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Introduction to 'Power, Bodies and Regulation within the Context of Religion and Spirituality'

Contested Bodies: Understanding Power and Regulation within Religious Spaces

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1 Introduction

Embodied and intersectional feminist approaches have emphasised the regulation of bodies (Davis 1997; Howson 2004), yet there has been less attention paid to theorising dynamics of power, regulation and embodiment within religious and spiritual contexts through using insights from both feminism and the sociology of religion (Page and Pilcher 2020). This Special Issue takes an intersectional focus to explore the plethora of ways in which people navigate the operation of power and regulation of their bodies within religious and spiritual frameworks. Intersectionality is a term coined by Crenshaw (1991) to denote the ways in which Black women are disadvantaged by both raced and gendered processes, through the misrecognition of their experiences within gender equality and race equality initiatives. While feminist endeavours prioritised white women's lived experience, anti-racist projects elevated the conditions of Black men, so Black women fell between the cracks of analysis and were therefore marginalised within progressive politics. As a legal scholar, Crenshaw prioritised legal experiences to demonstrate the inability of the law to recognise the ways in which race and gender interacted to shape Black women's marginalisation. Others such as Collins and Bilge (2016, 2) have organised intersectionality into a powerful framework to critically analyse structural inequality:

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> When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division (…) but by many axes that work together and influence each other.

By deploying a feminist intersectional approach this special issue draws on new perspectives that prioritise lived understandings and intersectional experiences (Hawthorne, Sharma, et al. 2024).

Lived religion (which also encompasses spiritual practices—see McGuire 2008) focuses on the everyday ways people construct their worlds through religious meanings. While lived religion research has prioritised individual agency and the plethora of ways that individuals navigate and construct their religious worlds, lived religious frameworks also understand that this is achieved in socially constructed contexts, where individuals inherit particular norms, values and belief systems (McGuire 2008; Orsi 1996). This context therefore impacts on the kinds of agency that are enacted and the extent to which individuals rework this inheritance. We add to lived religious understandings, by examining how forms of regulation inform the ways in which lived religion is enacted in different contexts. In line with our intersectional perspective, we foreground two dimensions of lived religion in this article: embodiment and space. Indeed, embodied and spatial elements are crucial to a lived religion analysis (Ammerman 2021). As we have previously argued, 'Our sense of self is inseparable from our bodies, and lived experiences of religion are mediated through bodily experiences' (Page and Pilcher 2020, 1). The body is therefore fundamental to understanding lived religion (Ammerman 2021). Furthermore, the body navigates the world through particular and constructed spaces. This makes space an integral part of this analysis. As Knott (2005) argues, we need to be receptive to the various spaces in which religion can be located, with religious inferences and practices occurring within spaces that are not neatly understood as where religion should or can occur. This is heightened in societies where there are attempts to separate the religious from the secular. Therefore, we need to expand our understanding of the location of religion beyond traditional spaces like places of worship and be open to the role that religion and spirituality plays in other contexts and spaces. In this special issue, we consider anticipated spaces such as religious buildings and communities, as well as potentially unexpected places such as courts of law. Furthermore, we will be examining spatiality and embodiment with a particular feminist framing.

In this introduction, we bring the papers in this special issue together through the lens of contestation. Firstly, the idea that bodies are *contested*—and asking, which bodies are considered 'in place' and 'out of place' in varying

contexts. In Puwar's (2004) terms, who is considered to align with the 'somatic' or bodily norm within a particular religious and spiritual space and in doctrine, texts and discourse? Who is a 'space invader' and therefore 'out of place' in the normative regulatory practices of religion and secular domains like the court room and classroom and places of worship? Which bodies are socially problematised, and why? Who benefits? Such projects are concerned with how bodies are explicitly racialised (Ahmed 2002), how racist discourses operate (Hall 1997) and how whiteness is made normative and the standard against which other bodies are measured (Hawthorne, Sharma, et al. 2024). We are interested in the ways that regulation may operate in different *spaces*—at the legal level; within the everyday 'policing' of bodies by others; in religious spaces with their own norms and rules that can sit outside of equality frameworks, and through the self-surveillance and personal regulation that people practice in relation to their own bodies. This is premised on particular hierarchical orderings of religions themselves. Some of the religions examined in this special issue (e.g. Anglicanism) are privileged and infused with middle class, male and white norms and assumptions that allow them to benefit from respectability and little scrutiny (Guest, Olson, et al. 2012). Meanwhile, Islam is vilified and written through intersectional power relations that encode it as dangerous, with these dominant constructions written and played out through real bodies (Mirza 2013).

Secondly, we want to situate bodies as *contesting*—exploring the complexities of agency and how individuals navigate power and regulation, recognising that people's embodied resistance strategies may not always appear in neat, familiar packages. As Mahmood (2005) has questioned—why do we only recognise embodied agency when people are explicitly resisting, particularly in religious environments? What this indicates is that secular and religious/spiritual spaces are intimately embroiled, but, further, it is too simplistic to see religion as the dominant 'regulator' as is commonly assumed in populist understandings. Instead, bodies navigate different spaces and are read within dominant discourses in particular ways. Here we will bring together the work of Mirza (2013) and her concept of 'embodied intersectionality' in conversation with Puwar's theorisation of bodies as 'space invaders', to analyse how bodies are read and mis-read in everyday interactions within religious and spiritual contexts, bringing to the fore an understanding of religion utilising feminist frameworks. In doing so, we will highlight four aspects of regulation that emerge from the articles—namely, regulation as 'storied', ritualised, relational and emotional.

In organising this article, we will start by introducing the Special Issue articles, following a fleshing out of our conceptual framework using Puwar (2004)

and Mirza (2013). We will then sketch out a way of understanding regulation, focusing on the aforementioned four elements: storytelling, ritual, the relational, and emotion work. We will end on some broader conclusions regarding agency, regulation and lived religion. Throughout we draw inspiration from the articles in this special issue.

2 Introducing the Articles

Zaheeda Alibhai's article, *(Un)Bounded Systems: Law, Religion and Agency*, focuses on the law and regulation, detailing two examples of case law (USA and France) involving Muslim women and veiling practices. These examples reveal the gendered and racialised practices that attempt to exclude Muslim women from citizenship in different contexts, and the role that state processes play in regulating Muslim women's bodies. In the duration of the court proceedings, the appellants were subject to paternalistic control mechanisms that sought to undermine their religious affiliation, and the appellants used various strategies to both comply with dominant discourses and to reject them.

Sukhbinder Hamilton, with Page and Pilcher, in their article, *'What Would Your Father Say?' Izzat, Identity and Belonging in the Educational Journeys of British Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani Women*, explore interviews with British women of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian heritage and their experience of *izzat* (loosely translated as 'honour'), a gendered concept which puts expectations on women and girls to behave in socially-sanctioned ways, ensuring that they do not bring shame and dishonour to their family and community. Various mechanisms are used to control behaviour such as community surveillance. But the authors emphasise the multi-layered nature of regulation, given that the participants experience other oppressive regimes, such as racism in the schooling system. This emphasises embodied complexity as the participants navigate various kinds of regulation.

Esther McIntosh and Sharon Jagger focus on ritual inclusions and exclusions for trans people within the Church of England in their article, *Ritual and the Trans Body in the Church of England*. They chart the ways in which trans bodies have been subject to liturgical regulation, such as the exclusion of some trans bodies from the marriage rites, encoded in rules that forbid same-sex marriage within the Church of England. Furthermore, they analyse the controversy over the liturgy of welcome, which was voted for within the Church to celebrate trans people's transition, but no new liturgy was forthcoming. Both examples reveal the ambivalent space that trans people occupy in the Church of England, which McIntosh and Jagger analyse in relation to ritual liminality.

Rosie Shorter and Erin Sessions' article, *'Your Unhappiness Is Sinful': Using a Happiness-via-Marriage Script to Regulate Gender and Sexuality in Australian Evangelical Faith Communities*, examines how gender and sexuality is regulated through the trope of happiness within the Australian evangelical context. Here, both women and queer people are regulated through the elevation of heterosexual marriage as the most esteemed and desired outcome in one's life—a happiness script that is deemed to be God-ordained. When marriage fails to live up to expectations (e.g. in cases of domestic violence) the conservative religious community is ill-equipped to respond in a way that prioritises wellbeing and safety, instead advocating staying with the abuser and praying harder. The sanctification of marriage is endorsed so much that violence is accommodated, and this is absorbed within this construction of happiness that regulates the Church.

3 Space Invaders and Embodied Intersectionality

Using Puwar's idea of space invaders, we argue that certain bodies get constructed as 'out of place', and they can also be temporally displaced—in other words, out of time *and* space. When your body is constructed as out of place, it means that, socially speaking, the space has not been created for you. Instead, it has been designed for other bodies (e.g. white, middle class, cis-gendered bodies). Ahmed (2017, 146) eloquently discusses this in relation to how spaces in academia are designed for white bodies:

> You walk into a room and it is like a sea of whiteness. A sea: a wall of water. It can feel like something that hits you … It is not always that you are not allowed in. You might even be welcomed; after all, you would promise to add diversity to an event. But you would feel uncomfortable. You would stick out like a sore thumb … When you leave, you leave whiteness behind you.

The articles in this Special Issue draw out the multiple exclusions that people encounter within religious, spiritual and secular spaces. Forms of 'inclusion', even for those with religious and spiritual membership, may not constitute recognition in a fully embodied sense. As Puwar (2004, 1) powerfully argues, '[w]hile they now exist on the inside, they still do not have an undisputed right to occupy the space'. The papers here identify liturgical exclusions—trans people excluded from Church of England liturgy (McIntosh and Jagger); Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani British women who get misrecognised

in educational spaces (Hamilton, Page, et al.); how niqabi-wearing Muslim women are misunderstood in the court room (Alibhai), and how Australian Anglicans are displaced from dominant sexuality norms that prioritise 'happy' heterosexuality (Shorter and Sessions). Space is crucial to this construction as the very fabric of a building can exclude one's body, evocatively demonstrated in Alibhai's case study of a woman unable to proceed with her civil claim regarding a car rental dispute because the court did not recognise her religious right to wear the niqab in front of a male judge. Furthermore, these moments of contestation come to the fore when certain bodies are rendered hyper-visible because they are seen as out of place and their bodies are not understood as fitting the somatic norm and are thus subject to regulation. This case is dominantly understood as a woman being unwilling and resistant to the norms of the courtroom but her attempt to appease the court by suggesting she removes her face veil for a woman judge is not accommodated. In other words, how the individual does work on their own body to comply or not with the regulatory norm is important to examine closely. Acts of resistance are therefore complex.

Mirza's (2013) concept of 'embodied intersectionality' is an important way of understanding the power dynamics that underpin the processes enacted between body and space in everyday interactions. Mirza understands embodied intersectionality as prioritising the interpretation of the body in intersectional understandings. In other words, the individual is intersectionally interpolated in a variety of identity strands such as ethnicity, age, gender, class, sexuality, disability and religion. As Mirza describes:

> Intersectionality is able to knit together the macro-economic political social discourses which structure inequalities with a complex array of individuated subjectivities which by imposition, choice or desire are written on and lived within the body … Embodied intersectionality not only seeks to theorise the complexities of race, gender, class and other 'positional' social divisions as lived realities … but also interrogates how this experience is affectively mediated by the body.
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> 2013, 7

Dominant identity constructions are produced through these varying configurations, so that an older Muslim woman of South Asian heritage is understood as meek and docile, while a black young woman is deemed angry and troublesome (Ahmed 2010). Ultimately, the somatic norm against which all bodies are being measured is the white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, able-bodied male (Puwar 2004) and anyone sitting outside this norm is therefore problematised

to some degree. Those closer to the somatic norm can garner greater forms of advantage, so that a gay white man or a heterosexual white woman can benefit from intersectional privilege. Yet even in cases where there is marginal deviation from the somatic norm, this can cultivate significant exclusions, as experienced in Shorter and Sessions' data with wives abused in Anglican evangelicalism, who have embraced the heteronormative expectations of the church, but are expected to pray harder and stay in abusive marriages.

4 Framing Regulation

We now turn to discuss the four aspects of regulation that we argue operate across religious, spiritual and secular contexts to position bodies hierarchically as contested bodies—namely, regulation enacted through storytelling claims to knowledge, ritual, relationality, and emotion. Whilst we are analytically separating these forms of regulation, in order to draw out their nuances and highlight their modes of operation through specific examples from the studies cited in this Special Issue, ultimately these forms of regulation intersect—in often pernicious ways—in specific relationships of power between people, organisations and specific spaces.

4.1 *Power, Knowledge and Storytelling*

Stories envelop our social experience. They are an important tool in demonstrating societal expectations and norms, evidenced in the crucial role that stories play in socialisation techniques—stories are inherited and modified, and circulate in our social worlds. Stories act as a form of knowledge production that indicates the accepted forms of knowledge in a given context. Stories are therefore embroiled in a knowledge-power relationship. Stories dictate what can be told and what gets silenced (Plummer 1995). What can be known about the world and what is closed off for introspection is forged through the available storytelling narratives in a society. Religions have a crucial role to play in articulating theology through stories too, and these are interpolated into secular scripts, thereby blurring the boundaries between secular and religious contexts. But many spaces have their dominant stories, whether it be the court, the street, the place of worship, the home or the school. And certain bodies dominate the storytelling—McIntosh and Jagger highlight that the Church of England tried to tell a new story about sexuality but without consulting trans people. The judge in Alibhai's court case example declared he had more knowledge about the litigant's religion than she did herself. Meanwhile complementarianism has been used as a specific ecclesiastical device that con-

structs women as submissive and men as active leaders in Shorter and Sessions' case study. Storytelling is therefore a powerful regulatory device in communicating dominant societal discourses; these dominant stories are the ones that get most recognition within the spaces in which they circulate; they are therefore infused with particular kinds of power. Yet they are not the only stories available; alternative storytelling offers a crucial window on different kinds of knowledge production. This is also in evidence in the articles here, as different theologies are expressed, and judges are challenged regarding their authority status. This does not necessarily displace the dominant story, but it does at least chip away at the normative narrative.

4.2 *Ritual—Physical Practices*

Ritual is often associated with religious spaces, but ritual is part and parcel of everyday actions and decision-making. Ritual encapsulates everyday practices that work to achieve some end, and the body is often crucial to enacting such ritual. Of course, some rituals are deemed more significant and are given heightened status. A marriage ceremony is esteemed and remembered as witnesses are invited to see the ritual in action. Yet other forms of ritual are everyday and routine. Bell (1992) uses the term 'ritualisation' to depict how some social actions are separated off and privileged in some way, such as how the aforementioned wedding takes on a special significance and meaning making. But these kinds of distinctions—between the ordinary and the special—are not specific to religious ritual and occur across spaces. Paying attention to what is being ritualised emphasises what is deemed culturally important. The cultural investment in heterosexuality as demonstrated in Shorter and Sessions' article on conservative Christianity is ritualised through the heterosexual white wedding with an expectation that it will be the happiest day of your life (Ahmed 2010; Ingraham 1999). Meanwhile other forms of ritual are habituated and repeated patterns of spiritual practice. In Alibhai's article, the litigant's routine practice of wearing the niqab in public spaces came up against the ritualised processes of the judge-determined courtroom, culminating in an extraordinary moment of conflict such that the original legal case was overshadowed by the problematising of bodily ritualisation. And in McIntosh and Jagger's article, they explicitly reference Church ritual as reproducing 'fixed meanings around sexuality, sex and gender', in this way conforming to a heteronormative script which excludes the narratives and experiences—and ritual acceptability—of trans bodies. In Bell's theorisation, 'the concept of ritual both exemplifies and supports the discourse within which it is elaborated' (1992, 13), and this is an example of the status quo being upheld through liturgical processes such that cis and trans same-sex couples remain barred from accessing wedding rites in

the Church of England. Nevertheless, Bell's (1992) theory also encompasses the role that ritual can play in challenging the status quo; for McIntosh and Jagger, this can be in small acts of dissent, such as how not designing a new liturgy of welcome for trans people can be reinterpreted, seen not necessarily as trans exclusion, but the normative inclusion of trans people when the liturgy has remained untouched.

4.3 *Relational*

Our third element of regulation centres on its relational components. The relational denotes how bodies interact with other bodies in specific social contexts (Howson 2004; Page and Pilcher 2020). This rejects atomised thinking, which prioritises individuals as separate and independent entities, to instead recognise how we are embedded in webs of connections with others (Harvey 2013). Yet this relationality is infused with power relationships and hierarchies; the somatic norm predicates that certain bodies are accorded more power and status, meaning that when bodies interact (e.g. through talking, arguing, touching, avoidance of touch, observing, not observing) it is not a level playing field. Ogiermann's (2007) fascinating research, for example, emphasises how in the English context, working with a range of scenarios where an apology would be required, women are more likely to apologise than men, are more likely to use adverbial intensifiers (i.e. emphasising the apology to make it seem more sincere) and to personalise that apology—to say, 'I'm sorry' rather than 'sorry'. Such interactions can be interpreted in broader power dynamics where women have less status and power, and in our understanding, form a pattern of relational regulation.

In this Special Issue, we note numerous examples where participants are managing their interactions with others, and recognising the power relationships at work, often in egregious ways such as in Shorter and Sessions' article, where wives experience the physical abuse at the hands of their husbands. For Alibhai, the absolute authority of the judge in *his* courtroom means that the appellant must navigate a terrain in which they, as a veiled Muslim woman, have few relational rights, where even the right to speak is carefully managed through court processes. Meanwhile, Hamilton, Page, et al.'s female Muslim participants are navigating the powerful role that community surveillance plays (*baradari*); participants experience public spaces as places where they are being observed by people with more power and status, and who can bring damage to their reputations, such as the gossip generated if they are seen in public with an unrelated man. They therefore navigate space carefully so as not to invoke the ire of community gossip, which could lead to devastating consequences, such as not being seen as respectable enough for marriage. Mean-

while surveillance played a different role in school, where a lack of interest and low expectations from teachers meant that participants had to find different resources to meet family expectations to do well educationally.

4.4 *Emotion Work*

Emotion is our final strand of regulatory mechanisms we are focusing on. Sara Ahmed (2010; 2017) has done much detailed scholarship to emphasise how emotions regulate our interactions, and some of the authors in this special issue utilise her work. Ahmed's core idea is that happiness is a form of regulation—there is a cultural push for individuals to achieve happiness in their lives (unhappiness is to be avoided) but there are specific and authorised pathways which are seen to lead to this happy state. Heterosexual marriage becomes privileged, exemplified in Western culture where the wedding day is often presented as the happy ending to a story rather than a potentially turbulent beginning (Ingraham 1999). Married happiness therefore becomes a disciplinary device—with unhappiness problematised—and because these links between marriage and happiness are so tightly bound, it makes it hard to recognise as legitimate those who experience this marriage script as a form of harm. This includes queer people, who in conservative religious contexts, are excluded from access to marriage. But this regulation also extends to those who are married and whose experiences do not match the expectations. Ahmed (2010, 33) therefore talks about 'the promise of happiness' as a conditional state that acts more as illusion than reality, but which governs our emotional expectations in our social interactions. Therefore, the bride is expected to be happy on her wedding day and is strongly encouraged to 'perform' and display this emotional state. In this way, emotions are disciplined, such that 'A happy life, a good life, hence involves the regulation of desire. It is not simply that we desire happiness but that happiness is imaged as what you get in return for desiring well' (Ahmed 2010, 37).

This is clearly demonstrated in Shorter and Sessions' article, where marriage is not only a disappointment but also a source of physical harm. The enculturated expectations of the surrounding conservative Christian society promote the veracity of the marriage bonds at all costs. In this way, unhappiness, following Ahmed's (2010) logic, becomes 'sinful' in this religious context. The happiness script is upheld through conservative interpretation of scripture and as a sacredly ordained state, and to question this means to question this interpretation of God's will; to reconcile the situation, wives are not advised by religious leaders to leave but to pray more and pray harder. Emotional regulation can also be located in other articles, such as Hamilton, Page, et al.'s, where Muslim participants are expected to square their desires with

those of their elders around them and regulate their feelings and behaviour accordingly. And for Alibhai, the courtroom encounter becomes one where the Muslim appellant must engage with the emotional regulation that constructs the wearing of the niqab as exemplifying untrustworthy and disloyal citizenship, which engages in narratives not just about religious hierarchies and how citizenship gets encoded in western contexts through Christianity, but also through racism. Whiteness, Christianity and nationhood become bound together to create the happy subject, and anyone perceived as being outside of this construction, must do their best to comply, to not be difficult, and to engage with what Ahmed (2010, 130) calls the 'happiness duty'. When the appellant in Alibhai's case 'fails' to comply and rejects these requests to orient their body to fall in line with dominant constructions of citizenship, censorship ensues.

Ahmed (2010) talks about the societal requirement for individuals to orient their bodies in the 'right' direction and how bodies that are seemingly going up 'wrong' paths will be subject to reorienting interventions; in this case, there is an explicit attempt to reorient the appellant's body using the notion of 'good' (or perhaps, 'happy') citizenship. Finally, McIntosh and Jagger's insights into trans experiences emphasises how queer bodies are emotionally regulated through the lens of unhappiness. If the heterosexual body exemplifies the happiness of heterosexuality, the queer body is necessarily othered and constructed as a problem. Ahmed (2010, 92) says that in our cultural outputs (e.g. novels) 'the queer child is destined to have an unhappy life', and this narrative has extensive currency. McIntosh and Jagger's analysis emphasises that the 'unhappiness' (read: hurt, anger, pain) for trans people is not emerging from their identity, but rooted in exclusionary processes and systems, where ritual life in the Church of England is curtailed and constrained.

5 Navigating Regulation: Self Surveillance and Contesting Power

To navigate these powerful, and often intersecting, forms of regulation, we see participants across the papers in this Special Issue 'policing' their bodies, practising forms of self-surveillance in a Foucauldian sense. Foucault (2008) explained how contemporary forms of regulation are forged through self-discipline because modern structures of power mask the moments when the body is being watched. Using the idea of the panoptical prison, Foucault explores how the prisoner is not cognisant of when surveillance occurs, hence the need to constantly perform an idealised identity, which is produced through the very spatialisation of the prison itself, and where the prisoner is under the constant

glare of the light, whereby 'visibility is a trap' (Foucault 2008, 5). Foucault uses this as a metaphor for the operation of power in contemporary society:

> Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers …
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> FOUCAULT 2008, 6

Thus, this ever-present visibility to authority results in practices of self-surveillance. Yet within these intensive moments of power being exercised, we also witness what Heyes (2006, 126) has termed 'enabling moments'. As argued earlier, power is complex, and resistance to regulation may not 'look' obvious, but this 'never means' that a subject 'cannot resist or fight back, or even reverse particular power relations at certain moments' (Sawicki 2013, 79). In their discussion of Australian evangelicalism for example, Shorter and Sessions analyse the Song of Songs to show how alternative narratives of 'unhappiness' and gender ambiguity can pose a challenge to heteronormative binary thinking. Further, if we take dress/clothing as an example from across two of the articles—Hamilton, Page, et al. and Alibhai—we see how women's wearing of the veil is subject to intense surveillance. As discussed, in Alibhai's article this is in relation to a judge asking her to remove her veil. Hamilton, Page, et al.'s article highlights the policing within friendship networks in a predominantly white school, whereby a young woman is also told to remove her headscarf, but by one of her peers. She faces a pressure to modify her embodiment as a condition of belonging within the friendship group. Both articles demonstrate how bodily regulation is exercised in different spaces. In both articles, the women draw upon their embodied knowledge—articulating their agency in terms of their own embodiment and their religion, to contest such demands. Both women powerfully state that they 'know' and 'respect' their religion, and that they will not comply with these demands which contravene their 'way of life' (Alibhai). Their acts of resistance are reminiscent of the women's accounts of their negotiation of 'truth claims' in their interactions with medical professionals in Lorentzen's (2008, 53) work. Women in Lorentzen's study asserted their own embodied knowledge: 'I know my own body'. In both the articles

of Hamilton, Page, et al. and Alibhai we see women similarly putting forward their own embodied knowledge of their religion, with similar first-person statements, assertively using the 'I', to contest their bodily regulation.

In his writings on power and resistance, Foucault identified a paradox—'that normalizing disciplinary practices are also enabling of new skills and capacities' (as discussed in Heyes 2006, 128). One of the complexities, then, is that the forms of regulation that we have identified here, and the forms of bodily self-surveillance that people engage in to navigate them, can produce a Foucauldian 'docile' body—in the sense that even while intense power is being exercised, through self-surveillance, a bodily transformation or perceived 'improvement' can manifest through an increasing of the body's 'capabilities' (Heyes 2006, 136). The article of Hamilton, Page, et al. demonstrates this complexity, through how community and family pressure to 'persevere' within education can be experienced as a form of regulation, at the same time that this very perseverance, and resulting educational attainment, can enable the young women to use education as a vehicle to prove their teachers' racist assumptions (about their capabilities) wrong. McIntosh and Jagger's article also teases out this paradox, noting how ritual within the Church of England is experienced as both affirming *and* policing of trans bodies at same time. Their article highlights moments where trans bodies become sites of spectacle—particularly in the media and indicates the rigid terms of church acceptance—trans bodies are often only considered 'in place' if they have transitioned and conform to heteronormative relationships.

The articles indicate the prominence of racism, sexism and heteronormativity as key regulators. Racism as propagated through teachers, communities and the law is evident in the articles of Hamilton, Page, et al. and Alibhai. In both Shorter and Sessions and McIntosh and Jaggers' papers, we see that it is heterosexual relationships and heterosexual marriages that are still seen as the benchmark of Christian and Evangelical 'happiness'. What all of the articles draw out, however, is the capacity for people to make inroads in spite of intersecting, and sometimes even competing, forms of regulation. People carve out pathways of resistance even when these are not 'obvious' (Mahmood 2005), and in the case of some of the participants across the papers, situate themselves as the experts on their own bodies and religious lives, despite regulatory demands to the contrary.

6 Final Thoughts

This introduction has situated the articles in this special issue in relation to forms of regulation, using feminist frameworks of *space invaders* and *embodied intersectionality*, to understand how various marginalised groups navigate their religious beliefs and practices, combined with the idea of lived religion, taken from the sociology of religion. The somatic norm (Puwar 2004) has relevance for all social spaces and enables a more concerted focus on how power dynamics materialise when certain bodies are constructed as space invaders. Meanwhile embodied intersectionality (Mirza 2012) analyses precisely the varying intersections that impact on how a certain body is interpreted within a certain space—the appraisal regarding whether a particular body is perceived to belong or not. These dynamics create inclusions and exclusions, creating social inequalities. An individual's relationship with power is complex, as they must navigate the ways in which a certain space has been structured. We note disagreements and challenges to dominant understandings of religion, and provocations regarding who should have the authority on a particular matter. While the somatic norm—the white, middle-class Christian male—has held privileged status in religious spaces, contestations abound regarding how religion is interpreted and constructed, with questions arising regarding who gets to define the contours of 'religion' (Hawthorne, Sharma, et al. 2024; Page and Yip 2020), and this gets to the heart of a fully engaged lived religious project.

Indeed, the intention of this introduction is to expand our understandings of concepts within the sociology of religion like lived religion, to bring them in conversation with feminist approaches (Hawthorne, Sharma, et al. 2024). This enables us to analyse more closely the ways in which lived religious practices are experienced through regulatory mechanisms and helps to address criticism that lived religion approaches have tended to focus on choice narratives and the experiences of those already privileged within religious structures (Altglas and Wood 2018; Page and Yip 2020). Bringing discussions of power to the fore enables greater specificity regarding the continuation of social structures that allow privilege to remain entrenched and indicates how inequalities continue to persist. The analysis also adds to arguments challenging the idea that the secular and sacred are distinct spaces. The articles in this special issue indicate how religious and spiritual bodies interact with multiple spaces on a daily basis, and forms of regulation occur in both, such as contestation over religion that occur in court rooms and educational spaces. As McGuire (2008) recognises, this demarcation of secular and sacred is a modern invention; in the past, individuals have 'observed no tidy boundaries between sacred and profane space and time' (McGuire 2008, 28). This also challenges the tendency to always align

conservative forces within the realm of religion, thereby constructing the secular erroneously as a site of progression and liberation (Scott 2018). While it is often the case that religion is considered to always be a form of restriction, the reality is more complex; religion is a multifaceted phenomenon, and a close examination of regulation allows for this complexity to be better understood (Page and Yip 2020). Overall, a lived religion approach that embraces feminist theory can engage in a critical sociology that understands religion as complex, messy, intersectional and embodied.

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