

# **Race, Retailing and the Windrush Generation: Principle and Practice in the John Lewis Partnership's Recruitment of Commonwealth Arrivals, 1950–1962**

*Alix R. Green*

## **Introduction**

Retail is a distinctive and potentially productive space for historians seeking to understand the workings of racist and racialized thinking in policy and practice and the exclusionary centring of Whiteness in conceptions of national identity in Britain. It is a sector premised on display and the public transaction of business and one of hidden labour, for example in distribution, personnel, management or estates. Engaging with retail offers us a valuable opportunity to explore how businesses shaped and reshaped racialized notions of staff aptitudes, attitudes and appropriate conduct organizationally and within and in response to broader social change. The immediate postwar period compels our attention here: a period of expansion as retailers sought to meet rising demand fuelled by customers' new discretionary spending power and one in which companies were both selling to and recruiting from a pluralizing society as newly recognized citizens of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth arrived in Britain, as did migrants and refugees from continental Europe. We can gain critical purchase on big questions, such as how citizenship, identity and belonging were refracted through the lens of race, by exploring and connecting case studies of how retailers understood and responded to this moment of transition and transformation.

In late 1961, executives at the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) – a large UK department store and grocery business with a distinctive democratic employee-ownership model – assembled a policy document on the ‘Employment of Coloured Workers’. It was intended to serve as a ‘directive to employing officials throughout the Partnership’ and as a statement ‘where occasion demands, for publication to the Press, to customers, or in our own journalism’.<sup>1</sup> The policy was formulated in response to a newspaper article, published in February 1961, which revealed to the *Observer’s* readership the discrimination in employment faced by Commonwealth arrivals, naming the Partnership.<sup>2</sup> Critical press coverage was unwelcome to the business, but, as I will argue, central and branch managers believed larger and more fundamental issues to be at stake.

The policy document opened with a restatement of Rule 21(2) from the 1950 edition of JLP’s written Constitution: to recruit those ‘whose assistance is likeliest to be best for the Partnership’s efficiency in the conduct of its business ... without regard to age, sex, race, social position, family connection, religious or political views, with the sole exception of totalitarianism whether called Fascism or Communism or something else’.<sup>3</sup> Appropriating and adapting a provision conditioned by Cold War anxieties in a context of decolonization, the policy went on to suggest that any assessment of suitability must take account of customers’ views. As no evidence of objection to African and West Indian workers was forthcoming, the Partnership was ‘prepared to experiment in suitable circumstances with the employment of these particular coloured workers, either men or women, in selling departments where candidates of sufficient intelligence and education and suitable appearance offer themselves’.<sup>4</sup> Should such experimentation elicit unfavourable reactions from customers or ‘from our normal sources of recruitment’ (clarified elsewhere as ‘the English white collar worker’)<sup>5</sup> then prompt action should be taken to transfer those Partners to other work.

That the company prepared the document is itself significant and the multiple identified audiences point us to the anticipated sources of commentary on or objection to the employment of racialized people in the Partnership. The formulation is also notable for its silences, ambiguities and preconceptions. How would such principles of recruitment be interpreted on the ground at a time when the retail sector was expanding and diversifying within a broader context fraught with anxieties about the impact of migration on British society? We can detect the traces of pseudo-scientific taxonomies, giving hiring managers potential cover for decisions based on the assumed attributes of a people group rather than the credentials of an individual. But particularly striking is the way in which clarity of principle was immediately – and, apparently, easily and unproblematically – occluded. The provisions and caveats evidently made sense to the policy’s contemporary architects

but, looking back, we have to ask why they did so. This is the task of the chapter: to try to explain the contingencies with which equity of treatment was offered to prospective and serving Partners.

An apparently rapidly pluralizing society raised serious implications for JLP's sense of identity and community on three levels. First was the level of the Partnership itself; the selection of new members mattered more in a community of co-owners ostensibly held together by bonds of collective effort and reward than in a conventional retail business. A second level of community embraced customers and the wider public; fostering a sense of allegiance and belonging with customers through the provision of quality products and of expert, conscientious service was understood as key to commercial success. Communities formed around individual stores, many of which had strong roots in their localities that predated acquisition by JLP, but careful stewardship of the company's reputation for integrity allowed for some portability of customer loyalty. A sense of national community formed a third level. The founder, John Spedan Lewis, saw his design for JLP as evoking and strengthening the distinctive institutions of the British democratic system. The damage and dislocation of the Second World War and its aftermath and the shifting constellations of power emerging from the Cold War and decolonization seemed to lend this task a fresh urgency and significance.

To understand the policy and these broader questions of identity and community, I draw on records held in JLP's archives, to which I had unrestricted access: items published as part of the company's commitment to an internal 'free press' in the central *Gazette* and branch *Chronicles*; memoranda between senior managers; routine reports from individual stores. I have focused on files the business itself created and organized in terms of race and 'colour', still present in archival descriptions, and on specific references in the Partnership press. This source base is not as extensive as we might expect for a period characterized by intense debates about migration and the resultant social mixing. It also captures almost nothing of the everyday experiences of Partners of colour.<sup>6</sup> These absences are revealing, placing JLP within a context in which claims of British society's 'colour blindness' were in wide circulation. Records that show where and how colour was both seen and named are conspicuous and disruptive in this context. From them, we gain some insight into how the company interpreted and responded to those moments when the fault lines between principle and practice became unstable.

The chapter was written and revised in the early 2020s. It was assembled, and will be read, through the lens of a present characterized by enduring systemic racism and hostility to migrants and refugees. This history matters because the arguments that stand in the way of racial justice depend on its absence, whether by ignorance, marginalization or selective amnesia. Claims

about British values such as equality before the law and tolerance – which are central to resisting demands for structural change – break down on historical inspection. The chapter aims to make two overarching contributions in this context. First, it seeks to show that histories of work and of business demand serious attention if we are interested in people's lives in the round; the experiences of Commonwealth arrivals in the pursuit of employment were conditioned by racial prejudice and it continues to affect the working lives of people of colour today – including in academe.<sup>7</sup> Second, the chapter proposes that case studies at this level of granularity are the necessary analytical complement to larger-scale enquiries about race, work and identity in postwar Britain. Historians of retail have much to offer on both counts.

### **Racializing citizenship and belonging**

The John Lewis policy statement was formulated at a time when Commonwealth immigration was increasingly being framed as a problem. Political conversations on loosening Commonwealth ties and the prospects of population mobility if Britain joined the European Economic Community were conducted alongside an urgent social dialogue about integration and 'race relations' after the violence of 1958.<sup>8</sup> The battle lines of desegregation in Jim Crow America and violent policing of Black South African protesters made headline news and seemed to offer 'lessons' relevant to national debates about 'the stakes of urban racial violence and ... the politics of race, nation, citizenship, and Britishness'.<sup>9</sup> Increasingly racialized ideas of citizenship and belonging shaped these processes, which were given legislative expression in the 1961 Commonwealth Immigration Bill. Enacted in July 1962, the law required prospective migrants to apply for a Ministry of Labour voucher, with three categories dividing those holding a job offer (known as category A), 'skilled' (B) and 'unskilled' (C) workers. Employers do not appear as actors in the legislation itself, but with no limit set on the number of category A vouchers, they acquired a new role brokering entry to the country.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the demand-led work-permit system made admission to the United Kingdom 'entirely employer based' until 2005.<sup>11</sup>

Legislative frameworks and formal government policies were only part of the picture. The British Nationality Act 1948 had codified a long-standing sense of imperial belonging and newly recognized citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies travelled to the UK to realize a claim ostensibly built on a 'shared and universal category of subjecthood that made no distinction in regard to race'.<sup>12</sup> Yet, as Nadine El-Enany has pointed out, informal measures to 'curb the movement of racialised people' were pursued by the Colonial and Commonwealth Offices from the start, including withholding passports and warning prospective arrivals about the difficulties finding employment and housing in the United Kingdom.<sup>13</sup> Those who overcame

these obstacles and made the journey then found the British promise of equality before the law to be hollow.

The experiences of Commonwealth arrivals were exposed in stark terms by Ruth Glass, a sociologist and director of research at the Centre for Urban Studies, in her analysis of West Indian migration, *London's Newcomers*, published in October 1960.<sup>14</sup> Prospective tenants faced 'the closed door', with overtly discriminatory advertisements or doorstep refusals; accommodation was largely to be found – as it had been for previous generations of migrants and outsiders, Glass observed – in high-density 'zones of transition'. In their search for employment, West Indians were subject to 'downgrading' of occupational status, particularly those who had previously undertaken skilled and non-manual jobs (see [Chapter 11](#) in this volume for how the purchase of corner shops by 'Asian' communities reflected an urge towards both self-determination and self-protection in the face of such exclusions). In explaining the indignities and animosities faced by these newcomers, Glass characterized the majority attitude within British society as 'benevolent prejudice': 'a combination of passive prejudice and passive tolerance' that allowed individual members of the out-group to be accepted while powerful biases against the out-group as a whole were maintained. Discrimination was not always explicit – in the form of official colour bars – but it was widespread and 'tend[ed] to be rather erratic and shamefaced', with passive tolerance 'camouflaging' prejudiced behaviour practised casually and routinely in every aspect of public life.<sup>15</sup>

Glass and other early sociologists and anthropologists of race relations, as well as the theorists who shaped the field of cultural studies, laid the intellectual foundations for the historians and other scholars who started to weave new ideas and perspectives on race, identity and otherness into their accounts of modern Britain in the 1990s.<sup>16</sup> As Geoff Eley noted, this temporality is 'off'. He pointed to 'the continuing eruption of racialised conflicts into public life' during the 1980s as the jolt for historians to recognize race as a significant concern in understanding 'the shape of the social world and how it works': a decade or so later than for gender.<sup>17</sup> It is perhaps only in the last 20 years or so that sustained historical attention – in academic work and in programming aimed at public audiences – has been given to Black lived experiences in postwar Britain and to the racialization of citizenship.<sup>18</sup> The 2023 call by the editors of a thematic issue of *Twentieth Century British History* 'to notice the work that race and its absent presence does' and 'to consider what else thinking with and through race might show us' suggests a significant temporal drag persists.<sup>19</sup>

This history was placed momentarily in the foreground of public engagement with the past in 2018, 70 years after the arrival of the *Empire Windrush*. The anniversary was marked in parliament, in the media and by museums, archives, local councils and other organizations.<sup>20</sup> Community

projects, many supported by Heritage Lottery Fund grants, captured and celebrated the contributions of Caribbean migrants to British culture and society – including in the world of work.<sup>21</sup> The contemporaneous scandal of government detentions and deportations of Windrush Generation members under hostile environment policies sharpened the critical edge of work done by academics and activists.<sup>22</sup> The use of ‘Windrush Generation’ in the title of this chapter consciously invokes the fraught duality of the term: belated recognition of the experiences and contributions of postwar Commonwealth arrivals amid state *derecognition* of theirs and their families’ legal status – and with it, revocation of access to healthcare, education, employment, and all the protections and entitlements of citizenship.

Historians, but more often, sociologists and geographers, have studied the discrimination faced by Commonwealth arrivals finding work and the prejudice they encountered in performing their daily responsibilities.<sup>23</sup> Those interested in trade unions have explored Black self-organization and the shifting boundaries of solidarity.<sup>24</sup> Yet the retail sector is largely absent from these literatures, reflecting, in part, retailers’ reluctance to employ Black staff on the shop floor.<sup>25</sup> Writing in 1979 about West Indian and Asian arrivals who had settled in Birmingham, J. Rex and S. Tomlinson observed that ‘whereas the white woman typically becomes a secretary or shop worker, the immigrant woman works in a factory, or in a hospital, or rather less frequently in service industries’.<sup>26</sup> Retailing was not, however, just the shop floor. To understand how questions of colour played out in a large company we need to consider many contexts of practice: the warehouse, the canteen, the garage, the typing pool.

This organizational plurality – with its divisions between roles that are on, and those removed from, public display – makes retailing a compelling subject for historians interested in race, identity and belonging in modern Britain. This research requires the use of business archives, often dismissed by historians as ‘too self-serving of the businesses they represent, difficult to access, or ... too dry in terms of their holdings’.<sup>27</sup> The potential exposure of historical racial discrimination may be regarded as a risk for companies still in operation – and confronting prevalent and persistent issues such as hiring bias and pay gaps – although it would not necessarily preclude the granting of archival access. There is a long way to go, but some businesses are recognizing that open, critical engagement with histories of exploitation and discrimination can help build trust and confidence, externally and internally.<sup>28</sup>

## **Democracy and diversity in the Partnership community**

Within these contexts, JLP is a productive case study – and not just as a large and complex multi-site retailer with rich archival holdings. It is also a

company with a keen sense of its historical and philosophical distinctiveness, which engaged Spedan Lewis and his successors in exercises of comparison and contrast with other businesses and institutions. These points of contact make the Partnership of interest to a wide range of historians. For example, Spedan Lewis' commentaries on JLP as a producer co-operative served both to acknowledge a shared foundational critique of industrial capitalism and labour exploitation between the Partnership and the co-operative movement and to underscore the subsequent divergence of their pathways. He saw the benefits that the Co-op shop brought to customers (explored in [Chapter 4](#) in this volume) as secured at the expense of staff. As he sharply put it: 'Private Enterprise says to the worker ... "I shall exploit you as far as I can but, if I do well enough for myself, you may find that you can get more out of me than you could out of the Cooperative Society of Consumers"'.<sup>29</sup> By taking the co-operative spirit as animating not the community of *consumers* but that of *producers*, Spedan Lewis drew the company's attention to focus on the formal and informal systems and structures that shaped how its members connected and interacted.<sup>30</sup>

In this respect, the Partnership was a form of *political* community. Spedan Lewis saw his business as an expression of, and a bulwark for, the institutions of British democracy, most notably against the threat of Communism. Powers were balanced between three principal authorities: the Chairman; a Central Council, elected by secret ballot; and the Central Board (with five Directors chosen by each of the other authorities). He conceptualized the Partnership as a 'state within a state' – bound by UK law but otherwise free to act in pursuit of its own constitutionally defined aims – a striking formulation that connects the Partnership into a range of themes in postwar British history.<sup>31</sup> For our purposes, however, the particular relevance lies in the notion of 'membership ... [as] correspond[ing] quite genuinely to citizenship in our modern democracies'.<sup>32</sup> Read alongside his reflections on cooperation, we start to understand Spedan Lewis' Partnership as a distinctive kind of community. Recruitment to JLP was not merely transactional or contractual; gaining employment meant acquiring a new, meaningful and commanding status, bringing both obligations and entitlements. In this context, race and racial prejudice became for the company an issue of *belonging* rather than one of complaint and redress (the latter, an administrative approach, formed the basis of the 1965 Race Relations Act, extended in 1968 to include discrimination in employment).<sup>33</sup>

The integrity of the Partnership community was not premised on uniformity but, at least ostensibly, on 'variety of standpoint and background', which Spedan Lewis saw as beneficial for effective 'team-work' within the business.<sup>34</sup> For the Partnership, team-work was no less than the means by which the democratic community survived and thrived, an insight that helps explain 1950 Rule providing for ostensibly open and non-discriminatory

recruitment. Marks & Spencer, another British retailer with clothing and food operations, formulated a similar though broader brush statement of principle in its 1954 Employment Policy:

Tolerance is a marked feature of our organisation. In selecting staff for example, no prejudice is shown in regard to nationality, religion, or marital status, provided the applicant is a person of integrity with the right qualifications for the job. We have as a result been able to draw on a very wide field and to absorb unusual personalities whose talent, though not immediately obvious, we have recognised and developed.<sup>35</sup>

Fostering variety was not only consistent with, but nourished by, an assumption that particular groups favoured certain traits; in the Partnership, recruitment should be ‘as wide as possible’ to ensure a range of traits was represented across the company.<sup>36</sup> For example, Spedan Lewis saw the role of Registrar as particularly suitable for women. Registrars – one in each branch, overseen by a Chief Registrar – were the ‘nervous system’ by which the Partnership as a large company detected the small signals of ‘[i]nadvertence, ignorance, unawareness’. This responsibility called on the ‘feminine abilities’ of shrewd judgement and sensitivity that were the outcome of millions of years of ‘females’ being ‘alert for danger and bent upon avoiding it’.<sup>37</sup>

The same line of reasoning saw the recruitment of ‘a very wide range ... of sections of our national community with a sprinkling of Jews’, of ‘foreigners’ with ‘abilities ... much less uncommon outside our own country’ and people ‘from outside the trade’ as parallel strategies of equivalent value.<sup>38</sup> Spedan Lewis did not elaborate on what these distinctive abilities might be, but it is worth noting the casual anti-Semitism that complicates any analysis of racialization.<sup>39</sup> In a long response to a 1944 letter to the *Gazette* reporting rumours circulating in two of the stores of ‘Jew-owners in the background’, he invoked the anti-Semitic notion of ‘Jewish blood’.<sup>40</sup> After insisting on the lack of it in his family tree, he commented in an almost offhand manner:

Jewish blood tends, as we all know, to have certain valuable abilities and certain unpleasant traits of character. I have always wanted to see the Partnership include in its team a moderate number of Jews but it remains to be seen whether that can be done successfully as a regular policy on a substantial scale.<sup>41</sup>

Spedan Lewis’ commitment to the idea that traits and habits were cultivated and passed on within social groups was broadly in accord with the then emerging field of race relations, which rejected biological explanations and ‘explored behavioral norms in order to chart cultural difference’.<sup>42</sup> In 1954, while still Chairman, Spedan Lewis reprinted in the *Gazette* under



the heading ‘No Colour Bar’ a complaint from a customer refusing to shop with John Lewis should they employ people whom she called ‘loathsome black creatures’, along with his reply. Beginning with the observation that the sun had darkened human skin over generations among people living close to the Equator, he then commented: ‘human beings do thus differ in colour and ... the characters of some coloured people are very high and the characters of some white people loathsome’. The presence of a ‘handful [of Partners] whose skins are not white’ may matter to her less – he suggested, in a characteristic non sequitur – ‘than if the present development of the fixed-price system did not oblige us to charge our customers for many things more than we otherwise should’.<sup>43</sup>

The framing of the company as a community animated by difference is particularly interesting in the context of the Commonwealth. Indeed, the Commonwealth promise of open, co-operative relations of mutual benefit bears affinity with Spedan Lewis’ notion of team-work. Marking Commonwealth Day in 1956, the John Lewis *Chronicle* encouraged its readers to befriend one or more of the ‘large and valuable group of Commonwealth Partners among us ... by extending a friendly hand, you, in your small way, will be doing a lot to maintain and encourage the Commonwealth spirit which may be so sorely needed in the future’.<sup>44</sup> The parallel extends to the powerful paternalistic assumptions that conditioned both institutions. Spedan Lewis did not imagine equity between members of the Partnership to mean equality. The company was, as the *Gazette* masthead reminded Partners on a weekly basis, a constitutional monarchy. Hierarchy was the natural expression of a wide range of ability and necessary for the effective functioning of the business; it was, he thought, in the interests of the rank and file to ensure ‘brain-workers’ were paid ‘handsomely’ for their capabilities.<sup>45</sup> ‘Commonwealth spirit’ may have called on White British Partners to ‘make the stay among us of our Dominion and Colonial colleagues a happy one’, but they did so as hosts welcoming transient and grateful guests (the descriptors ‘Dominion’ and ‘Colonial’ are striking here, suggesting the enduring imprint of racialized imperial categorizations on organizational thinking).<sup>46</sup>

If variety was seen as conducive to the functioning of JLP as a democratic community in the abstract, the implications in practice for Partners embodying difference were less clear. The Constitution’s rule on recruitment codified equity as a foundational principle, but, as we will see, it was also subject to informal interpretations that could undercut that commitment – inviting comparison with the contemporary immigration policy environment noted earlier. One of the principal criticisms of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act, both at the time and subsequently, was the wide discretion allowed to immigration officers.<sup>47</sup> The parallel with JLP is not exact of course, but a highly devolved company structure created a space between constitutional principles and employment practices in which local managers

operated. Branch recruiting officers had significant power in decision making, as did department managers, who rated performance for pay reviews and assessing promotion potential; we can recognize the application process as another ‘border’ that Black prospective Partners had to try to cross.<sup>48</sup> Despite Spedan Lewis’ insistence that there was no colour bar in the Partnership, he appeared to accept that too many applications from ‘British citizens with coloured skins’ would present a problem, a formulation that is notable for isolating racialization from migrant identity and legal status. Striking now, the term ‘migrant’ or ‘immigrant’ is almost completely absent from Partnership journalism and memoranda when referring to people from the Commonwealth. Indeed, a *Gazette* cartoonist represented ‘migrant labour’ in 1962, during Edward Heath’s negotiations for Britain’s entry into the Common Market, as a flock of White workmen flying out over the cliffs of Dover, tool bags in hand.<sup>49</sup> Black Commonwealth arrivals raised, for Spedan Lewis, an issue of such import that, in 1954, he referred their recruitment to the Partnership’s equivalent of the House of Commons; it was for the Central Council to debate whether such applicants are to be ‘admitted ... at all and, if so, to what extent and that limit will have to be maintained’.<sup>50</sup> Constitutional principles were not to determine recruitment policy alone, rather, the latter was the outcome of a necessary deliberative process – subject to many influences, considerations and concerns – whereby those principles would be translated into administrative rules.

### **Seeing colour on and off the shop floor**

In 1960, the Oxford Street store, destroyed by an incendiary bomb during the Blitz, was reopened: a symbolic moment in the company’s postwar recovery. Six new Waitrose grocery shops had opened since the war. The percentage of pay dispensed as Partnership Bonus – an annual distribution among all Partners as co-owners – had been growing following a five-year pause; in 1959/1960, the rate had jumped from 7 to 13 per cent. ‘Certainly we have grown and thrived’, observed the General Editor of the *Gazette*, in an essay-length reflection on the upcoming thirtieth anniversary of the First Trust Settlement that created the Partnership, ‘but not more quickly than other “ordinary” businesses. We have doubled our numbers and multiplied our Branches in a shortish span of years, but so have other people’.<sup>51</sup> This circumspect appraisal of the company’s fortunes spoke, among other things, to difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff as the retail sector expanded. ‘Our experience appears to be shared by the manufacturing and retail industries’, commented the Director of Personnel in July 1960, reporting a poor response to the latest round of advertisements and informing senior colleagues of the 100,000 registered vacancies in the London region on the latest Ministry of Labour return against a total unemployed figure

of 48,600.<sup>52</sup> Alongside selling staff, JLP found drivers, porters, clerks and typists difficult to find and retain.

The displacement and migration of people from Europe and the former Empire in the decades after the Second World War created new pools of potential applicants for the expanding Partnership and particular challenges for the company's recruitment procedures. There was a matter of due process: how do people who have left their countries of birth provide satisfactory references from, or even traceable contact details for, their former employers? Marcus Collins explored the difficulties West Indian men faced in providing certification of their skills; in the context of the Partnership, such verification was only the start.<sup>53</sup> Checking references – testimonials of prospective Partners' character and conduct – was essential as joining the JLP community brought an entitlement to all the benefits of membership as well as the obligation to act in the collective interest. As a consequence, engaging a new Partner without references demanded the attention of top-level management. In 1956, for example, when the Partnership stood at almost 12,500 members, the Chief Registrar issued a memorandum requiring all decisions on employing Hungarian refugees without references to be submitted for her personal attention – a striking example of branch-level recruitment being subject to central scrutiny.<sup>54</sup>

Being qualified to work and suitable for membership were separate matters and it is here that we can start to unpick the assumptions inflecting the company's recruitment practices. In the case of Hungarian refugees, the importance of 'intelligibility' between customer and sales assistant may have meant that the selling side 'is not necessarily the ideal field into which to attempt to absorb these unhappy people' – but their (uncredentialed) admissibility to the Partnership was not in question. For the Chief Registrar, Commonwealth Partners were 'not in the same class as political exiles. ... Sooner or later one must complete [their] references'. Should documentation not be forthcoming, termination may be 'in many cases' the preferred option.<sup>55</sup> Unspoken here, but revealed in other records, are the racialized ways in which notions of suitability were framed.

The prompt for JLP to create an explicit policy on Commonwealth recruitment was Mervyn Jones' three-part investigation in the *Observer*, published in 1961. The first instalment – 'Second-class citizens?' – dealt with finding employment and included a section on the retail sector subtitled 'We have to study our customers'. An unnamed John Lewis representative was quoted as saying 'You see coloured railwaymen because the traveller is required to give up his ticket, but nobody is required to buy here', before asserting: 'We have a duty to people we employ – a duty not to expose them to unpleasantness'.<sup>56</sup> In his article, Jones mentioned Glass' findings on the downgrading of occupational status experienced by West Indian arrivals.

Glass had found that this effect was pronounced in the case of non-manual workers, which included the sub-category of shopkeepers and assistants and salesmen. Five per cent of men and 16 per cent of women had been employed in this sub-category prior to their departure for Britain. Not a single person in her sample had found an equivalent job in London.<sup>57</sup> She also observed that those employers who did operate a colour bar justified their policy by shifting the blame; they pointed to the potential objections of White workers, disapproval of customers or effect on company reputation. The Partnership may have claimed to reject a colour bar, but managers believed that the reactions of staff and the public were serious considerations in their hiring of Commonwealth applicants.

The publication of Jones' article prompted a Partner to write to the *Gazette* under the pseudonym Quo Vadis to query why 'your "coloured" employees ... are not for the Selling Side', only finding roles in 'hidden warehouses and stockrooms'. The reply, printed with the letter, indicated that executives had already begun to position the Constitution at the centre of a new statement, which balanced equity in principle with due regard for 'the views of customers ... in assessing the suitability of candidates for work that involves personal dealings with customers'.<sup>58</sup> The imagined (White) customer plays a dual role in this emerging policy. Her views – the John Lewis shopper was routinely referred to as 'she' – were at once valued contributions to a legitimate conversation about shop-floor service and a potential source of offence and insult to Black Partners.<sup>59</sup> The apparent dilemma she created for the company was not a new one. Seven years earlier, in 1954, another *Observer* journalist had investigated an allegation from an Indian student that he and two others were told only shop-floor work was available and he 'might be exposed to rudeness from customers'. Their applications were therefore being rejected 'for their own sakes'.<sup>60</sup>

This paternalistic 'solicitude for the coloured man's feelings' (to borrow Jones' phrase) can be seen as a form of Glass' 'camouflage', a refashioning of prejudice – held by both staff and customers – in images conducive to those audiences. I use the term 'audiences' consciously. It is, of course, far from neutral; imagining an audience involves (at least implicit) judgements about power, accountability and entitlement: to whom do we address ourselves? Whose appraisal of us matters? The racial conditionality of JLP's audiences is perhaps best drawn out by reference to the BBC. In the late 1950s and 1960s, the Corporation covered Commonwealth migration and race relations in a range of programming to fulfil its charter to inform, educate and entertain. At the same time, White viewers' responses to content featuring Black characters were anxiously monitored in audience surveys.<sup>61</sup> That Partners had the right to challenge and scrutinize company policy through the *Gazette* fits well with the notion of an audience whose

opinions and preferences required careful handling. By understanding majority-White staff and customer groups as (preferred, privileged) audiences, we can tune in to the silences and the muted notes of the Black presence in retailing.

White audiences – Partners and customers – were in the foreground as JLP debated its approach to Commonwealth recruitment over the course of 1961. Commenting on a census of ‘coloured workers in the Partnership’, the Director of Personnel saw ‘remarkably little trouble which could be said to be directly attributable to colour prejudice’, drawing attention instead to a wider ‘hardening of opinion’ against ‘the rise in the numbers of them entering the country, which is tied up with a very real feeling that the coloured people (and of course by this are meant West Indians and Africans) may become a dominating force in some districts and some fields of labour’. In this context, ‘colour prejudice’ followed ‘quite naturally’ from this kind of thinking, he argued: ‘I would suggest that we do not attempt to move in this matter in advance of public opinion.’<sup>62</sup>

‘Public opinion’ served, for the Partnership, to shape and constrain the company’s experimental approach to Commonwealth recruitment.<sup>63</sup> But how could such an elusive, fragmented and discordant entity as public opinion be reconciled with the Constitution, which specified that an individual would be assessed only for their contribution to the efficiency of the business? The nine London-area branches surveyed for the census employed 180 ‘Coloured’ workers, the majority in portering, maintenance, stockrooms and catering, plus a small number in clerical roles. Only ten (all ‘Asiatics’) worked on the selling side.<sup>64</sup> Even with access to individual personnel files, we cannot know if Glass’ findings about the difficulties for West Indian shopworkers finding equivalent roles in the United Kingdom were reflected in John Lewis’ hiring patterns. It is nonetheless striking that of the 71 West Indians, none was employed in a selling job, particularly as it was the shop floor where expansion in Partner numbers was happening.<sup>65</sup> We can perhaps see here how a distinctive form of Jones’ ‘solicitude’ acted to modulate managers’ interpretations of the constitutional principle on the ground. Protecting Black employees from hostility and prejudice in public-facing roles reframed the hidden work of moving goods and typing memos as ‘work that suits them best’.<sup>66</sup> If the suitability of these Partners was understood as primarily a matter of context – where they worked and with whom, rather than the kind of work their qualifications and prior experience equipped them to do – then we can start to discern the practices that affected the experiences and opportunities of Black Partners.

That is not to say that work contexts could be neatly divided into public and private, shop floor and back office, in JLP or in other large retailers. Drivers, for example, occupied a liminal space. They belonged to those

hidden warehouse operations less popular with White applicants, but also entered customers' houses in the company's name to deliver or repair items (an inconsistency *Quo Vadis* letter had pointed out: 'Is there any difference between serving the customers in their homes and in the shop?').<sup>67</sup> Here was an occupation in demand where the supply was largely drawn from a growing West Indian community. 'Do we know from experience that customers object to coloured drivers or are we just assuming they would?' queried the Registrar of *Bon Marché*, a department store in Brixton acquired by the Partnership in 1940. She was concerned that inadequate references would mean discharging a newly appointed driver: 'Have the Central Council ever discussed it or is it too dangerous a subject?'<sup>68</sup> Drivers and porters were, indeed, recognized centrally as something of a special case. Encountering Commonwealth newcomers employed in public transport 'must increasingly condition customers to accepting them on commercial vans' was the explanation offered in the Partnership's policy statement.<sup>69</sup>

Within the business, the many amenities available to members also created complexities of context. In the leisure and residential clubs run by the Partnership for its members (such as the Odney estate, where the Heritage Centre and Archives is now located) Partners became customers; they were served by their peers. But it was in the branch canteen that this shift from providing to receiving service was routinized; though behind the scenes and far from potential public disapprobation, it was nonetheless a customer-facing context. The *Bon Marché* restaurant manageress complained to the branch Registrar in 1960, after a Nigerian member had left to have a baby, about recruiting Black Partners to the kitchen in future, claiming 'she cannot ask them, as she would ask any other partner, regardless of her theoretical duties, to serve at the counter. She says that partners [presumably White colleagues eating in the dining room] would consider them dirty'.<sup>70</sup> These assertions speak to the 'gendered terms of racialization that Black migrant workers encountered'; poor personal hygiene was just one of faults attributed to Black women, along with being 'slow, touchy, unadaptable, choosy, hypochondriac, and lacking in stamina'.<sup>71</sup> The Registrar, in her role as the branch's nervous system, was 'bothered by the [manageress'] attitude' and, should another Black member join the team, she would 'see [any] complaining partner'.<sup>72</sup> It is not clear from the document whether the registrar intended in such a meeting to confront complaints and support the Black Partner's continued employment in the dining room or move her to other work (and so ostensibly away from potential sources of offence). Yet it is the very lack of clarity or consistency in these examples that calls for attention; they show the importance of looking at between and behind-the-scenes work settings, where everyday encounters played out away from the stage of the shop floor.

## Conclusion

For the John Lewis Partnership, recruitment policy turned on the fundamental question of ‘who belongs?’ Making a judgement on whether a candidate was likely to contribute to the efficient conduct of the business was not just about their aptitude for a specific job but also about how well they would discharge the duties of citizenship and community at all levels: among fellow Partners; in their engagements with the shopping public; and as a member of a democratic ‘state within a state’. For this reason, attributes such as race – but also, as we saw in the Constitution, gender, class and political conviction, among others – were part of the lexicon in which internal policy debates were conducted, more than a decade before a long process of legislative interventions sought to curb discriminatory practices in employment, housing and other areas. Presenting the encounter with a changing environment as an experiment fitted with the company ethos and so created some space for testing and translating the Constitution into rules for recruitment on the ground. The story of the policy on Commonwealth workers is just one thread in a complex emerging pattern weaving together – sometimes unevenly or in jarring colours – principles and practices, ideas about citizenship and the realities of daily work.

This chapter sought to demonstrate the value of using companies (and their archives) as ways into thinking through how we can gain some critical, historical purchase on the ways race, identity and belonging were handled within organizations and by groups of people at a granular level. Retail is a useful sector on which to focus because the shop is a space premised on display: the window-dressing, the arrangement of goods or the conduct and appearance of selling staff – a quality that brings into sharp relief images of acceptable, respectable service and consumption.<sup>73</sup> It is also a sector of hidden labour, allowing us to work across the apparent public/private divides of shop floor and back office to understand with more nuance how questions of colour were processed within companies. These business histories are vital to a larger project of noticing race and attending to processes of racialization. If we are to integrate race seriously and systematically into accounts of modern Britain, then historians of business and organization must engage. Without the private sector, we lose access to a whole series of settings in which – despite the beliefs reported to Glass – colour was very much seen and Black British citizens led working lives too long out of historical eyeshot.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Judy Faraday, former Heritage Services Manager at the John Lewis Partnership Heritage Centre and Archives, and her colleagues for their openness, generosity and engagement over many years of collaboration. Thank you also to Katharine Carter, Company Archivist at Marks & Spencer,

for sharing details of its contemporary recruitment policy, and to Shirin Hirsch and Essex colleagues, especially Tracey Loughran and Lisa Smith, for offering support and encouragement as well as incisive and helpful feedback.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> 'The Partnership's Policy in the Employment of Coloured Workers', Memorandum 8102, Chairman to Director of Personnel, 28/11/1961, box 650, 24.
- <sup>2</sup> M. Jones, 'Second-class citizens?', *Observer*, 26/02/1961.
- <sup>3</sup> 'The Partnership's Policy in the Employment of Coloured Workers', Memorandum 17140, Director to Personnel to all Heads of Branches and Directors of Buying, 29/11/1961, box 2524(a). The written Constitution is an evolving document which sets out the company's governance system, principles and rules. The current version is publicly available: <https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/content/dam/cws/pdfs/Juniper/jlp-constitution.pdf> (accessed 18/06/2021).
- <sup>4</sup> 'The Partnership's Policy in the Employment of Coloured Workers' Memorandum 8102.
- <sup>5</sup> Memorandum 16,756. Director of Personnel to Chairman, 10/11/1961, box 650, 24.
- <sup>6</sup> S. Decker, 'The silence of the archives: business history, post-colonialism and archival ethnography', *Management & Organizational History*, 8:2 (2013), 155–173.
- <sup>7</sup> See, for example, Royal Historical Society, *Race, Ethnicity & Equality in UK History: A Report and Resource for Change* (2018).
- <sup>8</sup> D. Dean, 'The Conservative government and the 1961 Commonwealth Immigration Act: the inside story', *Race & Class*, 35:2 (1993), 57–74.
- <sup>9</sup> K. Hammond Perry, "'Little Rock' in Britain: Jim Crow's transatlantic topographies', *Journal of British Studies*, 51:1 (2012), 157.
- <sup>10</sup> While the Act itself prefers the passive construction of a Commonwealth citizen 'taking employment' (see Part I, Section 2, paragraph 3(c)), the preceding parliamentary debates gave prominence to the role of employers. In terms of process, the employer would both apply for and then remit the voucher to the chosen employee. See, for example, *Hansard HC Deb vol 654 (22/02/1962)* 'Clause 2—(Refusal Of Admission And Conditional Admission)'.  
<sup>11</sup> N.T. Duncan, *Immigration Policymaking in the Global Era: In Pursuit of Global Tale* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 94; Home Office, 'Controlling our borders: making migration work for Britain. Five year strategy for asylum and immigration', Cm 6472 (London: HMSO, 2005).
- <sup>12</sup> K. Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me: Black Britons, Citizenship, and the Politics of Race* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 54.
- <sup>13</sup> N. El-Enany, *(B)ordering Britain: Law, Race and Empire* (Manchester University Press, 2020), 95, 86.
- <sup>14</sup> R. Glass, *Newcomers: The West Indians in London*, vol 1 (London: Centre for Urban Studies, 1960), note to Table 10, 30.
- <sup>15</sup> Glass, *Newcomers*, 216–219.
- <sup>16</sup> It is impossible to capture the work of scholars or do justice to the wider fields of enquiry to which they belong. As an all-too-brief selection: M. Banton, *White and Coloured: The Behavior of British People Towards Coloured Immigrants* (London: J. Cape, 1959); S. Patterson, *Dark Strangers: A Sociological Study of the Absorption of a Recent West Indian Migrant Group in Brixton, South London* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1963); S. Hall et al, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1978); S. Hall, 'Minimal selves', in H. Baker, M. Diawara and R. Lindeborg (eds), *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), 114–119; University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back Race and Racism in 70s*



- Britain (London: Hutchinson, 1982); B. Schwarz, ‘“The only white man in there”: the re-racialisation of England, 1956–1968’, *Race & Class*, 38:1 (1996), 65–78; W. Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, Race, and National Identity, 1945–64* (London: UCL Press, 1998); C. Waters, ‘“Dark strangers” in our midst: discourses of race and nation in Britain, 1947–1963’, *Journal of British Studies*, 36:2 (1997), 207–238.
- <sup>17</sup> G. Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 133–148.
- <sup>18</sup> Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me*; M. Grant, ‘Historicizing citizenship in post-war Britain’, *The Historical Journal*, 59:4 (2016), 1187–1206; D. Newton, *Paving the Empire Road: BBC Television and Black Britons* (Manchester University Press, 2013); D. Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2016).
- <sup>19</sup> M. Matera, R. Natarajan, K. Hammond Perry, C. Schofield and R. Waters, ‘Introduction: marking race in twentieth century British history’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 34:3 (2023), 407–414.
- <sup>20</sup> Commons Debate, 14/06/2018, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-06-14/debates/0661DB22-68A9-4F6C-9C69-4F42C9837511/Windrush70ThAnniversary>, <https://www.bl.uk/windrush/articles/windrush-generations-1000-londoners>, <https://www.museumassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2020/06/22062020-museums-mark-windrush-day/#> (accessed 15/09/2020).
- <sup>21</sup> See, for example, <https://windrushfoundation.com/windrush-70/> (accessed 15/09/2020).
- <sup>22</sup> See, for example, T. Harris (ed), *Windrush (1948) and Rivers of Blood (1968): Legacy and Assessment* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019); El-Enany, *(B)ordering Britain*.
- <sup>23</sup> L. McDowell, *Working Lives: Gender, Migration and Employment in Britain, 1945–2007* (Chichester: Wiley, 2013).
- <sup>24</sup> See, for example, S. Virdee, ‘Racism and resistance in British trade unions, 1948–79’, in P. Alexander and R. Halpern (eds), *Racializing Class, Classifying Race: Labour and Difference in Britain, the USA and Africa* (New York: St Martin’s, 2000), 122–149; F. Lindop, ‘Racism and the working class: strikes in support of Enoch Powell in 1968’, *Labour History Review*, 66:1 (2001), 79–100; L. McDowell, S. Anitha and R. Pearson, ‘Striking narratives: class, gender and ethnicity in the “Great Grunwick Strike”, London, UK, 1976–1978’, *Women’s History Review* 23:4 (2014), 595–619.
- <sup>25</sup> See also P. Cox and A. Hobley, *Shoppers: The True Story of Life Behind the Counter* (London: Hutchinson, 2014), 228–229.
- <sup>26</sup> J. Rex and S. Tomlinson, *Colonial Immigrants in a British City: A Class Analysis* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1979), 107.
- <sup>27</sup> A. Greenwood and H. Ingram, ‘Sources and resources. “The people’s chemists”: The Walgreens Boots Alliance Archive’, *Social History of Medicine*, 26 (2018), 857–869.
- <sup>28</sup> A.R. Green and E. Lee, ‘From transaction to collaboration: redefining the academic-archivist relationship in business collections’, *Archives and Records* 41:1 (2020), 32–51.
- <sup>29</sup> J.S. Lewis, *Partnership for All* (London: Kerr-Cros Publishing Co., 1948), 192.
- <sup>30</sup> Indeed, ‘the happiness of all its members’ was, and is, defined as the ‘ultimate purpose’ of the Partnership, enshrined in Principle 1 of the Constitution.
- <sup>31</sup> Lewis, *Partnership for All*, 209–210. I discuss the implications of Spedan Lewis’ (henceforth in notes JSL) notion of the ‘state within a state’ in terms of pay policy in A.R. Green, ‘“Secret lists and sanctions”: the blacklisting of the John Lewis Partnership and the politics of pay in 1970s Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 30:2 (2019), 205–230.
- <sup>32</sup> Lewis, *Partnership for All*, 209. ‘Member’ is synonymous with ‘Partner’ as in ‘member of the Partnership’.
- <sup>33</sup> E. Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France: Ideas and Policymaking since the 1960s* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

- <sup>34</sup> 'The Founder's further attempt to enlighten the Partnership', *Gazette*, 23/07/1960, 595. JSL stood down as Chairman in 1955 and was thereafter accorded the title of 'Founder'. JSL's conception of team-work accords with Ussishkin's discussion of 'team-spirit' in British industry as an expression of and response to the collective mobilization of the Second World War: *Morale: A Modern British History* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 122–123.
- <sup>35</sup> *Personnel and Welfare Manual*, box Q/Q1/3/1, The M&S Company Archive.
- <sup>36</sup> 'The Founder's further attempt to enlighten the Partnership', *Gazette*, 23/07/1960, 595.
- <sup>37</sup> Lewis, *Partnership for All*, 428–430.
- <sup>38</sup> 'The Founder's further attempt to enlighten the Partnership', *Gazette*, 23/07/1960, 595.
- <sup>39</sup> T. Kushner, 'Racialization and White European immigration to Britain', in K. Murji and J. Solomos (eds), *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 207–225.
- <sup>40</sup> JSL's conception of Jewish traits and of Jews as inherently 'alien' was by no means exceptional. See T. Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester University Press, 1989) for widespread wartime antipathy to Jews, including as shadowy financiers, and its deep historical roots in Britain.
- <sup>41</sup> *Gazette*, 15/07/1944, 293.
- <sup>42</sup> Waters, "'Dark strangers" in our midst', 220. On race relations in Britain, see: M. Matera, 'The African grounds of race relations in Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 34:3 (2023), 415–439.
- <sup>43</sup> *Gazette*, 03/07/1954, 435.
- <sup>44</sup> 'Commonwealth Day', *Chronicle for John Lewis*, 26/05/1956, box Acc/2018/107/6.
- <sup>45</sup> On paying for brains: Lewis, *Partnership for All*, 228–229. 'Rank and file' was an official term in JLP at this time.
- <sup>46</sup> The article describes these Partners as 'a floating part of our Partnership'; of the ten short 'portraits' of Commonwealth Partners that follow, seven refer to potential return to home countries: 'Commonwealth Day', *Chronicle for John Lewis*, 26/05/1956, box Acc/2018/107/6.
- <sup>47</sup> See, for example, 'From bad to worse', *Times*, 17/11/1961, 15 (the paper was an insistent critic of the Bill).
- <sup>48</sup> For example: 'Apart from coloured workers, [the advertisement] produced one suitable applicant': Routine report from Clearings Registrar, 05/12/1959, box 472/y. Clearings was the branch handling despatch, distribution, stockrooms and workrooms.
- <sup>49</sup> 'Fresh air from Europe', *Gazette*, 03/03/1962, 108–109.
- <sup>50</sup> *Gazette*, 03/07/1954, 436.
- <sup>51</sup> 'What story has the Partnership to tell?', *Gazette*, 15/11/1958, 975–979.
- <sup>52</sup> 'The Chairman's Conference', *Gazette*, 16/07/1960, 570.
- <sup>53</sup> M. Collins, 'Pride and prejudice: West Indian men in mid-twentieth-century Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 40:3 (2001), 402.
- <sup>54</sup> 'Employment of Hungarians', Memorandum 26,390 Chief Registrar to all Registrars, 21/12/1956, box 2524(a).
- <sup>55</sup> 'Employment of Pakistanis', Memorandum 29,910 Chief Registrar to Director of Personnel, 23/09/1958, box 2524(a).
- <sup>56</sup> M. Jones, 'Second-class citizens?', *Observer*, 26/02/1961. The second part concerned housing ('The subtle barriers on the doorstep', 05/03/1961) and the third, living in multi-racial societies ('A cold co-existence', 12/03/1961).
- <sup>57</sup> Glass, *Newcomers*, 30.
- <sup>58</sup> *Gazette*, 18/03/1961, 149; internal memoranda also indicate that managers were starting to position the Constitution as part of an emerging policy on Commonwealth recruitment: 'Extract from Minutes of the 149th Meeting of the Chairman's Conference,

- held 28th February 1961', box 650/24; Memorandum 12460 'The Employment of Coloured People', Director of Personnel to Chairman, 01/03/1961, box 650/24.
- <sup>59</sup> On women as consumers, see: M. Hilton, 'The female consumer and the politics of consumption in twentieth-century Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 45:1 (2002), 103–128. The ways in which race and gender (and, indeed, race and class) are entwined in the shopper/shopworker relationship here cannot be explored in this short chapter but would be an interesting area for future exploration. On race and class, Waters has shown how the absorption of the working class into the national community in the 1930s and 1940s allowed Black migrants to be positioned as the new, threatening 'other': Waters, "'Dark strangers" in our midst', 212.
- <sup>60</sup> 'Employment of Coloured People', Memorandum 78,183, Director of Personnel to Chairman, 12/07/1954, box 650/24. The *Observer* does not seem to have actually published anything on the case.
- <sup>61</sup> Audience research for TV began in 1949; for a detailed discussion, see Newton, *Paving the Empire Road*. See also C. Grandy, "'The show is not about race": custom, screen culture, and *The Black and White Minstrel Show*', *Journal of British Studies*, 59:4 (2020), 857–884; G. Schaffer, *The Vision of a Nation: Making Multiculturalism on British Television, 1960–80* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). These were also increasingly powerful audiences: as Schaffer notes, TV ownership went from under 10 per cent in 1951 to 75 per cent in 1961, as households with more discretionary spending power created demand for consumer goods: B. Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom 1951–1970* (Oxford University Press, 2009). On the anxiety-inducing intersection of TV-watching and consumer audiences, advertising, see P. Gurney, *The Making of Consumer Culture in Modern Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 167–169.
- <sup>62</sup> 'Employment of Coloured Workers in the Partnership'.
- <sup>63</sup> 'Employment of Coloured Workers in the Partnership'. The 'experiment' was a long-standing John Lewis approach. Indeed, JSL saw the Partnership itself as 'an experiment in industrial democracy'. Managers were given significant independence of initiative to test proposals that may help the company fulfil its aims and purposes. See Green, 'Secret lists and sanctions'.
- <sup>64</sup> The term 'Asiatics' was not defined and appears to have been used interchangeably with 'Asians', also undefined.
- <sup>65</sup> The full annual census for 1961 indicates that total numbers increased by 1,006 (7.3 per cent) from 1960, with all of that increase falling on the selling side. John Lewis Oxford Street, part of the nine-branch survey discussed here, appointed 204 of those additional selling staff: *Gazette*, 15/07/1961, 549–551.
- <sup>66</sup> A phrase used by the Director of Personnel in response to 'Quo Vadis' letter and in his letter to the Nottingham Council of Social Service, which had asked the company to consider employing some temporary West Indian workers over the Christmas period: 26/06/1961, box 650/24.
- <sup>67</sup> *Gazette*, 18/03/1961, 149. Kreydatus has pointed out with reference to segregated department stores in the United States that Black retail workers were largely expected to be invisible; elevator operators and delivery drivers were among those who were visible but it was a visibility that demanded deference and extreme courtesy: B. Kreydatus, "'You are a part of all of us": black department store employees in Jim Crow Richmond', *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 2:1 (2010) 109.
- <sup>68</sup> 'Registry Report – April 1961', Extract from Memorandum 3034, Registrar Bon Marché to Chief Registrar, 05/05/1961, box 650/24. The Registrar comments here that there are 'plenty of coloured men (drivers) on the Ministry of Labour's books'.
- <sup>69</sup> 'The Partnership's Policy in the Employment of Coloured Workers'. The Bristol Omnibus colour bar dispute, first exposed in 1961 but hitting headlines in the boycott of 1963,

shows that public transport was not as open to Black workers as may have been assumed within JLP: M. Dresser, *Black and White on the Buses: The 1963 Colour Bar Dispute in Bristol* (Bristol: Broadside, 1986). Dresser points to the division between public-facing ‘on the buses’ work and behind the scenes garage work.

<sup>70</sup> Memorandum 2671, Registrar Bon Marché to Chief Registrar, 06/04/1960, box 472:E.

<sup>71</sup> Hammond Perry, *London is the Place for Me*, 86–87. Hammond Perry cites Sheila Patterson’s survey of White employers’ impressions of West Indian workers, conducted in Brixton in the late 1950s. She quotes a labour exchange official, who reported that White women objected to working alongside Black women for ‘personal hygienic reasons’. Patterson, *Dark Strangers*, 135–136.

<sup>72</sup> Memorandum 2734, Registrar Bon Marché to Chief Registrar, 26/05/1960, box 472:E.

<sup>73</sup> On the racialized ‘reading’ of professional behaviour, see: D. Payling, ‘“The people who write to us are the people who don’t like us”: class, gender, and citizenship in the survey of sickness, 1943–1952’, *Journal of British Studies* 59:2 (2020), 315–342. On retail as a ‘compelling site to study’ for historians of many kinds: T. Deutsch, ‘Exploring new insights into retail history’, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 2:1 (2010), 136.