…". …But I'm not long into my analysis before one of the women in the group claps back.

'We didn't say that religion has *no* place in the workplace. Or even that it might cause *problems*…"

"No, no, I'm not saying that *you* said that…," I respond. "I was simply trying to say that in other organisations…", I start… But I don't get to finish.

It's Karen. *Again*. With more of her nervous rambling…

"I'm just saying it makes *me* uncomfortable…", she says. And I let her finish her thoughts.

"Yes, okay…", I say after some time. Pausing. Letting the dust settle…

I know this energy when I see it. Like a heavy heat that rises. An anxiety that fills a room. And must be held up like a collective mirror.

"I feel like I'm being *pushed* to think this is really important, when, *to me*, it's actually not!"

 "The issue is about seeing *the whole area as a problem*," says her colleague, "when it's *really* only an issue for a small minority."

They are misunderstanding my words. I have *already* agreed with them. *Of course*, this is not an issue for *everyone*. In *fact*, that's *exactly the point*.

"Fair enough," I say. Before drawing for another breath. "Out of interest though… Would we ever say 'I don't think we should be having the conversation about *race*… simply because it makes us uncomfortable? …Or even about *gender*? Because *that* makes us uncomfortable too?…"

Several voices jump in at once. Scrambling for their turn…

"I think we're in danger of trying to identify a problem… that I'm not sure I believe is *there*. …Because of the stats, maybe it *is*. …But the stats are *clearly* skewed. Half of the population hasn't declared. And we can't go on *that*!"

Sally is feeling the heat. And chimes in to settle frayed nerves…

'I don't think it's about a *problem*…', she starts. Though she *also* doesn't get to finish…

'This is making me feel *really* uncomfortable…', says Karen again, before rising in a red-faced rage.

A *slap* of her papers on the table.

A contemptuous *roll* of the eyes.

The most *audible* of sighs.

Before she storms out in the snappiest snip.

'This is like something from a parody…', I think to myself. 'Except it's real. And I am here…. And, as much as it disturbs me, the show really *must* go on…'

Chapter 5: The Dominance of Judaeo-Christian Secular White(li)ness

For Lewis Gordon (in Sexton and Copeland 2003:57), race is the prime social signifier – the construct that "enters the room and frightens reason out". But what of religion, seen by many of my research participants as distinct from race? While race, racism and white(li)ness in British institutional life have now been well theorised in academic and popular literature, notably tackled by scholars such as Robin DiAngelo (2016, 2019), Shirley-Ann Tate (2017; 2017; 2018), Sara Ahmed (2012), and Nirmal Puwar (2004), for example, far less has been written about responses to religion and organisational culture. One notable exception to this is a body of research into 'religious illiteracy' led by Adam Dinham (2022; 2015; 2010). Though not explicitly decolonial, Dinham's work outlines various responses to religion and interpretations of the secular within public institutions, their policies and practices. It has been particularly significant in advancing an understanding of the 'anxious', 'ill-mannered' and 'ill-informed' public conversations around religion and belief in public life, including in the workplace (Dinham and Francis 2015).

In this chapter, drawing on thick description from my fieldwork, I delve deeper into responses to religion in organisations, exploring how various interpretations of the secular shape responses to faith, spirituality, and God-talk, and map onto common responses to race and race-talk in institutional life. Addressing issues of identity and hierarchy, I focus primarily on data from my facilitation and observation of strategic EDI workshops, focusing on attempts to advance the conversation around religion and belief and race as two separate characteristics, protected under equalities legislation. In doing so, I answer my second research question: how do differently positioned professionals interpret and construct organisational cultures in relation to ideas of secular modernity, and how do these constructions impact their engagements with race, religion, and worldviews at work?

In the opening two sections of my chapter, I draw on data sourced from a workshop I delivered for senior leaders at Network Rail. The attendees were a twenty-five-strong committee of mostly white, male, and nominally or non-religious senior leaders. My intention here was to analyse how attempts to discuss religion and belief-based diversity were received amongst the group, and to uncover the

extent to which their responses were replicated across the wider business. The next section examines how the predominantly white, staff team at the Faith and Belief Forum (F&BF), my second micro-ethnographic site, responded to issues of race, religion and worldviews, by drawing on rather different interpretations of what it meant to inhabit a modern secular organisational culture. The final part of the chapter builds on my observations of NR and F&BF to offer my comparative analysis of responses to religion and race across a range of additional organisational settings encountered during my research. In doing so I put forward a) a taxonomy of organisational cultures indicating common responses to religion, and b) my interpretation of how responses to religion and God-talk can be seen in relation to race and race-talk within organisations. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion about my data in relation to my conceptual framework, as I advance my thesis of how the identities and worldviews of more dominant and empowered organisational members manifest as '(Judaeo-)Christian-Secular White(li)ness' – dominant cultural threads which both implicitly and explicitly shape interpretations of the secular. I suggest that these interpretations strongly influence the extent to which issues of race and religion and worldviews can be named, spoken, and manifested in organisations.

5.1. Indifferent and Hostile Responses to Religion

5.1.1. The Identities and Worldviews of Senior Leaders

In my thesis introduction, I described the start of a day that was much like many others over the duration of my research project, or indeed in the course of my work as an EDI consultant. Leaving my temporary accommodation in Shoreditch, and making my way through the City of London, I arrived at my destination in Southwark: a run-of-the-mill corporate building, where I announced my presence to the receptionist as a prelude to the day's work. I was to deliver an Away-Day workshop for 25 members of the Network Rail's Senior Leadership Team (SLT); a group of executives positioned in the corporate arm of the business. As introduced in the vignette preceding this chapter, the workshop – which I co-facilitated with Imran, Chair of the organisation's Multi Faith Network (MFN) – was titled 'Religion, Belief and Inclusive Cultures in the Workplace', and presented one of many invaluable opportunities to gain data for my research examining organisational responses to religion and belief as one of the most under-served and overlooked strands of EDI practice.

Many aspects of the workshop stood out as noteworthy, exemplifying phenomena I have commonly encountered when opening space for conversations around religion and worldviews in organisations. First amongst these, were the identity dynamics of the workshop; Imran and I were the only two racial minorities in the room, taking what I described in my research journal as a "familiar excursion into the lion's den", as we set out to win over the "sea of entirely disbelieving White faces" of the leadership team described in Vignette 1.

While my journal reference to the 'lion's den' explicitly reflected on issues of power and hierarchy, my characterisation of the Committee as 'disbelieving' was made on two related grounds: First, I considered the Committee to be disbelieving on account of management scepticism about the importance of religion and belief as a legitimate workplace topic. Sally, a young woman in the Human Resources team had briefed me to keep this scepticism in mind; she had brokered our involvement in the Away Day, having recently attended a similar workshop with more diverse front-line staff. Second, was my visceral and embodied awareness of the fact that with the exception of five women, most leaders were older, white men; self-professed non-religious, though some, it turned out, held nominally spiritual and culturally Christian worldviews, which surfaced only after I probed participants to reflect more deeply on their positionalities. Of twenty-five attendees, there were only two exceptions: Sally, whom I knew from a previous workshop had attended a faith school, and who identified as "Jewish but not religious"; and an older man, in his late fifties, whom I overheard self-consciously declare Christian observance and practice during a break-out discussion. Other than this, only Imran and I openly attested to holding worldviews, or engaging in forms of practice that went beyond those non-and nominally religious perspectives reflected amongst the all-white and mostly male leadership team.

In this regard, the makeup of the room was reflective of the wider culture of Network Rail, described by participants consistently over my time in the field as being a hierarchical and "*very* patriarchal type of business... made up of middle-aged white men" (Abigail), with a "very secular, target-driven" (Rory) and "rational" top-down culture (Bethany). Bethany, (white, woman, Buddhist), one of the organisation's newer employees, described the culture as aligning strongly with "a very logical, empirical view of [the world]" driven by "hard facts and a struggle to engage with [religion as] this

intangible, nebulous thing" given the business's emphasis on science, technology and engineering.[93] Likewise the 'disbelieving' identity dynamics of the room could be seen as reflective and reinforcing of what Woodhead (2016:251) and Lee (2012a:150) describe as the normative nonreligious and Judaeo-Christian cultural threads of Britain's white majority population.

5.1.2. Senior Leadership Responses to Religion and Religious Diversity Efforts

In addition to these typical identity dynamics of the workshop, in which senior leaders largely professed non-or nominally religious (i.e. Judaeo-Christian) secular perspectives, were a series of other dynamics which reflected some common ways in which broader EDI and advocacy work often functioned within organisations in which I spent time. First, was the way in which the workshop, delivered voluntarily and in line with the organisation's strategic EDI work, was altruistically framed by HR as "an opportunity" for myself and Imran, my co-facilitator, to 'raise our profile', 'gain exposure' and 'do good' within the business by HR. Yet, Imran and I met apathy, resistance and even hostility from most of the senior team, who did not appear to perceive EDI (specifically around religion) to be worthy of their active attention, support or championing. Much of their resistance was expressed nonverbally and implicitly, with the bureaucratic mechanisms and business-as-usual institutional practices deployed in ways that blocked efforts to hold conversations around equity and inclusion (Warmington in Arday and Mirza 2018:Foreword). One example of this was how the allocation and management of time limited and constrained what could be said, signifying the lack of importance and priority attached to issues of religion and belief-based diversity: it had taken four years for the MFN and myself to secure an audience with senior leaders, despite their publicly documented commitment to religious diversity (e.g. Network Rail 2019a, 2023); our workshop was *a last minute* addition to the agenda, *shoe-horned* into a programme of events as an after-thought; and, finally, time allocated for our workshop gradually diminished as we approached the date for our session. We had originally agreed a two-hour workshop with Sally in HR, which was reduced to 'a protected 90-minute slot' a few days before the session, and then cut even further to approximately

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93 Network Rail's was a culture that was framed by some as "a closed community" (Abigail) — "a hard place for women" and ethnic minorities, especially those in front-line and track-side positions as "boots on the ground staff" working far from the relative privilege of the corporate side of the business (Rory). Some stories I heard from staff in front line positions strongly echoed disclosures received from research participants employed in settings such as the Fire Service (Lewis), the Navy (Hitesh), the Ministry of Defence (Allen) and the Metropolitan Police (Saeed) and reflected a culture in which bullying, harassment and discrimination went unheard, ignored, and forgotten about in ways that chimed with Obe's (2022) characterisation of organisations marked by "toxic" and "pack like" cultures as part of an independent review of life for minoritised workers in the London Fire Brigade.

an hour 'over a working lunch' as the Away Day got underway, and "more important matters" surfaced. Thus, bureaucracy impeded equity, reflecting a dynamic that resonated strongly with Ahmed's (2012) characterisation of diversity work as a form of 'organisational plumbing' (ibid. 2012:128), requiring one to continuously find ways to unblock bureaucratic pipes – often in ways that felt like "banging one's head against a brick wall" (ibid.; 2012:25; see also Power 1994 in Ahmed 2012).

In addition to the ways bureaucracy and business-as-usual practices served as signifiers of the lack of priority given to the issue of religious diversity, the workshop with SLT exemplified how often resistance was expressed verbally and explicitly.[94] This was evident in the session, with participants employing a range of diversionary tactics to avoid talking about religion and EDI. As depicted in Vignette 5, for example, there were a series of circular discussions in which workshop participants openly questioned and challenged the extent to which religion should be seen as "significant" and worthy of time and "attention from management"; tactics and responses that delayed our start time and disrupted our schedule activities. These tactics included protracted questioning and handwringing around the evidence and statistics introduced by Imran – a dynamic reflective of what I refer to as 'the data debates' in the vignette preceding this chapter.

Beyond undermining the professional expertise of MFN members and the EDI team's painstaking work to rigorously monitor equalities issues in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the effect of these interactions was to deny, question and dismiss both the evidenced reality of the organisation, and the testimony and lived experience of ethnically minoritised staff. Furthermore, the preoccupation with statistics and representation as a panacea to organisational inequity had a further detrimental impact: discussions were framed with reference to a neoliberal, corporatised paradigm, emphasising 'human capital' frameworks in which (religious) diversity issues were reduced to 'a numbers game' (Ahmed 2009:41; Grey 2006; Hoang, Suh, and Sabharwal 2022), and understood primarily as a 'business case' matter. This paradigm is challenged by critical scholars of EDI and management, who critique the focus on representation and the business case as reflective of a

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94 Forms of resistance towards engaging with religion differed markedly from resistance expressed around other protected characteristics such as gender or race, where public conversations have advanced to the extent that it is no longer considered 'PC' to communicate overt resist EDI efforts towards racial or gender equality so openly.

performative and commercially-driven 'turn to diversity' in recent decades (Swan and Fox 2010).[95] Thus, framing discussions about religion in these terms meant that both myself and other employees at Network Rail found ourselves increasingly drawn into making claims for recognition in professionalised managerial terms; religious diversity was explicitly emphasised as a form of 'spiritual capital' (Power and Baker 2017) with potential for 'bottom line returns', 'dividends' and 'competitive advantage' for the business, addressed in ways that chimed with mainstream literature and discourse on religion and spirituality in organisation (e.g. Robert A Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003; Miller and Ewest 2013; Mitroff and Denton 1999; Poole 2009; Power and Baker 2017). Overall, appealing to these mainstream discourses often constrained the terms on which those Othered on account of religion and worldview could speak: for example, almost all participants in Network Rail's MFN shared at interviews that they were moved to address organisational inequity on account of religious and spiritual convictions which they often privileged *above* or alongside corporate interest. As Rory put it, "The problem is we live in a capitalist society, so we've got to play by those rules".[96] Thus, in going unchallenged, the managerial paradigm had the effect of overburdening minoritised participants with delivering on the promise of bottom-line returns – an expectation that was not equally felt by staff from majority group cultures.

5.1.3. Mild Indifference and Active Hostility

The initial diversionary attempts deployed by the SLT, e.g. the data debates, continued well beyond the planned five-minute introduction. About a third of the way through our session James – a member of SLT, who had attended a session Imran and I had run for frontline staff – made an important intervention. James advocated for the value and importance of our work amongst his track-side team. He hadn't done much to stop the data debates, but his intervention was significant as it brokered the way for a more substantive discussion around individual members' feelings about religion.

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95 Some critical scholars argue that the 'turn to diversity' over recent decades signals a shift away from more radical, activist orientations to EDI work rooted in equity, justice, or morality – and inhibits a focus on addressing structural issues impacting the extent to which minoritised employees are rewarded, remunerated or able to progress from the bottom rungs of organisational life (see, for example, Ahmed 2012; Greene and Kirton 2009; Kirton and Greene 2009, 2010; Kirton, Greene, and Dean 2007; Kirton, Robertson, and Avdelidou-Fischer 2016)

96 The convictions and motivations of staff of faith involved in EDI work constituted a considerable source of data, though was beyond the scope of this thesis. This is an area I hope to develop and publish around in future.

Notably, the first and most dominant response emerging from breakout discussions was a degree of obliviousness, bewilderment, and ignorance amongst the majority of the SLT for whom religion held little or no relevance – a response I characterise as a mild indifference to religion. Many amongst the group seemed marginally curious, but mostly somewhat mystified by the focus on religion as a strand of diversity. This was an aspect of organisational life which most imagined was "not relevant to work"; a non-issue assumed to impact only "a small minority of staff" (see Vignette 6). Rather than being actively hostile towards the discussion, the group was mostly *unpersuaded* by the need to engage with religion. They were 'religion-blind' and blissfully unaware of how their own normative outlook and worldview might be perceived and experienced as anything other than neutral; they were ignorant of how their attitudes were experienced as dismissive, oppressive, and difficult to penetrate among people of faith and Othered worldviews in the business. Thus, among the majority of workshop attendees, reflected in Vignette 5, religion was "not a priority", not a "significant issue that need[ed] attention from management", not an issue that ought to be "a key conversation" and not "a problem here" – even if the SLT acknowledged religion constituted a significant dimension of social life 'out there', well beyond the workplace. The group interpreted 'secular' to mean that religion was 'a private matter', personal to the individual. They did agree that religion ought to be tolerated in the workplace, but broadly reflected that it should be confined to permitted workplace spaces (e.g. prayer or multi-faith rooms), and pragmatically managed through the bureaucratic mechanisms of HR and EDI policy and practice. I characterise this approach as offering religion a limited welcome; that is, it involved the implementation of practical accommodations as determined by a narrow legislative framework – especially the Public Sector Equality Duty – in line with emerging best practice.[97] It did not, however, reflect practice or confidence in *talking* about or *normalising* expressions of a diverse range of religions and worldviews, was not actively welcoming or supportive, and did not constitute the respect for a range of Othered worldviews I discuss in section 5.3..

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[97] This orientation towards supporting accommodation requests and offering religion a limited welcome was notably a theoretical and philosophical commitment held by senior leaders rather than a stance routinely implemented. In reality, I heard many examples of bullying, harassment and active hostility towards ethnically (i.e. racially and religiously) minoritised staff, with several facing or observing backlash, envy, and accusations of 'special treatment' directed towards those seeking accommodations for prayer, time off and fasting, for example. This was especially common for Muslim employees working track-side and in front-line positions.

A smaller group amongst the leadership team gave more vocally hostile responses to matters of religion. One of these responses led to a charged and antagonistic exchange between myself and an atheist, Simon, (white, British, male), who made sweeping statements, and pronouncements around the ills of religion, imbued with what Dinham & Jones (2010:20) describe as "conversation-stopping certainty". Sociologists characterise this as part of the 'bad religion' paradigm (Sheedy in Stoddard and Martin 2018:2, King in 2018:10) which frames religion as inherently problematic, regressive, and oppressive, rather than an aspect of social life that can have *both* negative and positive connotations and manifestations. Much of this exchange, filled with over-speaking and interruption, indicated a greater resistance towards 'institutional religion' than Woodhead suggests is common amongst 'nones' in Britain (Woodhead 2016:249–52). This included Simon's perception that "most religions are based on having a consequence to face that is negative if you don't believe", leaving nonbelievers or followers of other religions doomed to "burn in hell". Informed by Christian and Abrahamic cultural conditioning, Simon's opinion was that most religious adherents had "an ultimate goal of going to heaven", leaving non-believers doomed to face "a negative consequence" for dissent. As such, for Simon, religious practice was framed as fundamentally oppressive, and antithetical to the pursuit of workplace equality and inclusivity.

Another participant, Max (white, Australian, male, nonreligious), was less explicitly hostile, but shared his feeling that he dared not speak too openly about his views on religion in the context of a British organisational setting. He felt that "British culture", led his colleagues to tiptoe around religious matters in the workplace for fear of offending others, and experienced British social values of politeness, respectability, and political correctness as distinctly different from the directness of Australian society. Max's admission that he felt silenced was met with verbal agreement from his British co-workers, who affirmed his sense of being denied the right of free speech – and intervention that was followed by a 'close-to-the-mark' exchange and banter about Lent, an approaching event in the Christian calendar.

5.2. A Clearly Targeted Hostility: Responses to Muslims and to Islam

5.2.1. Electronic Rage & Online Hostilities

Given that specific and unspoken norms and expectations of professionalism and respectability were at play, hostility expressed towards religion in the SLT workshop, was likely more muted than it might have been outside of the context of an EDI workshop. Thus, while it is impossible to say how far hostile responses were reflected across the business, it was notable that I encountered and was told of significant hostility towards religion, particularly Islam, over my time in the organisation.

Much of this hostility was expressed via Yammer, the organisation's electronic communications platform, where MFN members were encouraged by the EDI team to share, promote, and discuss key diversity activities, initiatives, and campaigns. From behind the relative safety of a keyboard, 'institutional religion' – and especially Islam – were challenged far more vocally than was evident in the leadership team session; these challenges came particularly from atheist staff in the corporate arm of the business. Among them were two 'ex-Muslim' women, who openly shared traumatic experiences with family and community members, which they felt were directly related to religion. Both women drew on personal experience and examples involving nonbelievers, ex-Muslims and women around the world who had been persecuted (e.g., in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Malaysia and Thailand), making their case that Islam was an inherently oppressive religion, without redeeming elements, and which had no place in the workplace. According to one woman, "There is no such thing as 'militant Islam' or 'radical Islam', there's just Islam". The second woman suggested this perspective was "often misunderstood by Westerners, who think that there is such a thing as moderate Muslims [when, in fact,] 'Moderate' Muslims are not Muslims". Both women's experiences and the global examples of fundamentalism on which they drew led to a perspective in which Islam and Muslims were viewed in monolithic terms; their beliefs in the idea of a 'proper Muslim', for example, indicated a belief that there could only be one true interpretation of the religion and its holy texts, rather than multiple.

While it was possible to understand the strength of the women's feelings, which were rooted in their own lived experience, like Simon in the SLT (see section 5.1.3.), each notably expressed their convictions with the kind of conversation-stopping certainty that Dinham & Francis (2015) characterise as typical of public conversations on religion. Both deployed #imanexmuslimatheist and

#iprotest hashtags and referred to their own positionalities (i.e. "I used to be a Muslim, I know what I am talking about") to legitimate their perspectives in ways that would countenance no further dialogue on the matter. This was evident in the women's responses to Imran's post on the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' (2018) attempt to have a definition of islamophobia formally recognised by the government. One woman, for example, aligned her opposition to the move with a position statement published by the National Secular Society (2018). In this she was supported by several white, male, atheist colleagues who deployed their own arguments about freedom of speech on the platform, sharing their own frustrations that "Religion, and more exclusively Islam, is exempt from criticism" despite "the cruelty and misogyny of Sharia and the Islamic Slave trade, which has outlived the Western world by over two centuries"; or despite the high prevalence of "forced or arranged marriages and specific choices of race/religion… throughout the world" (quotes from atheist employees on Yammer). Together, this group communicated strong hostility, citing how religion writ large was inherently "intolerant", "repressive", "destructive to other peoples" and "at the centre of many of the world's greatest tragedies". They argued robustly that "the world would be a better place… [with] lasting peace [were it not] for the stranglehold that religions have over politics".

In addition to this clear hostility, several among the more hostile staff at Network Rail clearly reflected their nonreligious perspectives as inherently more enlightened, tolerant, inclusive, and progressive than their religious counterparts. Explicit claims of superiority were made, by two staff members who argued that "a humanist approach to life… would find the world a more agreeable place", and give rise to societies that were "less divisive by far". Further, some among the atheist employees presented their worldviews as somehow beyond scrutiny; unmarked and outside of the category of religion and worldviews in ways that aligned with the framing of the world religions paradigm articulated by Masuzawa (2005) and discussed in detail in section 3.3.. A good example of this was a response to a consultation on an Inter Faith Week banner campaign launched by the MFN, which represented both religious and nonreligious perspectives within the organisation (discussed further in Chapter 6). One atheist employee criticised the campaign, arguing that she "would never say atheism is a belief system"; hence, she didn't expect it to be represented as a worldview in EDI work connected with religion and belief. An equally perplexing contribution came from another employee who responded to Imran's post on the APPG's work to define islamophobia by questioning whether

"such a thing [as] minority religions exist", and asserting that "the minority view is secular or atheism", a belief challenged by latest census data and sociological studies of religion.[98]

Amongst these contributors, nonreligious, atheist and humanist worldviews were framed as somehow 'beyond or above religion' – inherently more inclusive and enlightened. This response interpreted the secular organisation as one which ideally would exclude religion from the workplace altogether. As one employee stated:

> "Genuine question… I know there is legislature in place encouraging Openness of Religion in the workplace, but see if everyone left it at the door and was just a human being, would that be such a bad thing? After all Human Decency is not derived from Religion, it precedes it." [sic]

Amongst this group then the core interpretation of the secular at play was one which associated neutrality and equity with the *absence* of religion in the workplace – an idea that would likely not appeal to religious adherents themselves since it would require a degree of splitting and double-consciousness – a matter I address further in Chapter 6.

5.2.2. Project Griffin and Everyday Islamophobia

In addition to views expressed in an ad hoc manner on Yammer, I observed other significant examples of hostility towards religion, especially Islam, which was stereotypically framed by some at Network Rail as an 'inherently violent religion'. These everyday incivilities and examples of islamophobia– a form of "cultural racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness" (APPG on British Muslims 2018:11) – were clearly associated with religion and (mis)interpretations of Islamic theologies as much as race.

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[98] The idea that secular atheism was in the minority might have *some* purchase with reference to "most of the population on the planet", but made little sense in the context of modern Britain based on recent census data (ONS 2001, 2011, 2021). Likewise, it was a suggestion that countered current sociological research, which clearly reflects the prevalence on no religion as "the new cultural majority" (Woodhead 2016), and reflects nonreligious cultures as powerful threads in British social life (Lee 2012a)

A prominent example was a contentious and protracted scenario in which Muslims were subject to especially harsh stereotyping as part of the organisation's mandated implementation of counterterrorism training under *Project Griffin*. Just as I had encountered when responsible for implementing the same training programmes in my role at Wasabi (discussed in section 1.1.1.), at Network Rail, *Project Griffi*n was highly contentious, and resulted in the MFN's submission of a formal written complaint to the government's [National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO)](). As part of their written complaint, the MFN, which was comprised of Muslim, Christian and pagan staff, raised the negative impact of the training on "Muslim and BAME" employees, questioning the competence, suitability, and religious literacy of the trainers, and highlighting "offence" caused on several grounds. The complaint challenged the "inappropriate… airing of IS propaganda videos" alongside "a well-known verse from the Muslim Holy text, The Qur'an" and "the Islamic testimony of faith (the 'Shahadah')" in training sessions; it laid out in explicitly theological terms how the approach resulted in "an incorrect perversion of the Islamic faith… [and] the message of mainstream Islamic teachings / Muslims". Overall, the MFN argued that the airing of offensive content during training was not necessary to achieve the session's intended learning outcomes, and had failed to provide necessary balance e.g. through the inclusion of a "rebuttal [to extremist ideas] from a credible Islamic scholar". Furthermore, the MFN raised a concern that existing training had contravened the organisation's EDI principles and commitments by failing to anticipate and mitigate the likelihood that Muslim and BAME employees would encounter racial and religious stereotyping through the sharing of content which overemphasised ""Islamic" terrorist group threats" – for example, highlighting only "AQ/IS related cases", displaying "photo mugshots of suspects and convicts" including only "Asian, Arab or Afro-Caribbean men", and failing to engage with "threats from other terrorist groups such as White supremacist Far Right / IRA groups".

Several further complaints related to the handling of key discussions in sessions. These involved grievances connected with the facilitation of "unnecessary discussion on the motives and ideologies of "Islamic" terrorist groups", with participants and trainers alike making unfounded and simplistic claims. These included, for example, the suggestion that the motives of terrorists "were 'religious' and not political", driven by "shariah (Islamic law)" and rooted in the fact that "they [Muslims] hate our way of life". As part of their written complaints, the MFN also highlighted how non-Muslim trainers spoke about interpretations of jihad as a form of "crusade", rather than as a form of "struggle" or "strive[ing] for betterment", which the MFN argued would be applied to many different

aspects of everyday life for most Muslims. Similarly, they highlighted a recent training session in which a module on "employee subversion / corporate sabotage" included a case study of a recently convicted British Airways employee (Muslim name, Asian male) who had "leaked sensitive corporate material to AQ in preparation for an apparent terrorist plot". This case study became the basis for a trainer-led discussion around "job roles in Network Rail that could similarly be compromised by such staff members".

Overall, the module content rendered Muslim and BAME employees subject to suspicion and scrutiny by their colleagues through inappropriate content. MFN members argued that the training content "implicitly suggest[ed] that some employees may 'not be suitable for certain roles in the company", and highlighted that "they [were thus seen as] potential security risks'" and subject to the forms of surveillance I discussed earlier in Chapter 4. Recollecting these events in interviews over the course of my field research, MFN members shared how this had created an uncomfortable and hostile environment in and beyond training sessions; visibly minoritised staff "felt naked after the training because of the way other participants… [were] looking at them" (Imran), with some feeling "They're pointing the finger at me!" (Colin) "based primarily on race" (Abigail); and other, notably Muslim staff, highlighting their sense that incivility and profiling was centred as much or more around religion and worldviews, and the desire to identify potentially extremist religious and political ideologies (Imran and Suleiman). As the group summarised in their written complaint, the training itself risked:

> "creating an atmosphere of mistrust amongst colleagues at every level in the company, including a McCarthyite culture at workplace of spying. This pretext is also vulnerable to be abused by some staff, which could result in workplace bullying of certain members."

Following the submission of their complaint, the MFN convened a meeting to discuss the training content with representatives from HR, EDI, and NR's counterterrorism unit, and the Home Office. At the time I was unaware of the full extent of Network Rail's Project Griffin story, and didn't know the full details of the complaint, but in early 2017, I was the sole independent consultant invited to a meeting on the matter. I was able to observe how MFN members successfully lobbied for the suspension and review of training materials, proposing some modifications that would sustain counterterrorism policy implementation, whilst also addressing concerns around workplace bullying. At the meeting it was agreed that the training be revised, and that Network Rail's HR and EDI teams

would offer a formal apology to ethnically minoritised staff for the 'offence' (i.e. harm) they had endured.

Unfortunately, issuing the apology became a difficult and burdensome for the MFN, and especially for its Muslim members. Having raised concerns and experienced offence*s themselves*, the group was tasked with the additional labour of drafting the apology statement on behalf of the organisation. I had observed a similar dynamic throughout my research, whereby minoritised groups pursuing professional pathways to secure recognition were charged with a disproportionate amount of unpaid equalities-related labour in addition to their day jobs. They were being asked to articulate and win broad support for certain policies; to solve problems that were not of their own making, when they too deserved redress. Thus, minoritised workers in general, and in this case Muslim MFN members including Imran and Suleiman, were put in the difficult position of seeking respectable ways to be recognised. As Imran explained, they understood that, ironically, they would have to resort to drastic action to have their voices heard, e.g. becoming whistle-blowers or "throwing [their] toys out the pram". Most had no desire to go public, but simply wanted to be heard, bring discrimination to an end, and to maintain their professional reputation; even while recognising the likelihood that their claims for recognition would badge them as 'radical', 'troublemakers', and even potentially as 'terrorist sympathisers' seeking 'special treatment'. Under the circumstances, there was a high degree of emotionally exhausting labour involved for MFN members, with minoritised employees seeking to signal as part of their written complaint that they were 'good Muslims', broadly supportive of counterterrorism efforts, while also defending themselves, their community and their interpretation of their race and/or religion in the context of significant hostility, marginalisation and/or discrimination. Their position was further complicated by the fact that the same staff raising complaints were often themselves drawn into engaging with forms of profiling and surveillance practices, political projects they themselves experienced as harmful. These experiences appeared to impact employee motivation, morale, and productivity; Suleiman, an MFN member, looked dejected when tasked to write the apology statement and notably resigned his post shortly after the apology's dissemination.

Invariably, Muslim staff found their experiences largely ignored or not understood by many colleagues from dominant social groups in positions of power; they accepted and tacitly supported the prevailing securitisation paradigm, actively working to implement the policy without, thinking

critically about, or planning for adverse impacts. This was evident, for example, in the senior leadership session discussed earlier in section 5.1. when a Director of Security, was widely congratulated after he proudly explained his role in rolling out organisational counterterrorism measures, at the same time as Imran had drawn attention to its associated challenges. This reflected a now well-theorised dynamic in which everyday citizens are made responsible for surveillance, security and counterterrorism work practices (Emerson 2019; O'Toole 2022; Qurashi 2018; Rodrigo Jusué 2022). Perhaps most troubling, it was apparent that senior leaders failed to grasp issues raised, where staff in front-line and trackside positions had disclosed a toxic culture in which islamophobia, racism, and sexism were rampant, normalised, and went largely unreported via formal channels.

5.2.3. Religion-Blindness as a Dominant Cultural Thread

Hostility toward religion was evident in particular scenarios and contexts at Network Rail; however, the most common responses to religion from senior leaders and others at Network Rail was one of mild indifference (discussed in section 5.1.). This stance was reflective of Lee's (2012a:149–51) thesis of how banal nonreligion constitutes a powerful cultural thread, and was unsurprising given the growing number of people who identify as having 'no religion' (Woodhead 2016). Just as Woodhead (2016:249–50 & 257–58) characterises, the majority in the senior leadership team were neither actively hostile to religion nor staunchly atheistic in their convictions, though they generally identified as nonreligious and were largely indifferent to religion as a matter for consideration in organisational life. The majority of SLT attendees reflected a wider feeling in the business, representative of "the emergence of a new cultural majority… and norm" in British society, in which most white people occupying positions of power attested to worldviews that would more accurately be described as somewhere "between Christian and 'no religion'", on account of a generational shift in patterns of belief and practice in recent decades (Woodhead 2016:245).

Their indifference did not, however, make the resistance to religion expressed by the majority of the SLT less troublesome for Others, especially those holding Islamic worldviews. Rather, it was characteristic of a response that was harder to name and call attention to compared to the active hostility towards religion within and beyond the session. Primarily, this was because indifference amongst the dominant cultural majority in the organisation was more likely to manifest as apathy and/or a generalised anxiety, discomfort and fragility around engaging religion in the public sphere.

What Dinham and Francis (2015) have theorised as 'religious illiteracy' appeared to play a significant role in inhibiting, blocking and undermining efforts to move the conversation around religion as a dimension of workplace equalities forward. In particular, senior leaders who mostly claimed to be non-religious or only nominally religious, had limited understanding and/or acceptance of religion. This created an uncomfortable environment in which it became extremely difficult to start a conversation about religion, let alone pursue accommodations, express one's own beliefs or secure recognition for harm. The effect was that the majority occupied a normative position in which their non or nominally-religious perspectives were barely reflected on; senior leaders were not wholly conscious of this until their positionality was up for scrutiny and brought to their attention in the session. In this way, dominant – in this case, secular cultural threads underpinned by a Judaeo-Christian cultural character – appeared to occupy a position at Network Rail that was much like, and even closely associated with whiteness – a matter on which I will elaborate further in section 4.4 of this chapter.

5.3. Actively and Cautiously Welcoming Responses to Religion

5.3.1. Alternative Interpretations of the Secular

In contrast to the indifference and hostility to religion apparent at Network Rail, a rather different response was evident at the Faith and Belief Forum, the second of my two micro-ethnographic sites, which had been my place of employment several years before. A focus on religion and worldviews was central to the work and mission of F&BF, and strongly aligned with its community cohesion and interfaith-focussed mission of "building good relations between people" and "work[ing] towards a connected and supportive society where people of different faiths, beliefs and cultures have strong, positive and lasting relations" (The Faith & Belief Forum 2018, 2022). Central to this mission was the organisation's core work: a series of education programmes run across schools, universities, workplaces, and the wider community through which a diversity of participants were encouraged to engage in dialogue and collective social action (ibid). As articulated with reference to Gordon Allport (1954 in Hewstone and Swart 2011) in the organisation's theory of change, the work of the organisation was predicated on the idea that contact between various groups was central in enabling diverse groups in Britain's multicultural society to "learn from each other"; to find "the most effective

way to tackle ignorance and challenge stereotypes" and foster "understanding and trust between people" (The Faith & Belief Forum 2018, 2022).

With its explicit emphasis on religion and worldviews, F&BF's organisational culture differed vastly to most other organisations I encountered before, during and since the end of my fieldwork. This was largely because, in the many years since its formal incorporation, staff had adopted, tested, and refined a series of methodologies, approaches, and principles for engaging in dialogue and social action across religion and worldview-based differences. Inspired by interfaith, mediation and peace-building initiatives around the world, these methodologies were recognised as award-winning by the United Nations, and had been the subject of research by several scholars (e.g. Dinham and Shaw 2017; Grayson 2018; Trethewey and Menzies 2016). Collectively, they equipped key stakeholders with skills and tools to facilitate and participate in programmes and activities in which the challenges and anxieties associated with holding public conversations about religion could be named, acknowledged, and addressed. Participants and stakeholders of religious and nonreligious worldviews alike were encouraged to explore, create and adopt religion-tailored 'safe space principles': participants were expected to 'assume good intent', adopt 'I statements', engage in 'dialogue not debate', equalise airtime for a range of views (i.e. the 'step up/step down' method), intentionally name difficult moments and offence (i.e. the Oops/Ouch method), and broadly commit to a baseline principle of curiosity and non-proselytism in relation to the Other. Additionally, using the organisation's ASKeR/ASKEE method, programme participants were supported to develop skills in sensitively and effectively asking and responding to potentially difficult and controversial questions around religion, and were also encouraged to develop the reflexive skills needed to articulate their own positionalities and stories of faith and belief as *individuals,* rather than as representatives of a particular community or group.

By applying and testing these same tools, principles, and approaches within the organisation itself, and aligning programme methodologies with EDI policies and practices, F&BF staff demonstrated and spoke openly about their commitment to "modelling the world we want to see" (F&BF EDI Strategy, 2018). This included cultivating a culture in which it was possible to 'do God' – or indeed not to – and to talk openly about how staff worldviews impacted and influenced their thinking, actions, and decisions within and beyond the workplace. Because of this approach, F&BF constituted an environment in which the team demonstrated an unusual degree of skill, practice, comfort, and

confidence in *talking* about and *normalising* expressions of religion and belief at work; a culture where a range of religious and nonreligious worldviews were actively welcomed, supported, incorporated, integrated, and respected in the day-to-day life and work of the organisation.

F&BF's environment was distinguished from others by its adoption of some innovative EDI practices: for example, routine lunch-and-learn sessions in which exchanges about each other's religion and belief were an explicit part of daily conversation; standardised training around Faith Awareness for new starters and interns; flexible leave policies allowing staff to swap Bank Holidays for their holy days or times of religious observance; and, events guidance, including principles for hosting and facilitating interfaith events and considering issues such as catering, greetings, dialogue principles, and scheduling, for example. Overall, these innovations amounted to an interpretation of the "faith-friendly but secular" culture as one that would provide a psychologically safe container in which a plurality of religions and worldviews could be expressed while working together, and potentially offensive issues could be named and explored. This culture was not evident to the same degree in other organisations I studied, where, as I have already noted, the secular organisation was far more likely to equate equality, inclusion, trust, cohesion, and neutrality with the absence, management, or containment of religion in the workplace. As such, F&BF's unique approach to religion and worldviews at work can be considered something of an outlier within my data set. [99]

5.3.2. Professionalisation as Secularisation

Notwithstanding the many distinctive aspects of F&BF's active welcome of religion and worldviews, the organisation was in significant flux and amid a protracted cultural shift during my time in the field, as noted already in section 2.2.1. Driving this change was a strategic move towards the diversification of the organisation's income streams – a pivot which various Directors and Trustees envisioned would reduce the organisation's long-standing reliance on mostly Jewish faith-based foundation funders and various high-net-worth individuals and families.

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[99] One possible exception to this was St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, another London-based interfaith organisation which had adopted similar principles and cultures, in part inspired by the close relationship between the two organisations. Other exceptions did not constitute formally incorporated organisations but rather networks and collectives such as Network Rail's MFN and several other multifaith staff networks within organisations where the dominant culture was one of indifference and/or hostility (e.g. EY MFN, Cabinet Office MFN etc).

Accompanying this strategic shift were several notable changes which emerged as leadership sought to build an infrastructure, team, programmatic offering, and brand identity that would position the organisation to attract new sources of government funding, and to capitalise on other sources of sustainable income – e.g. revenue generated through paid workshops in schools, and the provision of training and consultancy services to other organisations.[100] Most obvious among these was the completion of a long-standing rebranding process, which solidified the organisation's revamping of its identity as the Three Faiths Forum on incorporation in 1997, to 3FF in 2014, and eventually the Faith and Belief Forum in 2018. Publicly relaunched alongside a new strategic vision in the early stages of my fieldwork, the new website (2022), strategy (2018), and name cemented a turn away from the organisation's origins as an 'old-school' interfaith dialogue project – largely appealing to older men and religious leaders from the Abrahamic faiths – in favour of programming with broader appeal amongst religious and nonreligious groups within education, employment and community settings. These revised programmes, it was imagined, could be scaled up and expanded nationally and internationally to build the organisation's sustainability and reach.[101]

In tandem with these changes were significant alterations to the organisation's workshop methodologies. In seeking to go beyond the Abrahamic faiths, project teams switched increasingly towards encounter-based approaches, which were argued to be better suited to the inclusion of other minority faiths and people with non- or nominally religious and spiritual backgrounds, for whom it was argued that religious texts and scriptures were less likely to be relevant. Centred in these changes were approaches emphasising lived religion, the complexity of identity, and the individual and choice-based dimensions of how faith and belief is lived and practised daily. Further, and commensurate with this, was the phasing out of more explicitly theologically informed

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[100] This shift of direction was the pretext for my own employment in the organisation in the years prior to my PhD, as Directors of the organisation sought to take advantage of my experience as Training Manager of a private-sector, profit-making business as part of their own revenue-generation plans which included a vision for the development of a corporate workplace training arm.

[101] The emphasis on expanding the scale and reach of the organisation's programmes through one-off workshops and collective manifestoes represented a marked shift away from the slow work of transformation that was conceived of as central to the organisation's work on its Parliamentors or School Linking programmes in preceding years. Within both programmes, participants were encouraged to build deep and sustained relationships across difference, practicing and working through challenges associated with the implementation of the organisation's dialogue and social action methods. As a result, the shift towards expansion and scale-up was critiqued by several amongst the organisation's current and former staff in interviews, as being 'colonial', 'corporate', 'expansionist', and 'more concerned with what looked good' (i.e. good PR) rather than constituted a quality offering.

programming, including the schools' workshops, Tools 4 Trialogue, originally developed to support children in faith schools to engage in interfaith dialogue using text-based and scriptural reasoning approaches such as those described by Ford & Higton (in Dinham and Francis 2015:3).

Finally, came another significant and perhaps less intentional shift in the organisation's personnel and diversity profile, as new staff members – increasingly from nonreligious backgrounds – were recruited into the organisation, and more religiously observant and racially minoritised staff moved on.[102] This resulted in a situation whereby F&BF – an organisation concerned with and publicly presenting an image of doing diversity – was considerably lacking in ethnic, faith-based and cultural diversity itself. This concern was raised by several employees in the 2017 staff survey, and elaborated in the organisation's first formal EDI audit and strategy, which I helped to develop and implement alongside Gemma, the Head of HR & Operations at the outset of my formalised research collaboration in 2018. Within these unpublished internal documents, a stark reality was made plain: just 19% of the organisation's 21-person team identified as BAME, with all except one – Maria, a Black woman of Portuguese-African descent – identifying as white. Furthermore, all employees declared Christian, Jewish, and non- or nominally religious (i.e., specifically, spiritual, atheist, agnostic, and non-religious) worldviews, with no representation beyond the Jewish minority faith at all within the staff team. These statistics served as a stark contrast to the organisation's voluntary and unpaid education and internship programmes, where between 59% and 67% of participants were from BME backgrounds. They made for troubling reading when benchmarked by the HR team against the reality that, on average, 40% of Londoners where the organisation was situated, were BME. Over time, it seemed, the professionalisation of the organisation had been accompanied by a substantial loss of racial and religious diversity amongst a team that increasingly reflected the broader dynamics of a predominantly white and middle-class charity sector (Charity So White 2023), and were even less representative than Network Rail, the first of my micro-ethnographic sites.

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[102] Several amongst those exiting the organisation cited the change of direction as a key reason for their departure, and noted how the organisation had lost a certain spiritual quality to its culture in which it was more possible to explicitly do faith/God across difference. Notably, these staff came from religious backgrounds that had been better represented previously, though they did not stretch to indigenous beliefs which were broadly unrecognised in the world of interfaith, as I discuss in section 6.2.

5.3.3. A *Judaeo*-Christian-Secular Culture

In tandem with the changing staff profile came a significant *cultural* shift, one which slowly and insidiously influenced a more cautious response to religion in the organisation. While this increasing caution appeared to escape the notice of newer, and especially non or nominally-religious staff, the shift was felt acutely by more observant people of faith within the staff team and Board of Trustees. These groups, it seemed, felt increasingly inclined to privatise their expressions of faith and/or to speak of their worldviews in increasingly intellectual and sociological, rather than personal, embodied and/or theological terms. The change in culture was acknowledged by many of the organisation's longer-standing staff of all backgrounds, and especially those who had experienced the more faith-friendly quality of the organisation in earlier years. In separate interviews and as part of EDI conversations I facilitated with the team, several shared their sense that it had become increasingly difficult to 'do God'; and to manifest, speak about, or express their worldviews at work. This realisation prompted significant wrangling, and a sense that the organisation was going through an identity crisis – something I observed through anguished data debates, much like those at Network Rail; at F&BF, however, they centred around what constituted the 'right' or 'most realistic' kind of diversity for the organisation's team. In all then, the shift towards professionalisation surfaced what was described by Gemma in the organisation's first EDI strategy as "a renewed sense of introspection and… pressure to live up to the ambitious goal… [of creating] a future that belongs to people of all beliefs, of all backgrounds and identities".[103]

Significant in these internal conversations were several core anxieties. First was a sense that there had been a regression to the societal status quo within the organisation, with some feeling the increasing representation of non and nominally religious voices had unwittingly disrupted what had previously been a much braver – if not entirely safe – space for those professing more explicitly and overtly observant religious or spiritual worldviews. While those holding this perspective acknowledged the significant work to broaden the reach and appeal of the organisation's work, and to disrupt a wider societal tendency to pit religious and nonreligious views in opposition to one

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[103] Ultimately these conversations did amount to some significant changes, including the adoption (though not publication!) of the organisation's EDI strategy, the formalisation of key working groups, such as the one on Race and Faith established and set up by the organisation's only Black staff member in 2018, and a considerable effort to attract and retain staff from racially minoritised backgrounds. It remains unclear how these staff feel about the culture as it currently stands, since many of these changes occurred beyond my time in the field.

another, they increasingly questioned the fact that the organisation had, over time, come to reflect the make-up of Britain's cultural majority. This fuelled their concern that this shift could potentially dilute the organisation's long-standing focus on faith and associated forms of discrimination. As Shreya, an Asian, culturally Hindu, atheist employee stated, the effect over time was that the staff team increasingly came to include and represent perspectives which already reflected "the voice of power in society".

Significant tension and wrangling arose around another related challenge – a political liberalising of the organisation, in which staff increasingly represented left-wing political perspectives, and adopted what Thomas, a senior leader with significant influence, described as a structural rather than a relational approach to the work. These approaches made explicit a shift away from earlier organisational discourses of "meeting [more politically and socially conservative] people where they are", in favour of more explicitly disruptive intellectual analyses, centring intersectional engagement with issues of equity and justice, over trust and cohesion. The result was a more explicit expression of support for faith alongside LGBT and women's rights, for example, an orientation that arguably existed far more subtly under the surface of the organisation's culture in years prior. Thomas, an atheist, was not cognisant of these shifts on joining the organisation, but time had led him to appreciate the change. Yet Thomas consistently voiced his sense that staff were not alive to particular social realities and structural critiques of inequity, because of a privileging of relational over structural approaches, which had been more common in his previous organisation. He talked of how the organisation needed to do some "growing up" and maturing into adolescence. Thomas's view was at variance with the fact that many staff held strong structural critiques, and had found nuanced ways to integrate relational and structural methodologies. Their approach was to first develop strong, trusting and lasting relationships amongst programme participants, before undertaking the trickier work of addressing issues of structural inequity. Perhaps inherent in Thomas's analysis then, was a form of thinking in which the desire to privilege the relational, expressed in explicitly spiritual and theological terms, was received as infantile, child-like and in need of the kind of rational Enlightenment thinking more coded into intellectual and structural approaches.

Finally, a third and growing concern amongst many in the organisation was the belief among some staff that, despite public displays of diversity in the organisation's branding, F&BF retained a distinctly *Judaeo*-Christian-Secular cultural flavour. Ashkenazi Jews were well represented, accounting for as

much or more than half of the employees at various times, including within positions of power – e.g. amongst founders, funders, trustees, staff and programme participants. For three staff members, all notably Jewish and adhering to different levels of practice and observance, the 'Jewishness' in the culture was palpable and "dominant" (Alexa). In his interview, Joseph, for example, noted the prevalence of staff with backgrounds in Jewish youth leadership movements, who had left "fingerprints all over everything in the organisation". Alexa, another Jewish employee, explained how she had immediately felt "very at home stepping into F&BF… in a way [she'd] not yet experienced" in the UK since migrating from the U.S.. For her, the organisation had a "liberal Jewish vibe – a really familiar sense of humour or sarcasm… that [she] couldn't quite describe or put [her] finger on"; a feeling "subconsciously underlying" everything, which she instantly "picked up on and recognised". As with her Jewish and non-Jewish colleagues from white European backgrounds, Alexa experienced the organisation as both *familiar* and *familial*; F&BFs' former Deputy Director reminded Alexa of her Jewish American family, in ways she acknowledged probably felt "very different for colleagues" from other ethnically and racially minoritised backgrounds.[104]

The significant representation of and sense of belonging among Ashkenazi Jews in the organisation – inflected with whiteness and Europeanness as much as Jewishness – was important, and welcomed in general by F&BF's wider staff team. It was widely acknowledged that the presence of Jewish staff was critically important in addressing the long-standing challenges of antisemitism in wider society. Nonetheless, the "Jewish dominance" that was embedded in the organisational culture, posed some significant challenges, which were disclosed to me privately in one-to-one interviews, often in hushed tones that indicated the un- or barely say-able.[105] These disclosures revolved around the challenges for Muslim and anti-Zionist and/or pro-Palestinian staff and stakeholders who were often acutely aware of symbolic forms of representation such as artefacts in the office. They were anxious that these symbols might be misinterpreted as reflecting a real or imagined Zionist support for Israel despite F&BF's official organisational rhetoric of being "areligious, apolitical [and neutral] working with questions on faith and belief" (The Faith & Belief Forum 2022; also reflected in my interview with Daniel, the organisation's marketing and communications lead). An example of this was a

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[104] This characterisation of the organisation being "like a family" was also made on the recruitment page of the organisation's website, and inspired by comments made in staff surveys and discussions.

[105] The use of inverted commas here reflects the air quote marks made by at least four staff members who questioned the framing of the work

prominently displayed artwork, which visually reflected the organisation's ethos through a process of creative scribing, and depicted in blue and white a Middle East-based programme, though it named only Israel and not Palestine. Some privately felt such symbols created an unspoken and unaddressed imbalance of power, which could be off-putting and alienating to people from less represented backgrounds. It also made staff who had spent time in Palestine, and witnessed particular injustices, reluctant to speak openly about their experiences in wider staff discussions and forums. Additionally, concerns were raised about the disproportionate representation of Ashkenazi Jews. Some felt the presence of an ethnic minority group racialised and/or identified as white, served as a blind spot and masked the organisation's notable problems with race and blackness, a matter raised by the organisation's Race and Faith Working Group. This masking made for difficult conversations about race in the organisation, a challenge which mirrored and mapped onto those of religion, as discussed below.

5.4. Theorising Culture: (*Judaeo-*)Christian-Secular Cultures and Whiteness

5.4.1. A Taxonomy of Responses to Religion

So far in this chapter, I have discussed responses to religion at both Network Rail and the Faith and Belief Forum, demonstrating how vastly different interpretations of the secular were at play in both organisations. Based on these observations – and my triangulation of data from semi-structured interviews, which explored issues of organisational culture across a range of other settings (see Appendices 1 and 3) – it has been possible to arrive at an understanding of common responses to religion in organisations. In the table below, I summarise these responses, making clear how religion is commonly managed in organisations, and indicating the often implicit and unconscious interpretations of the 'secular' associated with each approach.

First, some responses to religion reflected an *active hostility*, as exemplified by Network Rail's senior employees, and discussed in sections 4.1 and 4.2. This stance was predicated on the idea of religion as antithetical to modern ideals of equality, diversity, and inclusivity in the context of a secular, liberal organisation. Religion, from this view, was perceived as inherently divisive, regressive and oppressive; a social force that would be excluded from the workplace were it not for legal obligations

and duties.[106] The second common response was that of *mild indifference*, and exemplified by the majority at NR and most other organisations I encountered. Here, religion was primarily framed as irrelevant and insignificant to the modern, secular organisation; to be minimally managed and contained on an emergent and often reactive basis according to the narrow lens of legal compliance, and according to an interpretation of the secular in which religion was framed as a private matter, or a minority concern. The third common response I describe as a stance of *cautious welcome* where some wanted to recognise or engage with religion. They interpreted the secular organisation as one where, in principle, multiple religions and cultures could coexist and be accommodated (or possibly even welcomed); nonetheless they had some anxiety, ambivalence, and confusion about how to balance and create space for a range of worldviews, and how to manage potentially troublesome dimensions of religion and religious diversity. Finally, the fourth response, most apparent at F&BF and within some staff faith networks such as the MFN, was a stance of *active welcome* where religion and worldviews were respected, normalised, and holistically and systematically engaged withing EDI policy and practice that went well beyond the frame of legal compliance. Such responses were predicated on interpretations of the secular shaped by more informed and plural understandings of religion and change in modern Britain as described by Woodhead and Catto (2013); and the idea that British organisations, like wider society, are neither religious, nor secular, but complexly both – what Habermas (2006) calls 'post-secular'. Likewise, they were predicated on an understanding that 'religious' worldviews must be engaged alongside nonreligious perspectives, with both equally capable of contributing to cohesion, inclusion and positive social relations – as well as their opposite.

Table 1: Summarising Responses to Religion in Organisations

Response	Theoretical Position	Mgmt. Approach	Implications for EDI
Active Hostility	Religion as inherently regressive and oppressive; outdated, troublesome and undermining of social relations	Religion unwelcome and to be checked at the door of organisational life as far as possible	Religion as inherently at odds with aims of equality, diversity and inclusion and cohesion

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[106] Important to note that, despite common misunderstanding and anxiety, neither the Equality Act 2010 nor Freedom of Religion and Belief legislation protect any particular religion or belief, but rather one's right to follow and manifest a particular belief system (i.e. people rather than beliefs). Furthermore, this right is not absolute, and rightly limited, such that one's beliefs must not cause harm to or result in discrimination or cause harm to others.

Mild Indifference	Religion as dying out and in decline; a personal and 'private matter' of limited to no relevance, importance, or significance in daily life, or in wider public and organisational life	Religion as a personal and private matter; a non-issue until made relevant or raised in organisations at which point it may receive an occasional limited welcome.	Religion to be tolerated, managed, and contained pragmatically in line with legislation; occasionally incorporated within EDI policy and practice on a reactive and needs basis
Cautious Welcome	Religion as a complex and dynamic social phenomenon of private and public relevance; a dimension of social life with potentially positive manifestations though with troublesome and often anxiety-inducing dimensions	Religion offered a limited welcome as standard; acknowledged as a dimension of life requiring routine/systematic yet cautious accommodation in organisations in line with legislation and emerging/minimal best practice	Religion to be tolerated, managed, and contained pragmatically in line with legislation; minimally but systematically incorporated within EDI policy and practice; the subject of dialogue under managed circumstances (e.g. as part of controlled and predictable EDI-led initiatives such as panels, events and workshops)
Active Welcome	Religion and worldviews as complex and dynamic social phenomena of private and public relevance; a dimension of social life to be actively welcomed and incorporated with positive aspects celebrated and troublesome manifestations confidently challenged and addressed	Religion routinely offered a wholesale and holistic welcome; acknowledged as a dimension of life routinely and systematically requiring accommodation in organisations; seen as something relevant to everyone, normalised and part of the fabric of organisational life regardless of worldview or conviction	Religion and worldviews respected as a routine and normalised dimension of social life; everyone acknowledged to have a worldview; generally agreed that no perspective is neutral or inherently superior; religion holistically and systematically incorporated within EDI policy and practices but also engaged beyond the narrow frame of legal compliance such that it is part of everyday conversation if and when people choose

5.4.2. Secular Stress and its Predictable Defensive Manoeuvres

As demonstrated through the example of Network Rail, my fieldwork made clear how many people experience religion as an emotive and even controversial topic – an issue eliciting anxiety, hesitancy, discomfort, and at times, distress and fragility when discussed in organisational settings. This anxiety,

which I term 'secular stress', and characterise in the vignette preceding this chapter as feeling like a "heavy heat that rises", "fills a room", and "must be held up like a collective mirror", is familiar to me as an EDI practitioner. It is also especially common among those responding to religion with stances of *active hostility, mild indifference*, and often even *cautious welcome* (see Table 1 in section 5.4.1. above). Further, it is discussed and reflected with reference to broader public conversations about religion in the literature on 'religious illiteracy' (Dinham and Francis 2015:3–5, 105 & 108; see also Davie 2015: viii; Jones 2015:187-188; Francis & van Eck Duymaer 2015:116-117; Conroy 2015:169-170 in ibid.)

Across numerous workshops, focus groups, and organisational discussions on religion, I noted how 'secular stress' gave rise to persistent and predictable responses among individuals and groups. The vignette that precedes this chapter, on which I elaborated in sections 5.1. and 5.2., thus exemplifies how those that experience secular stress enact common defensive manoeuvres. The effect of these maneuvres is to shut down, stall and/or otherwise inhibit conversation about religion, and the degree to which those holding non-normative and especially subjugated worldviews could express workplace concerns. These responses included: 1) *'conversation-blocking statements',* often expressed by one individual, though evidently felt by others in the room. A more extreme example of this response was evident in the series of statements deployed by Karen in the opening vignette; her persistent assertions of feeling "uncomfortable" talking about religion resulted in her abrupt exit from the workshop I co-facilitated with Imran among senior leaders. There were also 2) *'distancing manoeuvres'*, manifested in a tendency to engage with religion as an issue imagined to exist 'out there', beyond the workplace. This relegated religion to a matter of significance only to organisational stakeholders, project beneficiaries, service users, students, or customers, rather than the organisation's employees.

A tendency towards 3) *intellectualising* when the subject of religion came up was also common. Characteristic of this response were participants who became preoccupied with philosophical or theoretical issues, thus avoiding the discomfort or anxiety provoked by conversations on religion and inequity in the organisation. Commonly, these forms of intellectualising involved the kinds of data debates exemplified in Vignette 6; or alternatively, the circumventing of difficult conversations with long, drawn-out discussions around terminology, concepts and definitions of religion and worldviews. In the session with senior leaders at Network Rail, a good example involved an exchange

in which a participant responded to the data presented by Imran to ask whether we were talking about race or faith – an intellectually interesting conversation, but one which side-stepped issues of inequity and belonging, our central concerns. More problematically, during this exchange, another common defence was deployed, that of 4) *deflection and recentring dominant group interests*. This involved a senior leader raising an unlikely hypothetical scenario as part of a challenge to Imran and EDI colleagues' interpretation of company data. The senior leader questioned whether "faith [was] a proxy for race… [and whether we had] done the analysis of… [how religion-related EDI initiatives had taken into account the experiences of] a white male who's Hindu, for instance?". Rather than staying with the discussion, this had the effect of centring hypothetical concerns of dominant groups that had little basis in reality, and ultimately served to recentre white male interests.[107] In common with the other defensive manoeuvres, the effect was to hinder or stop the progress of important conversations around inequity, and indeed facing the realities of potentially hostile or unwelcoming organisational cultures and their impacts for those most directly affected.

5.4.3. Race, Religion and God-Talk

Reflecting back on my time in the field, it is my view that many of the defensive manoeuvres employed by those experiencing secular stress, signified something far more pernicious and entwined with colonial power relations than is laid out within existing theorisations of religious illiteracy (e.g. Dinham 2022; Dinham and Francis 2015). Reviewing literature on workplace inequity, I was struck by how common-place responses to religion at NR and beyond mapped onto already-theorised responses to race, and white(li)ness as a manifestation of coloniality in USA and British organisations (e.g. DiAngelo 2012c, 2012b, 2019, 2021; DiAngelo and Sensoy 2014; Tate and Bagguley 2017:294). As Table 1 shows, this included a correlation between how attempts to speak about religion – and especially attempts to do God-talk, or make appeals to spiritual, religious, or

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[107] Other examples of this dynamic during my field work included claims made to recentre dominant group interests when minoritised groups sought forms of recognition – for example, questions about the status of Christians or Humanists (e.g. 'What about Christians? Or Humanists?'); or indeed more strategic attempts to align dominant group interests with the interests or concerns of minority faiths. These occurred across the diversity spectrum, with at least three interviewees (i.e. Saeed, Hamza and Anika) sharing examples of employees requesting 'White Staff Networks' at key points when BAME staff had raised concerns. Additionally there were examples of a law firm's male employees asking, 'what about men?' and pushing for an International Men's Day in response to the women's staff network's campaigns. Such 'whatabouttery' became so commonplace that I quickly reached 'saturation' and stopped recording them in my journal and post-interview reflections.

theological values – were met with discomfort and anxiety. These responses looked remarkably like existing theorisations of 'white fragility', which Di Angelo (2016:248, see also 2019) describes as a "disequilibrium [which] occurs when there is an interruption to that which is familiar and taken for granted" among white groups, and typically when "people of color" seek forms of recognition in organisational life. Furthermore, these responses surfaced only when explicit discussion about both topics challenged liberal religion, race or colour-blind (Doane 2017; Bonilla-Silva 2014 in Tate and Bagguley 2017) organisational discourses built on the premised that 'everyone is the same' – or at least *similar enough* in the context of an imagined post-racial or post-religious (i.e. secular) society. As a NR manager suggested, religious issues need not be "a key conversation," beyond practical accommodation to be managed in line with organisational policy and bureaucracy.

Table 2: Organisational Responses to Race and Religion Talk

Organisational Responses to Race	Responses to Religion
Attempts to name and talk about race and racism elicit 'racial illteracy', 'white fragility' and 'racial stress' (Di Angelo, 2018)	Attempts to name and talk about religion and religious discrimination elicit 'religious illiteracy' (Dinham & Francis 2015) 'secular stress' and 'secular anxiety'
A colour-blind (Bonilla-Silva 2014 in Tate and Bagguley 2017) stance results in approaches to organisational accommodations or provision rooted in the idea that 'everyone is the same', 'we don't see race' and the myth of a post-racial society	A religion-blind stance results in approaches to organisational accommodations or provision rooted in the idea that 'everyone is the same' and 'we don't see religion' or 'religion is a private matter' and the myth of a post-religious society
White(li)ness as dominant cultural threads; white supremacy as underpinning philosophy and ideology	Christian-Secularity as dominant cultural threads; Cristian-Secular supremacy as underpinning philosophy and ideology
Whiteness as normative and the standard; that which is normal that is taken for granted	Non- and nominally religious orientations (steeped in Protestant Christian cultural conditioning) as normative and the standard; that which is normal and taken-for granted
Whiteness and white identities as unremarkable and unworthy of scrutiny	Christian-Secularity and Christian-Secular identities as unremarkable and unworthy of scrutiny
White people often framed as un-raced; not seen as 'racialised'; somehow above, beyond or outside of questions and conversations around 'race' *(though*	Non- and nominally religious people often framed as un-religioned; not seen as 'religionised'; somehow

this has perhaps shifted in context of BLM where the myth of a post-racial colour-blind society has been shattered)	above, beyond or outside of questions and conversations around 'religion'
White spaces discursively framed by dominant groups as neutral, equitable, liberal, inclusive, and open to/welcoming of all	Christian-Secular spaces discursively framed by dominant groups as neutral, equitable, liberal, inclusive, and open to/welcoming of all

In relating these common responses to race and religion to the literature and theorisations discussed in my conceptual framework (see section 3.4.), I was further struck by commonalities in how intersecting 'systems of oppression' – specifically white(li)ness and Christian-Secularity – appeared to permeate and influence organisational cultures. Both indifferent and hostile responses to religion were strongly influenced by the worldviews of those professing non- and nominally religious orientations; people reflective of the 'new cultural majority' in Britain (Woodhead 2016), who represented perspectives which were normative, standard, and broadly taken-for-granted (Lee 2012a:149–51). Amongst those espousing especially hostile responses to religion, Christian-Secularity was often embodied and advanced in ways that explicitly reflected a sense of Christian-secular supremacy (see section 5.1.). In contrast, among those displaying mild indifference to religion, Christian-Secularity took on a slightly different flavour. These participants generally saw religion as irrelevant, and were less likely to have reflected on how their own worldviews could be scrutinised as concrete phenomena. Effectively, this amounted to a sense that they were somehow 'un-religioned'; outside of processes of religionisation, somehow 'beyond or above religion', and hence implicitly neutral.

These stances mapped remarkably well onto existing theorisations of how whiteliness exists as the dominant cultural thread in organisations, subtly reproducing and sustaining the ongoing dynamics of coloniality and white supremacy in institutional life (Tate and Bagguley 2017; see also section 3.2.3.). Christian-Secularity, like whiteness remains "unsayable" (Tate and Bagguley 2017:294), functioning as the "bedrock of organisational culture… embedded within institutional structures and processes". Thus, "white people, Europeans and their descendants continue to benefit from… a world [and organisational spaces made] in their cultural image… [and according to a] psychology skewed consciously and unconsciously toward privileging them…" (Tate and Bagguley 2017:294). This 'psychology' is shaped by the dominant group – those more powerful members of majority culture

professing non- and nominally religious worldviews which Mignolo (2021, 2022) calls European cosmologies, and which I refer to as (Judaeo)Christian-Secularity. Thus, just as white whiteness is considered the normative state of being, against which all others are defined, and just as 'white' identities are seen as unremarkable and unworthy of scrutiny, Christian-Secularity and nominally and nonreligious Christian-Secular identities, also inhabit a similar position. Both rely on the construction of the racial or religious 'other' in order to define and assert their own superiority, and right to privilege relative to minoritised groups. This was the case in many organisations, despite discourses among dominant group members that existing organisations were neutral, equitable, liberal, inclusive, open and welcoming to all. Looked at side by side, responses to race and religion could be viewed as being rooted in intersecting systems of oppression – which, together, I refer to as *'(Judaeo-)Christian-Secular White(li)ness'* (JCSW).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored organisational responses to religion, and considered how they might be understood alongside race. As part of my unfolding argument, I started by outlining indifferent and hostile responses to religion (especially Islam) at Network Rail, ultimately describing how these responses were shaped by a non- or nominally religious cultural majority marked by Christian-Secularity. These responses, I argued, served in stark contrast to responses to religion and interpretations of the secular at play at the Faith & Belief Forum where religion was actively or cautiously welcomed into organisational life as part of an organisational culture marked my (*Judaeo-*)Christian-Secularity on account of the significant representation of Jews in the organisation. Taken as exemplifying case studies and triangulated with semi-structured interview data, I then drew together my observations from the field to advance a taxonomy of responses to religion in organisational life, which could be mapped against responses to race. Together I have shown how both constitute intersecting systems of oppression, giving rise to *'(Judaeo-)Christian-Secular White(li)ness'* (JCSW) as a cultural framework explaining the dominant cultural threads which sustain coloniality in the organisations I have studied.

In my next chapter, I build upon my analysis of the experiences of Muslim staff at Network Rail, to explore responses to a range of Other worldviews not typically considered within religion-related EDI work. This includes my consideration of the experiences of those collectively professing what I term 'nonmodern' worldviews at Network Rail, the Faith and Belief Forum, and beyond.

Vignette 7: 'Are our god(s) not real to you?!'

November 2018, Oxford

I am gathered with my peers – and also, if I am honest, still mentally gathering *myself* – as I enter the drawing room of the College, a space ablaze with nervous chatter.

Chiming with the customary chink of glass, faces meet across the open fire; assembled for the start of our first winter retreat:

A relaxed and informal opportunity for promising young scholars to network

Despite my poised appearance, I am lost…

Lost to the part of my mind that has mastered mockery – this subtle act of survival on which I draw without anyone knowing. Lost to the part that's in a chokehold with Ikaggen[108] – my devilish inner trickster – with its penchant for intrusive imagery, and inappropriate private jokes.

It is almost *never convenient* when Ikaggen intrudes. But almost always *relevant*.

This time is no different, as Ikaggen impresses upon me the wide-eyed image of Daniel Kaluuya. Replaying Jordan Peele scenes on a loop. And forcing me into ironic introspection; wondering if I too will I ever *'Get Out!'* of these white spaces – a question I will joke about with peers in the months ahead.

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[108] In Jungian psychology the trickster, represented here as IKaggen, is an archetypal character and/or aspect of the psyche which tends to draw on intellect and secret knowledge to engage informs of trickery that defy conventional rules, norms, and expectations of behaviour (Hyde 2008). In the Southern African folk culture of the Basarwa, the trickster, IKaggen, who is sometimes also thought to represent god(s), usually takes the form of a praying mantis, though can shape-shift into other forms (Bleek and Lloyd 1875; Lewis-Williams 1997).

I've become good at this game of intently listening; of stifling internal sniggers about the absurdity of it all. My neck is craned – slightly leaning to the left – as a nice, respectable, Man of God welcomes me, and draws me into his world.

He is White. Upper-middle class. An Anglican priest. Very much, as it happens, like my late Uncle Hugh. He is regaling me with stories from the book he's about to publish. And anecdotes from another he expects to publish soon.

I slowly sip a glass of orange juice; one that was perched between carafes of Merlot, and Sauvignon Blanc, just moments ago.

The enthusiastic, if slightly awkward, Man of God is speaking to me about the sacredness of the sea and its sacramental power; its ancient wisdom and its urgent spiritual call to a humanity on the brink of environmental crisis.

As IKaggen lets me go, another part comes forward. The part of my mind that loves to connect dots.

Mostly, I am theorising: Contemplating the universal familiarity of water across cultures. How 'the natural world' speaks to us. Is *part of us* even. And how it rarely, *if ever*, fails to provide powerful lessons and guidance.

I am contemplating the way humanity has tended to align nature and Source. The familiar way this Man of God espouses water's wisdom; and yet how rarely I hear the story of Nature's wisdom conveyed so unabashedly in the West.

I am contemplating *home*. And how we *also* value water.[109] How we understand its power, even if we frame it differently. How we habitually shout *'Pula!'* – or *'Rain!'* – both in times of prosperity and relief.[110]

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[109] For accounts of the significance of water and rain in Tswana culture see the work of British anthropologist Isaac Schapera (1971) and other works by Landau (1993) and Feddema (1966).

[110] For example, when droughts come to an end.

I am thinking, 'Maybe me and the White man *aren't* so different after all?!'…

There must be *something* that connects and *holds us*…

Maybe Mother Nature. Or even the Earth. Maybe the water. Or just… a God…?! …Or would it be gods?! *Plural. 'Modimo', or 'Medimo'?* Or perhaps even *'Badimo'*, as we say in Setswana.[111]

I am contemplating, maybe unexpectedly for me, this interconnectedness; feeling into my body, as the 'Man of God' tells me more about his next book: European faery tales, he says, and pre-modern mythologies.

As he talks, I continue connecting dots: first to the mythological Irish *leprechauns* my British father taught me about. And next to the *thokoloshi* – a small Southern African spirit-creature I was taught to fear as a Tswana child.

Eventually, I break my silence, interjecting with a half-formed thought: How *alike* human beings must be to have conjured *leprechauns* and *thokoloshis* so many oceans apart. To have nurtured such *similar* stories and truths: of benevolent beings that acted as protectors, yet *also* showed a propensity for punishment. I am wondering aloud, waxing lyrical about the origins of these stories; how they come to be passed down from generation to generation... when suddenly it happens…

…A colonial violence I cannot yet name (g)rips and surges through my body…

'Look!', the man of God says urgently, his eyes wide, as he gestures behind me. *'Look! There's a thokoloshi right there!!!!'*

My blood rises in panic; my body is braced to run. The Man of God is pointing behind me, pallored by the spirit beyond…

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[111] See Bennet (in Gaie, Nthoi & Stiebert 2002) for an historicised account of the similarities and differences between the monotheistic and polytheistic God concepts and worldviews of European Christians and pre-missionary Tswana.

I've barely had time to calculate. To question why the *thokoloshi* would be here *now*. And why, *in Britain*, of all places…. When it dawns on me, he's… *laughing*…?

* * *

I *still* wonder, even today, how it took so long for me to catch on. How I was so fully paralysed with fear; so lost in the grip of his misfired joke…. Before I wilted in the shame of my confused realisation.

Months later, when I first began ruminating on this incident, I *finally* found some anger.

A hot, incandescent rage that this so-called 'Man of God' and his people would travel across oceans of that *same sacred water* to inflict violence on my people.

That they would impose *their* image of God - a White, Western God - on *us*.

And then have *the gall* to do so… whilst claiming institutional oppression?! That it is *they* who are afforded little to no recognition?! That they are *mocked* and *persecuted* in public life?!

Even as they denigrate the worldviews of me and my ancestors?!

The same beliefs they pathologised and framed as backward. The same views they cast as savage, and widely denounced as witchcraft.

Yet, here was this man of God… gently mocking *me*…?! So that, for weeks, as I'd replay the scene, it was always attached to the same couple of questions:

"Are *our* gods not *real* to you...?! Do your people know *nothing* beyond *yourselves*..?!"

Chapter 6: Nonrecognition and the 'Nonmodern'

The question of whose God, religion or worldview might legitimately be considered real is intellectually interesting, if impossible to answer. At its heart, it is a question about truth claims and the validity of the beliefs and worldviews around which humans have typically sought to organise and regulate societies, or even make sense of the world, for as long as we have walked the earth. In the context of a super-diverse and religiously plural modern Britain (Woodhead and Catto 2013), existential questions of truth or ultimate reality are arguably far less important, however, than issues of the rights and experiences – past and present – of people who profess particular worldviews, or indeed the nature and quality of relationships between people holdings substantively different perspectives. Put another way, what seems to matter most in modern Britain is the extent to which a diverse array of religions and worldviews can be recognised, expressed, and manifest; or even how far diverse peoples can live and work well together in the context of such varied expressions.

In this chapter, I draw on memories such as that recounted in the vignette preceding this chapter alongside forms of embodied, ancestral, and intersubjective knowledge, to explore the extent to which various worldviews achieve recognition in organisational life (Fraser and Honneth 2004). Drawing on the testimonies of those professing what I refer to as 'nonmodern' worldviews – that is, beliefs reflected at the bottom, or altogether excluded from the world religions paradigm (Masuzawa 2005) and its associated religious, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies (see section 3.3.) – I centre the experiences of those on the margins of organisational cultures shaped by (Judaeo-)Christian-Secular Culture (see Chapter 5). Using these worldviews as a starting point, I consider the limits of recognition and expression for those holding beliefs constructed as 'nonmodern', and their implications for workplace relations, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), and Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB).

To begin, I outline the status quo within organisations, indicating how common sense, and colonial understandings of religion are institutionalised within EDI efforts, which are uncritically shaped according to the logic of the world religions paradigm. This is followed by an examination of the silencing impacts of these paradigms for those that remain unrecognised. I explore this through two stories; the first story is that of Abigail, a Norse Heathen, or pagan, who was active in advocating for

religious inclusion as part of her role in Network Rail's Multi Faith Network (MFN); the second story is rooted in my own observations and experiences navigating a range of organisational settings in which African indigenous beliefs were frequently muted or ignored altogether. In the final part of the chapter, I theorise both examples as forms of colonial silences which result in nonrecognition yet remain unseen and are taken for granted by the majority within predominantly white organisations marked by dominant (*Judaeo*-)Christian-Secular cultural threads.

A note on the 'nonmodern'

Before addressing the substantive content and themes to be explored in this chapter, it is necessary to share some reflections on language. While imperfect, my use of the concept of 'nonmodern' in this chapter reflects the best analytic term I have found that effectively brackets and calls attention to the common positioning of both pagan and indigenous worldviews within the religious, spiritual, and epistemic hierarchies constructed through colonial encounters and Enlightenment philosophical discourse on religion and humanity. In the case of, paganism, I use the term 'nonmodern' as it effectively captures the positioning of the vast collection of worldviews that were once normative in Europe, and actually pre-dated European colonialism and the emergence of modernity; these 'nonmodern' belief systems are routinely ignored and silenced within religion and belief-based policy and practice in the organisational settings I studied. These include, for example, belief systems that were denounced by Christians under the Roman Empire as 'heathenry' or 'witchcraft' and subject to persecution (MacMullen 1977; Nixey 2018; Salzman 2004:182). Nowadays, outside of small fringe groups involved with their contemporary revival, these worldviews are now more commonly associated with the stuff of 'folklore'. Additionally, I take the term 'nonmodern' to be inclusive of those worldviews and cosmologies of indigenous people of colonised societies, whose belief systems Europeans degraded and regarded with derision, suspicion, and labelled as 'savage', 'backward', or 'demonic'; these were broadly grouped together as 'other religions' (e.g. vodun, Rastafarianism, and various African or Pacific Islander or native beliefs) at the height of the British Empire and at the advent of Euro-modernity (Masuzawa 2005). Both pagan and indigenous worldviews are bound by the fact that they can be traced to legacies of colonial violence and domination, albeit over different time-periods. In making this choice, however, I acknowledge the risk that the term is seen to reinforce a construct and way of thinking about and ordering religion(s) that is itself colonial, as noted in the work of scholars such as Masuzawa (2005) and Asad (1993, 2003). This is a challenge faced by many

decolonial and anti-racist scholars, who are often charged with reinforcing colonial categories and logics simply by naming and calling attention to the dynamics through which they are reproduced and sustained.[112]

6.1. Network Rail's Inter Faith Week Banner Campaign

6.1.1. Religion, EDI, and the World Religions Paradigm

In Chapter 3 (section 3.3.), I outlined how contemporary common-sense understandings of religion have been shaped by the colonial logics of the world religions paradigm, and its associated spiritual and epistemic hierarchies. Here, I start with a broad but straightforward observation – based both on my experiences in the field, and as an EDI practitioner – that these common sense, colonial understandings of religion persist; they are sustained and reproduced through EDI policies and practices of many of the organisations I studied.

This is because, on the whole, EDI policy and practice around religion is grounded in an acceptance of the existence of six to nine easily definable, 'major' religions, each of which constitutes stable, ossified, and knowable categories. These stable categories and ideas of religion are typically reflected as part of what Masuzawa (2005) calls "a discourse of plurality", which is uncritically accepted as the basis for EDI and interfaith policy and practice emphasising diversity, inclusion, cohesion and shared values. In most organisations I studied, this way of thinking about religion was evident and was reinforced in many ways: for example, in the naming and structuring of staff faith networks; in the production of learning resources, materials and guides which uncritically reflected and reinforced existing understandings of monolithic 'world religions' as part of efforts to support religious literacy; and in the development of guides, calendars, campaigns and events developed to support the recognition of one, some or all of these major six or nine religions, for example.

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[112] It is worth noting that while I deploy the term 'nonmodern' for analytic purposes, and to convey the common position of pagan and indigenous worldviews collectively, I draw on the preferred language and self-definitions of research participants when discussing their cases and examples individually.

This discourse of plurality and approach to religion in organisations, as critiqued by antiracists in the 1980s, often reinforces what Barry Troyna (in Jackson 1995:274) characterised as a "superficial [but] well-meaning attempt to celebrate diversity" within a tokenising and crude "saris, steelbands and samosas" approach to multicultural organisational diversity. As Rajit, a study participant described it, this results in "the usual nonthreatening… safe… anybody can attend… plinky-plonky, happy diversity, let's see how the brown people do their thing" approach to religious diversity in organisations. Many minoritised people in my study perceived this approach as foregrounding issues of cohesion and inclusion, at the expense of more troubling questions of power and privilege.

6.1.2. Competing Claims for Recognition

At Network Rail, as in many other organisations I encountered, the world religions paradigm – or at least its discourse of plurality without an acknowledgement of power – was alive and well during my fieldwork. Unlike in many other settings, however, there were moments where the paradigm was challenged by those seeking forms of recognition in the organisation. A good example of this was evident during the organisation's banner campaign which was intended to acknowledge and celebrate religious diversity.

In November 2018, inspired by a campaign undertaken by Leicester Council of Faiths, Network Rail's Multi Faith Network (MFN) launched a 'banner campaign' to mark UK Inter Faith Week. The purpose of the campaign was two-fold. First, the initiative was intended to "promote inter-faith harmony on a grand scale". Second, in alignment with MFN's two EDI slogans, the campaign sought to raise the profile of the Network, communicating to staff and public alike that Network Rail was a public service organisation where people could "bring their whole selves to work" and expect to be met with "respect and not [just] tolerance". In the month prior to the launch of their campaign, as part of a consultation around the initiative, Imran, the Chair of the Network outlined the plan and motivations for the initiative as such:

> "Our highlight exhibition will be at one of the major stations in the UK with banners representing major faiths as per the last census in the UK... [and] showcasing a minimum of nine communities represented across London: Bahá'ís, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Pagans. The banners [will be] display[ed] for passers-by to read and

see. We will ask for Volunteers from all these groups to take part… to support community cohesion and harmony in diversity."

The idea behind the campaign was clear, exemplifying how, for better or worse, staff networks frequently aligned their values and activities both with government policy initiatives – in this case around community cohesion and interfaith – and popular EDI discourse, encapsulated in the EDI slogan of 'bringing your whole self to work'. In practice, however, the banner campaign surfaced some classic interfaith conundrums, including the question of who was to be represented, and how and by whom such decisions were to be made.

The issue of recognition and representation became especially vexed as the banner campaign moved from consultation to launch. In an email circulated a month before the campaign's launch, Imran, Chair of the MFN, outlined his proposal to include 'a minimum of nine' belief perspectives. Significantly, while the approach taken strongly reflected the discourse of plurality described by Masuzawa (2005), the proposed list of worldviews diverged both from the common-sense logic of the world religions paradigm and any obvious logic centred around UK census data. More specifically, while the Chair's initial email suggested selections were based on major faiths as identified within the most recent UK census at the time, the inclusion of Bahá'í, Jain and pagan worldviews suggested otherwise, since each of these comprised parts of the 0.4 per cent of people in Britain lumped together as 'Other religions' (UK census 2011). Similarly, except for Jainism, which is "less typically but still very frequently included in lists of major religions" (Masuzawa 2005: 2), neither Baha'i nor pagan worldviews constituted obvious choices for inclusion, based on either the criteria stipulated by the Chair at consultation (i.e. 'major faiths as identified within the most recent UK census') or the WRP. Rather, both exemplified worldviews, which are often grouped together as 'minor' or 'little' faiths at the bottom of typical lists of 'world religions' (ibid: 3-4; see also section 3.3. of this thesis). My knowledge of the MFN and its personnel leads me to speculate therefore that the worldviews originally proposed for inclusion were thus selected based on a more arbitrary combination of the following factors: 1) the belief systems already reflected and/or well known to those within the MFN and its core membership, which included (Asian) Muslims, (Black and white British) Christians and one (white British) pagan; 2) the precedent shared by Leicester Council of Faiths, which naturally reflected the involvement of Leicester's more numerous Baha'i and Jain faith communities; and 3) the requirement for MFN members and leadership to take quick and pragmatic decisions around

the campaign, given their work was entirely voluntary and undertaken amidst the significant time and workload pressures associated with their main job roles.[113]

When approached directly by the Chair for my thoughts about a matter unrelated to the campaign – specifically an unfolding controversy connected to conflicting truth claims amongst Christians and Muslims in the Network – I raised the issue of representation as an addendum to my input. In a direct email exchange, I included the following provocation for deliberation amongst network members, highlighting that there were other fundamental issues to consider:

> "With an initiative like this, there will always be wider (often controversial!) questions about which faiths and beliefs have been selected and represented. Those belief systems that don't have easily recognisable books / texts or aren't considered "the major 9 religions" (e.g. paganism, African ancestral belief systems, humanism and other nonreligious perspectives etc.) are often left out. Leaving them out, however, can mean colleagues at Network Rail are left out, including potentially some in the staff network."

6.1.3. Pushing Out the Pagan

Though I received no further communication on the matter, my analysis upon exiting the field starkly revealed how issues of representation played out as part of the campaign. By combining photos I had taken of the banners with email exchanges and comments from interviews, I was able to form an impression of one of the campaign's key controversies: specifically, how the pagan banner proposed at consultation was dropped in favour of a banner representing Humanists at launch. While it remains unclear how decisions about representation were made and justified, in this section, I outline and reflect on the impacts and implications of these decisions for Abigail – the Network's sole pagan member, and the only person I formally interviewed who professed a 'nonmodern' worldview over the course of my project.

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[113] In this regard, the voluntary work of MFN members again reflected a common dynamic of engaging non-experts and/or 'experts by (lived) experience' within EDI work and engaging them in potentially extractive forms of unpaid labour.

The removal of the proposed pagan banner from the campaign hit Abigail especially hard. Abigail too had fed into the consultation, providing input on substantive beliefs that might be displayed to reflect pagan perspectives, and hence, was surprised to discover the exclusion of her beliefs when the campaign launched. Her sense of anger and disappointment with the change was palpable in our interview several weeks later. In her words:

"I was off [sick] for three weeks in the summer, and then five more weeks, so I missed a lot of that conversation [around the banner campaign]. When I got back and saw that there wasn't a pagan banner... I was actually quite angry. But it was too late to do anything about it. I really thought… [shakes head in disbelief]... yeah, I was not happy. ...I wrote a fairly extensive email when I was consulted about it. ...It really wasn't good."

Abigail's sense of exclusion and betrayal was compounded by several factors. In addition to responding directly to the consultation, Abigail had been heavily committed and actively involved in the running of the Network over several years. Alongside her day job managing the logistics of a major strategic rail project, for example, she had been a driving force in conceptualising, launching and voluntarily running the network since 2012. She had also persisted with the work of "desperately trying to keep more [faith and belief] perspectives [represented]" even at points when she was depleted and "felt like just walking away". Having held the position as the Network's first Chair, she was passionate about advocating for religious inclusion, feeling that she had developed strong, supportive, and open relationships with fellow colleagues. Several years before the start of my research, for example, I had personally observed Abigail express support and solidarity for Muslim colleagues, as members of the Network lobbied senior leadership and the EDI teams to address issues of islamophobia that had emerged following the controversial launch of *Project Griffin* (discussed in section 5.2.3.). Though she did not articulate it so directly, I came away with the distinct impression that the decision to exclude the pagan worldview without a conversation, was received by Abigail as something of a betrayal – one that undermined the years of voluntary labour she had offered the Network, the trust built up with other members, and her confidence in openly discussing and advocating for her beliefs.

This latter issue was especially significant in intensifying Abigail's experience of exclusion. Since speaking up about her worldview and learning to advocate for herself had been an ongoing challenge,

Abigail's efforts to advocate for a pagan banner had rested on trusting relationships with colleagues built over time. Despite having been in several dialogues related to faith at work over the years, I noted, for example, how much more tentative and self-conscious Abigail was about sharing her belief system than others at Network Rail I spoke to – skirting around the issue and only disclosing more about her perspective after my several attempts at probing. In this sense, Abigail's approach to talking about religion reflected a common dynamic in organisations: the tendency, as already discussed in Chapter 5, to conform to a wider organisational culture in which religion was treated as 'a private matter'. Additionally, it highlighted some of the unique challenges Abigail faced in articulating her 'nonmodern' perspective: Since her particular beliefs – at the time, "Norse heathen with a touch of Mediterranean" – were fluid and existed very much on the margins of organisational and wider British social life, she automatically came to conversations about religious diversity anticipating that even interested and open colleagues would lack the religious literacy (Dinham and Francis 2015) to understand or engage with her worldview. As she told me, she often chose to withhold her beliefs altogether, engaging in acts of self-silencing, or heavily simplifying and minimising her identification to make herself recognisable and understandable to colleagues. This involved representing herself as pagan rather than Heathen, and thus defining herself by adopting a term she anticipated would be better understood by her colleagues, even though the term is widely rejected by most members of the Heathen community (Greene and Chitwood 2023).[114] As she put it to me:

> "Generally, when people ask me [about my beliefs], I say I'm pagan because they know what that means. But I'm not pagan in the sense of Wiccan, I'm pagan in the sense of 'not Christian' and 'not a major religion'. I'm *poly*theist with that emphasis. ...They know what it means more than when I try and describe what I actually am."

Although Abigail represented something of an outlier in the Network, and amongst my research participants overall, her experiences were significant in exemplifying what it means to exist on the margins of formalised institutional engagements with religion and belief. Despite being positioned well to be vocal and occupying a high status in the Network, she had significant difficulty having

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[114] As Greene and Chitwood (2023) note, most Heathens, who hold a diverse range of "Northern European pre-Christian practices and mythology", emphatically reject being classified as pagans despite the fact that to do so is a common practice.

forthright conversations about her worldview and had become accustomed to silencing or minimising her perspectives to be understandable and recognisable to colleagues across the business. Furthermore, even in the context of the MFN, where she had been more open – and as the first ever Chair of the MFN held a position of power – she continued to find herself excluded as the banner campaign was launched. This negation of Abigail's worldview, even after significant consultation, thus amounted to a form of nonrecognition – an act of silencing that cannot simply be understood as an unconscious bias or blind spot, given the conversations in the months and years preceding the launch; rather it can be read as a more conscious, active, and wilful refusal to offer the pagan worldview parity with other beliefs, including other minority faiths, which were better represented and recognised in the Network, organisation, and wider society. In this sense, Abigail's experience reflected the location of the 'nonmodern' in general within the world religions paradigm: moments of recognition, when they came, happened rarely and fleetingly, and seemed easily dismissed, ignored, or reversed.

6.2. Ignoring the Indigenous: An Interfaith & EDI Black Hole

6.2.1. The Pre-Modern European and African Indigenous: Unexpected Bedfellows

Meeting and coming to know Abigail over my time at Network Rail was an opportunity to improve my own religious literacy. Through a combination of direct conversation and further reading, I came to understand how Abigail was exemplary of the growing number of people involved in the contemporary revival of paganism as a worldview emphasising self-empowerment, social engagement and (re)connection to the natural world (Cooper 2010; Greene and Chitwood 2023; Harvey and Hardman 1996; Pizza and Lewis 2008; Strmiska 2005, 2018; White 2015). Additionally, I came to a better understanding of how Abigail's worldview was representative of the growing number of people identifying as "spiritual, but not religious" (Ammerman 2013; BBC 2013; Harvey 2016; Wixwat and Saucier 2021; Wong and Vinsky 2009), and therefore rarely considered and recognised within religion and belief focussed diversity efforts, which, as already noted, tend to function according to the stable, ossified categories of the WRP.

Like many others identifying as pagan, Abigail's worldview was heavily personalised and creative – a matter which made her beliefs difficult to pin down and summarise (Greene and Chitwood 2023:2). While in her earlier years, she had identified with several Anglican and Quaker traditions, her study of comparative religion in early adulthood, and her lifelong journey of spiritual seeking had ultimately led her to explore her ancestral roots beyond the Christian family she was adopted into as a child. This resulted in her identification with Norse Heathens – a group "with no single institutional authority, authoritative doctrine, or unifying text" (Greene and Chitwood 2023:2), one which gave her the license "to create [her] own" forms of ritual and practice based on personal reading and research. In this sense, Abigail's identifications also reflected how religion and worldviews are often complex, fluid, and subject to change over one's life course – or which, to use her words, were "still developing" over time. As she summarised it herself:

"My religion *now*: I would say, culturally, I identify quite well with the Norse stuff, so that's the Viking, Anglo-Saxon heritage, which is, obviously, what I've got. It may be because I'm adopted, but the idea of ancestors is quite powerful. I can't identify specific ancestors [in my lineage] but, obviously, I've got *some*, because otherwise, I wouldn't be here. So, there's that feeling of continuity [within my beliefs]."

Perhaps, surprisingly, learning more about Abigail's beliefs was also an opportunity to draw parallels between her own beliefs and others with which I was already familiar. The emphasis on polytheism within Abigail's Norse Heathen perspective, as well as her assertion "that Gods can be beings that can fail as much as humans" were especially resonant, and remarkably like some of the African indigenous spiritualities I had encountered and, to some extent, grown up around myself. So, too was her description of Norse heathenry as an LGBT-inclusive belief system – a point reflected in popular literature on the subject (e.g. Magdalene 2020), and impressed upon me when Abigail shared how she had been heavily influenced to advocate for the complementarity of LGBT and faith-based inclusion initiatives at Network Rail, based on the example of a bisexual Norse God.[115] Perhaps most resonant of all though, was the "reverence for nature, ancestor veneration, folk culture, magic, and

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[115] Within many African indigenous belief systems, ideas and notions of gender and sexuality can also be read is LGBT inclusive (see, for example van Klinken and Otu 2017; Migraine-George and Currier 2016; Mkasi 2016; Nyanzi 2014; Somé 2000).

mythology" (Greene and Chitwood 2023) within Abigail's perspective, and her descriptions of pursuing leave and workplace accommodations for the few rituals in which she engaged – the 21st of December for Yule or Winter Solstice, and the 21st of June for Litha or the Summer Solstice, according to the seasonally-focussed "Wheel of the Year" calendar typically followed by modern pagans (Greene and Chitwood 2023). Both of these strongly resonated with worldviews I encountered during childhood in Southern Africa, as well as more recent experiences within online and academic spaces where African indigenous spiritual practices were studied and celebrated according to the same calendar, e.g. the African and Diasporic Religious Studies Association and Ancestral Voices.[116]

At the data analysis stage, listening back to an exchange between myself and Abigail, I became cognisant of significant overlaps and commonalities between our perspectives, which had previously escaped my attention. I was struck, for example, by our exchange around the *thokoloshe* – a mythological creature to which I also referred in Vignette 7 – which had reminded Abigail of the Icelandic elves found in Norse Heathen mythology. Not only did our conversation constitute an interesting example of encounter-based interfaith dialogue between the researcher and research participants as discussed by (Barnes & Smith in Dinham and Francis 2015:88; Grayson 2018); it was also the first time, in my many years of exploring religion and belief in organisations, and across many years engaging in interfaith work at F&BF, that I had found myself in a substantive conversation with someone who could *personally relate* to the beliefs of my childhood, without my sense that they were being exoticised, denigrated or read as somehow wildly or quaintly Other – a matter on which I elaborate in the following section.

6.2.2. Ignoring and Inferiorising the Indigenous

My encounter with Abigail instigated significant reflection on the place of African indigenous worldviews in organisations. Like pagan worldviews, indigenous beliefs could be seen as being placed outside of or at the bottom of religious, spiritual, and epistemic hierarchies I discussed in section 3.3.

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[116] In recent years, modern paganism has come under "increasing scrutiny for 'borrowing' elements of 'global mythologies, folk practices, and religious structures", leading to heated debates around cultural appropriation (see, for example, Blanton 2011; Cutinello 2022; Greene and Chitwood 2023:1) It is therefore incumbent upon me to say that I saw no such evidence of appropriation in Abigail's case. Instead, the shared belief systems upon which I focus in this chapter are linkages of my own making.

– hence my use of the term 'nonmodern' to categorise both, as discussed earlier in this chapter. This positioning, however, posed a significant research challenge. Unlike Abigail's story and experience, which represented something of an outlier both at Network Rail and amongst my research participants in general, I had no direct testimony on which I could draw to make sense of the experiences of those professing indigenous worldviews – African or otherwise. Since indigenous beliefs did not come up at all in my research, either in my interview transcripts or observational notes of navigating organisations – except in the very rare instances where participants asked me directly about my worldview and I made passing reference to the spiritual and cultural backdrop to my childhood in Southern Africa – they existed as examples of the discursive, collective or social silences I discussed reflecting on within my analysis in section 2.3. of my methods chapter.

To illustrate, at both Network Rail and the Faith & Belief Forum, beyond Abigail's testimony there were no significant references at all to indigenous beliefs for the duration of my research project. This was also the case in the four years before commencing my research, over which I had involved relationships with both organisations – a matter which I had found especially troublesome at F&BF, given its status as an interfaith organisation focussed explicitly on religion, faith, and belief.[117] The same was true across all other organisations and participants encountered during my research and within all formal events and public discussions of religion and belief in the workplace in which I participated and undertook ethnographic observation over my time in the field.[118] From my reading of the literature around race and religion in organisations, my own experience of navigating the world of interfaith, and my role as an EDI consultant over many years, it was thus undeniable that, at least in predominantly white spaces, indigenous beliefs were systematically ignored and existed as a discursive and collective silence (Patterson 2022:8–9; Virloget and Alempijević 2021:1–3). This raised the significant challenge of how to analyse and convincingly write about the kinds of loud and deafening silences which were very obvious to me – often felt deeply, to use Walter Mignolo's (2022)

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[117] This is perhaps unsurprising given the lack of diversity in the staff team (see section 5.3.) and the organisations acknowledged issues with race and blackness, which might have made it more possible to discuss.

[118] One minor exception to this was a passing reference to Wiccan beliefs at one event which were referenced within the 'other' category of a pie chart reflecting religion and belief census data from 2001 and 2011.

term, as a 'coloniality in the body'[119] – and yet remained persistently overlooked or invisible to the majority in organisational settings.

The challenge of giving voice to these silences was only addressed after I had exited the field and began working in Black majority organisational settings, and alongside other Black researchers, who were similarly positioned to pick up on the nonrecognition of African indigenous beliefs. One space where it became possible to speak more openly, for example, was within my role at Black Thrive Global, where I was employed as a researcher in the final stages of my PhD. This was an organisational setting where references to religion and spirituality were much more commonplace; generally, far more easily named, with indigenous beliefs and practices frequently integrated into workshops, sessions, research themes and community healing spaces. The same was also true as part of my involvement in another Black-led professional research project funded by the Church of England, which I undertook alongside Dr Selina Stone and Dr Carlton Turner, and which explored how race and racism, ethnic or cultural differences and prejudices impacted the wellbeing of Global Majority Heritage (GMH) clergy at work (Stone 2022:1). Rather than being ignored, the shared cultural and social location of the research team and participants meant that indigenous beliefs could be explicitly named and reflected upon, especially amongst clergy of African descent.[120] Especially significant was our finding that, amongst GMH clergy, indigenous beliefs – which Stone (2022) referred to as 'global spiritualities' in our final report – were often suppressed, muted and silenced because they were explicitly framed as inferior and/or treated as a threat, especially within Evangelical quarters of the Church.

Several participants highlighted their difficulties in seeking to reconcile and wholly express 'global spiritualities' alongside the Christian theologies which were naturally dominant in the context of the

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[119] Mignolo's incitement to 'listen to the body' resonated also with insights from therapy and my involvement in meditation and collective spiritual practice (discussed in section 2.4.), and also with the works of Fanon and feminist literature by which I had been inspired during my research project.

[120] The question of whether the Church of England can be considered modern or indeed part of a secular society having undergone some process of secularisation by way of professionalisation is an interesting one, though beyond the scope of this thesis. I include published observations from the project here, however, because they are reflective of much of what I have observed about the spiritual and epistemic hierarchies associated with processes of racialisation at Network Rail, the Faith and Belief Forum and many other organisations explicitly identifying themselves as 'modern' and 'secular' during this research project.

Church. This resulted in scenarios where, like Abigail, GMH clergy were disciplined into acts of self-silencing; conforming and assimilating into the dominant organisational culture to the detriment of their psychological and spiritual wellbeing (Stone 2022:21–22). As a result, even in the context of the modern Church, where the expression of religion and spirituality were central to the work and role of clergy, sharing indigenous beliefs proved unwelcome or taboo. As one person told us:

"I don't feel like I can theologically reflect safely [here]. I can't talk to my colleagues about [my indigenous beliefs and ancestral practices], and so I have to keep it bottled up. It leads to sometimes this feeling of a split personality…when I start speaking honestly about my spirituality and wanting to bring it into my liturgy as I lead, and I do it sensitively, with social intelligence and so forth, I still fear, and sometimes it happens, that a colleague will go, 'Oh, that was heresy, wasn't it?' ....We have this whole ancestor thing. ...And I suspect that... the whole ancestors thing might be tense…" Quote from GMH Clergy in Church of England (Stone 2022:27)

Through the experience of this project, it thus became possible to see how the framing of indigenous beliefs as heretical served as a more explicit silencing mechanism that sustained the subjugation of those from formerly colonised nations. In the process, indigenous beliefs, simply on account of being 'not European' – and likely also, not associated with white identities – come to be framed as anti-Christian (Stone 2022:27) in ways that sustained, reproduced and reinforced the religious, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies established under colonialism (Mignolo 2011b, 2021, 2022). Such oppression, we theorised, resulted in significant harm, with groups minoritised on account of holding Other religions and worldviews forced into a position of "perpetually holding back one's own cultural norms" and having to engage in "the additional labour required to make oneself 'acceptable'" to dominant groups (Stone 2022:21–22). This harm, which constitutes a form of epistemic violence or psycho-spiritual oppression, has been theorised by my co-researcher, Carlton Turner (2020), as self-negation – "the tendency for persons living in the aftermath of slavery and colonisation to "not" like themselves, or to live with dissonance in their identity" both in Christian and secular organisational settings. Given the strong and now well-evidenced association between self-silencing and mental health conditions such as depression (see, for example, Maji and Dixit 2019; Page, Stevens, and Galvin 2011), this was a finding that had significant implications and applicability for my exploration of the wellbeing of others pushed into silence within the secular organisational settings I chose to study.

6.2.3. Back to Black: The Transformative Power of Healing Collectives

As already noted, the tendency towards ignoring or subjugating, and thus silencing indigenous worldviews, only began to alter in the very late stages of my PhD when, frustrated by some of my findings and experiences, I began to pursue connections with others to whom I felt more connected and understood. This process of seeking led me increasingly into Black majority spaces and collaborations which often, though not always, provided safer opportunities to overcome self-negation, and engage in collective sense-making around the intra-psychic and internal worlds of other Black people who felt such collective silences more acutely (Bohak 2012:40–51; Tojnko 2014:72–75 & Hrobat Virloget and Logar 2020 in Virloget and Alempijević 2021:1) – discussed in section 2.3.3..

My therapeutic process with a radical black feminist of African descent – someone who was explicitly open to African spiritualities and epistemologies – became one of the first places I broke silences linked to the indigenous beliefs of my childhood. Working with someone who could hold space as I became reacquainted with aspects of my identity I had been forced to disown, split off and abandon over my life course, I explored how the subjugation of the indigenous had impacted my worldview directly. Part of this process involved reflecting privately on what it meant to carry, and feel in the body, both the silencing Christian-Secular worldviews of the coloniser, and the syncretic blend of Christian-Indigenous worldviews of the colonised, which were both a part of my mixed British-Tswana ancestry.[121] While this surfaced painful experiences, the process of remembering allowed me to face, rebalance, and reintegrate aspects of my previously silenced self, ultimately de-centring, to the extent that is ever possible, the dominance of those Christian-Secular and Eurocentric worldviews that had dominated my personal, professional, and academic areas of my life. This process was directly made possible through my adoption of autoethnographic tools and strategies (see section 2.4.), and contributed to a process of 'decolonising the mind' (wa Thiong'o 1982), in ways that allowed me to observe and narrate what a differently positioned researcher may have missed.

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121 As Van Klinken (2022) notes, this syncretic blend and integration of Christian and indigenous beliefs is not unusual in Africa, including amongst those holding decolonial perspectives. Wangari Maathai, for example, can be read as holding a worldview that integrates both, and is not dissimilar to the perspective of my own mother, who was also an environmentalist and contemporary of Maathai.

Furthermore, it was a process which, in hindsight, aligned directly with the first two stages of Poka Laenui's (2000 in Chilisa 2011:15) decolonisation process, 'rediscovery and recovery' and 'mourning', in which "the colonized Other rediscover and recover their own history, culture, language, and identity" and engage in "a process of interrogating the captive mind... to define in their own terms what is real to them [and] …also define their own rules on what can be known and what can be spoken [and] written about."

One outcome of this therapeutic process which I did not originally anticipate would be relevant to my research, was the initiation of a WRoCAH/AHRC-funded Researcher Employability Project. This involved a one-month research placement at Culham St Gabriel's Trust (CSTG) where I conducted a heavily anonymised auto-ethnographic study exploring how African indigenous beliefs have been pathologised and treated as signs of disturbance and mental ill health within Western biomedical models of care. Drawing on the experiences of family members, the project charted the story of Nkamo, my mother, who was institutionalised within Botswana's sole state-run mental health facility, only to find herself treated by healthcare professionals who came to see her indigenous beliefs – and especially her normative cultural and spiritual beliefs in ancestors – as evidence of mental illness.[122] One result of disclosing these normative beliefs was that Nkamo was administered a higher dose of anti-psychotic medication for 'delusions' – medications which resulted in an end to the dreams and visions she had experienced with messages from her deceased father since childhood, and which had served as a source of comfort to her during times of difficulty and distress. In sharing this heavily anonymised story from my own life, representing my own lived experience through the story of Phatsimo, my work on the project allowed me to move from a private process of breaking silences therapeutically, to a more public process of documenting and sharing insights on the position of the indigenous – presenting and sharing my anonymised findings at events, seminars and conferences (e.g. the Leeds University Centre for African Studies and the 2nd Pastoral, Religious and Spiritual Summit for Chaplains in the Public Sector held in Leeds in 2021), and through a vlog publicly disseminated by CSTG and on various social media panels (Walker 2021). This shifted me out of earlier

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[122] In most African indigenous traditions it is unremarkable to believe that "departed relatives continue to live, as spirits, among the surviving descendants and actively communicate with family and community members (Ngubane 1977; see also Edwards in this issue)" and indeed that "ancestral spirits are essentially archetypes of the collective unconsciousness of individuals" (Bojuwoye and Edwards 2011:375). For discussions, see for example, Eze (2015:100), Kpanake (2018:202–3), Falola & Griffin (2021:39–40), and Chilisa (2011:3).

phases of Laenui's (2000 in Chilisa 2011:16–17) indigenous decolonising process, and pushed me more firmly into a mode of "dreaming and imagining other ways of doing research" and making a firm "commitment to addressing the challenge of including the voices of the colonized Other". Overall, this meant taking action to "challenge unspoken rules as to what can or cannot be said" and to intentionally disrupt what counts as "admissible evidence" (Paddy Ladd (2003) Chilisa 2011:4).

This more public process proved incredibly valuable, serving not only as a tiny personal act of decolonial liberation, but also as an opportunity to understand how others related to the issue – a process I documented in my research journal. Speaking publicly enabled several important exchanges with colleagues and peers: the first was with a fellow PhD student, who prefers to remain anonymous. This particular student had been researching the experiences of Black Christians accessing mental health services in the UK; she told me of a conversation during her qualitative data collection when, to use her own words, "a participant shared how racism operated in Western culture to depict voodoo as a spiritual practice as being shameful and taboo". Towards the end of an interview, she asked this participant if there was anything else they wanted to share regarding their experiences of religion and faith in mental health services. The service user apparently looked around and replied with a whisper, as if saying something taboo, shameful, or unsayable: "We probably shouldn't talk about voodoo, should we...?!". A second exchange came from a fellow Southern African PhD student, Dr. Jacobs Mbango Sihela, who I met at a Critical Management Studies summer school in Sweden. In a private exchange, having watched my vlog, he noted how the focus on the indigenous in my research "exposes the conflict between Western Ontology/Scientism and African Indigenous worldview/cosmologies, not just on mental health issues but on a range of other issues". More tellingly, with reference to Marimba Ani's text, Yurugu: An Afrikan-Centred Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behaviour (1994), he noted how the denigration of the indigenous was a challenge in which he was also embroiled – and one "that demands serious scholarly attention":

"The challenge that most [African] scholars face in studying African experiences is framing their studies within a western thought paradigm which end up despiritualizing our African experiences. And this is epistemic and colonial violence, as you correctly stated."

Finally, a third exchange late in 2022 proved especially fruitful and offered considerable validation of the analysis I have shared around the silencing of the indigenous in this chapter so far.[123] Following a keynote presentation at the CSTG RExChange conference, I was approached by Alysia-Lara, the former (Deputy) Head Teacher of a primary school, who had led on Religious Education (RE) among other subjects in her school, and was now responsible for leading on issues of racial justice and faith as part of a strategic national education initiative. Having come across my vlog and its associated teaching materials, Alysia-Lara shared how the silencing of her indigenous spiritualities had been relevant in both her personal and professional life. As someone with responsibility for education, she shared first, that she was increasingly advocating for the inclusion of indigenous perspectives in the teaching of RE, and how this had already involved working with colleagues to make links between the African indigenous worldviews with which she was familiar, and the pre-modern Irish indigenous beliefs (i.e. Druidry) of one of her colleagues. This collective bracketing of a shared experience chimed with my decision to explore Abigail's pagan beliefs alongside African indigenous worldviews and to theorise the shared location of both as 'nonmodern' perspectives. Second, she told me about a recent safeguarding incident she had been required to address when a concern was raised in response to a student expressing an indigenous worldview in an RE lesson – something she told me "never should have happened" and was a result of the lack of understanding and pathologisation of such worldviews.[124] She also thanked me for addressing intuition as a form of knowing in my vlog and shared a challenge she had encountered in teaching a group of Year 6 students about the concept. Specifically, for Alysia-Lara, the challenge was how to articulate a form of 'knowing' without reference to the spiritual and indigenous worldviews of her family of origin in ways that could cause problems:

"I remember reading a book to my Year 6s which mentioned intuition. I distinctly remember struggling with how to explain intuition *in a way where I wouldn't get in trouble with management*

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[123] Though the exchange occurred late into my write up phase, and long after I had conducted my analysis, I have included it here because of its salience and the paucity of research and evidence in this under-studied area of organisational life around which I can relate my findings.

[124] The incident had much in common with cases of students, especially Muslim pupils, referred to counterterrorism as part of the government's Prevent strategy (Holmwood and Aitlhadj 2022:6; e.g. Khaleeli 2015; Zempi and Tripli 2023:231). As Alysia-Lara shared, the pathologisation of indigenous beliefs "goes right to the heart of the safeguarding issues… [and] how we almost anticipate that some ways of knowing and making sense of the world will be received as threatening or somehow dangerous."

or parents. One child spoke up and said, "Intuition is when you just know something, you can't explain, I can't explain it. You just do."

Perhaps most relevant, however, were the challenges Alysia-Lara shared from her personal life. As a child of dual Brazilian and Nigerian descent, Alysia-Lara had grown up, like me, around both colonial Christian worldviews, and relatively subjugated African indigenous beliefs from both West Africa and Brazil (i.e. Afro-Brazilian Candomblé).[125] The silencing of these worldviews, she told me, began long before she became a working professional. When, following a significant family trauma (i.e. bereavement), she expressed intuitions and spoke of spiritual experiences within the framework that was normative for her and many others within her community, she was cautioned and told explicitly by the adults in her life not to mention such experiences at school. The impact of this was considerable and gave rise to the starkest example of (self-)silencing and (self-)negation I encountered: Alysia-Lara explained how she had become an elective mute between the ages of six and ten, largely because of trauma, but also because she struggled to name and put words to experiencing the presence of a recently departed relative. This experience, which was accompanied by a fear of being pathologised by those around her, strongly echoed the story of 'Nkamo', my mother, who was labelled a witch as a child, when she too had spoken of similar experiences at home and in her Catholic missionary school with reference to normative indigenous beliefs following the loss of her father as a child. As a result, listening to the vlog and my research findings provided Alysia-Lara with a language, theory, and way of making sense of her experiences – something which she made plain to me over a video call and a series of email exchange:

> "Today is the first time I have words to put to my experiences and understanding of indigenous beliefs. …My mum watched it too. She said that sadly she wasn't surprised or shocked by the testimony you shared; however, she was saddened that the same things are still happening 40 years on from when she started working in this area [of mental health]. She also said that unless the systems change, history will continue to repeat itself."

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[125] Alysia-Lara prefers to identify as Brazilian rather than Afro-Brazilian, owing to the fact that her ancestors' roots can be traced back directly to Brazil for many generations. An author currently working to document the story of her family has recently revealed that her relatives, dating as far back as 1823, all had Brazilian names, and that her grandfather had been actively involved in welcoming newly arrived slaves, encouraging the sustenance and preservation of their African indigenous beliefs and cultural practices in their ancestral home in Bahia in much the same ways she does in her own racial justice work today.

For Alysia-Lara, Mbango and myself then – all people of African descent – it seemed that the process of overcoming self-negation and self-silencing required that we went 'back to Black'. By this I mean that it was specifically through our connection to other Black knowers – and occasionally colleagues and research participants with a connection to similarly positioned pre-modern European worldviews (e.g. pagan, Druid) – that we were able to cultivate rare spaces of belonging, finding the words to articulate and break collective silences based on shared experience. This was because the connection to relatable others allowed us to overcome a form of oppression that Dotson (2011:244) calls testimonial smothering – the "truncating of one's own testimony in order to insure [sic] that the testimony contains only content for which one's audience demonstrates testimonial competence". Since like Abigail, we all anticipated that our indigenous worldviews would not be understood – at best, faced with blank stares of nonrecognition, and at worst, forms of gentle mockery or what Dotson (2011:244) names "pernicious ignorance" such as those described as part of my interaction with the Man of God in the vignette preceding this chapter – we chose to exercise discernment, withholding our true perspectives and prioritising silence as a form of self-preservation until we could be assured of both solidarity and safety.

These encounters in Black intramural spaces thus had much in common with some of the 'safe spaces' and subcultures I encountered, participated in, and/or was involved in facilitating along with others on the fringes of predominantly white organisations. These included, for example, Black, Afrocentric, and/or GMH-led decolonising collectives established and run by staff and students in Higher Education settings – for example, Decolonise University of Kent student-led initiative, a workshop organised by the Building the Anti-Racist Classroom collective, and several Black Theology and African scholarly networks for academics and students in the UK, where reference to indigenous and various other spiritual perspectives were far more common.[126] Collectively then, it was through these GMH/Black-led and/or majority spaces that it became clearer how race, and in this case Black-

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[126] I observed the same in the global south, as part of my involvement in a workshop on Decolonising Higher Education in Brazil organised and led by Professor Shirley-Ann Tate and Professor Breitner Tavares in 2019, where references to African Indigenous Beliefs were normalised, with devotees of Candomblé heavily involved in the conference, and integrating spiritual practice alongside academic theorisations. This notably occurred in ways that felt far more normative, embodied and integrated than the intellectual forms of engagement in academic institutions in the UK.

ness and African-ness, overlapped with the diverse array of 'nonmodern' worldviews that go unrecognised and silenced – likely because they remain marginal, on the fringes of, or non-existent within most of the secular and predominantly white organisations I studied.

6.3. Silences, Negation and Nonrecognition

In this chapter, I have so far considered the experiences of those such as Abigail and Alysia-Lara's colleague, who held or had an interest in worldviews that were normative in pre-modern (i.e. pre-Christian and pre-Enlightenment) Europe, alongside several others professing African indigenous beliefs. In this section, drawing on decolonial literature on silences and silencing, as well as African knowledges, I explore in greater detail how we might make sense of the experiences and impacts of silencing on these two 'nonmodern' groups which exist on the margins of organisational life, and phenomena associated with the rupturing of these silences.

6.3.1. Silences, Silencing and Epistemic Violence

As already noted in my methods chapter (see section 2.3.3.), within studies of marginalised and oppressed groups, silences and the practices of silencing "can signal a form of oppression, produced by the forces that exclude certain ideas, people and words from being spoken, visible, attended to or even thought about" (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:417). In the context of organisations such as Network Rail and F&BF, both of which are marked by *(Judaeo-)*Christian-Secular White(li)ness, how then should we make sense of the ongoing impacts of these "forces that exclude" on those professing what I collectively refer to as 'nonmodern' perspectives?

Much like the GMH clergy discussed earlier in section 6.2.2, those professing 'nonmodern' worldviews at Network Rail and F&BF appeared to engage in conscious and unconscious acts of self-silencing and self-negation, employing "façades of conformity" (Hewlin and Broomes 2019 in Spiller et al. 2021:82) and assimilating into "the dominant mono-cultural way" (Lentin 2008 in Spiller et al. 2021), unless and until they were fortunate enough to find safety and connection in relatable others. Thus, in the secular organisations I studied, just as much as the Church, powerful (Judaeo-)Christian-Secular cultural threads became the "hegemonic forces through which a dominant culture's worldview [ensured among the 'nonmodern' an] ...isomorphic pull of acquiescence to "normalized"

values and norms" (Freire in Spiller et al. 2021:82). This 'pull of acquiescence' – whether driven by the strongly Christian cultural threads of the Church, the much more explicitly non or nominally religious Christian-Secular culture of Network Rail, or the *Judaeo*-Christian-Secular culture of F&BF – seemed inevitably to be shaped by European cosmologies (Mignolo 2011b, 2022) and a particularly Eurocentric and European mode of being and seeing the world (see also Munyaradzi 2014:2). This European mode of being is in itself, as Mignolo (2011b) puts it, a feature of the 'colonial matrix of power'.

The impacts of these forms of coloniality amongst those professing 'nonmodern' perspectives were significant in professional life, and, in many cases, deeply and directly connected with mental health and wellbeing. Abigail and Alysia-Lara's testimonies, for example, made clear how being "subsumed into the dominant whole" resulted, over time, in the "silenc[ing of a] cultural sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and self-belief" (Spiller et al. 2021:82). In both cases, as was my own experience, this undermining of self-worth and identity had a role in disciplining each of us into becoming "the wardens of our own silence" (Spiller et al. 2021:82), sacrificing significant aspects of our "whole selves" in order to be received as professional among colleagues, peers and superiors, and at least superficially belong. In Abigail's case, the emotional labour involved with maintaining these silences appeared to have a direct impact on her internal world – something she expressed as part of a one-to-one conversation where she was able to more vulnerably express frustration at the experience of being unheard, unseen and overlooked within the banner campaign. The same was true for Alysia-Lara, whose anger was to some extent tempered by the sense of relief she experienced in finding someone with whom she could express the significant traumatic effects of being forced to self-silence.

When considered alongside my personal experiences, as well as the insights of my research in the Church of England and my WRoCAH/AHRC-funded Researcher Employability Project discussed in section 6.2. above, disclosures from both Alysia-Lara and Abigail painted a troubling picture. By "feeling into", being with and attuning to the emotions of both women, an intersubjective exchange around our shared experiences (Boden et al. 2016:1080) exposed clearly the limits of popular EDI discourse. Rather than being enabled to authentically navigate religiously plural organisations, bringing our "whole selves to work" according to the principles of diversity and inclusivity formally championed by organisations, the ongoing reality and dynamics of coloniality embedded in the

culture instead ensured our ongoing nonrecognition and negation. This led to constant vigilance and self-censoring as we sought to ascertain which if any of our worldviews could be named and stated safely in any given interaction. Additionally, both in organisational life and beyond, an (un)conscious acquiescence to dominant culture resulted in a sense of living constantly with double consciousness (Du Bois 2008; Fanon 2002) – or 'a split personality' as a clergy member put it – and a madness-inducing, institutionally-driven, "feeling of suffocation and choking" (Mbembe 2016) which has long been theorised in decolonial and black feminist literature as epistemic violence or epistemicide (Dotson 2011, 2014; Fricker 1999, 2007; de Sousa Santos 2014).

6.3.2. Breaking Silences as Anti-Colonial Liberation

In the face of epistemic violence and suffocation, it was significant that there were attempts by Abigail, Alysia-Lara, myself and others to rupture and speak into long-held colonial silences. These attempts to speak constituted claims for recognition – attempts to engage in "liberatory speech" acts, to name and challenge epistemic injustices, and possibly even to "release traumatic memories (Caruth 1995)" (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:420–21) – through formalised EDI and interfaith initiatives connected with religion and belief.

Following the BLM uprising, amongst people of African descent, similar claims for recognition in organisations, while still marginal appeared to be growing stronger. Towards the end of my research project, for example, I became aware of emerging attempts to collectively challenge institutional structures by people in my personal and professional networks. Amongst those professing African indigenous worldviews, this included a campaign by the [Council on African & Diasporic Indigenous Spiritual Systems](#) (CADISS), a UK-based collective petitioning the UK government, the United Nations (including its Human Rights Council) and, before Brexit, the European Parliament, to formally recognise ["African Indigenous Spirituality and its Diasporic derivatives"](#) (C.A.D.I.S.S. 2020). As part of these efforts, CADISS noted explicitly how "African Indigenous Spirituality is still excluded from the corpus of World Faiths", leaving practitioners of these worldviews "vulnerable to persecution and human rights abuses" in ways they perceived to be antithetical to 'religious tolerance' and "the principles of diversity and inclusion". Furthermore, they noted how indigenous worldviews are "not listed as part of the nation's celebrated religious festivals *nor... recognised in the workplace*" (italics my emphasis) – a matter which they argued to have "adverse implications under the Equality Act

2010 Act" (C.A.D.I.S.S. 2020, 2022). Critically, just as I myself and Alysia-Lara had done within our own advocacy efforts, in their first campaign (2020) they also linked the nonrecognition of African Indigenous Spiritualities with colonialism and the historical demonisation and denouncement of these beliefs as forms of 'witchcraft' or 'evil', noting the "historical redress Britain must make in acknowledging and correcting its past wrongs under Empire". In their words:

> "Britain especially has a significant role to play in this, because it was the first of the European countries to outlaw ceremonies such as Osun's in its colonies under the Obeah Act of 1898 in Jamaica, on the basis of a very vague definition of what 'Obeah' entailed."

These attempts by CADISS, along with those by others in the organisations I studied, appeared to reignite some of the more vocal critiques made of religion-focussed policy and practice initiatives by anti-racists in the 1980s. These included, for example, the work of leftist activists at the Greater London Council (GLC) discussed as part of an account of the "hidden history of interfaith" by Grayson (2018:16). As part of this history, Grayson noted how some interfaith initiatives in the 80s, taking place in the early stages of the shift from a race to a faith relations policy paradigm (McLoughlin 2010), had explicitly been conceptualised as spaces in which it might be possible to bring "people together to fight systemic injustices and racism". Furthermore, she noted how these earlier attempts at interfaith work had been "more community-based", involving "more black (African heritage) people [e.g. Rastafarians], who were also generally underrepresented in the interfaith spaces [she] encountered", and struck "a very different tone" to the kind of interfaith work and organisational culture she had encountered over the five years she undertook ethnographic research into F&BF (previously 3FF at the time of her research).

While both CADISS campaigns have lacked the support needed to draw the attention of public policymakers,[127] they can nonetheless be seen as examples of "intergenerational aspirations to visibilize personal and collective injuries" (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:420–21) – attempts by the descendants of colonised people to challenge silences which "emanate out of unequal systems of

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[127] Both campaigns by CADISS have attracted just 126 signatories and 1407 signatories respectively in the three years since launch

power produced by imperialism, racism, heteropatriarchy and their ongoing iterations" . Additionally, they can be seen as courageous attempts to recover voice, meaning, agency and liberation in the face of ongoing oppression; clear examples, it might be said, of how "individuals and social groups move from silence to voice their memories" (Virloget and Alempijević 2021:2).

6.3.3. Lingering Ghosts, Haunting Silences, or Ever-Present Ancestral Wisdoms?

In the face of ongoing coloniality, it is perhaps surprising that the perspectives of the 'nonmodern' were at all evident or traceable as I navigated the field. One possible interpretation of this phenomenon is that the muted presence of pagan and indigenous worldviews, which existed as fleeting ruptures in long-held, colonial silences within my data, signalled "a haunting or lingering ghost from the past" (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:417). If, as they suggest, these ghosts from the past continue to be "uncannily present in the narratives and modes of life that constitute people's imaginative possibilities and horizons of expectation" (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021:417), then it should be of no surprise that 'nonmodern' perspectives would be present; ready and waiting to be unearthed within the life of those in the organisations I studied. This would be especially likely given the contemporary 'revival' of pagan traditions that are now well documented in the literature, and given the turn in recent years towards indigenous beliefs that I have observed amongst younger colleagues, friends and scholars of African descent.

It is also possible, however, that interpreting the muted presence of pagan and indigenous worldviews as ghosts *from the past* which are now, in some real sense, experiencing a 'revival' is problematic. Such interpretations reinforce the Eurocentric 19th-century Enlightenment discourse through which it was imagined that the 'quaint traditions' and 'folklore' of the 'nonmodern' were inevitably on the brink of disappearance (Masuzawa 2005) and thus somehow in need of revival, rather than simply unknown, or unknowable to dominant groups. An alternative interpretation, and one that centres indigenous worldviews which have existed outside or on the margins of the academy (Chilisa 2011:1; Dei 2009:7; Munyaradzi 2014:9–10), might instead assert the ways that 'nonmodern' worldviews have remained alive and well; ever-present and stubbornly resistant to annihilation even in the face of colonial dominance and silencing strategies. This ever-presence could be understood according to non-Western conceptions of social reality in which 'nonmodern' worldviews continue to be transmitted to descendants through ancestors who "inhabit a spiritual realm beyond the

physically measurable… time and space" (Edwards 1985; Ngubane 19977)". In other words, it would be impossible, from within many African spiritual perspectives, that such worldviews could die or become relics of the past since "departed relatives continue to live, as spirits, among surviving descendants and actively communicate with family and community members" (Bojuwoye and Edwards 2011:375), participating in, and often having a profound influence in the lives of "their communities of origin" (Eze 2015:100).

Although reflective of a different (i.e. Norse Heathen) worldview, Abigail's story could perhaps be read from an African spiritual perspective as representative of this phenomenon, since her engagement with pre-modern European beliefs was arrived at directly through an exploration of her ancestry. While Western interpretations might view Abigail's journey from Christianity into Norse Heathenry as something that signals a move 'backwards' – to that which is even *more* 'barmy', 'strange', or 'other' – an Afrocentric spiritual framework might assert, for example, how Abigail's engagement with the Norse Heathen beliefs of her ancestors, should be interpreted as a courageous reclamation and acceptance of ancestral ways of knowing and being: a return to self and a move towards healing or wholeness made possible through ancestors that remain very much alive and present through the passage of time. Thus, even when silenced or muted at Network Rail, the institutional context of which she is a part, Abigail's ancestral worldview remains very much alive, especially so in her private life. This is evident in her claims for recognition as part of the banner campaign, her wearing of pagan symbolism through the adoption of a heathen brooch which she wears to work, her continued celebration of solstice festivals and other forms of ritual and practice in her personal life. The same is true also for myself, and several others with whom I eventually had exchanges after my time in the field (e.g. Alysia-Lara, Mbango etc.) – since each of us had active engagements with the indigenous beliefs of our forebears, even if this was rarely named in our working lives, and only shared through private exchanges.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated how those professing what I term 'nonmodern' worldviews occupy a similar structural position, often existing as social silences and subject to nonrecognition within broader EDI and interfaith engagements in organisational life. The experiences of Abigail, a Norse Heathen, constituted one example of silencing and nonrecognition within Network Rail's

interfaith week banner campaign, which occurred despite her considerable position of power within the organisation's Multi Faith Network. This argument is developed through my reflexive autoethnographic exploration of how Abigail's experience can be seen as adjacent to my own, and those of others holding indigenous African beliefs across a range of other organisational settings. In drawing this parallel, I have relied on intersubjective knowledge, as well as my broader experience as a practitioner researcher moving across and between different types of organisations, most recently at Black Thrive – a Black-led organisation where I worked during my PhD write-up, and where engagements with indigenous beliefs were less muted and somewhat more readily on the table for discussion. Critically, my observations suggest that 'nonmodern' beliefs are commonly silenced within existing engagements with religion and worldviews in organisational life – observations which I have been able to validate through direct affirmation of my findings, following my public engagement within this area. To speak into these silenced and/or muted worldviews, dedicating a chapter of my thesis to considering their relevance in contemporary organisational life then, is itself an attempt at overcoming self-negation, epistemic injustice and the psycho-spiritual oppressions that can be associated with coloniality; especially the spiritual and epistemic hierarchies established during European colonisation and imperialism and said to exist under the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo 2011b). It is also to acknowledge the ways that in reclaiming voice, words and language, we can emerge as "our own liberators... railing against [the] tide" (Freire 1970:97 in Spiller et al. 2021:82).

In many ways, offering this interpretation has felt risky and challenging. This is because dealing with silences has required me to make explicit ways of knowing that some consider unknowable – for example, drawing on knowledges connected to the ancestors and the spiritual realm, which are normative Botswana, but less recognised in Britain (Chilisa 2011). This process has also required me to be transparent and vulnerable, revealing aspects of my own worldview and enculturation, which have been historically marginalised, pathologised and subject to discrimination; hence silenced and largely kept private and within. In taking this approach, however, I have taken heart from the work of decolonial scholar Bagele Chilisa (2011), who also originates from Botswana, and has made a strong case for integrating our indigenous knowledge into research work. Likewise I have been inspired by Dragojlovic & Samuels (2021:18) who highlight that what is perceived as "potential unknowability should not stop [sociologists,] anthropologists and historians from attending to silences – indeed, if anything, it may increase the ethical demand that anthropologists engage with" them.

My concluding chapter builds on this encouragement and reflects more generally on how my thesis has been bound up in breaking colonial silences. It is preceded by two final ethnographic vignettes, *Born Precocious* and *My Job is Not to Make You Comfortable!,* both of which reflect how my process of undertaking research has served as a spiritually informed process of reclaiming agency and speaking truth to power; in each case this involved acts of liberation to break silences around race and religion and worldviews in both my personal and professional life.

Vignette 8: Born Precocious

LISTEN UP.

When I was 11 years old I was shamed and effectively disowned by my OWN family members for calling out their delectable, sweet, casual brand of anti-black racism.

They were 'good white people'.

Definitely 'well-meaning' white people.

Civil servants. Social workers.

People who felt they couldn't possibly be racist because they had done their 'equal opps training'.

Because they had done me the "favour" of giving me the "opportunity" to come and study in their lovely conflict zone in the U.K.

20 years later they still attempt to shame and silence me.

Around the time of my wedding, because they didn't get an invite, they sent a letter to my parents saying that I had always been a "precocious child". And, quote:

"Calling someone a racist in the 21st Century is just about one of the worst things you could be accused of. We had always hoped your daughter would grow up to be ashamed of what she said."

Can you imagine the levels of entitlement and narcissism it takes to be THAT way inclined? To have zero capacity for curiosity or self-reflection? And, worse still, to be THAT way inclined towards an 11-

year-old child in your care – who's journal you read to find these 'shameful insults' before staging your intervention? And then that same adult, out of nowhere, after a 20-year no contact hiatus?

Well... here we are. I am fully grown. Still precocious. With all the receipts. And I am not ashamed.

Not. In. The. Least.

I am not afraid to lose family over pathological levels of anti-blackness and white entitlement, which are also reflected across absolutely every sphere of society.

I learned everything about how anti-blackness functions within my family first.

Most of it looks like ignorance. Or complacency. Or anxious "I don't wanna know" and "make this go away" vibes.

Sometimes it is saviouristic or paternalistic "you should be grateful", "not all white people", and "maybe it's time to: let it go, move on and get past it" vibes.

Often it involves defensive scapegoating of one "problematic" (🙄), "bad apple". The person who is somehow more racist than those who were just as complicit. Negligent in their silence; wilful in their refusal to see.

The rest is a dose of minimising, stonewalling, white tears; the fragility, and deflection; the gaslighting when people don't have the courage or desire to self-reflect or fully engage.

If you think I am unwilling to lose strangers or jobs, you simply don't know me. I would quite literally take my life before I willingly tolerate that kind of disrespect and ignorance again.

I do know the costs of speaking up. Way too well. But these days...

I STAY SILENT FOR NO ONE.

That letter, sent TWENTY years later, after I had held my tongue and my pain for so long; it was the thing that SEALED THE DEAL.

ABUSE THRIVES IN SILENCE.

WE ARE ALL #TIRED.

AND SOME OF US WERE ALSO #BORNPRECOCIOUS.

Vignette 9: My Job Is Not To Make You Comfortable

6th July 2018

My job is not to make you feel comfortable. That is *not* what I am paid to do. My job is to challenge you to see the things you do not want to see. And think the thoughts you do not want to think. ...And, yes, that's what you're (occasionally!) paying me to do.

A lot of the time it's labour that I (and many other BPoC or marginalised groups) perform in organisations and the world for FREE!

Or rather, at significant cost to ourselves, our career progression, our mental health!
Because *we* are the ones who face significant #backlash for daring to raise these issues.

But still we speak anyway...

Even when we know, before we even open our mouths, that we may be cast as "angry", "aggressive", "obsessed with racism"; as the "dictators of diversity", and perhaps most patronisingly, as having had "a hard life" and being "understandably traumatised", including by friends and family...

Even when we know that by speaking up we will become "the problem". Not the "ism" itself, or the people and systems that perpetuate "isms" (which by the way, is what creates a justified and proportionate internalised trauma), but US. Because it's far more comfortable to project and deflect.

... STILL we speak up... For *ourselves*, if nothing else!

#racism #diversitywork #whiteness #alltheisms #allthephobias

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The theme of silences runs strongly through this thesis. Soo too, has it been a significant preoccupation of decolonial scholars, who have called attention to how silences and silencing practices are inherently bound up in questions of power and coloniality. Writing this thesis has itself been an act of breaking long-held silences and finding language to articulate my observations and experiences of the many organisations I have encountered over the course of this study.

In line with this motivation, and building out from my work as an EDI consultant, this study has explored how coloniality is reproduced and sustained with respect to race and religion and worldviews within the modern, secular British organisations in which I worked as a researcher and practitioner, for over five years, from 2018 to 2023. As outlined in my introduction and conceptual framework chapters, manifestations of coloniality are multifarious, complex, and highly contested, and have been theorised and advanced by a diverse range of scholars, critical thinkers, and political activists. My personal approach to the topic has therefore involved taking a highly reflexive autoethnographic approach to considering issues of coloniality, locating myself in the field alongside participants as I have explored the ongoing salience and relevance of a wide range of decolonial theory in contemporary organisational life. In doing so, I have filled a significant gap in the literature identified by Prasad (2003:7–9), and directly linked contemporary forms of marginalisation, discrimination and oppression in British-based organisations and working lives to legacies of colonialism, imperialism and empire.

Over the remainder of this chapter, I outline how my approach has allowed me to arrive at an unfolding yet authoritative account of the ongoing dynamics of coloniality. I approach the chapter by systematically showing how I have answered each research question with reference to phenomena and dynamics uncovered and articulated in my data chapters. This is followed by a brief reflection on the significance of my contribution and some possible avenues for further research.

7.1. Answering the Research Questions

7.1.1. Drivers of Organisational Engagements with Race and Religion

As already noted in my introduction, this study set out to explore ongoing manifestations of coloniality in the specific context of race, religion and worldviews in a few selected modern, secular British organisations. Building on my experience as an EDI consultant and practitioner, the early stages of my research were consumed with addressing my first research question, and advancing a deeper understanding of what drives and/or inhibits engagements with race, religion and worldviews within modern secular British organisations (RQ1). In many ways, this first research question was the easiest to answer. My most significant finding was that the factors influencing how individuals in organisations engaged with matters of race, religion and worldviews were multiple and complex. On the one hand, my time in the field made clear how government policy and legislation serve as top-down mechanisms, influencing the policies, practices and lived dynamics of organisations. This includes the Equality Act 2010, which, as I noted in sections 1.3.2. and 3.1., ensured that 'religion and belief' was seen, at least in principle, as having parity of status alongside 'race' as a protected characteristic (Edge and Vickers 2015; L. Vickers 2007; Vickers 2010, 2011), and thus, constituted a legitimate matter for discussion and engagement within organisational life. At Network Rail, as within other public sector environments, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) was particularly influential in driving engagements with faith (see section 2.2.1) despite a broader indifference and hostility to religion among the majority of personnel.

Additionally, there was also evidence that government policy associated both with counterterrorism and community cohesion, as well as broader efforts by the state to manage the diversity of multicultural Britain, influenced the nature of workplace engagements with race, religion and worldviews. In the case of the latter, this included interfaith policy and practice advanced under community cohesion strategies at the national level (Cantle 2001, 2008:62 & 194, 2012:91–92 & 112, 2016; Prideaux and Dawson 2018). The work and mission of Network Rail's MFN's, for example, was aligned with the wider organisation's aim of "promoting a more open, diverse and inclusive organisation", using "principles of interfaith dialogue" promoted by the state at a national level (see section 5.2.1). This could be seen in the MFN's planning of EDI and advocacy initiatives, such as the launch of its banner campaign to "promote interfaith harmony on a grand scale" around Inter Faith Week, a national programme of events led by the Inter Faith Network (see section 6.1.). It was also

visible in the Faith & Belief Forum (F&BF) mission to 'model the world they wanted to see' (section 5.3.), as part of their effort to reassure new funders and stakeholders of their credibility and capacity to attract revenue through equalities and community cohesion-focussed work (Prideaux and Dawson 2018:366) (see section 2.2.1 and 5.3.). In the case of Network Rail, the creeping of state counterterrorism policies and measures into workplaces and organisations was also apparent; just as in my former place of employment, at Network Rail this was especially evident as religion, and especially Islam, came to be disproportionately associated and conflated with extremism, as part of the controversial roll-out of counterterrorism training under *Project Griffin* (see sections 1.1.1. and 5.2.3).

Top-down drivers of engagements with race, religion, and worldviews were, however, by no means one-directional. While government legislation and policy aimed at managing diversity severely impacted organisational life, these instruments also became key mechanisms through which minoritised workers were able to mobilise around claims for recognition in organisations. Thus, staff networks, such as the Multi Faith Network at Network Rail and the Race and Faith Working Group at the Faith & Belief Forum, became some of the mechanisms through which staff made proactive and intentional claims for recognition in relation to race and religion. These claims for recognition typically emerged in the form of workplace grievances raised by individuals, and occasionally groups, as a response to racial or religious discrimination (e.g. see section 4.1.1. for a discussion of individual racism grievance raised by Hudson, and section 4.2.3. for the collective religion-focussed grievance raised in response to *Project Griffin*). Notably, such mobilisations for recognition often emerged in the wake of major events or larger public conversations in the wider socio-political landscape. In these moments, examples of everyday racism and religious discrimination were more common, typically emerging as part of 'casual water-cooler conversations', or exchanges carried out via electronic communications platforms in the wake of significant social events. Additionally, staff were more motivated, and perhaps all emboldened, to pursue conversations around issues in the wider social sphere.

Over my time in the field, for example, participants shared how they experienced an increase in discrimination at work at points when social events made national news. Staff at Network Rail spoke openly in focus groups about the islamophobia they commonly experienced following terrorist attacks such as the Manchester bombing in 2017 (see references to Imran and Ali in section 4.2.1).

Other occasions where space was made possible for dialogue in the organisation about external matters arose in the wake of the murder of George Floyd as the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement gained ground. Likewise, discussions around race, religion and worldviews tended to become significant at moments where larger political mobilisations and claims for recognition were being made in the wider public and online spheres. As an example, conversations around race strengthened and increased at F&BF, as the *Charity's So White* and *Black Lives Matter* movements increasingly gained ground, and issues of race and anti-black racism became significant b sector-wide and public conversations (see sections 2.4.3. and 2.5.1.); while mobilisations for working definitions of antisemitism and islamophobia became a significant part of workplace discussions at Network Rail, and were directly referenced by the MFN and other employees on Yammer, the organisation's intranet platform for internal communications (see section 4.2.).

7.1.2. Interpretations of Secular Modernity

In addition to the many complex drivers, several factors inhibited engagements with race, religion and worldviews in organisations (RQ1). These factors were intimately bound up with answers to my second research question, through which I aimed to explore an understand my second research question: how do differently positioned professionals construct workplace cultures in relation to ideals of secular modernity (RQ2). Chief among the inhibiting factors were the broader social attitudes of dominant groups (i.e. the cultural majority) in British society. Individuals in these groups were generally far better represented at the highest organisational levels (i.e. within senior leadership, Executive and Board level positions), and therefore had significant power to influence organisational cultures, both through action and inaction around claims for recognition.

At Network Rail, despite formal and public commitments to faith inclusion on the company website, a broader culture of indifference, and sometimes active hostility towards religion among the non or nominally religious majority – which included senior leaders – significantly impacted interpretations of what it meant to be a secular organisation (see Chapter 5).   These understandings of 'secular modernity', were heavily influenced by the rationality of the organisation's STEM culture, and in turn impacted the extent to which religion could be tabled, addressed and expressed as a legitimate diversity issue in organisations. Often they undermined and inhibited claims for recognition,

representation and inclusion made by religiously minoritised staff (see, for example, my discussion of the session I delivered alongside the Chair of Network Rail's MFN in 2018, in sections 5.1. and 5.2.).

At F&BF, where different and less inhibiting interpretations of secular modernity were at play, a far more welcoming and respectful stance towards a whole range of religions and worldviews was evident. The result was a far more welcoming and respectful stance towards a whole range of religions and worldviews – one that was in keeping with the organisation's focus on interfaith and intercultural relations and made sense given the significant influence of Jewish staff and stakeholders, who were well represented in the organisation (see section 4.3. and 4.4.). This stance, however, appeared to undergo significant alteration as the organisation undertook a rebrand process, professionalising and unwittingly secularising, as part of an attempt to attract new sources of income. Integral to this process was a drive towards hiring more non and nominally religious staff at all levels in the team, with personnel increasingly reflecting Britain's cultural majority, and thus reinforcing dominant group culture and the status quo (see section 4.3). The outcome was a more cautious and self-conscious response to religion; an environment in which people of faith and observant staff found it increasingly difficult to express and manifest their worldviews at work, as more religiously inclusive and earlier established interpretations of secular modernity came to be questioned.

Collectively, despite significant differences between Network Rail and F&BF, and strong challenges to dominant culture by minoritised staff in both organisations, a sense emerged that interpretations of secular modernity among dominant groups and the cultural majority aligned strongly with "classical" sociological ideas of what it means to be modern (e.g. those embodied by the likes of Marx, Durkheim, Weber etc) (Eisenstadt 2000:1). These interpretations "assumed, even if only implicitly, that the cultural program of modernity as it developed in Europe" during the colonial era were universally agreed upon, liable to "take hold and prevail all over the globe" (Eisenstadt 2000:1) and were reflected as dominant cultural threads within British organisations. As noted in section 5.4., these interpretations of secular modernity at Network Rail, F&BF and beyond, not only shaped responses to religion and worldviews, but were also intimately bound up with and strongly mirrored responses to race in organisations. The effect of this in both organisations and beyond was that claims for recognition on the grounds of race, religion and worldviews were inhibited as dominant groups

held tight to the prevailing paradigm of the secular, which secured their status and maintained coloniality.[128]

Overall, my findings in relation to research questions 1 & 2 reinforced, yet significantly deepened and challenged insights in the existing literature on religion and belief in organisations (e.g. Dinham & Jones 2010, Dinham & Francis 2015, Dinham 2021, Power & Baker 2018). These studies have examined how historical and contemporary socio-political and cultural contexts shape existing engagements with religion and worldviews. Much of this literature highlights the urgent duty placed upon public professionals to play their part in advancing 'religious literacy' and promoting 'community cohesion', while also emphasising the challenges associated with this task. This is against the backdrop of a pervasive public discourse of secularity in which religion – especially amongst the liberal left – is seen, at best, as the elephant in the room', and at worst, an irrelevant and archaic collection of 'problematic' belief systems which are frequently pitted against false notions of the 'neutrality' of secular, public institutions (Dinham & Francis, 2015, p5-6; Moore, 2015, p30 & 37). Likewise, these studies underline how employers, especially in the public sector, are increasingly required to participate in measures countering violent extremism, in line with the national security agenda (Home Office, 2011). Some researchers have shown how often, these CT measures disproportionately impact Muslims (Francis and van Eck Duymaer, 2015, p113-114; Dinham, 2015, p110; Wakelin & Spencer, 2015).

The conclusions that I reached my through data analysis, also aligned with those of more critical literatures on race and racism in organisations. These studies – as well as my own – identify both the drivers and challenges associated with EDI efforts to secure race equality in the workplace, a strand of EDI that is often hampered by the bureaucratic practices of the organisation (e.g. Ahmed 2012). Again, my conclusions were upheld by the research literature, which identified problematic dominant group responses to addressing issues of race and racism in organisational life; which have been theorised as whiteness (Di Angelo, Tate & Page, Tate & Baggulley, Gabriel).

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[128] This parallel dynamic was perhaps especially apparent at F&BF where racially minoritised staff worked to challenge the organisation's historic problem with race and blackness, and the tendency to treat 'race' as distinct from 'religion' and therefore somehow beyond the concerns of an organisation committed to interfaith and intercultural dialogue (see section 5.4.).

7.1.3. Race & Religion: (Re)Conceptualising a Conundrum

My third research question sought to understand and explore how racial, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies functioned within, shaped and influenced the lives of those working within modern, secular British organisations (RQ3). Closely associated with this question was my desire to unpack and disentangle the *relationship* between various forms of marginalisation, discrimination and oppression associated with race and religion, and worldviews in organisational life (RQ4). As I noted in Chapter 3, exploring race and religion in tandem, however, posed particular challenges.

My own personal identifications, as well as my work as a practitioner meant that I was acutely aware of how race, religion and worldviews were conceptualised and experienced as distinct categories in the day-to-day life of organisations. This was particularly evident within equalities legislation, where race and religion are listed as distinct protected characteristics and categories; hence they are often handled within EDI initiatives as entirely disconnected aspects of identity and diversity praxis. For example, Network Rail had a staff network called Cultural Fusion which attracted only 'BAME' people who broadly saw 'race' and 'culture' as distinct from the focus on 'religion' and 'faith' in the Multi Faith Network. This led to subtle competition for membership in their networks, and eventually, an internal and splintering of identifications. F&BF's work, on the other hand, had been advanced on the assumption that all people had a faith and belief; this 'faith and belief' could be seen as distinct from their 'race', and hence scrutinised by the organisation's Race and Faith Working Group. Similarly, many of my research participants spoke about their race and their religion as *intertwined yet distinct* aspects of their individual and communal identifications. Typically, race was discussed as a visible marker of difference, while religion was thought to be reflective of their internal worlds, spiritual lives and individual and/or collective sense-making mechanisms. For example, Asian Muslims in my study – including Ali and Saeed in section 4.2. and Imran and Suleiman in section 5.2. – spoke about their brown skin, hair, or dress as *distinct* from their beliefs – and were often intent on discussing this distinction. Similarly, Black Jews, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists I encountered *also* spoke about their race as distinct from their religion, distinguishing themselves from white or Asian counterparts with whom they also identified based on a shared faith and worldview etc.).

This lived reality however, somewhat troubled existing theorisations of race and religion in the sociological literature, and led me right into the heart of a long-standing theoretical controversy connected with how we understand race and religion as colonial constructs and categories (see section 1.1.3., 1.3.4., 1.4. and Chapter 3 - 3.1.1.). In particular, my data analysis exposed the limitations of the racialised religion discourse which has tended to regard religion as an aspect of racialisation and/or an issue of mere culture, and neglected to engage meaningfully with oppressions associated with theology, spirituality or worldview *within and across* a range of groups (i.e. at what Fraser calls the inter- and intra-group levels (Fraser in Fraser and Honneth 2004:40)). Thus, in order to better understand these issues and questions, it was imperative that I considered anew and explored more deeply how race, religion and worldviews might be seen and theorised as distinct yet intersecting colonial categories, each with their own hierarchical arrangements and forms of oppression.

In Chapter 3 (section 3.4.), based on my ongoing synthesis of literature and data as I navigated the field, I therefore advanced a framework that accorded with the perspectives, experiences and challenges of these people in organisations. This framework distinguished racial and religious, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies, and reflected 'race' and 'religion' as distinct yet intersecting categories. As part of my development of this conceptual tool I adopted term 'racialisation' to refer more narrowly to the construction of racial hierarchies rooted in phenotype as a visible marker of difference (i.e. European aesthetic norms, and black-white dualism). This term was distinguished from 'religionisation' which refers to the construction of 'religious, spiritual and epistemic' hierarchies rooted in worldviews as a marker of difference (i.e. 'European cosmologies', and (Protestant) Christian-nonChristian and Religion-nonreligion dualism). Additionally, with reference to the literature, I reflected in my framework how racial hierarchies are underpinned by 'white supremacy' and 'white(li)ness'; with religious, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies underpinned by 'Christian-Secular supremacy' and Christian-Secularity (Masuzawa 2005; Mignolo 2011b, 2022; Woodhead 2016). While imperfect, taking this approach provided me with a frame for looking at race and religion data anew across a range of groups; this provided a lens for analysis that exists as an alternative and/or supplement to dominant theorisations of racial and religious discrimination in the context of a shift towards the study of 'new ethnicities' and 'new racisms' in the context of the splintering of political blackness (Alexander 2002, 2018).

7.1.4. Racial Hierarchies and Race-Based Oppressions

When applied as part of my exploration of the ongoing dynamics and manifestations of coloniality in organisations, my new conceptual framework became the core mechanism through which I analysed and interpreted various forms of marginalisation, discrimination and oppression associated with 'race' and the ongoing reproduction of 'racial hierarchies' (RQ 3 & 4 Part A). At the most basic level the framework provided a lens through which to make sense of the ongoing reproduction of race-based hierarchies and whiteness in organisations. At Network Rail, for example, where 76.21% of staff were white and 'BAME' representation was significantly lower than the UK population, racial stratification was formally acknowledged. In line with the practices of many bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty, the organisation formally acknowledged its significant ethnicity pay gap, which stood at 6.4%, and outlined how 'management' and senior leadership positions were dominated by white people, with 'BAME' staff disproportionately represented in 'technical and clerical' roles (Network Rail 2019b, 2020, 2021; discussed in section 2.2.1. 2022). At F&BF, an organisation committed to diversity as part of its core mission, a racial stratification was also evident, with just one visibly minoritised Global Majority Heritage staff member among the organisation's 21-person staff team; notably this employee occupied a lower level position. As discussed in section 5.3.2., this internal team dynamic served as a stark contrast to the very significant representation of minoritised groups in the organisation's public facing programmes, which included a now abolished, *unpaid* internship programme where 67% of participants were 'BAME'. In both organisations, as with many other organisations I observed over my time in the field, significant racial stratification (i.e. referred to in diversity practitioner speak as 'the Guinness effect') thus had material impacts, with racially minoritised staff more likely to be concentrated in lower level, and lower or entirely unpaid positions.

Staff racialised as white were far more represented in positions of power, thus illuminating the reproduction and reinforcement of dominant group interest, cultural values and norms (Rollock and Gillborn 2011; Suyemoto et al. 2020). Altogether the economics and material implications of these dynamics were significant, and served to reinforce and lend validity to theorisations of coloniality which assert race and class-based dimensions of coloniality (Mbembe 2018; Mbembe and Dubois 2017).

In addition to offering a lens through which to make sense of the ongoing manifestations of racial hierarchies, my conceptual framework also became central to illuminating the workings of race-based oppressions, demonstrating how everyday racism rooted in skin colour, phenotype, and other visible markers of race and ethnic difference remain prevalent in organisational life. As I discussed in Chapters 4, these contemporary forms of racism and racial stereotyping can be traced through histories of colonisation and conquest , reaching back to the 1600s, and reflect how those marked by their proximity to blackness continue to experience incivilities (e.g. animalisation, dehumanisation and negative stereotyping) and, at times, forms of profiling and surveillance (section 4.1.). At best, these disciplinary regimes serve to influence and shape an individual's sense of belonging within their workplace (section 4.3.); at worst, they paint workers as a threat to the social order, and in need of a heightened degree of surveillance and securitisation by the state (see section 4.2.).

Critically, my time in the field made clear two significant aspects to these oppressions: first, how such forms of discrimination are commonplace, normalised and enacted by people of many backgrounds in organisations. This demonstrated for me the ways that whiteness and white supremacy, and even the security policies of state, are internalised and normalised by everyday citizens, even if they primarily benefit dominant groups. Second, this demonstrated how such interactions often arise out of overfamiliarity with intimate incivilities being a common outcome following many decades of increasing contact between white and "non-white individuals in Britain", to use Modood & Khattab's (2016) language. These intimate incivilities are also enacted by a great diversity of other communities, such that forms of racial oppression occur even between minoritised groups in the workplace (see my theorisation of intimate incivilities in Chapter 4).

7.1.5. Religious Hierarchies and Religious, Spiritual and Epistemic Oppressions

Despite the difficulties of disentangling race and religion (discussed above and in sections 3.1. and 3.4.), my conceptual framework provided me with a lens to analyse how religious, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies functioned within the organisations I studied. Additionally, it helped me to explore particular religion and worldview-based oppressions experienced by those with Other worldviews (RQ 3 & 4 Part B). At Network Rail, as indicated in Vignette 6, though many (i.e. 55%) in the organisation chose not to disclose their religion within staff surveys, the strongly scientific, rational, and secular culture of the organisation was unanimously agreed upon by religious and

nonreligious staff alike. As discussed in Chapter 5, it was also clear through my interactions and interviews with staff, that the mostly white and male personnel in the organisation's senior management and leadership positions, came from non- or nominally religious backgrounds and were of European descent. This resulted, as already noted in section 7.1.2. above, in a scenario where those at the top of the organisation held a distinctly European vision of secular modernity, which was heavily reflected within the dominant Christian-Secular cultural threads of the organisation. A somewhat similar picture was evident at F&BF, where the majority of staff in the organisation – and certainly all within the management and senior leadership team during my time in the field – identified as Christian, Jewish, and non- or nominally religious (i.e., specifically, spiritual, atheist, agnostic, and non-religious) worldviews, with no representation of any other minority faiths at all beyond those from Ashkenazi Jewish backgrounds within the staff team (see section 5.3.2).

As discussed in section 5.3.3., however, the significant representation of mostly non-practicing and reform/liberal Ashkenazi Jewish staff and stakeholders at all levels of the organisation, resulted in a distinctly *Judaeo*-Christian-Secular culture. Taken together, both organisations thus reflected a *(Judaeo)*-Christian-Secular culture with European worldviews and cosmologies (Mignolo 2011 & 2021) in dominant positions of the organisations, and all other worldviews either unrepresented or reflected in the lower rungs of organisational life. As with race, significantly more religious diversity was evident within F&BF's programmes where 'ethnic minorities' and 'BAME' groups were better represented, and people from (mostly better recognised) 'minority faiths' were also, as one would expect, better represented (e.g. Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus etc) – a trend that was common across many other organisations and settings I observed.

Beyond the issue of dominant group representation in the higher levels of organisations, key findings around the functioning of religious hierarchies in organisations were also reflected in Chapters 5 and 6. Both chapters reflected theory and concepts I addressed in my conceptual framework around the positioning and experiences of those subordinated within existing religious, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies. In Chapter 5 (section 5.2.3), for example, it was possible to observe how Muslim staff at Network Rail were subject to especially harsh and rigid stereotyping and "framed as 'fanatical' adherents of an inherently 'dogmatic religion'" (Masuzawa 2005) in the context of the roll-out of *Project Griffin*. This resonated with my discussion of religious hierarchies in section 3.3.1. of my conceptual framework, which made clear how Muslims might be seen as contending for a position

at the bottom rungs of religious, spiritual and epistemic hierarchies. Additionally, in chapter 6 (section 6.1.), my case study of Network Rail's interfaith week banner campaign, indicated how those like Abigail, who professed a 'nonmodern' perspective, were subject to forms of nonrecognition and negation, even as other minority faith colleagues (e.g. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Bahais, etc) in relatively subordinated positions under WRP based religious hierarchies secured forms of recognition alongside those from 'major religions' and even those professing 'nonreligious' worldviews. Thus pagan worldviews, once prevalent in 'pre-modern' Europe, were now situated alongside those professing indigenous beliefs, who occupied a subordinated position within the religious hierarchies, discussed in section 3.3.1. Together, both chapters thus highlighted how those professing Islamic, pagan and African indigenous worldviews were subordinated in contemporary organisational life, less able to manifest their worldviews and make sense of their working life in the frameworks which were authentic to them..

7.1.6. Theorising Entangled and Intersecting Racial and Religious Hierarchies and Oppressions

Looking at my data overall, my data demonstrates clearly the relationship between various forms of marginalisation, discrimination and oppression associated with race, religion, and worldviews in organisational life (RQ4). Despite the fact that race and religion remain difficult to fully disentangle *in theory*, the testimony of participants alongside my own lived experiences and the literature, made it possible to theorise how 'White(li)ness' and Christian-Secularity' - which together I refer to as 'Christian-Secular White(li)ness' - serve as co-constituted and intersecting systems of oppression. In answering research question 3, my data and findings strongly indicate that these intersecting systems of oppression were at the root of various forms of oppression impacting minoritised groups including 'skin-colour racism' based on race; 'cultural racism' based on ethnicity (which can have both race and religion based dimensions) and what I term 'psycho-spiritual oppression', based on religion and worldviews.

Thus, in response to my fifth research question, which sought to investigate *the impacts of these forms of oppression*, it thus became clear how organisational cultures marked by *(Judaeo-)*Christian-Secular White(li)ness were spaces in which ethnically minoritised employees could be subject to discriminatory treatment based on their claimed difference (Chapter 4) and/or their subjugated worldviews and epistemologies (Chapters 5 and 6). Collectively, these oppressions came with

emotional, psychological, spiritual, and material costs, which I suggest might be explored more deeply through further research in future.

7.2. A Final Reflection on the Research

This study represents the first research project to employ an autoethnographic approach to generate "thick description" (Geertz 1973) of the dynamics of race, and especially religion and worldviews, within modern, secular organisations in Britain. In advancing my thesis I have made at least two significant theoretical contributions to the field. These have included: 1) advancing a framework indicating how researchers and practitioners alike might conceptualise the relationship between race and religion as distinct yet intersecting oppressions; and 2) advancing an understanding of how coloniality is maintained and reproduced with respect to race and religion within organisational cultures marked by *(Judaeo-)*Christian-Secular White(li)ness.

Notwithstanding these contributions to knowledge, my study has also highlighted several further possibilities for future research. First, given the broad and exploratory nature of my study, it might be especially fruitful to focus future research around the experiences of particular minoritised and/or dominant groups. For example, it has been valuable to be able to track broad trends across large groups and categories, one limitations of this kind of sociological approach is the potential to over-generalise in drawing conclusions about particular groups and/or phenomena. An additional limitation, and one also inherent in this study, is the potential to overlook some of the specific issues and challenges experienced by groups within my study. Bearing this in mind, future research, and even further analysis of my own data, could help to illuminate the specific experiences of Christians, or Muslims, for example, and allow me to scrutinise how particular groups experience these organisations, and some of the more specific issues associated with claims for recognition. Taking such an approach might offer fruitful potential to apply the conceptual framework I have developed in chapter three to further interrogate and theorise the relationship between race and religion within or amongst single groups. This could allow researchers to explore the nature of the relationship between race, religion, and worldviews within single groups, and potentially offer to assess the relevance and value of the conceptual framework across a range of other groups, contexts or settings.

In addition, while in this thesis I have touched on claims for recognition made by racially and religiously minoritised people (see sections 7.1.1. and 7.1.2. above), I have paid somewhat less attention to collective forms of workplace activism and organising aimed broadly at challenging the dominance of JCSW and ushering in more plural and equitable workplace cultures. Another area for further research might also involve an in-depth focus on this area, exploring some of the key strategies, tools, tactics and mechanisms adopted by minoritised people as part of collective efforts to be fully included in organisational life. Finally, a further area of study, also associated with claims for recognition that I observed, relates could be a focus on the impacts of JCSW on racially and religiously minoritised individuals and groups. In particular, a focus on the mental health and wellbeing impacts of navigating, resisting and seeking recognition within hostile organisational cultures would be worthwhile, since it would build on many of the findings that emerge throughout this thesis.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Pseudonym	Interview Date(s)	Job Title & Role	Organisation	Ethnicity (self-defined)*	Worldview (self-defined)*	Gender (self-defined)*	Other
Organisation 1: The Faith & Belief Forum							
Niomh Walker	16/07/2018 and 24/07/2018	███	███	White British	Nonreligious	Female	
Maria Cabral	18/07/2018	███	███	Black African Bissau Guinean Portuguese	Nonreligious Christian (nondenominational; formerly Catholic)	Female	
Gabrielle Stewart	19/07/2018	███	███	Black Afro-Caribbean (Dominica & St Lucia) British	Christian (Pentecostal; formerly Catholic)	Female	
Sam Cohen	26/07/2018	███	███	White British	Jewish (reformed; practicing)	Male	
Lewis Jones	26/07/2018 and 30/08/2018	███	███	White British	Christian (Free Evangelical)	Male	
Gemma Edwards	27/07/2018	███	███	White British	Nonreligious Jewish (culturally)	Female	LGBT (Lesbian)
Alexa Hendriks	02/08/2018	███	███	White Dutch American	Nonreligious Jewish (culturally)	Female	

Sophia Georgiou	03/08/2018	▬▬	▬ ▬	British Greek Cypriot Ethnic Minority	Greek Orthodox Christian (culturally; but practice major events)	Female		White Passing
James Campbell	09/08/2018	▬▬	▬ ▬	White British	Nonreligious *Christian (culturally)*	Male		LGBT (Gay)
Daniel Nilsson	22/08/2018	▬▬ ▬	▬ ▬	White Swedish	Nonreligious	Male		
Henrietta Wright	24/08/2018	▬▬ ▬	▬ ▬	White British	Nonreligious Atheist	Female		
Shreya Gupta	30/08/2018	▬▬	▬ ▬	Brown British Asian	Nonreligious Hindu	Female		
Talia Abrams	18/09/2018	▬▬ ▬▬	▬ ▬	White ('but Olive Skinned') British Israeli Ashkenazi descent	Jewish (practicing)	Female		
Emma Allen	19/09/2018	▬ ▬	▬ ▬	White British	Nonreligious	Female		
Joseph Bing	28/09/2018 and 29/10/2018	▬ ▬▬	▬ ▬	White British	Nonreligious Jewish (culturally)	Male		
Maryum Khan	26/11/2018 and 11/12/2018	▬▬	▬ ▬	Brown British Asian Pakistani	Muslim	Female		Hijabi
Thomas Robinson	20/02/2019	▬	▬ ▬	White British	Nonreligious	Male		

Organisation 2: Network Rail (and affiliated)							
Imran Hussain	12/04/2018	███████ ███████ ███	███████	Brown Asian Pakistani	Muslim	Male	
Rory Rodriguez	17/10/2018	██████ ███████ ███████ ███████ ███████ ██	███████	White British Colombian	Christian (Catholic)	Male	
Colin White	07/11/2018	███████ ████ ███████ ██████	███████	White British	Christian	Male	
Abigail Davies	23/11/2018	███████ ███████ ███████ ████	███████	White British	Norse Heathen Pagan	Female	
Richard Hughes	04/12/2018	███████ ███████ ███████	███████ ████ ███████	White Australian	Christian (Evangelical)	Male	
Hassan Amir	20/11/2018	████	███████ ████ ███████	Brown Asian Pakistani	Muslim	Male	

Other Organisations							
Central & Local Government							
Aidan Walsh	21/03/2018	███████ ███████	███████ ███	White British	Nonreligious	Male	
Stanley Davies	21/03/2018	███████ ████ ███	█████ ████ █████ ██	White British	Nonreligious	Male	
Anton Beckford	31/05/2018	███████ ██████	███ ███ ███	Black Afro-Caribbean (West Indian) British	Nonreligious Spiritual Christian (culturally)	Male	
Anika Patel	24/07/2018	███████ ███████ █████	██████	Brown British Asian (Indian)	Nonreligious Hindu	Female	
Harriet Johnson	20/08/2018	████████ █████ ███████ ███	████ ██████ ██	White British	Christian	Female	
Allen Walters	22/01/2019	████████ █████ ████████ ████████	████ ██████ ██	White British	Nonreligious Humanist	Male	
Hamza Ahmad	07/02/2019	███████ █████	██████	Brown British Asian Pakistani	Muslim	Male	

Public, Private and Voluntary Sector Organisations							
Amelia Wong	30/05/2018	██████ ██████	████ ████	'Mixed Race' Middle Eastern & Spanish descent	'Mixed Faith' Jewish (culturally) & Atheist Christian (Catholic) Buddhist	Female	White Passing
Rajit Sidhu	30/11/2018	█████	███ █	Brown British Asian Indian/Punjabi	Sikh	Male	Turban
Saeed Khan	31/07/2018	██████ ███	████	Brown African (Kenyan) Asian	Muslim	Male	
Sarah Saad	16/08/2018	████ ██	██ ██	White British	Christian (Denomination?)	Female	
Inaya Mustafa	24/10/2018	██	███ ███	Brown Asian British Pakistani	Muslim	Female	Hijabi Refers to herself as Black
Noam Feldman	12/09/2019	█████	███ ███ ███	White British Ashkenazi	Jewish	Male	

* Rather than asking participants to complete a potentially reductive tick-box form to gather demographic data, I opted for an oral history/life-story approach to interviews, inviting participants to reflect on their childhood and family background with respect to ethnicity, race and religion and worldview. Thus, data included here can be seen as self-defined, and reflective of the multiple and complex identifications research participants provided.

Appendix 2: Focus Groups, Facilitated Sessions & Events Schedule

Focus Groups

Organisation	Session Date	Session or Event Title	Location	Participant No. & Profile
Focus Groups (see Appendix 4 for Topic Guide)				
Centre for London	22/08/2018	Religion and Belief in the Workplace: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	London	9
Foreign & Commonwealth Office	28/11/2018	Religion and Belief in the Workplace: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	London	14
Network Rail, Norwood Depot	30/01/2019	Religion and Belief at Work – Creating Inclusive Cultures	London	16
Network Rail, South East Route Exec Team	05/03/2019	Religion and Belief at Work – Creating Inclusive Cultures	London	25
			Total Focus Group Participants	*64*

Facilitated Sessions

Organisation	Session Date	Session or Event Title	Location
Northern College	19/04/2018	Controversial Issues: Focus on Religion & Belief	Barnsley
Invite Only Session @ Eversheds Sutherland	12/07/2018	Power & Baker Consultancy and Tamanda Walker: Religion, Diversity & Inclusion at Work	London
Invite Only Session @ St Ethelburga's Centre	13/09/2018	Breaking Through: Collective Care, Compassion & Intellectual Tools for EDI Work	London
Centre for Religion & Public Life, University of Leeds	01/11/2018	Religion and Belief in the Modern Secular Workplace: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	Leeds
Network Rail Multifaith Network	16/11/2018	UK Interfaith Week: Religion and Belief at Work – Creating Inclusive Cultures	Milton Keynes
HR Division International Conference	09/01/2019	Religion and Belief in the Workplace: HRM & EDI Professionals as a Force for Good?	Dublin
The Faith & Belief Forum	07/03/2019	Belief in Business: A Consultation with Organisation on Religion and Belief support needs in the Workplace	London
Cumberland Lodge	12/03/2019	Working Identities: Religion and Belief Based Identities in the Workplace	Windsor
Eversheds Sutherland	28/03/2019	Navigating Diversity in an Age of Globalisation: Focus on Religion and Belief	London
Eversheds Sutherland	05/07/2019	Stereotypes, Assumptions & Bias: Mental Shortcuts and Barriers	Leeds

Public EDI Events & Conferences

Equality & Human Rights Commission	12/06/2018	The Power of Measurement: Equality Audits and Frameworks	London
University of Leeds, PRHS	09/07/2018	Implicit Bias and Negative Stereotype Threat	Leeds
EY Hindu Network & Veda London	25/07/2018	Hinduism & Spirituality at Work	London
BARC Collective	15/06/2019 & 16/06/2019	Building the Anti-Racist Classroom: Organising for Liberation	London
Race Reflections	20/10/2018	Blackness Centred Self Compassion for Race Based Traumatic Stress	London
Cumberland Lodge	22/10/2018	What Should It Mean to Be British?	London
The Faith & Belief Forum	25/10/2018	Black History Month: Race, Faith & Belief	London
Cabinet Office (UK Civil Service)	12/11/2018	UK Interfaith Week: Let's Talk About Faith and Belief	London
The Faith & Belief Forum	13/11/2018	UK Interfaith Week: LGBTQ+ Interfaith – Telling Our Stories	London
Network Rail Multi-Faith Network	14/11/2018	UK Interfaith Week: Evidence for the Existence of God	London
Foreign & Commonwealth Office	15/11/2018	UK Interfaith Week: Faith in a Crisis: Are Faith and Belief Groups the New First Responders?	London
Nationwide	15/11/2018	UK Interfaith Week: My Faith & Food with Ravi Singh	London
British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group	21/11/2018	Doing Diversity: 'Decolonising' the Social Scientific Study of Religion	London
Royal Air Force Hindu Network	21/11/2018	Armed Forces Hindu Network Celebration: Diwali The Festival of Light	London
Birkbeck University	29/11/2018	Pan Africanism: A History by Hakim Adi	London

| NHS Employers & Asian Fire Service Association | 11/07/2019 | Development Summit: Promoting Excellence and Inclusive Pastoral, Spiritual & Religious Support For All | Leeds |

Appendix 3: Semi-Structured Interview Topic Guide

Welcome & Intro

- Intro research project
- Overview & Questions around Participant Information, Informed Consent & Ethics
- Agenda Setting & Adjustment: Thinking about the theme of my research, 'religion and belief in the workplace'…
  - What motivated you to participate in a research project with this theme?
  - Is there anything you would particularly like to make time to discuss today?

About Your Current Role & Organisation

- Can you tell me a little bit about your organisation to help me understand the context of your work? (e.g. sector, industry, core business/mission, size of organisation etc)
- Tell me a little bit about your role and responsibilities…
  - What is your official job title or role?
  - What are your key areas of responsibility?

About Religion and Belief in Your Current and Previous Roles and Organisations

- In what ways do you feel issues and considerations of religion and belief are connected to your main job role or any other voluntary roles you hold in your organisation?
- Where and how does religion and belief show up in the day-to-day life of your organisation?
- What drives or inhibits a focus on religion in your role and/or organisation?

About the Culture of Your Organisation(s) with respect to Religion and Belief

- How would you describe your organisation's company culture when it comes to religion and belief?
- How do you think/feel religion and belief is talked about, if at all, within your organisation(s)?
- To what extent are there explicit initiatives or engagements with religion and belief in your organisation (e.g. training, staff networks, policies, events, collection and/or monitoring of data, provision of prayer rooms, time off or other accommodations and special provisions etc.)?
- Thinking about existing engagements with religion and belief, what do you consider to be the religious dynamics within your organisation?
  - Have you encountered any particularly interesting, good or helpful engagements with religion and belief in your organisation and/or broader work in the sector?

- o Have you encountered any particular conflicts, challenges and controversies associated with religion and belief in your organisation and/or broader work in the sector? How did you navigate these scenarios?
- o Are there particular groups that are more or less involved with 'religion and belief' based initiatives or issues than others in your organisations?
- o How do religion and belief-based considerations, initiatives and engagements overlap with those of gender, sexuality and/or race/ethnicity?

About Your Personal Interests, Perspectives & Standpoint

- Can you tell me a little bit about your personal experiences of religion and belief?
    - o What would you say your own upbringing was like in relation to religion and belief? (e.g. within your family home, education, networks?)
    - o How do you think about your worldview today? In what ways has this shifted?
- How do you think your own childhood and experiences of religion and belief have influenced the way you think of issues of religion and belief in the workplace/your organisation(s) today?

Closing Questions

- Is there anything we have not touched on as part of our conversation today that you would like to discuss?
- Are there any people you feel I should approach or be speaking to as part of this project?
- Thank participants for taking the time to participate in the interview and explain the next steps.

Appendix 4: Focus Groups Topic Guide

Welcome & Intro

- Intro research project
- Agenda Setting: Explanation of focus group (purpose, themes and topics, timings etc)
- Overview & Questions around Participant Information, Informed Consent & Ethics
- Guidelines for Focus Group Discussion (i.e. no right or wrong answers, Chatham House rules, speaking one at a time, my role as facilitator etc.)

Participant Introductions

- Ask participants to introduce themselves
    - Name
    - Role
    - Organisation or key info about it
    - Why they decided to take part in this session/event?
- Initial reflections on religion and belief in this organisation…
    - Where and how is religion coming up in your organisation?
    - Are there particular opportunities or challenges associated with how religion comes up in your organisation and work?

Paired Activity

I'm interested to understand how we might think about challenging issues connected with religion and belief in relation to other people related issues/considerations in the workplace.

In a moment, I will hand out to you a series of real life, challenging scenarios and statements that I have come across through my own consultancy work in the sector. I want you to imagine that the statements and scenarios I provide have been said in your workplace environment and reflect individually on the following questions.

Scenarios
- "As an Orthodox Jewish man, I don't shake hands with women. But I'm always happy to explain, why as I wouldn't want to offend women I work with."
- "So what are your thoughts on the terrorist attacks in London Bridge / Manchester / Parsons Green yesterday"
- "As an atheist, I personally think belief in God is irrational, but I can totally understand why some people do believe. And it's important we make provisions for those people."
- "The prayer space isn't really for nonreligious colleagues anyway, so I wouldn't worry too much about notifying everyone of the opening."

- "Unfortunately we can't put that on the menu because we need to factor in the proper Hindus aren't allowed to eat beef."
- "Welcome to our lunch and learn. For this meeting we are inviting men to sit on the left and women to sit on the right, in keeping with our traditions. We're also inviting female colleagues to kindly cover their head with a shawl if they have one."
- "I can't understand why all team members are obliged to wear a poppy. Of course I want to respect and commemorate those that lost their lives, but if you grew up in Derry where I did, you'd also find this oppressive and nationalistic."
- "You know, we're both of faith, so I'm sure you will understand my feelings about homosexuality. I won't hate the person, because we're called to love, but I do think the act is wrong"

Stage 1: Individual Reflection
- What is your personal response to each of the statements made?
- On a scale of 1-5, and thinking about how the statement makes you feel as an individual, rather than your role or response as an HR professional, how offensive/problematic do you personally consider each statement to be?
- As a professional, how would you go about navigating or addressing this issue?

Stage 2: Paired Reflection
Now take a moment to discuss the statements with the person sitting next to you and compare your responses.
- To what extent is there consensus in your responses?
- What are the points of similarity and difference?

Group Discussion

Go through each of the statements one by one and take responses to the following from each pair:
- How offensive/problematic did you consider the statement to be? Did you have consensus on the statement or did you have different responses to this statement? What were the reasons for any differences of opinion?
- What were your views and approaches on how to go about navigating such an issue if it arose in your workplace?
- If you had to address an issue like this where religion and belief-based rights were competing with other rights (e.g. gender, sexuality or race), how would you go about working out what to prioritise? Are some considerations more important than others? How would you determine the priorities?

Follow Up Questions
- To what extent have each of you encountered issues like this in your workplace(s)?

- Can you envision a situation in which scenarios like this might occur in your workplace?
- If you encountered any of the issues in your workplace, how confident would you feel navigating and responding to scenarios such as these?
- In relation to each of these issues, did any of you change your mind/initial position about a particular approach because of the conversation you have had with others today? Please explain if so.
- What do you think you took away from being part of this conversation?

Thank You & Close

Thank participants for taking the time to participate in the focus group and explain any next steps.