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Race, Difference and Power: Recursions of Coloniality in Work and Organizations

You people: Membership categorization and situated interactional othering in BigBank

Stephen Fox[1] | Amie Ramanath[2] | Elaine Swan[3]

[1]Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

[2]Independent Scholar

[3]University of Sussex Business School, Brighton, UK

Correspondence
Elaine Swan, University of Sussex Business School, Brighton, UK.
Email: e.swan@sussex.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper offers an ethnomethodological membership categorization analysis (MCA) of an episode of argumentative talk in a bank, between a recent Indian migrant and her white British area manager. MCA examines how members use categorizations in the course of their everyday practical activities including workplace meetings. Our analysis shows how the "interactional trouble" between an employee and manager leads to the manager racially Othering the employee by invoking attributes resonant with what researchers call coloniality. Although theories of everyday racism and micro-aggression focus on everyday interactions, attention is not usually given to the moment-by-moment, turn-by-turn interactions and racial categorizations. In contrast, the MCA of our case study enables us to explicate the complexities of racializing and re-colonizing work in specific organizational encounters. Racist interactions in organizations are complex, contestable, and draw on various shared categories, resources, and knowledges deployed to achieve situated institutional aims. In our in-depth, close analysis of a relatively short interaction, we are able to reveal the institutional, gendered, racial, and colonial categories, and institutional and colonial devices that were made relevant; enabling us to explicate how racism works in the organizational every day. Studies of racist interactions stress there are specificities to the categories mobilized in organizational settings for

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example, parents, neighbors, race, and ethnicity and therefore the forms of racism produced. Our article contributes to studies of everyday racism in the workplace by showing the specific categories and devices—such as English, Indian, English Economy—mobilized turn-by-turn which led to a racially minoritized member of staff being interactionally Othered by the white manager in ways which not only does interpersonal harm but leads to her exclusion and dehumanization. We show how ethnomethodology and MCA are very useful, but somewhat neglected approaches, for learning about racism, coloniality, and gender in mundane, everyday workplace interactions.

KEYWORDS
ethnomethodology, membership categorization analysis, Othering, race, racism

1 | INTRODUCTION

Our article offers an ethnomethodological membership categorization analysis (MCA) of an episode of argumentative talk in a bank, between a recent Indian migrant and her white British area manager. Through the MCA analysis, we are able to show how our case study of a short interaction, displays the complex intersections of racism, coloniality, and "interactional Othering" in a meeting. We detail how a range of categories—institutional, gendered, racial, and colonial- and institutional and colonial devices—are mobilized in the encounter in the bank. MCA is a useful, and somewhat neglected approach for learning about racism, colonialism, and gender in workplace interactions. The contribution of the paper is its articulation of how racism works in the organizational everyday, showing how Jack the “boss” deploys institutional stereotypes in an institutional context for institutional aims. Racist encounters are complex and contestable and also situated. In our analysis we show how Jack mobilizes racist stereotypes that are part of the specific context and wider operations of racism and coloniality in contemporary Britain.

The editors of the special issue argue that we need to turn to theories of coloniality to understand how our categories of thought and analysis came to be and continue not only to shape why relations of racial and gendered domination “emerge and endure in work and organization”, but also how we study these (Greedharry et al., 2020; limki, 2018, p. 328). Our article builds on this argument, although taking it into a different academic trajectory, by bringing an ethnomethodological approach to categories and racial categorization—membership categorization analysis (MCA), together with Rawls and David (2005)'s concept of “situated interactional Othering” and postcolonial theories of British coloniality (Hesse & Sayyid, 2006; Tyler, 2012). Our focus is a consequential meeting within a branch of a British bank, we call BigBank, between Habeeba, a recent Indian migrant and her white manager, Jack. MCA examines how we categorize each other and interpret and assign meaning to actions, and use these categorizations to describe, argue, judge, and infer for particular local ends (Hester & Hester, 2010; Sacks, 1992). Situated interactional Othering denotes a practice of bringing in narrative interpretations or attributions of motivation to explain “difference” in response to “interactional troubles” and which lead to stigmatization and exclusion (Rawls & David, 2005).

We show how MCA enables us to examine members' categorization work in the meeting and how racial Othering developed during the course of interaction, and reached the nadir when Habeeba, was racially Othered by Jack in

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ways which excluded her from the interaction. Whereas theories of coloniality stress the ontological and epistemological politics of modernity's categories of thought, MCA studies the categorical and sequential dimensions of social life close-up (Hester & Hester, 2010). Categories are not invented each time they are invoked, but what they mean is relative to the particular context and local interactional work, in this case a conflictual meeting in a British bank (Hester & Hester, 2012). Categorization, as theories of race and coloniality also argue, is not neutral. In MCA, categorizations matter because they describe and evaluate according to normative assumptions and judgments (Whittle & Mueller, 2020).

Ethnomethodology (EM) enables situated racial Othering to be studied closely, turn-by-turn, moment-by-moment, in naturally occurring interactions like meetings in workplaces. Although there are distinctions between critical race theory and EM, our approach aligns with theorists of racism who insist that social interaction is "a primary mechanism" through which domination, exclusion, and possibilities for resistance are reproduced (Essed, 1991, 2002; Schwalbe, 2000; Schwalbe et al., 2000). Our focus resonates with studies of everyday racisms and micro-aggressions in organizations, a key aim of which, evident in the call for papers, is to make racializations and racisms more visible (Applebaum, 2018; Essed, 1991, p. 288, 2002).

Racist micro-aggressions and everyday racisms seem "minor and inconsequential" but "manifest a pattern that is relentless and repetitive and that has harmful effects over time", a view shared by Rawls across her body of work on race (Applebaum, 2018, p. 133). The concept of everyday racism connects structural and "ideological dimensions of racism with daily attitudes and interprets the reproduction of racism in terms of the experiences of it in everyday life" (Essed, 1991, p. 3). The point here is that wider histories and contexts, including relations of coloniality, and in the case of our paper, the colonial histories between Britain and India are relevant. For MCA, what racialized and gendered categories mean is an "in-situ empirical matter" and they are "inference-rich" that is, "part of the stock of knowledge and reasoning procedures that constitute the culture of a society or a social group" (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007; Whittle & Mueller, 2020, p. 338).

We argue that the study of situated interactions is critical: first, because "inequality requires attention to the processes that produce and perpetuate it" (Schwalbe et al., 2000, p. 420). Secondly, research is needed that does not reify "matters that are typically defined as 'structural'" such as organizations, institutions, and systems (Schwalbe et al., 2000, p. 420). An ethnomethodological approach can show the "temporal and situated processes by which race and racism are constructed and put to work, both in developing social policies, institutions, and agendas and at the level of everyday experience and interaction", through looking at talk turn-by-turn and the categories in its use (Durrheim et al., 2015, p. 86).

What's significant for our discussion on race is that ethnomethodology (EM) and related approaches—such as conversational analysis (CA) and membership category analysis (MCA)—have tenets which challenge other forms of sociological thinking (Garfinkel, 1967, 1986). Broadly speaking, EM, CA, and MCA involve paying close attention to mundane and everyday practices, like everyday racism, because the aim of EM and its offshoots, is the "study of social order at its point of production" (Whitehead, 2011, p. 5). Hence, EM's radicalism is in privileging participants' everyday categories which EM observes and analyses (over researchers' theoretical concepts/categories). The social organization of race, class, and gender are "demonstrated as arising in and from interactions between people" (Dingwall in Hansen, 2005; Rawls & Duck, 2020; Shrikant, 2021; Vom Lehn, 2016, p. 7; Whitehead, 2009). Tracing members' categorizations enables scholars to examine how racisms—everyday racism, new racism, institutional racism, tacit racism, and coloniality—are enacted and institutionalized in interactions, including workplace talk (Rawls & Duck, 2020; Stokoe & Edwards, 2007; Whitehead, 2009). Unlike discourse studies of race talk (for instance, Van den Berg et al., 2004), the focus is on how social order, "category systems" and "the incarnation of social structure" are assembled in day-to-day interactions, and how categories, as used, organize social action in talk and text (Hester & Eglin, 1997, p. 154; Housley et al. 2017; Whitehead, 2009).

In doing ethnomethodologically informed analysis, we extend organizational studies of race, and research on everyday racism, through a perspective which shows how "bigger issues" can be examined through mundane practices in the workplace (Zimmerman, 2005). Furthermore, we continue a significant strand in ethnomethodological,

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MCA, and CA studies of race which has seldom been discussed in this journal. Drawing on these enable us to detail the resources participants draw upon during racist interactions "on the ground" and make sense of organizationally situated resources shared by the participants. Our close-up MCA teaches us about the specific categories and devices that make up forms of racism, and how these are deployed in specific organizational contexts for particular institutional aims. In showing how racisms happen in situ through mundane, everyday organizational practices, we display the complex intersections of racism, coloniality, and interactional Othering. Our article extends current thinking on how racisms are linked to organizational logics and wider histories and manifestations of coloniality in the UK, and points to ways we can enact anti-racism in our research and workplaces.

2 | ETHNOMETHODOLOGY, RACE, AND GENDER: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Brief history of Ethnomethodology's engagement with race and ethnicity

The early work of the originator of ethnomethodology, Harold Garfinkel, focused on racial and gender inequality (1940, 1949, 1967) but his interest in race and social justice has been overlooked to a large degree until recently (Doubt, 1989; Rawls, 2002, 2013; Rawls & Duck, 2020; Turowetz & Rawls, 2019). His research on gender has been more well-known for some time. But Garfinkel's first publication as early as 1940 was about race: a short story called *Color Trouble* based on the racial discrimination experienced by an African–American woman which he observed on a bus. Keith Doubt argues that this story presages the tenets of EM and “speaks clearly and concisely to the issue of racism and the moral limits of social convention” (1989, p. 260).

Garfinkel's masters' thesis of 1942 was on “Inter- and Intra-Racial Homicide”, later published in *Social Forces* (1949) and focused on how courtroom outcomes in murder trials were based on racialized accounts produced by judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, and witnesses (Rawls, 2013). His Ph.D. research moved to the topic of Jewish students and social exclusion. Rawls (2013) who—working with him before his death in 2011—has edited several of Garfinkel's unpublished early writings into book form (Garfinkel, 2002; Garfinkel et al., 2006; Garfinkel & Rawls, 2015) and reminds us that Garfinkel, as a Jew in the 1940s, was identified as a minority scholar and not considered white, and that Garfinkel was firmly committed to questions of morality and justice. Countering claims that EM is not concerned with racism or sexism, Jason Turowetz and Rawls argue that “ethnomethodology was from the beginning engaged with questions of social justice: power, privilege and the violence they do” (2019, p. 21). In their view, Garfinkel's research reveals how racialized and minoritized groups encounter “interactional troubles” underpinned by “durable patterns of social inequality” (p. 21).

2.2 | Ethnomethodology, conversational analysis, race, gender, and the everyday

In the present journal, EM is mainly known through the work of Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman's studies on gendering (1987). Outside organizational studies, feminists have taken up EM, MCA, and CA to analyze gender as an ongoing accomplishment, often through talk (see for instance the work of Dorothy Smith, Elizabeth Stokoe, Candace West; Celia Kitzinger; and Sue Wilkinson). Stokoe has a body of work using CA and MCA, to examine how “everyday notions of gender are taken up, reformulated, or resisted, in turns of talk” (Stokoe, 2006, p. 467).

In organization studies, EM analysis of race and racism have been neglected even though EM studies on race in organizational contexts are well developed. Within MCA there has been a sustained interest in race and racial categorization, for instance Rod Watson's body of work has been germinal to the development of MCA and long been concerned with racialized categories (1976, 1978, 2015). His 1976 paper explores the language of racial discrimination and his 1978 paper examines racist talk in a phone call to a suicide prevention center in a British city. Watson's analysis is particularly useful to our paper in that he examines “the apportionment of blame or responsibility” by

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the caller, through ways of categorizing groups of people, and “membership categorization devices”, such as “black people” and “white people” and “the Catholics” and “the Protestants” (1978, p. 105).

Other MCA and CA studies have examined race and ethnicity in various organizational contexts from schools, police stations, community meetings, neighborhood resolution, anti-racist training, organizational meetings (Day, 1999; Hansen, 2005; Stokoe & Edwards, 2007; Whitehead, 2009; Kitzinger, 2009). Stokoe and Edwards (2007), provide a CA approach to racial insults and abuse in telephone calls to British neighborhood mediation centers and police interviews with suspects in neighborhood crimes. Stokoe and Edwards' key focus is how racist insults are produced, conventionally designed, and responded to by recipients, and what sorts of concepts about race are constructed through the insults and responses.

The main project across these CA and MCA studies is to show how race and ethnicity are produced *through* interaction, in naturally occurring real life situations. MCA focuses on ethnic or racial self-categorization; the ascription of racial/ethnic identities; and resistance to such racial categorizations (Day, 1999). What's critical to MCA is that “categorization using race/ethnicity is a means of identification but also a resource used in situ to accomplish social actions such as “conveying expertise; building a complaint; negotiating an identity; or describing and accounting for other people's behavior” (Wilkinson, 2011, p. 344). In an influential MCA-based article on an inter-racial public meeting about the design of a school in New York, Hansen (2005) argues that “there is a paucity of scholarship that expressly considers how ethnicity is utilized by participants as a resource in conducting the business of … social interaction” (2005, p. 63). Hence, MCA examines when racialized and ethnicized categorizations become relevant for members and how they are mobilized as resources to do specific interactional work (Hansen, 2005; Whitehead, 2012).

Researchers also combine EM approaches with other perspectives to examine race and racism. Kevin Whitehead (inter alia, 2009, 2011, 2015; Durrheim et al., 2015) working in a South African racial context, melds EM, MCA, and CA with discursive psychology to study interactional processes through which prejudice and racism are constructed and contested across different encounters including radio talk programmes and anti-racist training. His extensive body of work underlines how racial categories, and the social organization of race itself, are reproduced in interaction. For Whitehead (2009), EM has significant analytic value in that it investigates how racial categories reproduce the category system through which the uneven distribution of economic and social resources is assembled. Racist discourse depends upon racial categorizations.

2.3 | Situated interactional othering

Other studies, such as those by Rawls and colleagues, combine ethnographic and EM analyses to examine racism, and interactional trouble related to race and Othering. Rawls and colleagues' body of work is underlined by a commitment to Garfinkel's (1963, 1967) understanding of Trust Conditions, an implicit social contract, in “which both trust and reciprocity are requirements of situated practices” regardless of personal preference and demographic identities (Rawls & David, 2005, p. 471, capitals in the original). What's key to this view, is that in multicultural societies, trust is “no longer an attitude toward persons, but a necessary shared commitment to and competence with practice” (Rawls, 2016, p. 82). Inequalities patterned by race, gender, and other stigmatized categories lead to interactional troubles and “in the absence of successful reparative efforts…interactions break down”, and “self and sense-making fail” (Turowetz & Rawls, 2019, p. 5; Rawls & Duck, 2020, p. 246). As a result, ethnomethodologists such as Rawls and colleagues are interested in documenting “the trouble that inequality produces in detail” (Turowetz & Rawls, 2019, p. 4).

In this vein, Rawls et al. (2018) use video data to show how an interaction between two white police officers and a black male citizen culminated in an assault on and arrest of the innocent black man. Their analysis exposes how interactional aspects of racism are “routine occupational practices” in the police. They underline how “troubles” in interaction, especially “misalignment” between kinds of talk, failures of “reciprocity”, and racist remarks led to violent assault by the white police and wrongful arrest of the black man.

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While this article makes a major contribution to studies of racism, our study here is more informed by Rawls and David's (2005) analysis of situated racial Othering. Their ethnographically informed EM study focuses on how talk in a Detroit convenience shop—between an African–American customer and an Arab–American shop-keeper—breaks down mainly due to the former's Othering of the latter, based on what Rawls and David (2005, p. 482) call a “racialized ‘you people’ narrative”. As they write: “They go from mutual engagement, in the first lines, to almost physically coming to blows, in a matter of seconds” (2005, p. 482).

Unlike other theoretical concepts of Othering, Rawls and David's understanding is that “situated interactional Othering” is not simply a “condition of demographic, or belief based exclusion but rather something that happens to people…in interaction” (p. 472). Situated interactional Othering is a response to *interactional troubles* during the enactment of practices, such as asking for change as in their example. More specifically, someone is Othered when they are narrated in talk as “not being committed to the same practices, not giving someone the benefit of the doubt, not being sufficiently competent to perform in the practice” (p. 473). As they put it, “Othering…originates with problems in the orientation toward, or the production of, practices” (p. 473).

In their view, it is “essential that no one be ‘Othered’ in a “context of practice”—such as service encounters in shops, or meetings in the workplace—because “the process of ‘Othering’ destroys this foundation of trust” (p. 470–1). Their argument rests on their view that in contemporary multi-racial and globalized society, shared practices and not shared beliefs are the ones that make mutual understanding possible in “contexts of diversity” (p. 489).

Situated interactional Othering occurs when interactions are breaking down and actors import an external narrative, statement of belief, or attribution of motivation to explain the interactional troubles perceived to be caused by difference. In this view, narratives and belief statements are “a specialized form of social practice” which work retrospectively to account for something or someone rather than prospectively repair interactional troubles (Rawls & David, 2005). In their study, the narrative takes the form of a racialized “you people” categorization used of the Arab shopkeeper, by a Black African–American customer, to explain what he sees as “deviant” interactional behavior (p. 494). As they explain, “choosing a narrative account that is unknown or offensive to the Other and treating the Other's recipiency of the interpretation as irrelevant, treats the Other as the Object of interpretation rather than as a recipient” (p. 480). Such narratives do not work to repair the interactional trouble and the breakdown in trust, because they are external to the situation, not shared by all members, and drive the Other out of the practice in hand.

What's very specific to their EM understanding is that interactional Othering is about being excluded from interaction, intelligibility, trust, and reciprocity. To be clear, they are not saying that “demographic” Otherness and the stereotypes and exclusions it engenders aren't problems. The categories of race and gender lead to troubles in day-to-day interactions and it is in these that social expectations and order are assembled (Turowetz & Rawls, 2019). In line with theorists of everyday racism, Rawls and David stress that Othering of this interactional kind is not a minor matter as is often assumed by white people but very harmful existentially, economically, and socially for those Othered.

3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | Research design

The data we analyze below were collected as part of two ethnographic studies by the second author, an Indian born migrant who has lived in the UK since 2008. The present paper is based on a study in a branch of a bank we call *“ABBB”* (short for “A Branch of Big Bank”: a pseudonym). As is often the case with organizational ethnography, the type of access to the organization shapes what can be observed. The researcher was not granted permission to audio-record everyday discussions or meetings within *ABBB* nor interviews with staff but was permitted to take ethnographic fieldnotes at any point. The main source of the data for our discussion is a “transcript”, from these

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fieldnotes, of talk-in-interaction from a consequential meeting in the bank prior to a formal inquiry to be held the following day.

For CA, mechanically or digitally recorded data is considered to be the *sine qua non*, but researchers do from time to time use remembered or non-mechanically/digitally recorded noted down examples (Kitzinger, 2008). In a defense of her own use of fieldnotes, Celia Kitzinger argues that the originators of CA—Sacks, Schegloff, Heritage, Lerner, and Jefferson—used fieldnotes; remembered examples; fragments of conversation; even literal notes on the back of an envelope, and all "caught in passing", in their development of CA (Jefferson, 1975 cited Kitzinger, 2008, p. 185).

Our article draws on an EM informed categorical MCA which lends itself to the use of field-notes and interviews. The researcher is an experienced note taker, with skills in transcribing and short-hand, developed through transcribing hours of focus groups for a market research company in India. In this study, she took detailed field-notes with shorthand notations during the meeting in real time and marked the pauses, interruptions, and tonalities as she recalled them, the nuances of which are not part of our analysis here.

We present a "single case analysis" of a particular episode of argumentative interaction within the branch. In much qualitative research, scholars argue "depth" is the goal of research—and things do not have to be "generalizable" or even "ubiquitous" to be important—a phenomenon can be important simply because it happened. Within EM/CA/MCA, "single case analysis" involves "the resources of past work on a range of phenomena and organizational domains in talk-in-interaction are brought to bear on the analytic explication of a single fragment of talk" (Schegloff, 1987, p. 101). Conversational data and perhaps related interactional practices—through descriptions of, or notes on, posture, movements, facial expression, etc.—are taken from a single interactional context and subjected to detailed examination (Donald, 2018).

Some CA scholars are averse to single case analyses preferring to seek *collections* of instances to describe a single phenomenon. But over 40 years, there have been many examples of single cases in EM and CA, including in Sacks's (1992) own work (for other examples, see Mehan & Wood, 1975; Schegloff, 1987; Sudnow, 1972; Watson, 2015); and multiple arguments for the distinct purpose and contribution of single case analyses (Raymond, 2018; Schegloff, 1987, 1988; Whalen and Whalen, 1988). Emanuel Schegloff insists that a "single case brings with it "internal" evidentiary resources that warrant its being taken very seriously indeed" (1988, 442). Hence, an important purpose of a single case is to reveal the intricacies of a single utterance, speech act, or episode (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008; Schegloff, 1987, 1988). Single cases offer a rich understanding of an existing phenomenon within its local context. Watson (2015) is of the strong view that this distinctive context means that the researcher cannot extract the "just this-ness" from the here-and-now to create de-contextualized collections. For Geoffrey Raymond (2018) the contextual specificity of singular sequences of data analysis can sit alongside collections and generalizations in EM.

3.2 | Analytic approach

MCA has been described an "empirically tractable method" for researchers interested in members'—not academics'—categories of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and their relevance to interaction, rather than sequential issues and conducted in a number of organizational contexts (Stokoe, 2012, p. 278). In essence, MCA is an "analytic mentality" and a "collection of observations" rather than a step by step methodology, for describing how members invoke and mobilize categories to organize and understand the social world, and how these are used in positing people, morality, events, and actions (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015, p. 6; although see Stokoe, 2012).

MCA and CA became branches of ethnomethodology in the late 1960s and early 70s, due to Harvey Sacks collaborating with Garfinkel in EM (notably Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970). Together, they wrote "On Formal Structures of Practical Actions" (1970), an article which brought both approaches together. Sacks invented the analysis of categorizations in his Lectures 1964–72 (Sacks, 1972, 1992, p. 40). Since its origins in Sacks' work (1992), MCA has developed three "distinctive genres" ethnomethodologically informed MCA, focused on categorical analysis; conversational analysis

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informed MCA, examining sequential analysis of talk-in-interaction; and studies which bring categorical and sequential analysis together as they are seen to inform each other in interaction (Hester & Hester, 2010, p. 564; Hester and Eglin, 1997, p. 2). Hence, there is no one monolithic approach to undertaking EM or MCA. Our approach in this article is informed by EM and ethnography. EM scholars have written on the insights ethnography and EM bring to each other (Pollner & Emerson, 2001).

According to Sacks (1972, 1992), membership categories are classifications or social types used as means of describing people and making sense of their local, situational actions. He was interested in examining the principles and methods that people use in selecting categorization for themselves and others on particular occasions; and the consequences of these categorization processes (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015; Sacks, 1972, 1992). MCA focuses on how people claim, disavow, assign, and reject identity categories; how they describe them—directly, indirectly, and evaluatively—and how and why they become relevant within any particular sequence of social interaction (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015; Stokoe, 2012).

Categories are seen to be “inference-rich” that is, “the store house and the filing system for the common-sense knowledge that ordinary people…have about what people are like, how they behave, etc.” (Schegloff, 2007, p. 469). Members routinely identify categories but they also ascribe to them certain activities, known as category-bound activities (Sacks, 1992), linked to categories; and category-tied predicates (Watson, 1978), such as attributes, rights, responsibilities, obligations, duties, and knowledges, viewed as “properly” linked to a category (Hester & Eglin, 1997; Jayyusi, 1984; Sacks, 1992). Categories are often collected into membership categorization devices (MCDs), such as “medical occupations” which might include nurses, doctors, auxiliaries, etc; and in ABBB, manager, boss, employee, customer, and director, were assembled under the MCD bank, all of which carried expectable rights, obligations, and activities (Whittle, 2017). MCA analyses how categories are collected into MCDs and tied to predicates occasioned in situ (Watson, 2015). MCA scholars note that speakers often categorize themselves and/or others implicitly through descriptions and category-resonance rather than explicit category labels (Hansen, 2005; Hester & Eglin, 1997; Sacks, 1992). The meanings of categories and MCDs are relative to the local social context as accomplished and oriented to by members and analyzed for how they are made relevant and recognizable to members in their talk (Hester & Hester, 2010).

What's critical to MCA is that the categorizing of members by members is usually more than just description. Categories and MCDs, are “interactionally deployed to perform social actions in formulating locations, doing accusations, making excuses, allocating blame, finding a motive, telling a story and so on” (Eglin & Hester, 2006, p. 9). And this is the case when members racially categorize themselves or others, as in our study: race and ethnicity are not just identifications but resources put to work (Hansen, 2005; Whitehead, 2012).

Finally, a brief point on ethics: our case entails discussing misdeeds in selling bank products which were illegal at the time and raised ethical questions for us in our analysis and writing. But it should be noted that the fieldworker obtained informed consent from participants at each meeting and subsequently anonymized all names. Furthermore, the meeting took place some years ago. Finally, many financial institutions in the UK, US, and Australia were found to have been mis-selling, and as a result, it is now understood as a sector wide problem and a system in which employees are implicated, as we will see in the data below as individual face tensions in if and how to follow and not follow policies.

3.3 | Research context

The personal banking team in Mishti's branch reported to Jack, the area manager for *BigBank's* personal-banking services. In an interview with the researcher, Mishti described him as “her senior”. Mishti managed the branch staff but left most of the management of the personal bankers to Jack, and his office was in Mishti's branch.

On the day of the meeting, the researcher arrived at the branch to find a tense atmosphere. Throughout that day she heard rumors and snippets of information. Someone at another branch had been found to have been “mis-selling”

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the bank's *BetterLife* policy. *BigBank* had launched an investigation and an audit trail had revealed that many of its customers' files lacked the necessary documents to prove the customer wished to invest in the plan. The audit found that one of the "personal-banking team" in Mishti's branch—"Habeeba"—did not have customer signatures for most of the payments into the *BetterLife* plan that she had arranged. During the day the researcher came to understand that the rule was: personal bankers, dealing with clients by phone, *should not* immediately transfer the client to the new policy and take an immediate payment, even if the client said on the phone that they should. Although the client could—and often did—verbally agree by phone to purchase the new policy—and this was legally binding—*BigBank's* formal policy was that personal bankers should *not* take the money straight away.

BigBank's senior management had arranged for an internal inquiry, with a hearing to take place at the bank headquarters, with Habeeba being the first person to be interviewed by senior managers. Jack would be interviewed at a later date. The plan was to hold an evening meeting of the personal banking team after the branch closed. The other personal bankers had been discussing the hearing and advising Habeeba on how to make her defense. It appeared that following Jack's instructions, Habeeba spoke with clients by phone informing them about the new policy *BetterLife* and encouraged them to "invest" money into it. Once they had agreed, over the phone, she immediately set up the payments so that money left the customer's account right away.

3.4 | Findings and analysis

Once the branch was closed for the day, at the evening meeting Jack and Mishti were present, along with the personal-banking team: Habeeba, Sheri, Neha, Ali, Adi, Kunal, and Dave. The personal banking team, except Dave a white British man, were all of Indian heritage—some were second generation British Indian, and others international students who had obtained a job in the UK on a visa.

At the start of the meeting, Habeeba looked distraught, slumped over the table, head in her hands. The young women, Sheri and Neha seated on either side, rubbing her back gently. Ali, Adi, and Kunal seemed uncomfortable, their jackets slung over chairs. Jack was leaning against the window. Mishti made a quick phone call, ordering "sweet hot tea". Mishti kept looking around impatiently, glancing at Jack and Dave who were whispering.

The conversation goes as follows:

Suddenly, Habeeba drained her glass of water and says:

01 H: I was new. It wasn't my fault. I was new. I was new (pause). I was
02 new. Why am I being punished? Why? Why?

The meeting begins in an emotionally fraught way with Habeeba denying fault, justifying her denial ("I was new"), and asking why she's being punished? In self-ascribing herself as "new", Habeeba invokes the member category of a "novice-employee". Habeeba would have a host of available membership categories she could use to describe herself: for instance in this case—personal banker, woman, Indian. But not all membership categories are relevant to accomplish the interactional work needed, which for Habeeba, is formulating an argument (Wilkinson, 2011).

Habeeba is hearably under duress. The four-fold repetition of "I was new" displays Habeeba's belief that in being new she could not possibly be at fault, so should not be punished. Thus, she disclaims responsibility. Whether this reasoning will or should be acceptable becomes one of the main points of argument in the meeting and shortly she will add further reasons.

In assigning herself the label 'new', she begins to imply the kinds of motives, entitlements, obligations, activities, and knowledge—"category predicates"—that can conventionally be imputed to a novice-employee (Watson, 1978). This category enables her to formulate a reason why she is not blameworthy (Watson, 1978). In particular, she invokes a "category-bound entitlement" that she is not responsible for not having a specific form of knowledge, so therefore may claim that as a novice-employee she cannot be at fault (Watson, 1978). As the argument unfolds, we

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will see how Habeeba and Jack both invoke and develop other related categories, like boss, manager, and even the English economy. They go on to suggest, explicitly or implicitly, the "proper" or "expectable" actions and activities that can be inferred to these type of identities.

In clearly excusing herself of fault from the outset, prior to even having been asked for her account, and stacking a claim to being blame free, Habeeba can be heard to be creating "interactional trouble" for Jack and Mishti (Rawls & David, 2005). By denying the fault she opens up the possibility that someone else may be at fault. Possibly they are in the room.

Neither Jack nor Mishti respond to Habeeba's question (why am I being punished?), rather, Mishti invites Habeeba to inform the meeting about what happened:

03 M: Why don't you tell us what happened? From the start?

In saying this, Mishti gives Habeeba "the floor" encouraging her to explain what happened, implying that what Habeeba has said so far is not sufficient. Sacks (1992) notes, those who go first in a dispute are generally in a weaker position than those who get to go second. This is because those who go second can simply attack the position of the person who goes first without outlining their own position:

> Going first means having to put your opinion on the line, whereas going second means being able to argue merely by challenging your opponent to expand on or account for his or her claims (Hutchby, 1996, p. 497).

Hutchby insists that institutional settings and discourses shape the unfolding of arguments and distribute conversational resources asymmetrically by role, allocating some participants' differential interactional effects. These points will soon become apparent in the meeting.

Habeeba continues by providing her account of what happened and how it happened. She adds several assertions.

04 H: I had barely finished my training and Jack
05 ((finger pointed at Jack who is leaning against the window))
06 asked me to bring in new customers for BetterLife. I asked
07 him about the protocol, reminded him that that's what we are
08 taught (pause) that we are not supposed to divert any money to
09 anything without the customer's signature. And what did he
10 say? What did he say? ((imitates his deep voice))
11 "It's fine. The rules are not written in stone. They are only
12 guidelines. Just do what I say, love, I know what's right."
13 ((she slams her hand on the table))
14 Obviously you don't know what's right. This. Is. All. Your
15 fault. All. Your. Fault. And who gets the blame? Me (pause)
16 That's who. Now I am going to be fired, you (pause) you (pause) basta

She reaffirms her self-categorization of her novice-employee status by adding that she had "barely finished her training" (L4) when Jack asked her to "bring in new customers for BetterLife". At L5, she directly states Jack is the source of the problem that she is in (finger pointed at Jack who is leaning against the window). L6–9 she stresses that she asked him about the protocol, taught in training, claiming she reminded him: "what we are taught" (specifying "that we are not supposed to divert any money to anything without the customer's signature" L8–9). Here Habeeba makes institutional roles relevant, positioning herself as novice-employee and Jack as her "boss" who can "tell her what to do".

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At L11–12, she imitates his voice and his response through reported speech. Studies show that reported speech—"reporting, directly and indirectly, the words of other people", gives "veracity and authenticity to a descriptive account" by suggesting that the speaker "is simply voicing the words of another" (Stokoe & Edwards, 2007, p. 338–339). Reported direct and indirect speech serve different functions such as giving evidence for a "claim being made" or even "dramatizing a point" (Buttny, 1997, p. 478). They are not neutral but construct an evaluation of the event and people involved. Direct speech appears to reproduce the words of the original source and indirect conveys the content but the not words (Buttny, 1997, p. 478). Direct quotes enable the speaker to draw on the prosody and style of the original speaker. We see this here as Habeeba "voices" Jack directly performing his "voiced persona", framing Jack and his actions. This and helps her to position him as blameworthy, breaking rules and being the "bad" employee, and her the "good" employee (Buttny, 1997, 1998). In doing this, Habeeba seeks to shift the blame to Jack, and her use of reported speech helps makes her claims sound more robust (Buttny, 1997, 1998). She also deploys "indirect reported speech", voicing the policy implicitly to position herself as a new but the "good" employee.

Habeeba's problem, in her own account, is that she is being blamed for doing something she was explicitly directed to do by her manager, and against her own thinking as formed in the training. So having diligently followed his instructions in her own sight she is therefore a "good" novice-employee. Therefore, it is Jack's instructions that are found to be flawed and he must be at fault.

Here, we can see signs of increasing interactional trouble ahead in Habeeba's shift from describing what objectively happened to: (a) repeated rhetorical questions (what did he say?) (L9–10, 15); (b) her imitation of Jack's voice; (c) her slamming her hand on the table; and (d) her blaming Jack directly in very strong terms. Habeeba is hearably indignant that Jack's confident explanation and command have turned out to be so wrong. By imitating his voice and certain ways of speaking (e.g., "Just do what I say, love, I know what's right.") she is upping the ante and daring him to deny her recollection and assertion. She voices his gendered use of "love" on purpose and later in the transcript we see him use this again. In saying "you don't know what's right" (L14), she hearably produces an accusation of managerial incompetence.

For MCA scholars, people in everyday interaction categorize themselves, each other, and each other's actions in moral terms, regardless of whether moral issues are foregrounded, because they make claims about what "things" ought to be like (Jayyusi, 1984). Categories and predicates specify normative, expectable actions, activities, and the morality that are "setting-relevant" for a type, or types, of person such as manager or novice-employee. In making her accusation, Habeeba holds Jack accountable for misdirecting her, a mere novice-employee. She displays "moral work" in addressing his lack of moral responsibility and actions, labels him as being at fault, and therefore responsible for her actions (Jayyusi, 1984). Her accusing, blaming, criticizing and expressing of outrage constitute a series of forms of moral criticism of her manager and as a result, a problem for Mishti, Jack, and the other members of the meeting. Through her categorial actions in front of the whole team, she can be heard to degrade Jack who is in danger of losing face. Her own fear of imminent dismissal is the only mitigation.

Jack does not respond to her at this point; rather, Mishti intervenes:

17 M: (places a hand on Habeeba's arm)
18 M: Ha…bee…ba ((warning tone))
19 Please… Ah, here comes the tea. Drink some.
20 (A girl comes up to the group, tea tray in hand. A kettle and 10 cups are
21 placed on the tray)
22 Thank you.
23 H: (The girl leaves. Mishti pours some tea, adds milk and 3 teaspoons of sugar.
24 She hands the tea to Habeeba.)
25 M: Drink! (Ordering tone)

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At L17-25 Mishti's intervention warns Habeeba of "trouble" and seeks to gain some control with her warning tone, hand gesture, and command to drink the tea. Mishti or indeed anyone else at the meeting could have agreed or disagreed with Habeeba's account, but no-one does. Jack has lost some face and Habeeba remains distraught and is in an increasingly precarious position.

Habeeba does what Mishti tells her to do by drinking the tea. No one speaks. She then continues:

26 H: (Habeeba glares. Sips the tea)
27 H: Sweet. Sweet. Why am I being punished? Why? (Pause). Why? (Pause) I didn't
28 know it would be so (long pause) such a problem. I wondered about
29 it. I thought that we couldn't do such things, you know, just
30 talk to someone on the phone, tell them about our new
31 scheme, and move the money. But Jack, our man-age-er told
32 me that it is okay (sniffs) (long pause) I did not think it would become
33 such a big deal. (Sniffs) (Pause). I trusted Jack. I really
34 trusted him.

L27–34, Habeeba repeats several points she has made previously and her question remains: "Why am I being punished?" The repetitions display that she is trying to hold the line of her argument. Habeeba has already repeated various phrases in L1–2 and 4–16. Now, L27–34, Habeeba returns to and reformulates her account of "what happened". Having produced at Mishti's request (L4–16) a first stark account, she now, after Mishti's intervention (L17–25), appears to orient to Mishti's warning tone and authoritative commands and produces a second version of her first account (L26-34). She hearbly reformulates it following what MCA calls a "look again" procedure, that is, evaluating the situation with fresh resources (Watson, 1978, p. 109). Habeeba sounds less sure of her account: she uses less definite descriptions, stating she "didn't know it would be … such a problem" (L27-28), and invoking terms like: "I didn't know," "I wondered," "I thought" which demonstrate some mitigation of her earlier more definite position (Pomerantz, 1984).

Nevertheless, she reiterates again her reasons for thinking she should not be punished. She remains adamant on this point. Her formulation L29-32, specifies more clearly than before Mishti's intervention, that Jack told her she could move money without a signature, rather than "what we are taught" (L7-08).

Here (L31), Habeeba emphasizes the category of manager in regard to Jack. In doing this she deploys a "standard relational pair" (SRP), namely "manager" and "novice employee" (Sacks, 1972). Standard relational pairs are a class of categories in which two membership categories are commonly paired together. Examples included parent–child, teacher–pupil, doctor–-patient, manager–worker, and as Habeeba frames it, manager–novice-employee. Relational pairs imply rights, duties, and moral obligations in relation to each other. Often one half of the pair has a particular duty of care to the other, as Habeeba implies in her account (L31-34): "But Jack, our man-age-er told me that it is okay … I trusted Jack. I really trusted him."

Whereas in her first account (L14-16) Habeeba emphasizes that: "obviously you don't know what's right. This. Is. All. Your fault. All. Your. Fault. And who gets the blame? Me", in her look-again second account (L33-34) she explains "I trusted Jack. I really trusted him". In shifting from accusing to talking about trusting Jack, Habeeba invokes the category bound predicate that novice-employees should at least be able to trust their manager's word within the workplace. She implies that as an incumbent of the category manager, Jack is conventionally and properly obliged to engage in activities predicated of the category "manager", such as giving correct information and being trustworthy and responsible.

In L32-33, the transcript suggests that Habeeba is sniffing, perhaps crying, suggesting some "(temporary) interactional incapacity" (Archer & Parry, 2019: 598). At this point Jack responds verbally with a strong accusatory and antagonistic response, verbally ignoring and adding to her distressed emotional state. He is brief:

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35 J: Listen. (Pause) You knew it was wrong and against company
36 protocol. Yes? You could have said no. You didn't. Did you?
37 Did you? (Long pause) So it is your fault. Get it? Can you underst-

Nothing in these three lines acknowledges Habeeba's self-categorization that she was new, a novice fresh out of training, and obliged to take his advice and entitled to trust his answers to her check-up questions. However, in specifying she "could have said no" he implies that someone either suggested or asked her to do something she knew was wrong. But Jack, we find, is using a different category-bound predicate: someone fresh from training who knows the protocol exactly so should be expected to enact the protocol.

Jack's response—"You knew it was wrong and against company protocol"—is strongly worded and works to reformulate what Habeeba has said in L06-12. Jack does not, at this point, accept that he asked her to do anything. When he says: "Listen. You knew it was wrong and against company protocol", he erases any instruction he may have given. In his account, Habeeba simply knew what the protocol said and took the wrong action. She could have said no, but didn't.

As a target of moral criticism, there are various types of responses Jack could make, for instance, giving an account, apology, or admission, or making an outright rejection or denial (Archer & Parry, 2019). But instead, he simply re-formulates Habeeba's account selectively, altering the presumption she was holding on to (that he told her to do it), and undermining her conclusion that it was his fault. He represents a direct challenge to her account and moves the conversation into the opposite direction to Habeeba; that is, he is working toward her guilt and his innocence.

He picks apart her argument by using a sequence of closed form of interrogatives, which allow a constrained "yes" or "no" response at the very most, and are grammatically formatted to prefer a "yes" response (Raymond, 2003). Such questions are "blame-implicative", "a powerful resource often relied upon in the construction of legal argument" which reduce the potential extended replies and have been described as a "coercive" form of questioning (Archer & Parry, 2019, p. 595). Jack's accusatory questions imply Habeeba's guilt and work to seek a confession from her. He does not answer her question about why she is to be punished. But he tries to assign blame through his questions, bypassing her category-bound predicates that she was new therefore sought his advice; and the category-bound predicates and actions that Habeeba ascribed to him as a manager. In producing a series of coercive questions, Jack can thereby be heard to "deflect, neutralize and make redundant" her account (Hester & Hester, 2010, p. 39). He does not address her reproaches of him which could have become the objects of his dispute or moral offense. He uses the accusatory questioning turns to exonerate himself from wrongdoing by portraying her responsibility for the problem, and obscures his own agency.

Jack tries to reject moral criticism by putting the blame on her and getting her to agree to fault without much explanation, all of which inflames the growing lack of interactional trust. His closing comments: "So it is your fault. Get it? Can you underst-" a verdict followed by two sharp questions: the first "Get it?" is followed by "Can you underst" which implies that she probably has not understood, nor cannot. Here, he is turning the tables on Habeeba, using her self-claimed novitiate status to demonstrate her lack of understanding. He comes back to this shortly.

He weakens her claim to the category-tied predicate of a "novice employee" of not knowing how to behave and he asserts strongly that she did know what she was doing was wrong. Ignoring her rights and entitlements as a novice employee, he says she could have said No, implying that novice-employees can say No, and that this responsibility lies as much with a novice-employee as with a manager. This categorical work extends his argument that Habeeba alone should take the blame in the inquiry for the wrong-doing she claims he directed. From here on the meeting becomes more of a tit-for-tat argument with Habeeba responding as follows:

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38 H: My fault? My fault? For trusting my boss? I thought that
39 maybe you (pause) had the power to override the rules. I thought
40 you knew what you were doing. But you just wanted sales to
41 go up! Money! That's all. You don't care about us, your
42 employees. Do you? Money. That's all (pause).

Previously she used the membership category “manager”, but now Habeeba responds with a repeated rhetorical question: “My fault? My fault? For trusting my boss?” (L38), referencing the word “boss”, inferring a more hierarchical relation (bosses give orders rather than suggestions). This invokes a power relation—not in the sense of a theoretical concept but as a practical matter of fact. One is obliged to do what one's boss instructs. Claiming her category-bound entitlement more strongly here, she states she thought he had the information, rights and responsibilities to override the rules. One category-bound duty of a boss, for Habeeeba, is to give accurate advice/instruction to employees and to take responsibility when it turns out that advice is wrong or if the boss misled her, deliberately or accidently, then surely that boss is responsible for any mistake made as a consequence.

In this excerpt, Habeeba widens her accusation against Jack, explicitly invoking the standardized relational pair—”boss-employee”—to reformulate her claim of him. Instead of just being wrong through incompetence, she now depicts him as not caring: “You don”t care about us, your employees'. Adding: “Money. That's all” (L41-42); stating what she thinks his motive was. In doing so, she produces another moral judgment entailing an evaluation of Jack's conduct as infringing expectations based on a normative assessment of a boss's actions and values. In upgrading her blaming and degradation of Jack, Habeeba hearably judges that his moral standing has diminished further.

“Blamings” can demand a morally loaded response like an admission, account, or apology (Archer & Parry, 2019). But despite Habeeba's accusation, Jack orients back to the topic of money and how the team and she did well by her doing what she did:

43 J: And? We had the best sales for that quarter. Thanks to you.
44 J: (Flashes a smile)
45 And are you forgetting that little. wonderful. thing, called
46 a bonus, that you earned? It was nearly as much as your
47 basic salary!

In essence, he tries to pass the interest in money back to her by imputing her motive and suggesting she flouted the protocol to earn a big bonus and that she and the team benefitted. In so doing, he reformulates her claim that he wanted money to turn it back on her. He does this to continue his narrative that Habeeba needs to take the blame in the inquiry.

Habeeba responds quickly displaying her understanding of the problems with Jack's claim that she sought money.

48 H: A bonus one quarter, and dismissal within 6 months. Great
49 track record for me! Oh!

Jack ignores her with a dismissive ‘whatever’, treating Habeeba's last remark as of no consequence. He then issues her with a series of commands on how she should present herself at the following day's inquiry with senior managers:

50 J: Whatever. Just say it was your fault, you were new, blah blah blah
51 J: ((in a high pitched tone))
52 (Long pause)
53 J: Make sure you don't blame me. And don't take my name.

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54 They'll think you were just a novice who made a mistake,
55 driven by the need to earn a bonus. You will promise to be a
56 good employee, it won't happen again, blah blah. It's not
57 unheard of, amongst you people.
58 ((smirks and winks at Dave, who winks back))
59 They might feel bad and let you off with a warning
60 ((sniggers))
61 No?

He commands her to 'say it was your fault' at tomorrow's internal inquiry, to explain 'you were new' (L50) and 'make sure you don't blame me'. Jack appears to inhabit the directive boss category given to him by Habeeba (L38) and gives Habeeba his commands: 'Make sure you don't blame me,' 'don't take my name,' (L50-53) projecting 'compliance, deference and obedience', 'second pair parts of commands' (Hester & Hester, 2010, p. 38). He now infers his recognition of the category relationship of boss–employee and that he is in a position to issue these commands, that he has authority over her and that she owes him deference and compliance. He is asserting his right to direct Habeeba as her manager and echoing Habeeba's invocation of the boss category at L 31, 32, 38 but twisting it to his own ends for her to take the sole blame and not mention him.

He suggests the inquiry members will 'think you were just a novice who made a mistake driven by the need to earn a bonus' (L53-54). Here, Jack agrees with her self-ascription of novice-employee but reformulates it with new predicates to the category, which she did not imply. And then, he adds: 'It's not unheard of, amongst you people' (L56-57). The last remark assigns her a new identity: being a member of the category 'You people'; a predicate of which—according to Jack and common knowledge in some bank quarters—is to 'be driven by the need for money'.

Jack does not make explicit what the identity of "you people" is but he is referencing Habeeba, who is a recent Indian migrant. Although he doesn't mention the category of Indian directly, it is hearable that Jack means to infer her race and implicates the other British- and migrant- Indian people in the room. Scholars note that members generally avoid mentioning race or ethnicity directly, by name or label, and instead deploy other resources—associated activities or concerns—to invoke them indexically or imply a racial meaning indirectly, without saying it 'in so many words' (Hansen, 2005; Schegloff, 1996, p. 181; Whitehead, 2009); unless it's a situation when race talk is encouraged such as diversity training (Whitehead, 2009). In this case, the meaning of "you people" as a racial category 'derives its sense from the particular group that is being 'indexed' or 'pointed to' in that particular context' (Whittle, 2017, p. 220; see also McIlvenny, 1996). Additionally, the two white men, Jack and Dave exchange affiliative winks as Jack makes these categorizations.

Jack implies that he and the senior managers share this commonsense racial knowledge of people like Habeeba, as if the categorization is a semi-official, institutionally recognized type of person. At no point in the meeting, has Habeeba assigned herself a category membership of race or gender, or made race a 'relevancy' in her argument. He suggests that her need to get a bonus would not be unheard of, that is, the inquiry members are likely to have come across similar cases, and he says of the inquiry: 'they might feel bad and let you off with a warning'. Here, he tries to provide plausible motives for Habeeba so that she obeys his commands and take the blame.

In her turn, Habeeba repeats her denial and her accusation of him, which he had not acknowledged in his turns, and responds with a verbal and physical counter-attack, making her distress and indignation at his racialized categorization of her in ways that are hearable and visible:

62 H: ((stands up, roughly pushing the chair back))
63 Firstly, it wasn't my fault. It was your call. I did what was
64 asked of me. Like a good employee. Secondly, why shouldn't
65 I blame you? And third, and most important, what do you
66 mean by 'my people'? Huh? Huh?
67 ((aggressive tone))

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There are several parts to her opposition to his remarks: first, a denial of fault in which she re-attributes the blame to Jack, restating the SRP manager/employee and the category-bound assumption that as her manager, it was his call. She insists that in obeying his commands as a manager about the protocol, she behaved as a good employee, so does not need to promise the inquiry that she will be a good employee. Secondly, she resists his command that she should not blame him.

Thirdly, and the 'most important' issue as Habeeba hears it, is Jack's insult 'you people'. She asks a direct question, hearable as an accusation, and a display of her contestation of his categorization: 'what do you mean, huh, huh?' (L66-67). Habeeba can be heard to resist and disrupt his categorization. Because participants know that mentioning race and ethnicity and stereotyping are potentially sensitive, questionable, and negative, Habeeba's interrogative 'what do you mean by 'my people'?' offers Jack the face-saving possibility of denying any racist connotation. But Jack does not accept, as we see in his next moves.

In this next excerpt, we hear him upgrade his racist insult and racially Other her and her colleagues through invoking the category "you people" in relation to the MCD 'English economy'. Jack starts by again showing non-verbal affiliation to the other white man in the room (L68) and continues to try to coerce a confession from her, using the over-familiar form of address, 'love', hearably inappropriate, sexist, and condescending given the nature of the meeting, and his role as 'boss'. It points to the intersections of race and gender in this racist interaction.

68 J: ((smiles slowly, glances at Dave. Dave grins))
69 Come on love, admit it. You wanted money, you did the stupid
70 thing I asked for. You people can be so naïve! You people want
71 to work here, be part of the English economy, then try not to
72 be stupi-

After he calls for her admission (L69), he re-asserts his account of the reasons for her mis-selling: her appetite for money, as she followed his advice. At the same time, he affirms that she did what he told her to do, 'the stupid thing I asked for' (L69-70). Since she is accused by head office of breaching the protocol, Jack has just inferred that he did ask her to do this. This is almost an admission that he had asked her to breach the Bank's protocol as she said earlier (L10-12, L29-34). However, he is more focused on persuading Habeeba that the motive she should admit to, at the inquiry, in doing as he asked, was that she 'wanted money', which he asserts as a predicate of 'you people' (L54-57, L69-70).

He answers her question (L65-66) about what he meant by 'you people', by associating it with further category-bound predicates of stupidity and naivete, adding to his earlier ascription of 'being driven to earn a bonus' (L55). He repeats 'you people' twice here in a confrontational and even threatening manner, even though, or perhaps because, he could see that Habeeba was distressed.

At L71 in his next move, Jack invokes the MCD—'the English economy'—through which he brings forth a category of a social configuration that is, economy, modified by the national or racial category of English. Like other categories, what national and racial identities 'mean', is a members' phenomenon and contextual matter. Given that the racial category of 'Indian' was alluded to in the previous turns, it can be heard here as another category within the device of economy. It is also possible to infer the 'customary reference' of 'English' to refer to white people (Tyler, 2012; Watson, 1978). Scholars note that people of color are more likely to describe themselves, and be categorized as British, a civic identity, rather than English, a racialized or ethnicized one (McCrone, 2006, p. 274). Indeed, some argue that calling oneself English can be heard to be 'tapping into a strain of right-wing sentiment which has chauvinistic overtones, both against 'foreigners' and 'Europe' (McCrone, 2006, p. 274).

Additionally, within this MCD, Jack seems to infer there are two groups—English and Indians—that exist in an adversarial SRP—whereby membership is mutually exclusive and predicates associated with them, oppositional (Jayyusi, 1984). The predicates according to Jack are English—sophisticated and clever—; and Indian—naive and

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stupid. His application of the MCD "English Economy" also provides for the possibility of additional pairs of categories such as English/foreigner, English/Indian, white/brown, and insider/outsider: the latter identities in each pair he implicitly assigns to Habeeba and her peers, and the former to himself. In mobilizing this MCD, he racializes Habeeba and her peers again and casts doubt on her, and her peers' competence and qualification to be a member of the 'English' workforce because they deviate from what he implies are the occupational requirements of those working in the banking sector.

We can see his attack as predicated on his incumbency of directive boss, acting in a predicate bound way, presenting himself as the one who can decide what's right, wrong, and appropriate and competent to adjudicate on race and workplace traits. It is plausible to suggest that Jack is self-categorizing not only as directive boss, but as a white English boss who is entitled to make a racist evaluation of his Indian employees in this way.

Jack is making supposed commonsense knowledge in the bank about racial difference relevant to push his claims that Habeeba doesn't understand the nuances of the workplace and should obey him and take the rap. In so doing, Jack verbally and racially attacks her and the rest of the team, stigmatizing them as mentally deficient and professionally incompetent based on their race. Rather than understand his racist insult as individualized prejudice, MCA encourages us to hear it as relevant and consequential, invoked as a resource to legitimate his actions and denigrate hers, and part of BigBank's institutional categorizations of its Indian workers.

In this paper, we end our analysis at L72 in the transcript, since Habeeba does not speak again. His racial Othering silences her. Jack's attack is followed by a series of instructions from Mishti that Habeeeba take the sole blame at the inquiry and not invoke Jack's name. Jack finishes by telling her she has no proof that he did anything wrong and repeats his Othering narrative, 'You people are so naïve' which he know distressed Habeeba and probably all of the Indians in the room. He then walk-outs unilaterally with Dave, the other white man, withdrawing from the argument, terminating the interaction, and leaving it unresolved. After the inquiry, Habeeba lost her job.

4 | DISCUSSION

We can see from this transcript that Habeeba starts the meeting using the standard relational pair (SRP) of novice-employee and boss/manager. To be a good employee in Habeeba's book means asking your boss for direction and trusting that s/he gives you a good steer, all consistent with a 'hierarchical organization MCD' in which bosses tell novice-employees what to do. Jack appears to be using the MCD of 'flat organizational structure' in which there are 'self-managed employees', who know company policy and follow that, even when directed to do otherwise. Managers just give guidelines. Employees can say no to them.

Jack appears to use the MCD of flat organizational structure strategically during the meeting to discount her argument and to use it against her. But later in the excerpt, Jack orders and commands Habeeba, activities which align with her classification of the MCD hierarchical organization structure and predicates of boss. What's also noticeable, is that during the course of the meeting, as she interacts with Jack, Habeeba gradually enacts the category of the employee who will say 'No' to Jack, her manager as he tries to get her to take the sole blame.

Habeeba consistently invokes the SRP of novice-employee/boss and does not ascribe any demographic categories in making her claims. In Rawls and David's (2005) terms, she treats everyone as populational identities that is, actors defined by mutual participation in a practice, in this case a workplace meeting in a bank. In contrast, Jack shifts from invoking occupational categories—novice-employee—to demographic identity, making race relevant to his argument in ways that can heard as racist. When Habeeba does not follow his commands, he re-categorizes her from being a novice who made a mistake to being an Indian in need of money, a categorization he claims is based on some common place knowledge in the bank. He then invokes the MCD of the English Economy in which stupid Indians/clever English, foreigners/English and outsiders/insiders are collected. At this point, he also performs the predicated actions of hierarchical boss in commanding her to do what he says and take the blame; and evaluating her qualities as

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a worker in the MCD of the English economy in a racist way. In selecting a narrative that is hearably racist, and clearly one that she is distressed by, he is claiming the right to make interpretations of her as a manger in BigBank, and that she is not allowed to assess, and that he infers are part of the common place knowledge of the white management echelons (Rawls & David, 2005).

Habeeba has refused to support the narrative that Jack has perpetuated that she take the sole responsibility for the wrong-doing that he has seemingly directed. In Jack's view, she is causing 'interactional trouble' and has become 'accountably Other' because she is not obeying the directions he enacts through the category of manager (Rawls & David, 2005). Jack activates the racist 'narrative account' of 'you people' being stupid and naive, and not competent in the 'English economy' to interpret why she is causing 'interactional trouble'. He knows this is a narrative that she and the others in the room will not share and in invoking it, destroys the last vestiges of Trust Conditions that operated between them.

Othering narratives about groups already exist amongst those with similar beliefs and values, often because of problems with each other historically and then are 'carr[ied] …into interactional situations' (Rawls & David, 2005: p. 489). In this vein, Jack's construction of Habeeba and colleagues reproduces what critical race theorists call coloniality, the 'historic effects of colonial logic' which inform categorizations of race, notions of white Western superiority, and racial hierarchy in the present (Iimki, 2018, p. 327; Tyler, 2012). White peoples' 'sense of superiority that historically has its origins in Empire and images of Empire' and the supposed inferiority of those colonized underpinned the rationale for and expansion of colonialism (Tyler, 2012, p. 429). The non-European is 'designated as lacking rational capacity and moral will, lesser or non-beings, instituted in unresolvable difference' (Iimki, 2018, p. 331). Coloniality underpins how British Asians are seen as racially marked immigrants and cultural outsiders (Hesse & Sayyid, 2006). What's important for Barnor Hesse and Sayyid (2006) is the extensiveness of coloniality, and the erasure of colonial violence and exploitation in white British's talk, thinking, social practices, policies, and forms of governance (Tyler, 2012). Katherine Tyler insists that 'even within mundane and ordinary [interactions]…colonial notions of culture and difference are expressed, articulated and performed that mark off and distinguish the white English Western self from non-English, non-Western, non-white foreign others' and which we see resonances of in Jack's classifications (2012, p. 442). While coloniality may be understood ethnomethodologically as a 'theoretical object'—a researcher's analytic category—and is not invoked at any point by the workers in the bank, this does not mean that its meanings do not influence beliefs and narratives about Indian workers in BigBank.

When Habeeba resists Jack's attempts to take the sole blame, he ups the ante, racially degrading her and her colleagues, applying race, over other categories, as a relevancy to win his argument and denigrate her competence. In doing so, as Iimki writes of the operation of coloniality in the workplace, he positions his Indian colleagues and staff members as ontologically different, in ways resonant with colonial Othering, and which deny her competence and exile her from the practice of the meeting discussion. He displays that he has full authority to do whatever he wants. His power as a manager provides the institutional context which enables Jack to make direct, unmitigated claims about racial difference, which no-one feels they can challenge. This interaction is a warning to the Indian workers in the room that they must do what he asks of them and that if they don't, they can be racially stigmatized, degraded, and made expendable.

What's important to note about the Othering going on here is that it is not simply a case of Jack racially insulting/Othering the Indian workers, although this has harmful effects as the everyday racism literature shows. Situated racial Othering is a 'process of driving someone outside of the practice' as we can see from the silencing of Habeeba (Rawls & David, 2005, p. 490). For Rawls and David, situated interactional Othering means being 'excluded from being human, refused reciprocity and excluded from intelligibility' (2005, p. 494). As they note, descriptions of racial discrimination are often belittled by white people but 'interactional difficulties are not trivial' (p. 494) and lead to 'the exclusion of persons from those *situated interactions* in which the essential economic, political and social transactions take place' (italics in original, Rawls & David, 2005, p.474).

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5 | CONCLUSION

Our article contributes to studies of race, coloniality, and racism in organization studies by bringing EM analyses of race, from Garfinkel onwards, to the readership of the journal and showing how a close-up analysis of workplace interactions can reveal the complexities of racism in mudane meetings in organizations. One key aspect of coloniality is that it refers to racial classification, 'an arrangement of power propagated through a 'cognitive model' that affirms a categorical distinction between Europe and non-Europe' (limki, 2018). For limki, this understanding of the ontological production of gender, sexual, and racial difference legitimizes the subordination, inequality, and exploitation of racial, gender, and sexual Others in work.

Alongside of coloniality theorists, other social scholars of different hues—critical race and EM—are interested in racial categorization and racial formation—how race has been and continues to be made—in order to promote racial justice and equality. But these theories differ in their projects and perspectives. Critical race theory and post/coloniality scholars are often interested in the questions underpinned by researchers' analytical categories, related to the relations between colonial history, racist cultures, global capitalism, and social power relations, such as did 'a category of race facilitate colonialism, or was colonialism instructive in cultivating a concept of race?' (Meer, 2018, p. 1167). In contrast, EM and MCA study members' categories in situ, as an occasioned matter for their situated purposes: categories-in-context (Hester & Hester, 2012). As we have shown, the aim is to examine how members classify persons racially and what people are and do; and importantly, mobilize race and ethnicity as a resource for practical purposes in local interactional contexts (Hansen, 2005; Whitehead, 2009). Such categories are not invented each time relative to a particular local social context as accomplished by participants and draw on local and wider circulating cultural knowledge (Hester & Hester, 2012).

Our article takes the editors' argument about the significance of categorization and the effects of this on the *unfolding* of racialization and the *emergence* of racial inequality but respecifies them through MCA and situated racial Othering (Greedharry et al., 2020; limki, 2018). In this way, we can offer an analysis of a meeting within BigBank which provides a rare insight into specific inter-racial interactions between employees and their managers. Our study works through the turn-by-turn talk and categorizations to explain how Jack makes race relevant for his argument that Habeeba should take the sole blame for the wrong-doing he seems to have directed. Jack does this in his position as manager, invoking the racist 'you people', a stereotype in an institutional context for institutional aims, a form of racism different from how racism happens in other contexts. In so doing, he deploys a racist categorization echoing a coloniality logic of 'racial Others as ontologically different', attributing characteristic to her which he infers is racial common sense in certain quarters of the bank and making Indian, new employee and greedy relevant in these interactions (limki, 2018, p. 327). Through this process, Jack racially Others Habeeba and the other Indian workers in the meeting in ways which dehumanize them and lead to their 'exile' from the interaction (Rawls & David, 2005).

Our literature review and empirical study provide an alternative way of understanding everyday racism which moves away from popular notions of unconscious bias or racist motivation, to analyze how race emerges in situ to accomplish social actions (Whitehead, 2012). This has critical implications for how we understand race but also how we challenge racism in organizations. Finally, we show that an MCA analysis of the granular detail of talk can tell us about what Don Zimmerman describes as the "big" issues, such as power, inequality, racism' and we can add coloniality, and he adds, 'whenever we look at deviance, disability, or the conditions underlying some social problem, we unavoidably encounter the footprints of the ordinary, routine processes of a society' (2005, p. 446, 447). An underutilized approach in organizational studies of racism, MCA reveals how the complexities of racism happen mundanely but with devastating consequences.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

ORCID

Elaine Swan https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4422-807X

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Stephen Fox is Professor in Organisational Learning at Queen Mary University of London. His research interests are in ethnomethodological and ethnographic studies of work and organisations.

Amie Ramanath is an HR consultant specialising in employee engagement, learning and development. Her PhD focused on workplace culture and communication in the NHS. As an immigrant herself, matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion are close to her heart and have been a key focus of her research and career.

Elaine Swan works at Sussex University Business School where she researches feminist and critical race approaches to diversity, therapy culture and food.

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