Toxic Geographies: Race, Gender and Sexuality Based (Micro)aggressions in Higher Education

Submitted by Maura Pavalow to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Geography, October 2015.

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

..........................................................
Abstract

This thesis attends to recent calls and decades of demands to de-whiten and de-colonise the discipline of Geography and higher education more broadly. This manuscript contributes unique empirical research and analysis on race, gender, sexuality and everyday life to geographies of intersectionality, visceral geographies of (micro)aggressions, and toxic geographies. Intersectionality is a Black Feminist framework that centres the entanglement of race and gender, (micro)aggressions are often unconscious and subtle insults experienced at the scale of the body by marginalized people, and toxic geographies are spaces with high concentrations of (micro)aggressions. The main objectives are to explore the co-constitutive nature of (micro)aggressions and space, engage intersectionality in practice through Participatory Action Research (PAR), and to centre the lives and promote the agency of students of colour, women, queer, transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) students in US higher education.

The empirical research of this thesis is a PAR project and team composed of eleven people, myself included, on race, gender, and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at an elite US residential institution of higher education. The PAR team collectively curated a public art event where the university community was invited to share stories of (micro)aggressions experienced, witnessed, and produced. The PAR team’s efforts resulted in a powerful encounter that led to changes in policy and practice to mitigate toxicity in one particular place.

The analysis of the empirical research involves an exploration of the fluidity, fixity, and spatiality of toxic geographies along the axes of race, gender and sexuality and within the context of the academic-military-prison industrial complex (AMPIC), a framework of structural violence. In addition, this thesis applies the higher-level analytic of intersectionality to the empirical research, connecting the micro level of (micro)aggressions, the meso level of the PAR team, and the macro level of the AMPIC to provide an empirical example of the complexity of toxic geographies, and an avenue for future research, by highlighting the material impact of the neoliberal university on the mental health of students of colour, women, queer, and TGNC students.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to my supervisors, Clive Barnett and Jo Little, who came on board halfway through this PhD. I am grateful that they took up the challenge of supporting a scholar-activist PhD on the often invisible, and easily disregarded, daily phenomena of microaggressions. Clive and Jo have been beacons of light in providing incredible guidance, critical insight, and unwavering support. As a distance learner, I appreciate their flexibility and patience, particularly with the inevitable technical difficulties of Skype.

As someone who had never imagined the possibility of pursuing a PhD, I am extremely thankful of the Exeter-Brown PhD Studentship in Material Culture and Globalisation for this opportunity. Thank you to Nicola Thomas for introducing me to Anti-Racist Feminist Geographies and her encouragement to take risks in doing a creative Masters’ dissertation, both of which have dramatically inspired this thesis. Thanks also to Pepe Romanillos and Ian Cook for their support.

Thank you to Patricia Krueger-Henney for sharing her expertise as a PAR practitioner and her mentorship in designing the PAR project in this thesis. Thanks also to Mary Grace Almandrez, Allyson Brathwaite-Gardner, Gail Cohee, Kelly Garrett, and Mona Abo-Zena for their advice, education, and support on developing a context-specific research design that could have a positive impact beyond the pages of this thesis. They have been pivotal in making my PhD a transformative experience and inspiring me to fearlessly pursue a commitment to social justice in my work and daily life. Words cannot express my gratitude.

Thank you to the Office of Institutional Diversity, Brown Center for Students of Color, and LGBTQ Center at Brown University for their financial support of the empirical research of this thesis in providing funding for the Participatory Action Research (PAR) team, our open art event, and printing our Disorientation Guides in August 2015. Their eagerness to support this action research and general encouragement at an institutional level is deeply appreciated. I am also grateful to the Dwyer House Dissertation Completion Fellowship and Sarah Doyle Women’s Center at Brown University, particularly Felicia Salinas-Moniz, for providing in-kind support, mentorship, and office space, in my third year of the PhD. Thanks to the Providence Africana Reading Collective for sharing a variety of important texts, people and conversations that have influenced this thesis.

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with, and get to know, the brave, empowering, and thoughtful co-researchers in the PAR team: April, betta, Coreen Dame, Gina, Kieren, Hayaatee, Lilah, Coreen, and Susie. Thanks for
taking the risk to work with me, their commitment to each other and the project, and their generosity in sharing their experiences, creativity and wisdom. Collaboratively creating this PAR team and doing action research together has been a deeply enriching experience, both personally and professionally.

I am beyond grateful to Andrea Sterling, Justine Stewart, Malcolm Shanks, Tina Park and Shane Lloyd for proofreading this thesis, especially while busy with their own commitments. It means the world to me that they took the time to proofread my work and further evidence of how lucky I am to call them friends.

Most importantly, thank you to my family and friends, whose love and support give me strength, remind me of my priorities, challenge me to do better, and provide inspiration and comic relief. Special thanks to Malcolm for encouraging me to apply to this PhD and to realize a dream I never allowed myself to have; and for being my informal supervisor, constant collaborator, and suite/sweet-mate. Thank you to Justine and the Stewart family for their advice and helping me decide to accept this PhD opportunity, especially within a short window of time. Thanks to my Goldsmiths Women’s Football family, especially Saf, Gill, Tash, Sarah, Jenny, Lenez, and Aini, for their friendship and making my transatlantic move to England seamless. I am grateful to peers throughout my time in Exeter for their friendship, camaraderie and validation, especially Anna, Sophia, Purva, Hasma, Akkas, Sue, Louise, Lindsay, and Callum. Thank you to Nicolette and Amanda for being two of the best roommates I could ask for, particularly in my move back to the States. Special thanks to Nicolette for being my rock for the last couple years; it is such a joy to get to live with her, support each other, and remember the important things in life. I am grateful for Timorge, for our friendship and capacity to balance care and silliness, and to the BCSC for bringing us together. Thank you to Andrea for being a pivotal player whose brilliance, vulnerability and overflowing love has been a gift and continues to inspire. Thanks to Brandy for her friendship and particularly her camaraderie and support in the job market. Thank you to my extended family for your consistent support and faith in me. Uncle Ken, thank you introducing me to the work of bell hooks. Bridget, thank you for those random text messages of support while I was in the midst of a deadline. Brendan, thanks for the many DVDs of TV comedies and the laughter they produced. And last, but not least, thank you especially to my parents, Florence and Bruce, for their unconditional love and support, for teaching me how to practice love and care as ways of being in the world, and inspiring one of the foundations of my commitment to social justice: for me, doing social justice work is all about love.
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## Acronyms

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#BBUM</td>
<td>Being Black at Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501(c)(3)</td>
<td>Non-profit organisation that is exempt from federal and state taxes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAG</td>
<td>Association of American Geographers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAUP</td>
<td>American Association of University Professors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMPIC</td>
<td>Academic-Military-Prison Industrial Complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQR</td>
<td>Absolute Quiet Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCSC</td>
<td>Brown Center for Students of Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDS</td>
<td>Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BME</td>
<td>Black Minority Ethnic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSJP</td>
<td>Brown Students for Justice in Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSU</td>
<td>Black Student Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Community Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPS</td>
<td>Counseling and Psychological Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCA</td>
<td>Corrections Corporation of American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMIT</td>
<td><em>Count Me In Too</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT</td>
<td>Critical Race Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISP</td>
<td>Departmental Independent Study Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOC</td>
<td>Dean of the College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPC</td>
<td><em>Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HPHP</td>
<td><em>Hurt People Hurt People</em> event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITAB</td>
<td><em>I, Too, Am Brown</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITAH</td>
<td><em>I, Too, Am Harvard</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTA</td>
<td>Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, &amp; Questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQA</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning &amp; Asexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGSA</td>
<td>Lesbian Gay Student Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPC</td>
<td>Minority Peer Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSJP</td>
<td>National Students for Justice in Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYCLU</td>
<td>New York Civil Liberties Union</td>
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<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYPD</td>
<td>New York Police Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>OWS</td>
<td>Occupy Wall Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>Participatory Action Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDC</td>
<td>Prison Divestment Campaign</td>
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<tr>
<td>PGP</td>
<td>Preferred gender pronouns</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIC</td>
<td>Prison Industrial Complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSA</td>
<td>Public Service Announcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWI</td>
<td>Predominantly White Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PyGyRG</td>
<td>Participatory Geographies Research Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>QRC</td>
<td>Queer Resource Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Residential Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RI</td>
<td>Rhode Island and Providence Plantations</td>
</tr>
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<td>Rock</td>
<td>John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPL</td>
<td>Residential Peer Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDWC</td>
<td>Sarah Doyle Women’s Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJP</td>
<td>Students for Justice in Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMP</td>
<td>The Microaggressions Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWC</td>
<td>Third World Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>University of California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCSA</td>
<td>University of California Student Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGSG</td>
<td>Women and Geography Study Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPC</td>
<td>Women’s Peer Counsellor</td>
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</table>
Abbreviations

**Intersectional Geographies**: Geographies of Race and Gender

**Intersectional**: an action that centres the entanglement of race and gender

**isms**: Systems of oppression (e.g. racism, classism, sexism)

**Misogynoir**: anti-Black misogyny

**Rhode Island**: Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Chapter 1. Introduction

Where I’m Coming From

To introduce this thesis, I share a personal narrative about how I became interested in the topics of everyday violence, race, gender and sexuality in US higher education. What follows is a rough summary and one of many ways to tell my trajectory, a process that is non-linear and fluid.

In 2007, I began my undergraduate studies as a home student at Brown University in Providence, RI, USA. Throughout my first year at Brown, I began learning about social justice and systems of oppression (or the ‘isms’) through everyday social interactions and conversations. For example, the ‘isms’ include racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, ableism, and imperialism; they are structurally ‘intersectional,’ or deeply entangled and mutually constituted (Third World Center, n.d.). These topics came up in daily discussions with peers (e.g. racism in the classroom) and seemed to be an important part of student life at Brown, or at least in my social circle. These conversations were often sparked and informed, in part, by my peers’ participation in year-round programming at Brown’s Third World Center (TWC). The TWC was established in 1976 as a result of student protesting to ‘meet the needs of all students of colour and to promote racial and ethnic pluralism in the Brown community’ (Third World Center, n.d.).

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1 US English is my first and native language. This thesis is in British English, a dialect that is relatively new to me; and is one I have been learning since 2011 (when I started my postgraduate studies at the University of Exeter). In this thesis, I use US English colloquialisms or US English intermittently and include a footnote for explanation where appropriate.

2 Heterosexism is a system of oppression based on sexuality that marginalises LGBTQA and other non-heterosexual people; and it centres or privileges heterosexual people.

3 Transphobia or cissexism is a system of oppression based on the gender binary that marginalises transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary people; and it privileges cisgender people.

4 In 2015, the TWC changed its name to the Brown Center for Students of Color (BCSC).
My first year in university was the first time I had ever had conversations about the ‘isms’ or social justice due to my positionality, lived experience and educational background. For example, from ages 3 to 18, as a white American upper-middle class young cisgender girl and woman, I attended public primary and secondary school in a predominantly (95%) white and upper-middle class suburb of New York City. In history classes highly influenced by state-sponsored curricula, I was inaccurately taught that the United States has been in a ‘post-racial’ era, or a time without racism, since the US Civil Rights Movement (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). As such, we did not learn about complicated and multiple histories of race, racism and whiteness in the 50 years after the Civil Rights Movement and in fact were taught they did not exist. Furthermore, growing up in a largely white and upper-middle class bubble, I had few, if any, life experiences to contradict such ‘post-racial’ classroom teachings.

In digesting the difficult reality that my prior 18 years of education about United States and world history was incomplete and racially biased, I continued to be educated by peers and began to awkwardly educate myself on what was left out of my history books and life experiences primarily through extracurricular activities and everyday life. Alongside my studies, I became involved in a variety of social justice efforts at Brown and in the broader city of Providence, RI. In this organising work, I had the privilege to work closely with several experienced Providence-based community organisers who taught me about social justice practice, critical

5 My white privilege is evidenced in the narrative about my lack of racial awareness. In other words, my whiteness gives me the daily privilege to not have to deal with race or racism.
6 My class privilege is evidenced in my narrative regarding the class-based opportunities I had access to, such as the neighbourhood I grew up in, Ivy League education, etc.
7 In other words, I identified with the gender that I was assigned at birth.
8 Government-sponsored.
9 For more information, see (New York State Education Department, 2013).
theory and history through experience. For example, I learned about US legal histories of institutional racism and classism, historical practices of resistance and the impacts of these legacies on contemporary de facto segregation, prison recidivism, dropout rates, gang violence, and domestic violence in Providence.

These extracurricular experiences are the foundation of this thesis and I have struggled to find a way to properly cite or credit the labour of my previously mentioned peers, colleagues and life experiences within existing academic conventions and values beyond acknowledgements or anecdotes. For example, how do I cite the knowledge about the prison-industrial complex (PIC) that several people taught me from their lived experiences? How can I value these sources and ways of knowing, not published in a journal article or book, as legitimate and influential, rather than marginal sources? If I cite academic literature, as per convention, that provides similar insights that I learned from my colleagues, mentors and peers without citing them directly, who and what does my citationality over-value and/or displace? In other words, what is my citationality doing? In experiencing the difficulty of citing everyday knowledges as central to my academic work and attempting to unlearn my previous 18 years of miseducation, I became interested in critiques of, and alternatives to, traditional educational institutions, methods and values. These lived experiences led to my interest in scholar-activism and participatory methodologies (see Chapters 2 and 3) and informed my decision to do Participatory Action Research (PAR), in part, in order to explore answers to these questions, as discussed and evident in the citation practices of this thesis.

Prior to becoming a Masters student at the University of Exeter in 2011, it had not occurred to me to question where these social justice tools came from, their historical geographies as it were, nor how their contexts impact how and why
the practices and terms are used today. Through my academic education and interactions with peers at the University of Exeter, I began to realise that I had normalised the practices and languages of social justice, without citation or context, which erased the historical geographies of these praxes. In turn, my citational practices, and lack thereof, contribute(d) to the erasure and exploitation of the bodies and labour that produced these emancipatory tools and histories of resistance. In other words, I was ignorantly inflicting epistemic violence, which is the displacement or destruction of socially marginalised ways of knowing the world by the supremacy of dominant ways of knowing (Spivak, 1988). This epistemic violence exists within historical geographies of oppression based on socially constructed categories such as race, class, sexuality, gender, nationality, ability, and age, as discussed in Chapter 2.

For example, in 2011 a peer at the University of Exeter taught me that the notion of ‘intersectionality’ (Crenshaw, 1989) comes from the specific legacies of US Black Feminist Thought, Woman of Colour Feminisms and Indigenous Feminisms (see Chapter 2).¹⁰ Thanks to this peer, I learned that the tool of intersectionality that I had been using for five years to talk about the entanglement of systems of oppression was in fact historically based in discourses that I knew nothing about and, thus, did not cite or credit, which affected the accuracy of my understanding of intersectionality (see Chapter 2). The fact that I was able to maintain this ignorant plagiarisation of the centuries of work by Black feminists, feminists of colour and Indigenous feminists throughout my academic and social

¹⁰ Furthermore, I learned that many other social justice concepts and practices emerged from these specific scholar-activist fields, such as prison industrial complex (Davis, 1998), non-profit industrial complex (Smith, Richie, Sudbury, & White, 2006), white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy (hooks, 1981), and academic industrial complex (Smith A., 2007).
justice careers seemed indicative of broader systemic issues. To take responsibility for my profound ignorance and irresponsible actions, I focused my PhD studies on learning about geographies of intersectionality as both a theoretical framework and an epistemology (see Chapter 2), which I apply to the citationality in this thesis.

In exploring Intersectional Geographies, a variety of geographers have researched the multiplicities of the discipline's erasure of the histories, bodies, and writings of Black feminists, feminists of colour and Indigenous feminists, who give intersectionality depth and meaning, as outlined in Chapter 2. (Mahtani, 2004; Akinleye, 2006; McKittrick, 2004; McKittrick, 2006; Louis, 2007). These erasures, or examples of epistemic violence, can be oriented as forms of ‘(micro)aggressions’ or everyday violence (see Chapter 2). (Micro)aggressions are ‘subtle forms of bias and discrimination’ that are inflicted by members of dominant or ‘privileged’ groups (e.g. white, cisgender, wealthy) on members of marginalised groups (e.g. people of colour, transgender, non-binary, low-income) often unintentionally (Sue, 2010, p. 5; Sue, et al., 2007, p. 273). In the case of epistemic violence as (micro)aggressions, it can be seen as ‘micro’ in the sense that it is often an act of unconscious bias and at the same time lived as ‘aggression’ because the impact is the felt and material violence of erasure. To take responsibility for the epistemic violence of my citational practices, in this thesis I focus on the spatiality of everyday violence, or (micro)aggressions, and resistance in the field of Intersectional Geographies.

The power dynamic of those who inflict and those who experience (micro)aggressions is complicated by the multiplicity of the ‘isms,’ in which people

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11 The particular notion of ‘(micro)aggression’ is intentional in order to emphasize the fact that (micro)aggressions are everyday manifestations of structural violence. The rationale for this stylistic choice is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.
occupy multiple subject positions and encounter the ‘isms’ at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, etc. (Truth, 1851; Cooper, 1892; Jones, 1949; Cade, 1980; Beale, 1970; The Combahee River Collective, 1977; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; hooks, 1981; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Carby, 1982; Walker, 1983; Lorde, 1984; Anzaldúa, 1987; Spillers, H. J., 1987; Spivak, 1988; Puar, 2012a). Due to the multiplicity of identity and various systems of oppression, most people produce and experience (micro)aggressions (e.g. a white cisgender woman produces racial and transphobic \(^{12}\) (micro)aggressions and experiences sexist (micro)aggressions). Much of the contemporary scholarship on (micro)aggressions is single-axis (i.e. focuses on one variable at a time, e.g. race) and does not consider intersectionality (e.g. interdependency of race and gender) or the reality of the entangled and messy interplay of multiple identities (e.g. race, gender, sexuality). This thesis seeks to contribute to that gap in literature and the previously mentioned absences in my scholarship and lived experience by exploring the spatial conditions of resistance that make ‘intersectional’ (i.e. race, gender, and sexuality based) (micro)aggressions visible through participatory and scholar-activist approaches to research (Sue, et al., 2007, pp. 281, 283; Lau & Williams, 2010, p. 318).

**Thesis Overview**

This Human Geography thesis is situated within the Radical/Critical Geography subfields of Queer, Transgender, Feminist, and Critical Race Geographies. These distinct yet entangled fields respectively explore the

\(^{12}\) ‘Transphobic’ is an adjective used to describe a person’s or institution’s behaviors that uphold transphobia or cissexism, which is a system of oppression based on the gender binary that marginalises transgender, gender non-conforming, and other non-binary people; and it centres or privileges cisgender people.
relationships between space and sexuality, gender, and race in a US context. It is important to emphasize that the context of the empirical research (e.g. US focus, location in an elite & predominantly white institution of higher education) impacts how the central topics of race, gender and sexuality are understood, lived, and addressed. As social constructs, race, gender and sexuality are place-specific and understanding them requires interrogation of context and not equivocating various place-based histories. For instance, while there are similarities, race operates differently in the UK than in the US, largely due to differing histories of colonialism, immigration, and place-specific politics, among a variety of other factors. As a result, in this thesis I draw heavily upon US-specific understandings and histories of race, gender and sexuality given the US context of my empirical research.

Within these broad subject areas, my thesis focuses on the spatiality of everyday violence and resistance in terms of race, gender and sexuality in the context of US higher education. The focus on US higher education is due to contemporary debates in these fields (see Chapter 2) and my personal interest, location and embodiment in higher education as previously discussed. Specifically, there is a dearth of scholarship on the co-construction of intersectional (i.e. race, gender and sexuality based) everyday violence and structural violence, particularly within the context of higher education. Outside of Geography, there has been a range of scholarship over the last several decades on (micro)aggressions in the field of Psychology, with which geographical scholarship on everyday violence has had limited engagement. This thesis aims to contribute to this gap in geographical thought by putting this concept currently rooted in Psychology through a spatial lens, which, I argue, is necessary in order to understand how (micro)aggressions take, and make, place as well as how to mitigate them. One of the key spatial
stories of (micro)aggressions that will unfold throughout this thesis is that of scale. (Micro)aggressions are manifestations of structural violence (i.e. macro; e.g. structures, institutions) that take place at the scale of the body (i.e. micro; Joshi et al, 2015) and require inter-scalar methodologies and epistemologies (e.g. Participatory Action Research and intersectionality) to gather data of encounters at the scale of the body in order to inform action at the scale of the institution. In exploring the relationship between (micro)aggressions, intersectionality, scale and the production of space, this thesis focuses on the co-construction of (micro)aggressions and structural violence and its impacts on health disparities in higher education for students of colour, women, non-binary and queer students. In addition to geographical literature, this thesis also contributes to gaps in the practices and policies of diversity work and supporting marginalised students in higher education through the active intervention of the PAR team’s project as well as this written thesis in identifying the impacts of structural violence specific to higher education on the health of marginalised students.

This thesis follows a Radical/Critical Geography tradition (detailed in Chapter 3) of defining research as a rigorous critique of a social injustice and collective action to rectify that very issue (Woods, 2002; Gilmore, 2002; Pain, Kesby, & Askins, 2011; Pulido, 2000; Kobayashi, 1994). To accomplish such a scholar-activist definition of research, I utilised a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach in my empirical research in order to access and explore student’s visceral understandings (i.e. at the scale of the body) of space and everyday violence at the research site as a team of co-researchers and to collectively address such violence (see Chapter 3). The research site is Brown University, my alma mater, and was chosen intentionally due to my positionality, contextual
knowledge and lived experience in relation to the research site. All of these factors were tools to foster trust in developing this project in collaboration with students, staff and departments in order to get a deep understanding of context as well as an effort to give back to the peers, staff and spaces at Brown that inspired my critical consciousness and led me to this thesis. The main objectives were to explore the co-constitutive nature of (micro)aggressions and space, engage Intersectional Geographies in practice through PAR to centre the lives and promotes the agency of students of colour, women, transgender, non-binary, and queer students.

This thesis contributes unique empirical research and analysis on race, gender, sexuality and everyday life to the nascent scholarship of visceral geographies of (micro)aggressions; and to literature and practice in higher education and at Brown University on how to support students who live at the intersections of multiple systems of oppression. Further, this manuscript attends to recent calls (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015; Domosh, 2015; Braun, et al., 2015) and decades of demands to de-whiten, de-colonise, and dismantle cis-hetero-patriarchy\(^\text{13}\) in the discipline of Geography (Monk & Hanson, 1982; Sanders, 1990; Kobayashi, 1994; Gilmore, 2002; Pulido, 2002; Mahtani, 2004; Louis, 2007; Johnson, Cant, Howitt, & Peters, 2007; Mahtani, 2014; Domosh, 2015; Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015; Braun et al, 2015), and higher education more broadly (Ahmed, 2012; Wilder, 2013; Chatterjee & Maira, 2014), through multiple intervention sites, including citationality, research focus, and methodology.

\(^{13}\)Cis-hetero-patriarchy is the entanglement of multiple systems of oppression (e.g. cissexism or transphobia, heterosexism, and patriarchy) that marginalise women, transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, LGBTQA, and non-monogamous people; and centre or privilege men, cisgender, gender-conforming, binary, straight, and monogamous people.
Chapter Summaries

This thesis is composed of eight chapters. After this introduction (Chapter 1), the thesis is organised according to the following structure: literature review (Chapter 2), methodology (Chapter 3), results of the research and key analytic themes (Chapters 4-6), high-level analysis (Chapter 7) and conclusion (Chapter 8). A summary of each chapter is as follows.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature in the overall field of Radical/Critical Geographies, while focusing on Queer, Transgender, Feminist and Critical Race Geographies—or what I’m calling Intersectional Geographies—to provide an overview of contemporary debates on ‘toxic geographies’ or geographies of everyday violence (Mahtani, 2014). I argue that there are gaps in geographical literature on everyday violence in limited engagement with a breadth of scholarship on ‘(micro)aggressions’ in the field of Psychology. I aim to contribute to those gaps by providing an overview of the concept of ‘toxic geographies’ posited by Mahtani in 2014 and placing it in conversation with the aforementioned Psychology scholarship to explore the spatial story of (micro)aggressions.

Chapter 3 details the methodology and methods utilised in this thesis beginning with a definition and description of PAR as a spatial and inter-scalar practice that leads into a discussion of the research design and implementation. The empirical research is a PAR team composed of eleven people, myself included, on race, gender, and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at Brown University, an elite US residential institution of higher education. The co-researchers that compose the PAR team are introduced. This chapter looks at PAR as a process of place-making and considers the spatial practices involved in
creating the participatory geographies of the team and the spatial conditions that enabled sharing experiences of (micro)aggressions through a discussion of the process of data generation and descriptions of the data that emerged. Ethical considerations and challenges encountered in implementation are discussed.

Chapter 4 describes the research site (i.e. Brown University) and contextualises it within contemporary critical scholarship on violence in higher education to illustrate the entangled relationships between the various scales of violence, namely macro (i.e. at the level of the university and its regional, domestic, and global relationships) and micro (i.e. within the university and its locality). This chapter introduces the notion of the 'academic-military-prison-industrial complex' or AMPIC, which contextualises the US university within macro dynamics of inequity through its’ entanglement with neoliberalism via academic, military and prison industries (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014). Then, I describe the research site and situate it within this framework through case studies of Brown University’s relationships with neoliberal academic, military and prison industries.

Chapter 5 connects the AMPIC and lived experiences of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at the research site by overviewing the PAR team’s collective imagined geographies of Brown and its toxic geographies through the smaller and intimate scales of team’s understandings of place and everyday violence. The team identified several places on campus as especially ‘toxic’ or having high concentrations of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions for people of colour, women, transgender, non-binary and queer people. Furthermore, a couple co-researchers identified the majority of the campus as toxic and that there are very few spaces where they feel safe from the daily attack of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions. Spaces specifically
designed to provide identity-based support to students of colour, women, transgender, non-binary and queer students (e.g. Brown Center for Students of Color, LGBTQ Center, and Women’s Center) were often some of the only spaces identified as ‘safer’ by this team. This chapter explores the spatiality of ‘safety’ and ‘toxicity’ as experienced by students of colour, women, transgender, non-binary and queer students at the research site and makes connections between such everyday and structural violence of the AMPIC.

Chapter 6 explores how (micro)aggressions are experienced spatially and at the scale of the body through a microanalysis of encounters at, and as a result of, the PAR event called Hurt People Hurt People. A variety of affective registers were used to describe the feelings of (micro)aggressions and how they happened in a particular place, such as trying to walk through or breathe in a space full of thick air. This is seen through a variety of examples, such as through the intentional location of the PAR project event and participant engagement in co-constructing and transforming the event space. Through this PAR project, policy changes were enacted and several members of the PAR team mentioned realising that space is constructed and not fixed, which points to the transformative potential of PAR to encourage agency and transform space.

Chapter 7 is an analytic chapter that applies the higher-level analytic of intersectionality to the empirical research, connecting the micro level of (micro)aggressions (Chapter 6), the meso level of the PAR team (Chapter 5), and the macro level of the AMPIC (Chapter 4). This chapter synthesises the thesis via intersectionality and provides an empirical example of the complexity of toxic geographies by highlighting the material impact of the neoliberal university on the mental health of students of colour, women, non-binary and queer students.
Chapter 8 is the final chapter that concludes the thesis by providing a thesis summary and returning to contemporary debates in the literature to fill the previously identified gaps in Geography scholarship on everyday violence, (micro)aggressions, and intersectionality.

**Where We’re Going**

This chapter introduced what brought me to this thesis: personally, my interest in social justice theory and practice as well as the routine yet unnoticed habit of erasing centuries of labour, activism and scholarship by those from multiply marginalised backgrounds, particularly those who contribute to the legacy of ‘intersectionality’; and academically, I argue is a necessity to apply a spatial lens to the notion of (micro)aggressions in order to understand how they take and make place. Intersectionality and (micro)aggressions are the two key concepts explored in this thesis and they are discussed in detail in relation to relevant literature and contemporary debates in the next chapter.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

Radical/Critical Geography is a sub-discipline of Human Geography that attempts to ‘enact fundamental changes’ in existing social structures and to ‘envisage a new kind of human geography’ through an academic’s everyday duties (Fuller & Kitchin, 2004, p. 1; Berg, 2004, p. 556). As scholar-activist geographers (Blomley, 1994; Blomley, 2006; Fuller & Askins, 2010), many if not most Radical/Critical Geographers argue that scholarship is a political action (Kobayashi, 1994, p. 78; Fuller & Kitchin, 2004) and a ‘vehicle for social change’ (Castree, et al., 2008; Cahill, 2004, p. 273). This perspective has three important elements: 1) a commitment to a rigorous critique of social injustice in and beyond the academy (Woods, 2002; Gilmore, 2002; Pain, Kesby, & Askins, 2011), 2) an overarching politics of hope that a better world is possible (Kinpaisby, 2008), and 3) an understanding that researchers have the capacity and responsibility to take part in actively attempting to co-create that world (Kobayashi, 1994; Pulido, 2002; Routledge, 2010, p. 395).

This thesis follows these features of Radical/Critical Geography in conducting Participatory Action Research (PAR) on the topic of everyday violence in higher education and implementing intersectionality as an epistemology, as defined and situated within relevant literature throughout this chapter. The structure of this chapter begins with an overview of the spatialities of everyday identity-based violence, or (micro)aggressions\textsuperscript{14}, in the academy through the lens of the body. Then, I define intersectionality as a tool for conducting the aforementioned

\textsuperscript{14} The particular notion of ‘(micro)aggression’ is intentional in order to emphasize the fact that (micro)aggressions are everyday manifestations of structural violence. The rationale for this stylistic choice is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.
‘rigorous critique of social injustice’ as applied to the embodied experiences of (micro)aggressions; and I outline relevant contemporary debates to which this thesis seeks to contribute. As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, PAR was used in the empirical research of this thesis to access embodied knowledge and act upon my responsibility as a researcher to strive to co-create a ‘better world’ through a collaborative and action-based research approach.

**What are ‘(Micro)aggressions’?**

Psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce coined the term ‘(micro)aggression’ in 1970 to discuss the everyday indignities experienced by Black people in the US as a public health issue (Pierce, 1970). Pierce discussed (micro)aggressions within the context of anti-Black racism as everyday ‘offensive mechanisms’ enacted by white people on Black people that accumulate to create the ‘lethal disease’ of racism (Pierce, 1970, p. 267). In a later collaborative paper, Pierce et al defined racial (micro)aggression as the ‘subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’” (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Wills, 1977, p. 66; Sue, et al., 2007, pp. 272-273; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Since the 1970s, scholarship on (micro)aggressions has expanded in the field of Psychology to consider other forms of racial and identity-based (micro)aggressions, such as gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions, largely due to the scholarship of professor Derald Wing Sue (Sue, 2004; Sue, et al, 2007; Sue, 2010). Sue defines (micro)aggressions as ‘subtle forms of bias and discrimination,’ such as ‘subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones’ perpetrated by dominant groups often unintentionally (Sue, 2010, p. 5; Sue, et al., 2007, p. 273). The pervasiveness
and normativity of (micro)aggressions in everyday life often leads to their existence being ‘dismissed and glossed over as being innocent and innocuous’ (Sue, et al., 2007, p. 273). However, these subtle forms of discrimination are harmful to marginalised persons in impairing performance by ‘sapping the psychic and spiritual energy of recipients and by creating inequities’ (Sue, et al., 2007, p. 273; Sue, 2004). Specifically, this harm occurs from the accumulation of (micro)aggressions over time and space in ways that ‘assail the self-esteem of recipients, produce anger and frustration, produce physical health problems, shorten life expectancy, and deny minority populations equal access and opportunity in education, employment, and health care’ (Sue, 2010, p. 6).

Over the last five years, the term ‘(micro)aggression’ has become popularised in the public sphere in large part due to the 2010 creation and subsequent popularity of The Microaggressions Project (TMP) on social media. TMP is a Tumblr blog that invites and posts anonymous stories of encounters with (micro)aggressions (using Sue’s definition) across a variety of axes of identity ‘in the hopes of making visible the ways in which social difference is produced and policed in everyday lives through comments of people around you’ (The Microagression Project, 2013). The project has been successful in part due to the utility of the language by lay people to describe everyday and often invisible phenomena, as well as its location on social media. On Tumblr, people can follow the page and re-blog posts (e.g. digital form of word of mouth) that enhances publicity efforts, which launched TMP to the 24/7 news cycle of left-leaning news websites such as Racialicious (García, 2010), Feministing (Angyal, 2011) and BuzzFeed (Nigatu, 2014). With the language of ‘(micro)aggression’ circulating the

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15 Tumblr is a social media website for blogging and social networking. See Tumblr.com.
Internet, it has become commonplace in a variety of other public places, such as internet-based social justice education (e.g. the online magazine *Everyday Feminism*), social media (e.g. the hashtag #microaggression on Twitter), popular culture (e.g. MTV News video on racial (micro)aggressions, see Ramsey 2015), and institutions of higher education (see Micro/Aggressions, 2015).

Despite the decades of robust academic scholarship on (micro)aggressions and its recent assimilation to public life and everyday language outside of the academy, the spatial story of (micro)aggressions remains largely untold. Only in the last several months has the language and topic of (micro)aggressions made it to geographical scholarship as the primary subject of inquiry (see Domosh, 2015 and Joshi et al, 2015). The next section engages with this recent literature, identifies areas to expand and gaps to fill, and outlines how this thesis aims to contribute to the dearth of discourse around the spatiality of (micro)aggressions in Geography.

**The Spatial Story of (Micro)aggressions**

Despite the lack of geographical scholarship on (micro)aggressions, the existing scholarship has laid a firm foundation to draw from and build upon. This section will be brief in discussing the two recent geographical works on (micro)aggressions, namely Mona Domosh’s 2015 article in the AAG Newsletter entitled ‘How We Hurt Each Other Every Day, and What We Might Do About It’ and Joshi, McCutcheon and Sweet’s 2015 paper ‘Visceral Geographies of Whiteness and Invisible Microaggressions.’ The main spatial stories that emerge from both of
these pieces are the importance of scale and location as well as the entangled relationship between (micro)aggressions and the production of space.

Joshi et al argue that (micro)aggressions take place at the scale of the body and they draw upon visceral geographies (Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010) as an analytic framework to orient the ‘body as a geographical space’ and connect ‘how bodies feel internally’ with material and social geographies at a broader scale (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015, p. 300). Since (micro)aggressions are often a private encounter of embodiment and pain, they are often illegible to and unseen by those who do not feel them (Domosh, 2015). This invisibility and lack of acknowledgement can deepen the wounds created by (micro)aggressions by having one’s pain and lived experiences invalidated. People who strive to address their encounters with (micro)aggressions in settings where those experiences are largely unseen (e.g. in a workplace setting) are often placed in positions of greater precarity regarding job security or personal safety by being perceived as a troublemaker, liar, or someone who does not belong (Domosh, 2015). For instance, Domosh invited geographers to email stories of (micro)aggressions experienced in a short period of time; one respondent stated, ‘I am afraid to send this email…I’m sure I would be let go’ (Domosh, 2015, p. 3). Researching (micro)aggressions requires building or rebuilding trust and careful attention to issues of safety in order to gather first-person accounts to shift the location of (micro)aggressions beyond the scale of the body (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015).

Furthermore, (micro)aggressions are related to the production of space. The daily navigation of bodies through spaces and their attendant encounters of (micro)aggressions (both experienced and produced) leads to the accumulation of spatial patterns and habits of interaction that can produce spaces that are
experienced as toxic (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015; Mahtani, 2014). For
instance, experiences of racial (micro)aggressions are entangled with the
production of racialised spaces and are often exacerbated in white spaces (i.e.
spaces mostly inhabited by white people and/or organised based on the norms of
whiteness) where racial (micro)aggressions are over-produced and inflicted on
people of colour:

Invisible racist practices are taking up space in bodies and buildings…This
is an incredible paradox; invisible racist remarks and practices that we claim
we cannot see are materialising in the production of space at the scale of
the body, departments, and classrooms. (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet,
2015, p. 310)

The space that these (micro)aggressions occupy in bodies takes the form of
occupying cognitive energy (e.g. trying to ascertain if an experience they had was
a (micro)aggression, if the person intended to be harmful or not, if they should do
something about it) and mental and physical stress (e.g. diminished confidence,
increased stress that can lead to issues of high blood pressure, exacerbation of
existing health issues). Joshi et al draw attention to the visceral reactions that
bodies of colour encounter and how that impacts the production of space (2015).
Within the context of student experiences in higher education, students of colour
are negatively impacted by such phenomena and experience ‘emotions of self-
doubt, frustration, vulnerability, isolation and resentment that in turn affect
academic performance’ (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015, p. 306).

In coping with the daily experiences of (micro)aggressions, Joshi et al state
that the production of ‘counter-spaces’ was consistently identified as a main coping
mechanism in order to momentarily escape toxic spaces (e.g. places with high incidents of (micro)aggressions) and be surrounded by people with shared backgrounds and experiences in a supportive environment (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015, p. 306). The empirical research of this thesis incorporated this tactic of curating counter-spaces through utilisation of Participatory Action Research to gather a team of students who experience race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions to co-produce a space in which to collaboratively share experiences of (micro)aggressions; and use that to inform the development of an action research project over the course of several months. PAR was chosen due to its collaborative and long-term qualities to build trust and incorporate safety concerns in order to gather stories of (micro)aggressions, as aforementioned.

This thesis seeks to contribute to recent geographical scholarship by attending to spatial stories of (micro)aggressions, which I argue are necessary to understand and address them. In the following two sections, I review scholarship in Intersectional Geographies and Queer Intersectional Geographies that describe and research experiences of ‘(micro)aggressions,’ yet rarely use this specific language (exception: Price, 2010, p. 580). The next section begins with a definition and historical overview of intersectionality, an inter-scalar epistemology about the mutual operationalisation of race and gender at the scale of the body and institution. This thesis applies intersectionality to understand the spatiality of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions.

**Historical Geography of Intersectionality**

Following Geography’s disciplinary tradition of focusing on an Anglo-
American centre, this thesis explores Intersectional Geographies of ‘(micro)aggressions’ in the context of the US due to the empirical research at an institution of higher education in the US. This section provides an overview of an Anglo-American historical geography of ‘intersectionality’ and reviews literature on everyday violence and resistance in Intersectional Geographies, or Geographies of Race and Gender, or Anti-Racist Feminist Geographies.

In this section, the concept and tool of ‘intersectionality,’ a framework that rigorously critiques injustice, is defined and contextualised within historical geographies of: third wave feminism, US Black Feminist Thought, Women’s Studies, and Anglo-American Geography. First, ‘intersectionality’ is a term coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a scholar of Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory, to describe the lived experience of Black women and women of colour and other people who live at the intersection of race and gender marginalisation (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw developed intersectionality as a ‘Black feminist critique’ of feminist theory, antiracist politics and antidiscrimination law, namely their historical tendency to adopt ‘single-axis’ frameworks of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). A ‘single-axis’ approach to antiracism or feminism focuses on one system of oppression, racism or sexism respectively, as isolated from each other and from other systems of oppression (e.g.

16 The Anglo-Americanism of Radical/Critical Geography is an example of the broader ‘Anglo-American hegemony’ of Human Geography in which disciplinary power revolves primarily around British and American geographers and institutions (Berg, 2004, p. 555; Gutiérrez & López-Nieva, 2001; Panelli, 2008; Minca, 2000; Samers, 2005). According to a 2001 study by Javier Gutiérrez and Pedro López-Nieva, geographers working in British or American universities produce 73.4% of scholarship published in the top ‘international’ Anglophonic geography journals (Gutiérrez & López-Nieva, 2001, p. 67). Another 11.8% of geographical scholarship in these ‘international’ journals is produced in two other ‘Anglo-Saxon’ countries, namely Canada and Australia (Gutiérrez & López-Nieva, 2001, p. 56). As Gutiérrez and López-Nieva argue, these ‘international’ human geographical journals are ‘not, in fact, very international’ and are rather predominantly American and British journals (Gutiérrez & López-Nieva, 2001, p. 67; Berg, 2004, p. 555).
heterosexism\textsuperscript{17}). In practice, such frameworks define racial or gender discrimination based upon the experiences of the most privileged subjects within the oppressed groups, such as men of colour in single-axis anti-racisms or white women in the case of single-axis feminisms (Crenshaw, 1989).

Feminist theory that centres gender and sexism/patriarchy as the primary point of analysis fails to consider race and ‘will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of colour’ (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1252). In addition, antiracist politics that focus solely on race and racism fail to consider misogyny (including transmisogyny\textsuperscript{18}) and result in a version of antiracism that ‘will frequently reproduce the subordination of women’ (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1252). In so doing, these two approaches theoretically erase Black women and women of colour and, thus, lack the capacity to address their discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). These issues cannot be resolved through the ‘add and mix’ approach of including Black women and women of colour into established frameworks since the structures themselves are built upon their erasure (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140).

Crenshaw offers ‘intersectionality’ as an alternative to single-axis approaches in which Black women are centred in an analysis in order to explore the complexity of Black women’s lives that are often absent from or distorted by single-axis analyses (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 139-140). With Black women in the centre, the entanglement of racism, sexism and classism, and the mutuality of their related subject-positions (i.e. race, gender, class, etc.) come to the forefront of any given analysis. An intersectional approach refuses to view gender or sexism or

\textsuperscript{17} Heterosexism is a system of oppression based on sexuality that marginalises LGBTQA and other non-heterosexual people; and it centres or privileges heterosexual people.

\textsuperscript{18} Transmisogyny is the hatred and oppression of transgender women and gender non-conforming people with feminine or femme presentations and/or self-identifications.
race or racism as independent categories or systems. Furthermore, Crenshaw notes that her discussion of intersectionality can include how other systems of oppression (i.e. heterosexism, cissexism\(^{19}\), settler colonialism\(^{20}\), etc.) and their related oppressed subject-positions (queer, transgender, Indigenous, etc.) affect the lived experience of the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1991, pp. 1244-1245). In this thesis, I focus on the entanglement of race and gender with the additional lens of how sexuality is interdependent with race and gender, as discussed later in this section.

The intersectional approach requires a political strategy known as ‘political intersectionality’, which necessitates building coalition across all anti-oppressive politics (e.g. anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-classism) in pursuit of the liberation of Black women, women of colour, other intersectional experiences, and all marginalised peoples (Crenshaw, 1991, pp. 1251-1282). For example, this politics of intersectionality was foundational to the Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist lesbian organisation in the late 1970s in Boston, MA, US. Members of the collective changed over time and included the architects of Black Women’s Studies, namely Gloria Hull\(^{21}\), Barbara Smith\(^{22}\), and Audre Lorde\(^{23}\) (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Smith B., 1979; Smith B., 1983; Smith B., 1993; Lorde, 1981; Lorde, 1984). In 1977, the collective released a statement that involved a rationale for an

\(^{19}\) Cissexism is a system of oppression based on the gender binary that marginalises transgender, gender non-conforming, and other non-binary people; and it centres or privileges cisgender people.

\(^{20}\) Settler colonialism is a form of colonialism and system of oppression based on the occupation of Indigenous land by foreigners (i.e. settlers) and genocide of Indigenous peoples. Examples of settler colonial states include the United States and Israel.

\(^{21}\) Black feminist and co-editor of 1982 *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982).


intersectional politics, or Black (lesbian) feminist politics. ‘If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all systems of oppression’ (The Combahee River Collective, 1977, p. 4). An intersectional approach to oppression centralises people who live at the intersections of racism, sexism, and other ‘isms’ to analyse, and ultimately dismantle, all forms of oppression.

The late 1970s and 1980s saw a rise in influential scholarship and organising by Black women and women of colour (Cade 1970; Beale 1970; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; hooks, 1981; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Carby, 1982; Walker, 1983; Lorde, 1984; Anzaldúa, 1987; Spillers H. J., 1987; Spivak 1988). These works became known as the beginnings of third-wave feminism, which ‘is defined by the challenge that women-of-colour feminists posed to white second wave feminism’ (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p. 1). Of these texts, the two that had the most substantial impact on the third-wave movement were Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa’s This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Colour and Gloria T. Hull, Patricia B. Scott and Barbara Smith’s All the Women Are White, and All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies (Heywood & Drake, 1997, p. 1; Rojas, 2009; Moraga & Anzaldúa. , 1981; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982). Both texts are edited collections of essays and poems by women of colour, Black women specifically in the latter, that address connections between gender, race, sexuality and class. Crenshaw’s 1989 coinage of intersectionality is situated in this time-period of third-wave feminism in which she named a lived experience as well as a tool and concept that was already being used (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013). Patricia Hill Collins utilised and popularised the term in her 1990 book Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and
the Politics of Empowerment.

The term ‘intersectionality’ became canonised by Anglo-American Women’s Studies as a framework to address their historical whiteness and racism (Collins, 1990; Carbin & Edenheim, 2013). In its travels to Women’s Studies, intersectionality’s context and meaning has changed often in ways that obscure its Black feminist genealogy and incapacitate its critique of whiteness and its anti-racist feminist objectives (Puar, 2012a; Clifford, 1989). Namely, over the last twenty years in Anglo-American Women’s Studies, ‘intersectionality’ has become a primary mode of analysis for studying all forms of ‘difference’ in ways that fail to cite ‘intersectional’ scholars beyond, and sometimes not even, Crenshaw (Puar, 2012a, p. 1; Yuval-Davis, 2006). For example, a study that focuses on the entanglement of gender and sexuality, or nationality and class, or gender and disability, is seen as ‘intersectional’ within this institutionalised definition in contemporary Anglo-American Women’s Studies. However, this version of ‘intersectionality’ rarely enacts an anti-racist feminist politics that orients race, gender and other social differences as mutually constitutive nor centres Black women or other women of colour; instead, it re-centres the issues of white women and the ideologies of whiteness.

Jasbir Puar and a range of critical race and postcolonial theorists note that in this appropriated framework of intersectionality ‘the centrality of the subject positioning of white women has been re-secured’ (Puar, 2012a, p. 1). In other words, the institutionalisation of intersectionality has reproduced the ‘othering of women of colour’ that the Black feminist project of intersectionality explicitly sought to address (Puar, 2012a, p. 2). This contemporary ‘intersectional’ scholarship ironically perpetuates the re-centring of whiteness and the marginalising of women
of colour through this institutionalised use of the term (e.g. intersectionality used in a study on gender and disability without consideration of race) and through limited citationality (e.g. only citing Crenshaw). In her September 2015 article in the Washington Post, Crenshaw highlights the inconsistencies between contemporary utterances of ‘intersectionality’ and the material realities of women of colour:

*Intersectionality was a lived reality before it became a term. Today, nearly three decades after I first put a name to the concept, the term seems to be everywhere. But if women and girls of color continue to be left in the shadows, something vital to the understanding of intersectionality has been lost.* (Crenshaw, 2015)

In this article, Crenshaw provides an overview and reminder of the Black feminist genealogy from which intersectionality emerged, as a term to describe the lived experiences of Black women and other women of colour as well as an approach to anti-discrimination law, anti-racism and feminism that centres Black women and other women of colour. Claims of doing ‘intersectional’ work that do not centre these populations inflict epistemic violence on the centuries of lives, labour, activism and scholarship of Black women and other women of colour, perpetuating their marginalisation, which is antithetical to the origins of the term.

In sum, after unpacking Kimberlé Crenshaw’s 1989 coinage of ‘intersectionality’ within the history of US Black Feminist Thought and third-wave feminism, it is evident that the concept of intersectionality has been present for centuries before being named as such in 1989, as noted in Crenshaw’s own words above. The concept and name of intersectionality has since travelled throughout, and been transformed by, the Anglo-American academy, including Radical/Critical
Geography. In its travels, intersectionality has become misappropriated by Women’s Studies as a universalised concept that often re-centres whiteness and white-woman-ness. In an effort to mitigate misappropriating intersectionality, this doctoral research strives to commit to an anti-racist feminist politics (i.e. political intersectionality) and engage with intersectionality’s Black Feminist genealogy through citational practices. This thesis will use the term ‘intersectionality’ to refer to ‘political intersectionality,’ which is an anti-racist feminist politics that understands race and gender as dependent, not independent, variables. In practice, this thesis enacted a PAR project on race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions in order to centre the agency, lived experience and leadership of people multiply marginalised by race, gender and sexuality. In order to provide context for such empirical research and consider how intersectionality has been conceptualised in geography to date, the next section outlines contemporary scholarship on geographies of race and gender.

**Intersectional Geographies, or Geographies of Race and Gender**

According to Geographer Audrey Kobayashi, the political approach of anti-racist feminism, also known as ‘political intersectionality,’ emerged in Radical/Critical Geography in the mid-1990s (Kobayashi, 2005). This scholarship was in conversation with the aforementioned scholarship of third-wave feminism, as evidenced in geographical writings that cited this work and primarily focused on the ‘intersection of ‘race’ and gender,’ a sample of which are reviewed as follows (Kobayashi, 2005, p. 33). One of these inaugural pieces is Rickie Sanders’ 1990 paper, *Integrating Race and Ethnicity into Geographic Gender Studies*. Sanders
critiques the alleged victories of Feminist Geography for failing to consider, let alone centralise, ‘both race and class’ in their vision of ‘the ‘feminist revolution’” (Sanders, 1990, p. 228). In so doing, Sanders calls for ‘an “integration” of gender and “race”’ in geographical scholarship based upon the ‘double jeopardy’ of marginalisation based on both racism and sexism (Kobayashi, 2005, p. 33). Sanders cites Frances Beale’s 1970 essay ‘Double Jeopardy’ to encourage geographers to take up the Black feminist or intersectional project of centring women of colour, demonstrating the influence of third-wave feminism on the development of Intersectional Geography.

In the mid-1990s, geographical scholarship followed Sanders’ call and work on the entanglement of race and gender gained momentum. In 1993, Linda Peake’s paper troubled Feminist Geography’s historically ‘single-axis’ approach to patriarchy (i.e. an approach that focuses on sexism as an independent variable) by considering how sexism/patriarchy operates differentially based on race and sexuality (Crenshaw, 1989). Peake accomplished this through substantial conversation with ‘lesbian feminists and black and African-American feminists’ of the time (Peake, 1993, p. 415; Carby, 1982; hooks, 1990). For example, Peake engaged with Black British feminist Hazel Carby’s work that critiqued white feminist theory for pathologising black family structures as ‘more oppressive’ than the ‘white nuclear family’ (Peake, 1993, p. 418; Carby, 1982; Moynihan, 1965). This white feminist theory sticks Blackness in the ‘precapitalist’ time of ‘Third World “backwardness”’ in order to posit whiteness and white-woman-ness as having more agency in Anglo-American modernity (Peake, 1993, p. 418). Thus, the focus on the nuclear family as ‘the site of women’s oppression’ erases ‘the range of household and kinship relations in black cultures’ and obscures the impacts of
systemic racism on citizenship laws that often institutionally divided Black families as part of national policy (Peake, 1993, p. 418). In addition, in 1994, Kobayashi and Peake conceptually engaged with the tensions of biological essentialism and social constructionism of race, gender, and their entanglement in the second issue of *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*. In this essay, Kobayashi and Peake trouble ‘natural’ discourses of race and gender, otherwise known as biological determinist accounts, to develop a politically informed research agenda (Kobayashi & Peake, 1994). In the same year, Kobayashi accounted her empirical scholar-activism with a specific Japanese-Canadian community to explore the tensions of representation and reflexivity in research with women of colour (Kobayashi, 1994).

Geographical scholarship on intersectionality during the 1990s confirmed that race, gender, sexuality and other forms of social difference are not biologically determined but rather are social constructs (Kobayashi & Peake, 1994; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000, p. 393; Kobayashi, 2003, p. 345). These concepts are shaped by specific historical and geographical contexts and have material impacts on people’s lived experiences (Gilbert, 1997). For example, in 1997, Geographer Melissa Gilbert promoted a ‘nonessentialist epistemology’ of race and gender that focuses on the spatial processes of how people become gendered and racialised, rather than ‘natural’ or static categories of race and gender (Gilbert, 1997, p. 30). Gilbert orients these processes of racialisation and gendering as ‘mutually constitutive’ and supports such a statement by discussing the work of US Black feminist Patricia Hill Collins. This is another example of the influence of Black feminist thought on Anti-Racist Geography, and Radical/Critical Geography broadly (Gilbert, 1997, p. 30; Collins, 1990).
In the late 1990s, intersectional geographical scholarship expanded and began centring the lives of women of colour. For example, Laura Pulido’s 1997 paper is one of these first texts that ‘actually takes seriously the lives of women of colour,’ rather than the normative practice of mentioning women of colour ‘in passing’, through a case study of participation in environmental justice movements by women of colour from low socio-economic backgrounds (Pulido, 1997; Kobayashi, 2005, p. 33). Pulido explored Gayatri Spivak’s 1988 question ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ to challenge the positionality of academics researching historically oppressed or ‘subaltern subjects’, particularly regarding processes of naming and epistemic violence (Pulido, 1997, p. 11; Spivak, 1988). Pulido’s piece was influential in considering research as a process of co-producing space, bodies and identities by entangling researcher and research subject within a relationship in which identities of both are altered. Given her argument of the transformative potential of such research on all involved, Pulido demanded ethical attention to power dynamics of the co-constitutive nature of the research process (Kobayashi, 2005, p. 34). Furthermore, Pulido’s 2002 paper Reflections on a White Discipline ‘courageously “laid it all out on the line”’ in examining how racism affected her experiences in the predominantly ‘white discipline’ of Geography in which she illuminated the relationship between processes of racialisation, the production of space, and a sense of belonging (Mahtani, 2006, p. 22; Pulido, 2002).

Following Pulido’s 2002 paper, Minelle Mahtani organised a series of papers about the lived experiences of women of colour in Geography in the first 2006 issue of Gender, Place and Culture. Minelle Mahtani argued that ‘much remains unspoken’ about how the whiteness that prevails throughout departmental or university practices and policies affects the ways recruitment, retention,
scholarship, and experiences of women of colour take shape in Geography and in higher education more broadly (Mahtani, 2006, p. 22). To address these issues, these 2006 papers outlined Geography’s need, which can be applied to most other disciplines, to address the intersections of racism and sexism in order to be more hospitable to, and inclusive of, the scholars and scholarship of women of colour and their supporters (Akinleye, 2006; Mahtani, 2006; Kobayashi, 2006; Sanders, 2006). For example, Mahtani discussed her research that has explored the lived experiences of racism, sexism and classism with women of colour geographers in order to understand how to create a ‘more inclusive climate for geography – not only in our corridors, colloquiums, offices and lecture halls, but also at the Christmas party and lunches at the faculty club’ (Mahtani, 2006, p. 22; Mahtani, 2004). Mahtani suggested geographers, particularly feminist geographers, ‘take the risk’ of critically examining and teaching about how racism, sexism and other ‘isms’ manifest in Geography and the academy to change these oppressive practices from our locations in site of knowledge-production (Mahtani, 2006, p. 22).

Sheila Akinleye follows Mahtani’s suggestion in discussing her experiences as a ‘black female from a working class background’ and a mother in one Geography department in the US (Akinleye, 2006, p. 28). She situates the likelihood of her finishing graduate school and acquiring tenure as ‘against the odds’ based on a variety of facts, such as the reality that ‘blacks and women are more likely than white males to leave graduate programs before completion (Lovitts, 2001)’ (Akinleye, 2006, p. 28). Akinleye exemplifies this by noting that of all tenured faculty in the US, ‘women of colour rank the lowest in number’ (Akinleye, 2006, p. 28). This is also the case in the UK as evidenced in a 2013 report by the University and College Union Report where Black Minority Ethnic
(BME) professors, and specifically BME woman professors, are under-represented24 and under-paid throughout Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK (University College Union, 2013; Bradbury, 2013). Akinleye accounts her experiences of being ‘made to feel’ hypervisible, invisible, and out of place in Geography by colleagues through a range of (micro)aggressions, even though she does not use that language explicitly (Akinleye, 2006, p. 29; Mahtani, 2006). She notes ‘being publicly snubbed by not being acknowledged, greeted in hallways, or invited to specific events’ while being strategically made visible by peers as a ‘tokenization of women of color’ in being oriented as representing the opinions, ideas and values of a diverse range of people (Akinleye, 2006, p. 29).

Akinleye’s account of the tokenisation of women of colour in everyday life in the discipline of Geography maps onto Katherine McKittrick’s investigation of how this translates to geographical scholarship through discussion of the naming of bell hooks as a ‘key thinker’ in Human Geography in 2004 for hooks’ contribution of the spatial politics of the margin (McKittrick, 2004, p. 193). McKittrick critically engages with how hooks’ work has been often tokenised as the ‘authentic embodiment of blackness’ in geographical scholarship (McKittrick, 2004, p. 193). In practice, hooks is used ‘as an object-subject-catchword who necessarily provokes radical (and arguably racially ‘safe’) theorising’ and is often the ‘only cited’ Black woman academic in geographical scholarship (McKittrick, 2004). While hooks is noted for her contribution to the ‘politics of location’ in geography, hooks herself has been spatialised by geography as ‘the margin’ itself, as a ‘site, theory and subject for geographic investigation’ in a way that ‘risks re-colonising Blackness and

24 For instance, of the 14,000 university professors in UK HEIs, 1,195 are BME professors, 50 are from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, and 10 are Afro-Caribbean women professors (Bradbury, 2013; University College Union, 2013).
homogenising all Black women’s experiences and identities’ (McKittrick, 2004, p. 193). In this way, McKittrick states that the mainstream use of hooks in geography, similar to the mainstream use of intersectionality in Women’s Studies as previously discussed, often obscures and displaces the diverse and prolific scholarship of other Black feminists, Black geographers and Black feminist geographers throughout the Anglo-American world, including Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Clyde Woods, Rickie Sanders, and Bobby Wilson (McKittrick, 2004, p. 193). This is an example of how normative academic practices, such as citationality and tokenisation, perpetuate practices and policies of whiteness and patriarchy ‘within our academic corridors of power’ (Mahtani, 2006, p. 22).

This section has provided an overview of scholarship and contemporary debates in Intersectional Geographies since the 1990s. Sanders and Peake were two of several geographers in the early and mid 1990s who critiqued the single-axis focus of most feminist geography scholarship to that point and called for an integration of race into geographical investigations of gender, sexism and patriarchy (Sanders, 1990; Peake, 1993). Around the same time, geographical conceptions of gender and race rejected biological essentialist models, adopted social constructivist approaches, and began to focus scholarship on gender and race as spatial processes (e.g. how bodies and spaces become gendered and racialised; Kobayashi & Peake, 1994; Gilbert, 1997). Scholarship in Intersectional Geographies began to pick up steam in the 2000s when geographers began to take up the call of Sanders, Peake and others in centring the lives and first-hand accounts of women of colour. A great deal of scholarship emerged on the experiences of women of colour faculty and graduate students in Geography departments across the Anglophonic world (Pulido, 1997; Pulido, 2002; Mahtani,
2004; Akinleye, 2006; Kobayashi, 2006; Sanders, 2006) as well as critiques of the continued tokenisation of women of colour in geography departments and scholarship (McKittrick, 2004; Akinleye, 2006). Despite all of this scholarship, the calls that began in the 1990s for sustained investigations of an analysis of gender and race have continued through today (Mollett & Faria, 2013; Faria & Mollett, 2014) because they have largely been unheard, ignored, and/or tokenised.

This thesis aims to address the decades of calls for geographical inquiry that mobilises an analytic centring the entangled processes of the racialisation and gendering of bodies and spaces by focusing on undergraduate experiences of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions in the context of US higher education. The breadth of geographical scholarship on experiences of belonging, or lack thereof, of women of colour as faculty and graduate students, as previously reviewed, raises broader questions about university spaces and their entanglement with sense of place, belonging, identity, performance, well being, and (micro)aggressions. Despite existing scholarship on faculty and graduate students within Geography departments, there has been limited exploration of related experiences of undergraduate students in university spaces beyond Geography. To fill this gap in scholarship, my thesis focuses on undergraduate experiences of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at one university in order to investigate the relationship between multiple spaces within a university, encounters of (micro)aggressions and senses of belonging on behalf of undergraduates.

Further, while much scholarship in Intersectional Geographies deals with the lived experiences of race and gender and making connections between the everyday and structural, there is currently limited complication of gender, a lack of
consideration of the relationship between non-binary genders and race as well as that between sexualities and race. There is a breadth of scholarship in queer and transgender geographies about the relationship between marginal sexualities, genders and the production of space, however it is in limited conversation with Intersectional Geographies. My thesis aims to attend to these absences by queering Intersectional Geographies, and thus simultaneously race-ing queer and transgender geographies, by putting these sub-fields in conversation with each other, as discussed in the next section.

**Queering Intersectionality Geographies**

In reviewing literature in Intersectional Geographies in the previous section, there was a lack of scholarship on the relationship between race and non-binary genders, nor the entanglement of race, gender and sexuality. This section seeks to rectify these gaps by providing an overview of geographies of gender and sexuality, queer geographies and transgender geographies and highlighting moments where the entanglement of race and gender are considered in order to expand and queer Intersectional Geographies by making connections between literatures. This section focuses on recent geographical literature surrounding topics relevant to (micro)aggressions, namely everyday violence and fear, in feminist, queer, transgender and critical race geographies. I begin with a historical background of geographies of gender, geographies of sexuality, queer geographies, and transgender geographies. Then, I provide an overview of debates on how space is raced, gendered, sexualised, and otherwise normalised and focus on the material and affective implications of transgressing such spatial
norms. Last, I connect these contemporary debates to the previously discussed gaps in Intersectional Geographies and outline how my empirical research strives to tackle such absences.

To historically situate this work within the broader discipline I provide an overview of the distinct, yet overlapping, geographies of gender, geographies of sexuality, queer geographies, transgender, and non-binary geographies. Geographical investigations of ‘women’ and the dominance of ‘men’ began in the late 1970s, largely inspired by power dynamics within higher education (WGSG, 2004; Browne, Nash, & Hines, 2010; WGSG, 1984). Such scholarship produced a wide range of work on topics that include the spatiality of gender and the gendering of space (WGSG, 1984; Little, 1987; Knopp, 2007) and intersections of gender, race and ethnicity (Peake, 1993; Kobayashi & Peake, 1994; Kobayashi, 1994; Gilbert, 1997; Sanders, 1990). Around the same time gender and feminist geographies emerged, geographers began researching gay and lesbian lives (Nash, 2010; Knopp, 2007). These gay and lesbian geographies largely focused on gay and lesbian neighbourhoods and businesses in western urban contexts (Castells, 1983; Lauria & Knopp, 1985; Valentine, 1993). Early geographical scholarship on both gender and sexuality has since been critiqued for static conceptualisations of gender and desire that largely operate within a man-woman gender binary and assume single-gender sexual desire (Nash, 2010; Knopp, 2007; Nash, 2010; Browne, Nash, & Hines, 2010; Doan, 2010). There are, of course, exceptions that engage gender beyond the binary and focus on the lives of transgender people (Browne, 2004; Browne, 2005; Doan, 2007; Nash, 2007; Hines, 2010) in addition to geographical work on sexualities that include multiple-gender desire (e.g. bisexuality, pansexuality, etc.; Hemmings, 2002) and
heteronormativity (Hubbard, 2000; Hubbard, 2008). Many of these exceptions are from queer and transgender geographies (Knopp, 2007), discussed as follows.

Queer geographies have emerged within the last decade and look at the co-constitutive relationships between non-normative sexual behaviours, queer subjectivities, and queer spaces (Nash, 2010). This work addresses the aforementioned critique of essentialisation of gender and sexuality in gay and lesbian geographies by focusing on behaviours, desires, and the contingent nature of identity (Nash, 2010). For instance, despite claiming to theoretically reject essentialisms around gender and sexuality, in practice, the empirical work of queer geographies largely centres on the lives and spaces of gay and lesbian people, which often actively and implicitly excludes the lives and spaces of transgender, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and other marginal genders and sexualities (Oswin, 2008; Browne & Lim, 2010; Rosenberg & Oswin, 2014; Maliepaard, 2015). In other words, the sustained priority to investigate monosexual and homonormative lives in practice, likely unintentionally, is an epistemic violence that materially excludes and erases transgender, bisexual, and other non-normative genders and sexualities from the field of investigation and scholarship (Oswin, 2008; Browne & Lim, 2010; Maliepaard, 2015).

The exclusion of the lives of transgender people from geographical inquiry has led to the recent emergence of transgender geographies (Browne, Nash, & Hines, 2010; Rosenberg & Oswin, 2014), as articulated in the 2010 special issue of *Gender, Place, Culture* (Hines, 2010; Nash, 2010; Rooke, 2010; Browne & Lim, 2010; Doan, 2010). These papers collectively called for ‘new and innovative understandings’ of the co-constitutive relationships between gender and space in addition to ‘the challenges and resistances transgender people experience in the
spaces and places they use, create and reject’ (Browne, Nash, & Hines, 2010, p. 573). The former (i.e. papers that demand innovative conceptualisations of gender) involves challenging ‘western conceptualisations’ of gender, sex, bodies, norms, roles, and binaries (Browne, Nash, & Hines, 2010, p. 574). For instance, white western and settler colonial understandings of gender construct and police particular gender regimes. The man/woman gender binary is a relatively modern invention that cannot be detangled from white (settler) colonialisms (binaohan, 2014; McClintock, 2013). The latter (i.e. papers that call for scholarship that centres the lives and leadership of transgender people) discusses the ways in which transgender lives are metaphorised into abstract theorising with limited consideration for the material struggles and creative resistance of transgender people (Tuck & Yang, 2012). For example, several transgender studies scholars (Namaste, 2000; Stryker, 2004; Hines, 2007) have critiqued Judith Butler’s use of transgender lives to conceptualise the fluidity and performativity of gender without substantial engagement with transgender people nor first-hand accounts of their lived experiences (Butler, 1990; Butler, 1993; Browne & Lim, 2010; Nash, 2010).

Emerging transgender geography scholarship brings this transgender studies work into conversation with geographies of gender and sexuality, and vice versa. This work explores transgender lives, struggles and creativity as more than ‘simply...a “gender” issue’ and instead involves the intersections of gender, sex, and sexuality (Browne & Lim, 2010, p. 617; Stryker, 2004).

In addition, some scholarship in transgender geographies argue for understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality that include how the spatial processes of everyday life and the co-production of space are racialised, colonised, classed, and vice versa (Hines, 2010; Oswin, 2008; Knopp, 2007). Empirical work
in gay and lesbian geographies, queer geographies, transgender geographies and feminist geographies alike largely focuses on predominantly white, cisgender, settlers, men, middle to upper middle class, non-disabled, western lives, experiences and theories (Roen, 2001; Hines, 2010; Knopp, 2007; McKittrick, 2013). Several geographers have critiqued how the centralisation of such privileged subjectivities, in theory and practice, leads to an exclusion of people of colour, low-income, undocumented, transgender, non-binary, women, disabled, and Indigenous people from geographical understandings of gender and sexuality (Binnie, 2004; Nast, 2002; Puar, 2002; Browne, 2004; Oswin, 2008). For example, Hines identifies this as a problem in geography and within their own paper, noting how their empirical work follows this trend through research on transgender lives and geographies with white and predominantly middle class transgender participants based in the UK (Hines, 2010). While this representation would not necessarily be an issue alone, the problem arises in it’s coupling with the absence of a discussion about the implications of whiteness, middle-class-ness and citizenship on transgender experiences and theorising.

Having briefly outlined contemporary debates in feminist, queer and transgender geographies, a common gap in all of these literatures is an absence in empirical research on people of colour, immigrants, undocumented, and low-income people who experience gender and/or sexuality based marginalisation. This dearth of empirical research limits geographical understandings of gender and sexuality to the realm of privileged subjectivities (e.g. white, middle-class, wealthy, cisgender). This gap in geographical literature, namely the aforementioned deficiencies in empirical and theoretical work on gender and sexuality geographies, presents an ‘under-researched area’ to which my research strives to contribute by
theorising ‘Intersectional Geographies’ through mobilising understandings of gender beyond the binary and sexuality beyond single-gender desire as well as centring the intersections of race, (settler) colonialism, gender and sexuality in my empirical work, as discussed in Chapter 3 (Hines, 2010, p. 602; Nash, 2010). Explicit theorising of Intersectional Geographies begins in the next section, which reviews relevant geographical literature on the relationship between violence, fear and transgression of spatial norms in terms of race, gender and sexuality.

**Materialising Queer Intersectional Geographies**

This section reviews scholarship within Queer Intersectional Geographies that focus on the implications of transgressing spatial norms in terms of violence and fear. Within this broad topic, I focus on the aforementioned debates surrounding materiality in geographies of gender and sexuality (Knopp, 2007; Nash, 2010) and put that in conversation with related work in critical race geographies (McKittrick, 2013; Mahtani, 2014). Both debates include critiques of contemporary work on race, (settler) colonialism, gender and sexuality that abstract and dematerialise racism and transphobia in ways that do not address the materiality and lived experience of people of colour and transgender people. Such critiques implement a historical and material understanding of violence. I focus on two analytical frameworks posited by geographers McKittrick and Mahtani in order to implement an understanding of the everyday or micro and structural or macro workings of spatial violence within a plantation analytic and an understanding of toxicity, respectively (McKittrick, 2013; Mahtani, 2014).
A foundation of feminist, queer, transgender and critical race geographical scholarship is the understanding that space, the body, and identity are co-constituted (Knopp, 2007; Browne & Lim, 2010; Rooke, 2010; McKittrick, 2013). In other words, space and bodies are always in the process of becoming gendered, sexualised, and racialised; and gender, race and sexuality are dynamic spatial phenomena (Nash, 2010; Browne & Lim, 2010; Kobayashi, 2003). As aforementioned, queer geographies have critiqued earlier geographies of gender and sexuality for essentialising identity as a static entity as opposed to a contingent process (Nash, 2010). Assumptions that space is ‘always-already heterosexual’ are problematic because they stick heterosexuality and a man/woman gender binary in place (Browne & Lim, 2010, p. 618). This occludes the realities that transgender, non-binary and queer people create space and that various spatial configurations affect practices and identifications of transgender, non-binary and queer people (Puar, 2002; Nash, 2010). For example, Larry Knopp discusses the importance of spatial conditions on whether drag is recognised: it is often recognised when out of place and not recognised when it fits in with surrounding spatial norms (Knopp, 2007, p. 51). Knopp uses this example to conclude that, due to the emergent nature of identity and space, space is not ‘always-already heterosexual’ and rather is constantly in the process of becoming sexualised (Browne & Lim, 2010, p. 618).

Knopp’s drag example is a case of the previously discussed transgender geographies’ critique of queer geographies for the practice, despite theory, of abstracting the lived experiences of transgender people without attention to their struggles, creativity and humanity (Butler, 1990; Butler, 1993; Browne & Lim, 2010; Nash, 2010). In this instance, gender transgression in the form of drag is used to
theorise how space, gender and sexuality are not static, while not attending to the materiality of drag artists and transgender lives. Recent transgender geographical scholarship has engaged with such materiality (Nash, 2010; Doan, 2007). For instance, Sally Hines’ 2002 interviews with white transgender people in the UK revealed stress and anxiety felt by several participants in encountering (micro)aggressions in their work life (Hines, 2010). Several participants discussed their fear of their work environment and making adjustments in their gender performance to mitigate any potential violence, ‘or the worry of the physical threat,’ they might encounter (Hines, 2010, p. 604). On the flipside, participants who felt less constrained by their workplace noted less anxiety and more ease with performing gender closer to how they identify (Hines, 2010). Another example is Kath Browne and Jason Lim’s empirical study on transgender geographies in Brighton, UK (Browne & Lim, 2010). Transgender participants had substantially lower incomes than non-transgender participants and were employed at a drastically lower rate than the national average (Browne & Lim, 2010). This empirical work provides evidence of poverty as a disproportionate issue for transgender people and points to structural violence in the form of a gender pay gap beyond a man-woman binary (Browne & Lim, 2010). As an emerging field, transgender geographies have a range of understandings of violence, in addition to self-identified critiques of how to move forward within the field.

As opposed to Browne and Lim’s more structural look at violence, Hines is implicitly working with an individual understanding of violence that focuses on the everyday lives of transgender people with limited engagement with the relationship of that individual violence to structural violence. This disconnection between micro and macro may be a symptom of the issues of dematerialisation that transgender
geographers (including Hines) have noted, as evident in their call for more scholarship that attends to the material intersections of gender, sexuality, race, colonialism, and class (Oswin, 2008; Hines, 2010). In fact, queer and transgender geography critiques surrounding materiality mirror critical race geographers’ critiques of geographical work on race for dematerialising race and racism (McKittrick, 2013; Mahtani, 2014; Saldanha, 2006). For instance, McKittrick argues that essentialisation within the field denies agency to bodies of colour, sticks them to certain places, and perpetuates ‘the white discipline’s’ poor understandings of race and racism (McKittrick, 2006; Pulido, 2002). To combat tensions between theory and practice, McKittrick and Mahtani offer analytic geographical models to understand identity-based violence as material, historical, and contingent, discussed as follows (McKittrick, 2013; Mahtani, 2014).

McKittrick’s framework focuses on the spatial violence of anti-Blackness, primarily through past, present and future plantation geographies or sites of dehumanisation, such as the plantation, the prison, the city, and the European imagination of ‘uninhabitable’ places and ‘non-human’ human commodities (McKittrick, 2013). The historical plantation required the imagined geographies of non-European landmasses, such as the west coast of Africa and east coast of the Americas, as ‘uninhabitable’ in the eyes of European colonists (McKittrick, 2013, p. 3). These colonial conceptualisations of non-European space by Europeans were built upon the reality that such spaces and their occupants were previously ‘unimaginable, both spatially and corporeally’ a century or two before (McKittrick, 2013, p. 3). As a result, European understandings of non-Europeans as ‘barbarous and irrational’ emerged in order to rationalise European desires and practices to make profit through the commodification, displacement, and violation of lands and
bodies (McKittrick, 2013, p. 3). These imagined geographies are inseparable from the material geographies that maintain such imaginations in which Indigenous and Black peoples, and ‘particular spaces of otherness’ were ‘designated as incongruous with humanness’ and consistently subject to genocide, enslavement, forced diaspora, rape, premature death, forced sterilisations, and terror (McKittrick, 2013, p. 6; Gilmore, 2006). Constructing a European world order involved the development of divisions, hierarchies and policing what is human and scales of humanity. McKittrick argues that this led to a ‘rigorous nonhomogeneous human model’ that included distinct, yet overlapping, ‘geographies for white men, white women, indigenous men, indigenous women, men, and Black women’ (McKittrick, 2013, p. 6). These spatial arrangements that emerged at that time, in addition to the structural violence developed to keep such formations in place, substantially inform today’s geographical configurations (McKittrick, 2013, p. 7). When discussing ‘human geographies’ it is important to note that humanness is not homogenous and is, instead, mapped inequitably across bodies often based on markings of Otherness (e.g. Blackness).

For instance, Black geographers, alongside many Black Studies and Critical Race scholars, have written about the ways that contemporary prisons and practices of mass incarceration, particularly in the US\textsuperscript{25}, are present-day manifestations of the plantation’s racialised slavery (Gilmore, 2006; Alexander M., 2012; Crenshaw, 2011; McKittrick, 2013; McKittrick, 2011). Slavery is legal in US prisons, according to the 13\textsuperscript{th} amendment in the US Constitution: ‘Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall

\textsuperscript{25} The US imprisons people at a high rate in comparison to other countries. For example, it has 25% of the world’s prisoners, while only constituting 5% of the world’s population (NAACP, 2014).
have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction’ (emphasis mine; First Congress of the United States, 1789). The legal slavery present in the US criminal justice system is racialised with Black and Latino people incarcerated at a rate of 58%, which is substantially disproportionate with the fact that they constitute about 25% of the US population (NAACP, 2014). The aforementioned colonial project persists in this example where the plantation and prison alike are spaces where hierarchies of humanness are (re)produced and commodified through spatial violence (e.g. containment, displacement, dehumanisation) in exchange for profit and power for the empire.

Today's global economy was, and still is, constructed, in part, through dependence on plantation economies (Beckford, 1972). The transatlantic slave trade was a hierarchal racialised economy that over-developed land owners in the North Atlantic while simultaneously under-developed the enslaved and ‘unfree’ (McKittrick, 2013, p. 3). Such racial-wealth hierarchies have persisted for centuries, to this day, and have consistently taken the form of under-developing, impoverishing and otherwise violating Black life and spaces, regardless of constructed boundaries of nation-states. In other words, the contemporary global economy requires anti-Black violence, alongside other violence, in order to maintain itself, namely through premature death, ‘racial surveillance, sexual cruelty, and economic accumulation’ often at the hands of the state (McKittrick, 2013, pp. 8-9; Gilmore, 2006). For example, in 2012 every 28 hours an employee or affiliate of the US government killed a Black person in the US (Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, 2013) and as of August 2015, at least 19 transgender women, a vast majority of whom were Black women or women of colour, were murdered as a hate crime (USHRN, 2015).
Given the economic nature of the plantation, McKittrick argues that the ‘idea of the plantation is migratory’ and plantation logics (i.e. dehumanisation, containment, and displacement of Black lives) are present in contemporary spaces including ‘agriculture, banking, and mining, in trade and tourism…the prison, the city, the resort’ (McKittrick, 2013, p. 3). The dispersion and everydayness of ideological and material manifestations of the plantation leads to the emergence of multiple modes of survival (e.g. revolution, creolisation, maroonage, blues) that take place through ‘complex negotiations of time, space, and terror’ (McKittrick, 2013, p. 3; Woods, 2002). McKittrick posits that such negotiations and tactics of resistance are pivotal in understanding ‘secretive histories’ about ‘systemic violence’ as these are often sites that ‘contextualise…its economic superstructure while development a creative space to challenge this system’ (McKittrick, 2013, p. 10; McKittrick, 2014). In other words, geographies of (racialised) violence must include understandings of death and life, creativity and struggle. Work that only focuses on the former can perpetuate the fixation of otherness in place and deny agency. In order to access these ‘secretive histories’ and mitigate practices of othering, this thesis implements Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a methodology that centres the lived experiences, leadership and creativity of marginalised people in order to not only investigate, but also attempt to change, an issue of injustice, as discussed earlier.

Mahtani’s framework of racial violence centres on the affective notion of toxicity, namely the co-constitutive relationship between bodies, identity, space and violence. Toxic geographies are defined as ‘emotionally toxic material spaces’ in which toxicity refers to the capacity to ‘destroy an organism’ (Mahtani, 2014, p. 360). This use of toxicity refers to the way that institutional spaces can physically
and psychologically poison Othered bodies, which is consistent with scholarship on environmental (micro)aggressions (Sue, et al., 2007; Sue, 2010), visceral geographies of (micro)aggressions (Joshi et al, 2015), and environmental racism (Pulido, 2000; Pulido, 2002). The first two focus on the ways that spaces and structures inflict daily forms of violence on Othered bodies, which can have repercussions on mental and physical health over time as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. The latter explores the proximity of environmental hazards (e.g. pollution, toxic waste, food desserts) to communities of colour and the disproportionate impact that toxicity has on the health of such communities (Pulido, 2000). Mahtani ties these interdisciplinary concepts together through a case study of the discipline of Geography as an example of a toxic geography for scholars of colour and scholarship on race (Mahtani, 2014).

Building upon previous scholarship (Mahtani, 2004; Mahtani, 2006), Mahtani explores the ways toxicity ‘literally poisons our field’ in Geography (Mahtani, 2014, p. 360). Part of such toxicity is the gap between scholarly work (on race and colonialism) and everyday life in the discipline (where scholars of colour are consistently marginalised; Mahtani, 2014). This gap between theory and practice has been a recurring issue throughout this literature review26 and points to the ways feminist, queer and critical race geographies can all benefit from material and structural understandings of violence. For example, some geographical work on race privileges its social constructed-ness (e.g. performativity, affect, emotions) without deeply engaging with the relationships between race, death, incarceration, 

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26 For example, recall queer geography’s critique of gay and lesbian geographies for centring gay and lesbian lives and not considering, for instance, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, and asexual lives; while queer geographies theoretically engage with gender and sexuality beyond the binary, their empirical work largely focuses on gay and lesbian lives. This disconnect between theory and practice has been highlighted by transgender geographies, which are looking for material and first-hand accounts of the lived experiences of transgender people that acknowledge their humanity.
violence, and struggle. ‘Premature death cannot be distilled down to primarily a social construct. Comfortable perches in academia allows us to be distanced from these spaces and it is that distance that needs to be bridged’ (Mahtani, 2014, p. 361). As Mahtani argues within the example of Geography as a discipline, and it can be argued throughout predominantly white institutions (PWI) of higher education, this distance itself is racialised due to the demographic reality that geographers are ‘still mostly white’ (Mahtani, 2014, p. 363; Pulido, 2002). In fact, distance from racial violence is largely a reality for white geographers and other white scholars, while many scholars of colour experience daily racial violence in navigating the toxic geographies of Geography and PWIs. Mahtani notes there are ‘so-called white progressive critical geographers’ that will point to the overwhelming whiteness of the discipline in their scholarship, but rarely act upon that in practice in the form of supporting scholars of colour when they encounter racial violence within the discipline (Mahtani, 2014, p. 365).

The lived experiences of scholars of colour illuminate the material and affective reality of these toxic geographies and raises questions about related experiences amongst undergraduates across university spaces, as previously discussed. Mahtani draws upon stories of women of colour in geography based on empirical work, personal experiences, and informal conversations over the last decade, including ‘stories…whispered in the hallways of the AAG’ (Mahtani, 2014, p. 362). This imagery of whispering in hallways suggests that there are particular spatial conditions for where and when ‘secretive histories’ about systemic violence are told, heard and validated (McKittrick, 2013, p. 10). Despite some increases in representation, ‘we know that they [women of colour] can be battered and bruised, emotionally and professionally’ (Mahtani, 2014, p. 362). Knowledge of these stories
of violence encountered within the discipline and university are often ‘submerged and hidden’ and known mostly by those who experience ‘the isolation and pain that comes from the way race is engaged and imprinted on bodies’ (Mahtani, 2014, pp. 362-363). The lived experience of violence, pain and exclusion is a form of spatial knowledge that provides insight into the ways race and racial violence take place.

In formal interviews with women of colour students and faculty in Geography a decade ago, Mahtani found ‘ongoing experiences of marginalisation, racism and isolation’ and currently ‘susp[ec]t[s] that not much has changed for scholars of colour in our discipline’ (Mahtani, 2014, p. 364). For instance, teaching race at PWIs for scholars of colour, geographers and non-geographers alike, is often a toxic experience as ‘emotionally draining’ and having ‘truly debilitating career impacts’ due to the impact that any negative teaching evaluations may have on promotion prospects (Mahtani, 2014, p. 366; Pulido, 2002). In addition, as more scholars of colour join the discipline, obstacle such as limited or non-existent mentoring persist. Furthermore, emphasis on policing and strengthening the borders of the ‘white discipline’ (Pulido, 2002), and thus discouraging encounters with interdisciplinary scholars of colour, can contribute to the isolation that geographers of colour may experience. Mahtani calls for ‘a committed form of interdisciplinarity to move beyond the confines of our discipline’ in order to avoid perpetuating a ‘myopic world view,’ which will occur if ‘we only draw from our old pools of thinking’ (Mahtani, 2014, p. 366). It is important to contextualise these disciplinary borders within the colonial history of Geography and recognise that policing such borders detracts from efforts to de-imperialise and decolonise the discipline (Louis, 2007; Johnson, Cant, Howitt, & Peters, 2007; Panelli, 2008).
Drawing upon their interviews, Mahtani posits that Geography, and likely other predominantly white disciplines, may in fact be more toxic for scholars of colour now, given that the neoliberalisation of academia has decreased already scarce opportunities for professional and emotional support (Mahtani, 2014). For example, one faculty interviewee laughed at the idea of Geography being committed to anti-racism by stating that such a commitment ‘is so far off of geography’s horizon that it isn’t funny!’ (Mahtani, 2014, p. 365). While such a statement may cause offense to some geographers, it is important to not deflect from the valid spatial knowledge implicit in this statement: that racial violence is present, normalised, and supported in Geography. To address this reality for many geographers of colour, Mahtani, following Clyde Woods, calls for developing networks and ‘new spaces’ in which to collectively ‘challenge “implicit silencing strategies”’ by being ‘honest about the forms of silencing that proliferates’ (Woods 2007: 51 in Mahtani 2014: 366). Making space for such ‘secretive histories’ is a potential tactic for mitigating levels of toxicity in various human geographies, including Geography.

McKittrick’s framework of the plantation and Mahtani’s notion of toxic geographies are important analytics for my empirical work on (micro)aggressions at an Ivy League university. The former is particularly relevant to help conceptualise the structural violence embedded in the specific environment of Brown University, which was and still is deeply entrenched in historical and contemporary plantation economies, as discussed in Chapter 4 (Justice B. U., 2007; Wilder, 2013). The latter provides insight to the ways ‘some bodies encounter friction’ in institutional spaces (Nayak, 2011, p. 554) and how such friction takes place everyday, weathering self-esteem and health (Ahmed, 2013a).
In addition, these recent geographical conceptualisations of violence map well onto intersectional understandings of violence that incorporate the lived experiences of women and LGBTQ people, thus contributing to the previously discussed scholarship in geographies of gender and sexuality.

**Lived Experience as Spatial Knowledge**

This section discusses literature within critical race, queer, feminist geographies that emphasises the everyday lived experience of marginalised people as a form of spatial knowledge necessary to understanding violence, practices of normalisation, and struggle. A recurring theme throughout the various geographies of gender and sexuality and critical race geographies reviewed in this paper, as well as the review of recent geographical scholarship on (micro)aggressions, has been the centrality of lived experience to understand the materiality of spatial processes of everyday violence (Knopp, 2007; Nash, 2010; Nash, Trans geographies, embodiment and experience, 2010; Nast, 2002; Domosh, 2015; Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015). For instance, several transgender geographies have called for empirical work that prioritises first-hand and everyday experiences of transgender people because ‘trans voices need to be heard and new knowledges created from the specific understandings gained through lived experiences’ (Namaste, 2000; Stryker, 2004; Browne, Nash, & Hines, 2010, p. 574; Hines, 2010; Nash, 2010). As previously mentioned, several queer geographers focus primarily on performativity, which often leads to inadequate considerations of material realities and lived experiences of the human geographies in question (Hines, 2010). The limits of focusing on performativity in
queer geographies maps quite seamlessly onto Mahtani’s previously discussed critique of ‘so-called white progressive critical geographers’ and our scholarship on race, whiteness, and white settler colonialism that focuses on performativity and social constructed-ness, rather than death, survival, violence, and resistance (Mahtani, 2014, p. 365).

In addition, McKittrick’s plantation analytic calls for geographical investigations of racial violence that include the creativity, survival, struggles, and resistance of peoples who experience such violence (McKittrick, 2013). Including struggle in conversations of violence is important to make space for the agency of oppressed peoples and avoid sticking them in the place of violence or death. ‘One way of disclosing the mortality of place is through expressive texts...These narratives...bear witness to the destruction of place by invoking the stakes of human struggle’ (McKittrick, 2014, p. 4). Such violence is often silenced and made invisible. Creative geographies make space in which these ‘secretive histories’ about systemic violence can be seen, heard, felt and remembered. ‘To turn to decolonial poetics produced by diasporic communities who have survived violent displacement and white supremacy allows us to identify unseen and uncharted aspects of city life...’ (McKittrick, 2013, p. 4). Attending to the McKittrick’s argument as well as the arguments of feminist, queer, transgender and critical race geographies that everyday lived experience and creative geographies are important forms of spatial knowledge, this research implements PAR to access the spatial knowledges of lived experience and creative geographies of resistance.
Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the two key concepts in this thesis, namely (micro)aggressions and intersectionality, and considered their spatialities through reviewing contemporary debates in Intersectional Geographies, Queer Intersectional Geographies and geographies of race, gender and sexuality. This thesis strives to contribute to the nascent geographical scholarship on (micro)aggressions through the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a long-term methodology to create a ‘counter-space’ to access encounters and understand how (micro)aggressions take form at the scale of the body, as explored in Chapter 3. In addition, the scale of the body, and encounters therein, is complicated by a focus on intersectionality and the entanglement of race, gender and sexuality in order to contribute to a queering of Intersectional Geographies, and a race-ing of gender and sexuality geographies. My empirical research uses PAR to engage with lived experience, struggle and creativity as forms of spatial knowledge. I use PAR to centralise everyday lived experiences of violence (e.g. ‘toxic geographies’) and value the agency of undergraduates of colour, women, non-binary and queer undergraduates to lead a project about their own survival, struggle, and creativity (Mahtani, 2014). The research design actively encouraged co-researchers to engage with narratives and creative methods to explore and ultimately disrupt toxic geographies of race, gender and sexuality at their university as experienced at the scale of the body and defined by undergraduates of colour, women, transgender, non-binary and LGBTQ undergraduates, as discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 3. Methodology: Doing PAR

In this chapter, I overview the research methodology used in this doctoral thesis and the various methods implemented to gather the data discussed in the remaining chapters. I begin by introducing PAR as a spatial practice and inter-scalar methodology that operates at a meso scale to connect everyday embodied encounters to macro structures. Then, I provide an outline of the research design and a narrative of the implementation process, including mechanics of the methods utilised and data gathered. Finally, I discuss the ethical considerations of the research. I conclude with a discussion of the challenges that arose, steps taken to address such difficulties, and what was learned in the process.

PAR as a Spatial Practice

In this section, I define PAR and focus on its utility as a spatial practice, as evident in relevant geographical literature, namely participatory geographies. PAR is an orientation to research that critiques power dynamics within ‘mainstream research’ and offers an alternative ‘counter-hegemonic’ approach to knowledge-production (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007, p. 9). PAR poses questions such as: Who has access to produce knowledge? What and whose knowledges are considered legitimate? What and whose knowledges are not valued? How is knowledge produced, and by whom? Who are the subjects of research? Who are the researchers? What impacts does the research have on research subjects and researchers?
These questions implicitly critique ‘Fordist’ and ‘imperial’ modes of research that privilege the interests of researchers over the lives and material realities of vulnerable research subjects and strive to mitigate such concerns through a PAR approach (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007, p. 1). For decades, participatory approaches such as PAR have sought to directly challenge traditional forms of research by distributing the benefits of research more widely to the often-marginalised communities in question. To accomplish this, PAR is a team-based approach to research in which academics and participants co-create knowledge in a critical, reflexive and cyclical manner ‘not just to do no harm, but to do good on participants’ terms, rather than academics’ (PyGyRG, 2009). In this way, those who are ‘typically studied’ are oriented as ‘decision-makers and co-researchers’ whose lived experiences are the ‘starting point for investigation’ (Cahill, 2007b, p. 268; Pain, 2004; Cahill, 2004, p. 274). This cyclical process involves consistent questioning, reflecting, and collective decision-making to ensure participants’ agency is centralised, their needs met and protected throughout every step of the research process, and that academic researchers are held accountable to the co-researchers and their communities (Manzo & Brightbill, 2007). In practice, PAR implements a variety of methods for doing research with—not for—vulnerable and marginalised peoples. PAR teams choose methods based on the languages, learning preferences, skills and interests of co-researchers, which often leads to mixed methods projects and ‘hands-on’ methods such as storytelling, media-based methods, and participatory diagramming (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007, p. 17). The capacity to achieve such ideals is challenging, contingent and ranges from PAR project to PAR project.
There are difficulties, challenges and many critics of PAR. For instance, there is a robust critique of the ‘tyranny of participation’ on the use of PAR in international development contexts (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). This critique focuses on the use of a context-based method (i.e. PAR) in a place where the primary facilitators (i.e. often Western researchers) are not local and have limited understanding of that context. This reality, coupled with the historical background of Western researchers colonising non-European places under the guise of ‘helping,’ ‘saving,’ and ‘educating’ non-Western peoples, leads to a critique of many PAR projects in international development as well as university-community partnership contexts as imperialist efforts disguised as ‘good will’ (Illich, 1968; McKittrick, 2006). This critique extends beyond international development contexts and points to the tension that all research and knowledge-production are laden with power, but power does not always equal domination (Kesby, 2007; Allen, 2003). The particular difficulty with PAR, alongside other methodologies and theories, is its strong rhetoric of social justice does not necessarily translate into practice (Ahmed, 2007). The success of the case study of this thesis in realising such rhetorical goals is discussed later in this thesis.

The methods and theories that PAR implements are inspired by popular education and activist movements (e.g. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy, Black Panther Party’s Oakland Community School) that aimed to address context-specific inequities in public education (Freire, 1970; Huggins & Le-Blanc-Ernest, 2009). For instance, the Oakland Community School addressed the material ways in which Black people in Oakland (US) were barred access to education, knowledge-production, and self-determination in the 1970s-1980s. To accomplish this, organisers created spaces to gather, collectively learn and
organise action to effect change (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Abo-Zena & Pavalow, In Press). Similarly, PAR involves co-constructing ‘safe space[s]’ in which to practice ‘radically alternative modes of social interaction’ in pursuit of empowerment (Kesby, Kindon, & Pain, 2007, p. 24). PAR, and the movements that inspire it, requires particular spatial processes and is deeply entangled with the co-production of space and spatial relations.

Over the last few decades, geographers have developed interest in the spatial practices of PAR in the ‘participatory turn’ (Pain, Kindon, & Kesby, 2007; Fuller & Kitchin, 2004). The ‘participatory turn’ in Geography is indebted to the ‘cultural turn’ of the 1990s in which geographers’ interest in discourse and representation led to increased use of qualitative methods and subsequently more legitimacy of PAR and other participatory approaches (Pain, Kindon, & Kesby, 2007, p. 27). More recently, the ‘emotional turn’ has led to a need for sensory methods ‘to engage new media, lived experiences, performative, haptic and embodied knowledges’ (Pain, Kindon, & Kesby, 2007, p. 28), including creative participatory methods such as participatory diagramming (discussed later in this chapter), storytelling and media-based methods, as aforementioned. Furthermore, the material turn’s interest in ‘more-than-human’ geographies (Whatmore, 2006) aligns with PAR’s emphasis on changing the material and ‘more-than-human’ realities of inequity. PAR is viewed as a ‘spatial practice’ in which alternative research spaces are co-constructed where marginalised individuals and groups can ‘speak and critique everyday society,’ and organise action to address such critiques (Kesby, Kindon, & Pain, 2007, p. 24; Cahill, 2007c). There is debate over whether empowerment can be sustained for co-researchers after a PAR project when they no longer have the resources they had in the ‘safe space’ of PAR.
(Kesby, 2005; Kesby, 2007; Cahill, 2007a). However, as Caitlin Cahill reminds us, the iterative process of PAR exists within, beyond, in between, before and after the spaces of PAR (Cahill, 2007a). In other words, there is no binary between the 'good' spaces of PAR and 'bad' spaces of everyday life. The spaces of PAR are not utopian and are just as embedded with power dynamics as non-PAR spaces. During a PAR process, co-researchers are constantly negotiating power dynamics and unjust material realities outside of the ‘safe space’ of PAR as well as within it. Once the PAR process is over, these dynamics are often still in place. In this way, it is not the primary goal of PAR to provide an alternative space that acts as a utopia outside of everyday life; rather the goal is to provide a space in which the dystopias of everyday life can be discussed and struggled against in community.

Geographers Kath Browne and Jason Lim’s PAR project is an empirical example of a geographical investigation of violence that centred lived experience and agency through implementing the spatial practices of PAR. The broad aim of their project, *Count Me In Too (CMIT)*, was social justice for LGBT people in Brighton, UK. CMIT was a community-university partnership that began in 2005 in which LGBTQ residents of Brighton and the surrounding area were co-researchers who led the research agenda. In 2006, the research team conducted 20 focus groups (69 participants) and a survey (819 respondents) focusing recruitment on ‘issues of multiple marginalisation and exclusion within the LGBT collective’ (Browne & Lim, 2010, p. 620). Results of the research included participants’ discussions of the homonormativity of the ‘pink pound’ that economically excludes and marginalises transgender and bisexual people from the LGBT community in Brighton (Browne & Lim, 2010). The imagined geographies of Brighton influenced the complex relationships between space, identity, violence, and feeling safe for
participants. As the ‘gay capital’ of the UK, many respondents associated the place with being tolerant and progressive. Such imagined geographies made transgender experiences of exclusion complicated in that several reported feeling excluded in Brighton, but safer there than in ‘other places’ where they encountered more abuse (Browne & Lim, 2010, p. 627). In this comparison to other places, Brighton is imagined as an ‘exceptional city’ (Browne & Lim, 2010, pp. 623, 627). For instance, many transgender respondents were physically and medically excluded from Brighton due to its lack of access to transgender friendly healthcare in terms of sexual health services, ‘gender reassignment’ or mental health aid, despite similar services available in Brighton that are catered to gay men (Browne & Lim, 2010, p. 623). Charing Cross Hospital in London is the closest gender identity clinic, which is a place that many transgender respondents discussed, often in very negative terms: ‘...the system that’s in place now damages people quite extensively. It isn’t even that we are not cared for; we are damaged by the system’ (Browne & Lim, 2010, p. 623). This is one of the ways in which the imagined geography of Brighton as ‘progressive’ is complicated for transgender people in their experiences of abuse by the medical system, and its limited accessibility due to distance. This case study was informative for my empirical research design, as discussed in the next section, particularly given that the structural violence at the research site (i.e. elite US institution of higher education) is often masked by imagined geographies of Brown University as exceptionally progressive, as discussed in Chapter 4.
Designing a PAR Project

The research was designed in two main stages: preliminary ethnographic work and PAR project. For the former, I conducted preliminary research at Brown, as a Brown alumna, from September 2013 to August 2014 through an internship at the Brown Center for Students of Colour (BCSC), formerly the Third World Center (TWC). This preliminary research involved building relationships and having discussions with students and staff at the BCSC, the Sarah Doyle Women’s Center (SDWC), LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning) Center, and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at Brown University. Such conversations explicitly informed the design and methods of the second phase of research in which I recruited 10 undergraduate students (18 years or older and identified as a person of colour, woman, and/or LGBTQ) at Brown University to collaborate in a PAR project from September to December 2014. The goal was to collaboratively explore and develop action to mitigate undergraduate experiences of race, gender, and sexuality based (micro)aggressions.27 The research question was: How can PAR be used to explore how geographies of toxicity and resistance are rendered (in)visible through spatial practices in the context of a postcolonial (e.g. Ivy League) university?

The research examines the relationships between space, power, marginalisation and resistance in higher education; PAR was crucial to this research because it implements an epistemology committed to reflexivity, locating power in processes of knowledge-production, and it attempts to address the inequities of who has access, and who does not, to privileged forms of knowledge-

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27 The particular notion of ‘(micro)aggression’ is intentional in order to emphasize the fact that (micro)aggressions are everyday manifestations of structural violence. The rationale for this stylistic choice is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.
production. The focus on higher education requires a hyper-reflexive engagement with the processes of knowledge-production in this doctoral thesis. In other words, writing a thesis from the academy on inequity in the academy requires my reflexivity and direct engagement with my positionality in designing, executing and writing up my research. PAR actively ‘accepts and embraces the idea that all knowledge is situated’ and it rejects objectivity in the sense that ‘neutrality is neither possible nor desirable,’ encouraging the hyper-reflexivity of my research (Manzo & Brightbill, 2007, p. 37). Furthermore, PAR’s emphasis on reflexivity and its cyclical nature of reflection and action provide vital tools for researching the entanglements of space and power, particularly in higher education. These ‘context-specific methods’ (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007, p. 1) lend themselves to a geographic approach to research in that it is very local in method (i.e. focus on context of co-researchers, flexible to emergence), yet inter-scalar in constantly connecting various scales (e.g. reflecting on a co-researcher’s individual experience of racism and situating it within structural issues in various contexts of the institution, nation, globe, etc.).

In addition, PAR is an approach to research that embraces multiple forms of knowledge (i.e. emotional, performative, affective) and creative methods for accessing such knowledges, which are necessary for research on the often hidden yet deeply felt experiences of (micro)aggressions. Standard qualitative research approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, are often used as one-off engagements. It is difficult to get at complex issues and emotions without having established relationships and trust with participants, which usually requires multiple

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28 ‘Requires’ as defined by the intersectional feminist perspective and genealogy I’m enacting as previously detailed in the Literature Review.
and consistent meetings. Given the spatial knowledge of (micro)aggressions and intersectionality is often encountered at the scale of the body and through lived experiences, PAR, as a long-term approach that values building relationships for purposes of trust and accountability, was principal in accessing such often-hidden and unseen knowledge. Furthermore, PAR offers access to alternative and creative methods steeped in traditions of social movements, which are useful in accessing the aforementioned emotional and performative knowledges of marginalisation.

This section has given a short overview of the empirical research and rationale for the use of PAR as a methodology. The details of implementation and methods utilised are discussed in the following sections, beginning with the recruitment and selection of the PAR team, then the data generation that emerged from PAR team meetings, and the data from the culmination of the PAR project.

**Recruiting a PAR Team**

From September 2013 to August 2014, I conducted preliminary ethnographic research that involved designing and recruiting a PAR team. As follows, I give a detailed account of how implementation took place and what methods were utilised within this general timeline, organised through two phases: recruitment and selection.

To set up this research, I contacted Brown University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to inquire about ethical implications or paperwork I would need to complete to conduct research with the host institution’s students, as a visiting graduate student. The IRB informed me there was no formal paperwork for me to
complete, since I had to go through the ethical approval process at the University of Exeter. They suggested I request a letter of support from the Dean of the College (DOC), who I met in early January 2014 to speak about my research. The DOC provided me with a letter of support on 14 January 2014. After consultation with my PhD supervisors, I submitted a Track B application for ethical approval on 17 January to the Geography Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter. I received approval on 23 January.

In February and March 2014, I drafted a recruitment flyer in consultation with a local PAR practitioner, Dr. Editha Mishkin. She highlighted the importance of valuing the contributions of co-researchers and as a result I explored ways for students to receive academic credit for participating. A professor of Gender and Sexuality Studies, Dr. Carolyne Higbie, agreed to act as a Faculty Sponsor in order for participants to receive academic credit (see Appendix 4 for grading rubric) by attending a few team meetings and meeting with me weekly to update her on the progress of the team. For several weeks, co-researchers wrote weekly reflections (e.g. about their lived experiences, participation in the PAR team, and making connections between the two) to hand in to Carolyne so she could get a sense of their engagement and participation. Since Carolyne did not attend all of the meetings, towards the end of the semester, several co-researchers expressed lack of interest in the reflections and/or discomfort sharing their reflections as part of grading. To attend to this, the team decided to fulfil this reflective assignment through a month of working on a zine (i.e. self-published booklet with writing, collage and/or drawings often containing critical opinions) after one of the co-researchers conducted a zine-making workshop for the group. Setting up this logistical element pushed back the timeline of announcing the opportunity so that
the offer of academic credit could be incorporated into recruitment materials. All of the co-researchers registered to get academic credit for participation. The grading option was pass/fail.

In March and April 2014, I invited and incorporated input on the final draft of the recruitment flyer from my doctoral supervisors and collaborators at Brown, namely the directors of the BCSC, LGBTQ Center, and SDWC, in addition to a practitioner at CAPS. The final version of the flyer was sent with an announcement via email to a variety of centres, administrators, deans and faculty. Of the 42 emails sent, I received 25 responses with nominations of students, feedback, questions, and confirmation that they forwarded the opportunity to interested students. When students were nominated, I contacted them directly via email to state they had been nominated and to invite them to apply to this opportunity. I received emails from over 50 undergraduate students expressing interest in being a co-researcher in this PAR project. Answering these students’ emails and questions about the opportunity played a formative role in developing the implementation of this research.

To engage in the framework of PAR that emphasises humanising the research process, I invited all students who expressed interest in the research to meet with me for up to 30 minutes. I met with over 30 students. These meetings began on 20 April 2014 and ended before Exam Period on 7 May. The rationale behind this method was multi-purpose, and included: giving students an informal opportunity to ask questions in person; humanising the process and appreciate students’ time by meeting in person, rather than through technological mediation (e.g. email, phone); to use the format of meeting, my performances as ‘(not) expert’, and conversation to explain what PAR will look like in practice in this
project; to frankly invite students to ask me any personal questions, particularly in terms of how I identify and why I am interested in this research, as a way to figure out if they would feel comfortable working with me given my positionalities, personality, interests, etc.

Due to the large interest, I developed a short application (see Appendix 1) utilising Google Forms through my personal Gmail account. I did not use my email account through Brown University for this survey to protect the confidentiality, privacy and security of the data. Before releasing the application on 28 April 2014, I received feedback from my collaborators and a colleague at the host institution that I incorporated into the final application (see Appendix 1). The application deadline was 1 July 2014; it was specifically chosen to give students time to work on their application after their exams and the end of the semester on 16 May 2014. In correspondence with students, whether in person or via email, I emphasised that I understood their coursework is a priority and that I did not want this process to interfere with their exams. For all potential applicants, I offered to be available to answer any questions or speak in person or via phone or Skype any time before the deadline. Part of this rationale is similar to that of meeting in person, namely trying to humanise the research process by making myself accessible through multiple communication formats. I received 26 applications in total.

After an initial review of the applications, I met with a colleague, Anton Wayland, who has a Masters of Social Work and experience in hiring and the content area. He reviewed the applications (identifiers had been removed) and provided advice on selection and interview questions. He also acted as a sounding board for me to talk through and work out sound arguments for my methods of selection. Based on that consultation, I organised 30-minute maximum interviews
for each applicant. Most of them were conducted via Skype or phone since it was summertime and most students were off campus. I asked each applicant the following questions, where time permitted:

1. *If you could choose one superhero power, what would it be and why?*
2. *What are your other commitments, and how many hours allocated for each?*
3. *What are your personal goals for this project?*
4. *Are you a team player? Tell me an example of when you worked well in a group and an example of when you were in conflict in a group.*
5. *What are your greatest weaknesses?*
6. *What are your greatest strengths?*
7. *What do you need from teammates and a supervisor to work well in a team? (E.g. structure, autonomy, room to be creative).*
8. *Give me an example of a time you did something ‘wrong.’ How did you handle it?*
9. *What problem or action would you want to focus on?*
10. *Can you fully commit? (E.g. willingness, capacity, interest).*

These questions changed over the course of the 26 interviews. For instance, the fourth question caused some confusion in the first few interviews. To rectify that, in later interviews I started by encouraging the applicant to provide examples wherever possible. Then I shortened the fourth question to, ‘Are you a team player?’ and reminded the applicants to provide examples. I ended each interview by letting the applicant know of various resources on campus that can provide support on topics related to this research, namely the BCSC, LGBTQ Center, SDWC, and CAPS.

I transcribed my interview notes, reviewed them alongside the applications, and made tentative decisions of the 10 applications I would accept, the 10
applications I would put on a waitlist, and the 6 that I would decline. I found it difficult to make decisions, let alone have a strong argument for those decisions due to the number and strength of the applicants. To assist in this process, I consulted with Anton and another colleague, Kara Smith (a PhD student in Sociology with experience in hiring and the content area), who reviewed the 10 applications and interview transcripts (identifiers removed). They provided input on the selection, asked questions and acted as a sounding board for me to talk through and work out rigorous arguments for my selection. For example, Kara pointed out that there were several residential leaders (i.e. students who live in residential halls and provide support to residents; see Chapter 4) in the acceptance pool, which could pose conflict in issues of scheduling and potential issues of cliques forming within the team. Based on this consultation, I slightly adjusted the 10 applications I intended to accept and waitlist. Then, I ran my selection by three of my collaborators, namely a practitioner at CAPS and the directors of the SDWC and BCSC. These conversations proved formative in developing selection criteria (i.e. commitment, willingness to be challenged, team player, representative sample) and identifying applicants that could meet that subjective criteria based on the application and interview. The selected group was representative of the applicant pool. For instance, out of 26 applicants, 4 white people applied; I selected 1 white applicant for the sample size of 10 to be representative of the applicant pool. Within the students of colour who applied, there was a large pool of Black applicants (i.e. applicants self-identifying as Black), and I tried to keep that representative. The rationale for a representative selection process was used as a method to engage with intersectionality in practice (see Chapter 7).
Selecting for a ‘representative selection’ was informed and complicated by intersectionality, namely striving to select co-researchers to assemble a team that centred the entanglement of race and gender in terms of representation demographically and regarding skill and interest. It was interestingly mind-boggling to try to figure out how to have an ‘intersectionally’ representative sample based on the data I had on how applicants identified in terms of race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality. For gender, a vast majority of people who applied identified as women. There were a few applicants who identified as non-binary gender or genderqueer or men. For sexuality, it was about 50/50 in terms of identifying as LGBTQ or not. I wanted to have a majority of LGBTQ-identifying students in the cohort, which helped in selection decisions. At the same time, I did not want to choose someone only because they identified in a particular way. Explaining my rationale to multiple people was a helpful process that developed and strengthened my rationale and choices. I sent out notification emails of being accepted, waitlisted or rejected in August 2014. All 10 accepted applicants agreed to be part of the PAR team.

The final team of 10 undergraduates was composed of 8 co-researchers who live at the intersection of race and gender marginalisation: 1 non-binary trans person of colour and 7 women of colour (inclusive of 5 Black women). In addition, 5 co-researchers live at the intersection of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation: 1 non-binary trans person of colour and 4 queer women of colour (inclusive of 3 Black queer women). Each co-researcher is introduced as follows in Figure 1 in their own words. In the following chapters, when I use a direct quote from the co-researchers, I will cite the evidence using footnotes, including a reminder of their positionality in relation to the entanglement of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation, and in general terms which (micro)aggressions they face.
### Figure 1: Names & Self-Descriptions\(^{29}\) of Undergraduate Co-Researchers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Identity and Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kieren Perez</strong></td>
<td>[is a] college sophomore, Latinx (non-white), non-binary trans, queer, mentally ill, concentrating in STEM. [I] joined this project because 1) I'm interested in experiences with microaggressions, 2) wanted validation for those experiences and 3) to bring attention to these experiences in academia. I care about creating better spaces for marginalized students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Betta Newlin</strong></td>
<td>is a sophomore ('17) at Brown University double concentrating in Africana Studies &amp; Public Policy. she identifies as a Black working-class pansexual woman from the southern United States. she applied to/joined this project because she is interested in exploring ways to collectively self-care/heal while navigating a very oppressive world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>April Primavera</strong></td>
<td>is a sophomore at Brown University. She identifies as a South East Asian American, a queer woman, lower-middle class, and a second-generation immigrant. She focuses her academic career on making information both aesthetically pleasing and easily accessible...to push back against the current forms and presentations of academic work. She joined...to validate her own experiences with (micro)aggressions and structural violence in academia and to help form institutional memory of narratives that are so easily ignored. She finds that not only is it important that these stories be recorded and saved for future use, but that they be preserved the way their authors prefer, so as to respect their autonomy and narrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gina Perry</strong></td>
<td>[is a second-year student and identifies as] African American, Female, Lively, Hurt, [and not-LGBTQ].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Susie Toro</strong></td>
<td>[is a 2nd-year + identifies as] both a person of colour and a light-skinned African American, as an intelligent woman, as someone with a disability [and not-LGBTQ]. I'm interested in social justice, hip hop, baseball, dancing, and superheroes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lilah Keen</strong></td>
<td>[is a 2nd-year + identifies as] white, working-class, queer, cis-woman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nicholas Peterson</strong></td>
<td>[is a third-year student and identifies as] first gen, mixed, bisexual (closeted) [and uses he/him/his pronouns].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coreen D’arcangelo</strong></td>
<td>[is a third-year student and identifies as] able-bodied working-class queer Black-American woman who is sensitive to mental illness/disabilities/health challenges/problems [and] juggling a loving heart and open mind with uncompromisingly standing up for justice and believing the revolution will come through fire. Piercing laugh. Joined because was enthralled by the idea of PAR (empowering the researched! Community-based! Duck academia, within academia!) And love the concept of (micro)aggressions (duck your feelings! This matters!).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hayaatee</strong></td>
<td>identifies as a pansexual Black Syrian cis-woman in the class of 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dame Tori</strong></td>
<td>[is a fourth-year student and identifies as a person of colour], an Asian-identifying woman, [and not-LGBTQ, who describes herself as] “sleeper,” [an adjective to explain how] I feel like I was a later bloomer to this sort of education (as a senior)...I've sort of felt like the last few semesters have been my coming to critical consciousness, I’ve sorta touched on it a little occasionally in class—not too much though. But sort of in the idea that I came to Brown and my first few semesters was completely uncritical...the idea of Sleeper was because it's sort of taken me longer than some of my peers to become critically conscious/aware of a lot that's not good, that's wrong, with Brown.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{29}\) These descriptions are principally written in co-researchers’ own words. This data was collected in March 2015 through email exchanges where I asked each co-researcher how they would like me to write about them in this thesis, namely: How do you want me to write about you? How would you like to be introduced in writing to my readers?
(in terms of race, gender and sexuality). Having outlined the devices utilised in selection and recruitment, including an introduction of each co-researcher in the PAR team in their own words, the following section provides an overview of the methods implemented during PAR team meetings and the data generated.

**Constructing Counter-Spaces and/as a Team**

From September 2014 to December 2014, the PAR team met twice a week and collaboratively designed and implemented a culminating PAR event in December 2014, which is discussed later in this chapter (see Appendix 14 for timeline of key meetings and narrative data). The directors of the Brown Center for Students of Color (BCSC), Sarah Doyle Women’s Center (SDWC), and LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning) Center were present at the first PAR team meeting to introduce themselves as resources for the team and students individually. The next PAR team meeting was a 3-hour retreat with the aim of scheduling weekly meetings, getting to know each other, learning about our interests in (micro)aggressions at Brown, and an introductory PAR training. After these two introductory meetings, the PAR team began meeting regularly, twice a week. This section overviews the methods implemented, processes involved and data that emerged from the PAR meetings during this time period. The structure of this section is organised chronologically according to the key devices used (e.g. needs assessment, participatory diagramming, editing consent form, guest speakers, reflection activities) and data generated (e.g. definition of norms, PAR and participation terms; understanding of context and methods; and design of PAR project).
One of many methods implemented to foster PAR team building, particularly in terms of co-constructing insurgent geographies and a sense of ‘safety,’ was an informal needs assessment conducted in our first meeting on 9 September, 2014. I handed out post-its to co-researchers and asked them to write down three sets of needs: dietary, accessibility and learning. Part of the rationale for the activity is to find out what co-researchers’ needs are and to construct meeting agendas and activities accordingly to make sure everyone—and their various abilities—are actively included. Asking for needs and adjusting correspondingly is a form of modelling as well as putting theory into practice. For the former (i.e. modelling), it demonstrates to the group one of many ways in practice to be inclusive. For the latter (i.e. putting theory into practice), it is a way of teaching about PAR and participatory methods in practice rather than simply through words. In addition, this informal needs assessment was an exercise in constructing norms for this insurgent geography, norms that are ideally counter-hegemonic given the context of a PAR team on race, gender, and sexuality based (micro)aggressions. However, to know what those norms should look like for this group first requires understanding the individual and collective needs and then acting in kind to create norms that meet those needs.

I received the post-its at the end of the meeting and wrote them down in my field notebook. For dietary needs, I learned that one co-researcher is vegetarian, another gluten intolerant, and another does not like chocolate, which was helpful in catering refreshments to not exclude anyone from consuming any food provided and to not waste money. For accessibility needs, a couple of co-researchers disclosed physical and mental health disabilities and attendant needs if affected during a meeting. For learning needs, I found out that several co-researchers had...
visual learning preferences (i.e. ‘I learn best with graphs, colours and images’\textsuperscript{30}), another kinaesthetic preferences (i.e. ‘I might need to get up and move around to stay focused’\textsuperscript{31}). In addition, one co-researcher also expressed needs regarding environment (i.e. ‘I do prefer not being outside on hot days because I am insectophobic’\textsuperscript{32}). I took these into consideration in ordering food, selecting a regular meeting place, and designing of meeting agendas, all of which were constantly up for negotiation.

The group co-defined ‘PAR’ in our second meeting on 14 September 2014 through a participatory diagramming activity. Participatory diagramming is a common method used in PAR projects in which participants often silently express their ideas and perspectives on individual or shared paper whether through writing, drawing, or sketching maps or other figures as relevant to the project or prompt of the specific activity at hand (Alexander et al, 2007 in Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007). There are a variety of rationales for the use of this method that are applicable to this case study, such as the way it is inclusive of multiple learning preferences and skills, particularly those that are tactile, kinaesthetic and visual. In addition, many people can participate and express their voice at one time, as opposed to a group discussion where one person speaks at a time.

In preparation for the participatory diagramming activity, I asked the co-researchers to read my ethical approval application with a very critical eye, a short piece about PAR, and the first two chapters of Smith’s 1999 book Decolonising Methodologies due to its discussion of the historically and contemporary

\textsuperscript{30} Source: anonymous co-researcher in PAR team, 9/9/14, Informal Needs Assessment written on a post-it at the end of the first meeting, conducted at Brown Center for Students of Colour.

\textsuperscript{31} Source: anonymous co-researcher in PAR team, 9/9/14, Informal Needs Assessment written on a post-it at the end of the first meeting, conducted at Brown Center for Students of Colour.

\textsuperscript{32} Source: anonymous co-researcher in PAR team, 9/9/14, Informal Needs Assessment written on a post-it at the end of the first meeting, conducted at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
relationship between research, the academy and power structures. Given several co-researchers’ preferences for tactical, kinaesthetic and visual learning that emerged from the informal needs assessment, I facilitated a participatory diagramming activity in our second meeting in order to develop a shared definition and understanding of PAR and as a way to process the reading they did in preparation. I put three big blank pieces of paper on one wall, each with one word on it, respectively, ‘participatory,’ ‘action,’ and ‘research.’ Focusing on one word at a time, the co-researchers brainstormed words and phrases they associated with each word by stating them out loud while I wrote their suggestions down on the paper until there were no more suggestions. The results of this activity are depicted in Figures 2-4 and discussed in the following paragraph. The activity acted as an icebreaker that mobilised the participation of every co-researcher, presented an opportunity for co-researchers to synthesise their readings of PAR literature, and encouraged further participation in debriefing the activity. After completing the activity, the team engaged in a group discussion about recurring themes and interesting points raised through the process of participatory diagramming about PAR and how the team could use it.

As evident in these images, the data generated includes a variety of words and phrases associated with ‘participatory,’ ‘action,’ and ‘research.’ Words co-researchers related to ‘participatory’ included collaboration, people, voice, exclusion of introverts; with ‘action,’ responsibility, change, activism, backlash; and with ‘research,’ hashtag, erasure, dehumanising, political (for more see Figures 1-3). This word association activity led to a crowd sourcing of this group’s initial definition of, and concerns with, PAR. The team collectively seemed to mostly associate words that typically have positive connotations with ‘participatory’ and
Figure 2: Participatory Diagramming ‘Participatory’\(^{33}\)
Transcript of words surrounding ‘participatory’: people, voice, involvement, communication, what you put in is what you get out, mutual responsibility, community, flexibility, hands, can exclude introverted people, collaboration, benign empire/imperialism.

Figure 3: Participatory Diagramming ‘Action’\(^{34}\)
Transcript of words surrounding ‘action’: ability, ableism, privilege, opportunity, change, movement, erasure, advocacy, education, responsibility, personal stake, activism, backlash, push back, gendering of active vs. passive, what constitutes action, or active v. passive?

\(^{33}\) Source: PAR team (all 11 co-researchers, myself included), 14/9/14, Participatory Diagramming Activity to define ‘participatory,’ conducted at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.

\(^{34}\) Source: PAR team (all 11 co-researchers, myself included), 14/9/14, Participatory Diagramming Activity to define ‘action,’ conducted at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
Figure 4: Participatory Diagramming ‘Research’

Transcript of words surrounding ‘research’: Google (Scholar), Tumblr, academia, veritability, who produces & verifies ‘knowledge’? (e.g. academia), evolving, erasure, political, job security, quality vs. quantity, hierarchies, power, Facebook, trending, hashtag, Internet, how did people do research before Internet?, dehumanising (e.g. anthropology), contextualise, interpretation, manipulable/manipulative.

‘action’ (e.g. collaboration, voice, change, activism), despite a few exceptions (e.g. can exclude introverted people, ableism, privilege), while ‘research’ attracted more words in general and more critical words (e.g. erasure, dehumanising, power) both on the diagram itself and in the debrief of the activity. While an initial definition of PAR was not written down, nor the intended outcome of this activity, an initial understanding of PAR emerged as an approach to research that is critical of mainstream academic practices and attempts to address those issues through collaboration and change. This participatory diagramming process, in addition to the data generated, was productive in working towards creating an insurgent space.

35 Source: PAR team (all 11 co-researchers, myself included), 14/9/14, Participatory Diagramming Activity to define ‘research,’ conducted at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
in which co-researchers could share their ideas, particularly critical perspectives, and collectively define PAR on their own terms for their own context.

The aforementioned participatory diagramming activity was also productive in laying groundwork for collectively defining terms of participation in co-editing an informed consent form later in that meeting. As a group, we spent the next few meetings collectively editing the consent form (see Appendices 2 and 3) that was part of the ethics application to establish a mutual agreement for participation in the PAR team. In practice, almost everyone brought a computer and used an internet-based word processing program (i.e. Google Docs) to collectively edit the same document at the same time and place. This was a team-building moment where co-researchers expressed their needs and boundaries and developed ownership of the research process by creating a shared definition of (micro)aggressions, terms of participation, and rationale for the PAR project, detailed as follows.

Defining a shared definition of (micro)aggressions was one of the team’s first tasks in co-editing the consent form. April suggested expanding the current definition of (micro)aggressions (i.e. ‘put-downs’) since it is ‘too specific’ (April, 16/9/14; see Figure 1 for April’s self-description). She gave examples of ‘model minority myth or personal experiences in class’ in which she has experienced (micro)aggressions that ‘could be intended as positive’ but are in fact felt as ‘negative’ (April 16/9/14). For instance, the common perception of ‘women of color as exotic’ may be intended as positive, but in fact is negative because they are being objectified (April 16/9/14). April brought up the point that ‘put-down’ as a definition of (micro)aggression was too narrow and seemed to focus on someone

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36 Source: April Primavera, 16/9/14, Co-Editing Consent Form + Co-Defining ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR team meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
intending to be harmful, which does not include all the non-intentional (micro)aggressions. Hayaatee suggested ‘maybe subtle othering rather than put-downs’ (Hayaatee, 16/9/14; see Figure 1 for Hayaatee’s self-description)\(^{37}\), and Coreen brought up the point that we would have to ‘explain othering’ (Coreen, 16/9/14; see Figure 1 for Coreen’s self-description)\(^{38}\). As a result of this dialogue, the group changed the language of ‘put-downs’ to ‘subtle forms of bias and discrimination’ on the consent forms (see Appendix 3).

The team collectively defined the terms of their participation in collaboratively editing eligibility, benefits and risks on the consent form. For eligibility, Kieren and betta (see Figure 1 for Kieren’s + betta’s self-descriptions) asked to adjust the language in terms of identity-based eligibility criteria to be more inclusive and relevant to the identities present in, and as defined by, the PAR team. In response to these requests, the team added ‘non-binary’ to the list of identities and ‘A’ for asexuality at the end of the ‘LGBTQ’ acronym (see Appendices 2-3). As for co-defining what the benefits are for participating as co-researcher, the team decided to add ‘personal growth’ as a benefit (see Appendix 3) and reorder the list according to importance as defined by the team, namely: personal growth, impact at Brown, academic credit, and research experience. The team’s main edits to the risks of participation included a critique of the previous language as dehumanising and an expanded new human-centred definition of the risk of ‘emotional distress’ (see Appendix 3) to address specific emotional needs and support as well as an understanding of the (micro)aggressions as stressors. For instance, April pointed

\(^{37}\) Source: Hayaatee, 16/9/14, Co-Editing Consent Form + Co-Defining ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR team meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.

\(^{38}\) Source: Coreen D’arcangelo, 16/9/14, Co-Editing Consent Form + Co-Defining ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR team meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
out that ‘we’re involved in this research because we have emotional distress, not that this research will cause this stress, but it could exacerbate it because we already live through these experiences’ (April, 16/9/14). The team’s approval of these changes exemplifies a process of collectively naming group interests and norms, primarily around co-constructing space to discuss lived experiences not typically seen in academia, learn language for those conversations, engage in self-reflexivity to learn about (micro)aggressions we perpetuate, prioritise human-centred language, and validate the different ways people take care of themselves. This process of implementing more inclusive language, as well as (re)defining benefits and risks of participation, was a part of place making in defining needs, norms and support structures.

A collective declaration of the intentions and rationale of the research emerged from collaboratively editing the consent form, which included a resistance to mainstream research models that was made possible through adjustments in language and confidentiality protocols. For instance, upon Dame’s suggestion, the team incorporated language from my ethics approval application into the consent form in describing PAR to ‘include something that indicates this is in opposition to more traditional academic-guided research’ (Dame, 16/9/14; see Figure 1 for Dame’s self-description)\(^{39}\). Hayaatee inspired the team to change the language of ‘creating’ knowledge in the previous consent form to ‘engage with knowledges’ because the former was ‘kind of contradictory to all that we discussed’ (Hayaatee, 16/9/14) at the second meeting in terms of research and power, as informed by PAR and the first two chapters of Smith’s book *Decolonising Methodologies*. In

\(^{39}\) Source: Dame Tori, 16/9/14, Co-Editing Consent Form + Co-Defining ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR team meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
addition, we agreed that there would be a second consent form (see Appendix 7) at the end of the semester where the team will more specifically define ‘data’ based on what was gathered since that could not be defined prior to a PAR process that is based on emergence. April and Kieren proposed to change the voice of the consent form from third person to first person, which was approved based on a consensus to make the consent form less ‘clinical’ and more personal (Kieren, 16/9/14). In addition, the team disagreed with having the data destroyed after 10 years, as written in the confidentiality section of the previous consent form, because the data is collectively owned in a PAR project and the team wanted these stories to live on since they are often not told in academia. These adjustments to the consent form made explicit the goals of the research as an alternative to traditional approaches in rejecting the often-dehumanising nature of academic language and using unconventional protocols for data maintenance.

Kieren jokingly said that upon reading that data would be destroyed after 10 years in the previous consent form, they ‘imagined fire’ and a very dramatic scene in which all of our work went up in flames (Kieren, 16/9/15). Their comments about visualising fire led to communal laughter and an impromptu organic brainstorm session in which the team collectively created an idea of an action research project of organising a fieldtrip to a fire pit as community healing. betta suggested it could be a ‘socially engaged art’ project where ‘everyone comes and writes (micro)aggressions and puts [them] into a bonfire’; the event could be filmed and we could ‘make s’mores’ (betta, 16/9/14). Hayaatee pointed out that we could

40 Source: Kieren Perez, 16/9/14, Co-Editing Consent Form + Co-Defining ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR team meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
41 Source: betta newlin, 16/9/14, Co-Editing Consent Form + Co-Defining ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR team meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
apply for on-campus arts funding. This conversation was somewhat in jest and then we were out of time for the day, however the bonfire idea came up several times throughout the three months together and ultimately inspired the final PAR project discussed later in this chapter.

The process of collectively deciding how and why confidentiality should be maintained, in addition to the preservation of data generated by the team, enabled us to develop shared norms and ownership in the research process and products, as well as brainstorm a potential project. Once consent forms were signed, the PAR team continued meeting twice a week and engaging in various activities in pursuit of collectively designing a PAR project with the broad goal of mitigating race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at Brown, including speaking with students invested in this work.

Two of the administrators of the ‘Brown University Micro/Aggressions’ Facebook page visited the PAR team in two meetings to share their wisdom, answer co-researchers’ questions and provide advice on our nascent project ideas. This Facebook page was created in November 2014 in response to the ‘Ray Kelly Incident’ (see Chapter 4) as a ‘place for historically marginalised people to anonymously share stories’ in order to ‘make public the many private interactions had by students at Brown’ (Micro/Aggressions, 2015; Vega, 2014). The administrators, or ‘admins,’ manage a survey where students are invited to share anonymous stories that they post on the Facebook page without identifiers or names. The administrators also curate the page, facilitate conversations that happen in the comments, and interject in submissions or comments that violate the mission of the page. The administrators want to remain anonymous for reasons of confidentiality, privacy and safety. To respect their anonymity, the administrators
and I drafted a simple confidentiality statement, which the PAR team discussed and signed. Creating, discussing and signing this confidentiality agreement was an example of putting PAR in action in inquiring about the needs of the administrators and working together to ensure those needs were considered and taken seriously.

The goal of meeting with the administrators was to access existing knowledge about (micro)aggressions at Brown and student organising around that topic in the context of the university to inform the design and implementation of the PAR project, and to identify possible opportunities for collaboration and mutual support. Questions that co-researchers asked the administrators included: *Do they get posts that harass them? How do they choose what (micro)aggressions go on the page? What is the editing process like? What prompted the administrators specifically to start this page? What's the goal? Was the point to create a space, dialogue, etc.?* The administrators answered most of these questions and engaged in a vivacious and helpful dialogue with the co-researchers, providing advice and inspiration that informed the team’s decisions. For instance, in reference to harassment they encountered through managing the Facebook page, the admins suggested that the anonymity of participants increases the likelihood of ‘trolls,’ or people who harass or say hurtful things due to the lack of responsibility given the privacy provided by their anonymity. In part inspired by one admin’s discussion of their personal experience navigating additional harassment in managing this virtual page, the PAR team’s project was an in-person event that had an element of anonymity in writing down stories without identifiers while accountability in writing those stories in the same space as other authors. In addition, the admins explained that part of the framing of this Facebook page was to focus on the connection between (micro)aggressions and systemic oppression, which is represented on the
Facebook page in the cover page image of the John Carter Brown Library. That library houses the records of Brown University’s involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and is the location of student-led protest in 1985 that demanded a public release of the documents. The admins chose that image for the Facebook page to make explicit ties between the histories of oppression and protest with daily experiences of (micro)aggressions at Brown University, which reinforced the PAR team’s interests in making connections between micro and macroaggressions and addressing the macro through the micro. Further, one admin advised the PAR team to start doing since often people too much time planning and not enough doing. These meetings energised the group and inspired the planning process.

After attending the ‘I, Too, Am Harvard’ Blacktivism Conference in October 2014 at Harvard University, Susie (see Figure 1 for Susie’s self-description) emailed the team and asked to be put on the next agenda to share her experience and present a possible project idea. I suggested she use her weekly reflection assignment to talk about her experience and to share it with the team to maximise meeting time. She made a video for her reflection that she shared with the group before the meeting. The conference was organised by the group of Black students at Harvard whose social media project ‘I, Too, Am Harvard’ or ITAH (i.e. photographs of Black students holding chalkboards with anti-Black (micro)aggressions they had encountered) went viral in March 2014 (Vingiano, 2014; ITAH, 2014). They organised this Black activism or Blacktivism conference for students from across the country to focus on and organise around the issues of Black college students. Susie explained that the “I, Too, Am Harvard’ hashtag and photos were a social media campaign to advertise a play that allows Black voices to be brought to the forefront’ and how they demonstrated solidarity by having
‘priority seating for other students of colour’ (Susie, 17/10/14). They had a post-play conversation in which students presented demands to deans in attendance in a public way, forcing their hand to accept the demands.

Susie expressed interest in starting an ‘I, Too, Am Brown’ (ITAB) project and the group discussed concerns about doing so within the PAR team since it is not an all-Black space. The conversation shifted to thinking more about the benefits of doing a public art project like the ITAH photo project and play, while supporting, not leading, an ITAB effort. The weekly reflection assignment and trust that had been generated within the team to share lived experiences enabled this conversation to take place, for Susie to share her experiences at the ITAH Blacktivism conference, and for those experiences to reinforce and inform the PAR team’s interest in a public art project. Deciding on, and shaping, a PAR project was facilitated by another participatory diagramming activity, detailed as follows.

To facilitate an expedited planning process, Hayaatee created a shared Google Document in which there was a table with three columns: name, visions and implementations. Each co-researcher wrote down their visions for a PAR project on (micro)aggressions at Brown as well as implementation ideas next to their name. Informed by each other’s visions and ideas, the team began a participatory diagramming activity to start the planning process in early October. This activity involved four different large pieces of paper with the words ‘Aims/Objectives,’ ‘Research Questions,’ ‘Methods,’ and ‘Resources/People You Know’ written on them, respectively. The team divided into four groups of 2 to 3 people who spent about 10 to 15 minutes at each piece of paper as a team.

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42 Source: Susie Toro, 17/10/14, Discussion of Experience at Blacktivism Conference at Harvard in PAR team meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
discussing their ideas for each prompt, writing them on post-its and putting them on each paper. Once each group had a chance to comment on all four topics and read all of the post-its we collectively discussed the ideas. To synthesise succinct aims, objectives, and questions, we physically moved around the post-its on the pieces of paper to identify common themes (see Figures 5-7).

Through discussion, the co-researchers identified several common themes for each topic. For aims and objectives, the team organised all of the brainstormed ideas under three interconnected main themes, namely visibility, education and systemic change (see Figure 5). Visibility encompassed the interests to hold a ‘student-led forum’ in which to share experiences. Making (micro)aggressions visible enables the aim of education on such previously unseen topics to ‘explain (micro)aggressions’ and ‘explain the connection of micro to macro (i.e. (micro)aggressions are symptomatic of a larger structure).’ Visibility coupled with education that embraces the entanglement of everyday and structural violence, within a PAR context, lends itself to the third theme. The team aspired to realise systemic change through ‘collaborative art,’ ‘self-reflexivity,’ ‘accessibility for other communities,’ and ‘reject[ing] worship of the written word.’ The participatory diagramming activity enabled the PAR team to identify their aims, while loosely defined, as making (micro)aggressions visible on campus, educating about (micro)aggressions and their relationship to structural violence, and enacting systemic change through art, reflexivity, and storytelling.
Figure 5: Participatory Diagramming Aims/Objectives (4/10/14)\textsuperscript{43}
See the text boxes surrounding the image for transcript of words on post its and poster.

\textsuperscript{43} Source: PAR team (all 11 co-researchers, myself included), 4/10/14, Participatory Diagramming Activity to brainstorm aims and objectives, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
See the text boxes surrounding the image for transcript of words on post its and poster.

Source: PAR team (all 11 co-researchers, myself included), 4/10/14, Participatory Diagramming Activity to brainstorm research questions, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
Figure 7: Participatory Diagramming Methods (4/10/14)\textsuperscript{45}

See the text boxes surrounding the image for transcript of words on post its and poster.

\textsuperscript{45} Source: PAR team (all 11 co-researchers, myself included), 4/10/14, Participatory Diagramming Activity to brainstorm methods, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
A broad research question emerged from this process: ‘How can we effectively change this university for the better? And better for whom?’ This overarching question had four subcategories (see Figure 6; PAR Team, 4/10/14). The first, ‘reactions and dealing with (micro)aggressions; coping and healing elements,’ maps onto the aim of education in investigating ways marginalised people at Brown cope with the daily onslaught of (micro)aggressions. The second, ‘Brown and the communities it affects,’ relates to the aims of education and systemic change in exploring (micro)aggressions that Brown afflicts on surrounding communities and ways to address that in practice through the PAR project. The third, ‘education around (micro)aggressions’ explicitly connects to the education aims by focusing on foundational terminology and utilising accessible language and methods in implementing such education across campus. The fourth, ‘responsibility and accountability for institutional support’ focuses on questions about systemic change by studying what spaces the communities in question consider ‘unsafe’ and identifying gaps between those lived experiences and Brown’s policies and practices for supporting marginalised students.

Co-researchers brainstormed a variety of potential methods (see Figure 7; PAR Team, 4/10/14) ranging from writing a manifesto about the team’s intentions and demands from the university to a workshop on how to create self-published booklets with critical content (i.e. zines) to a teach-in led by members of the campus community, to a variety of creative methods for disseminating research (e.g. project on buildings, write with chalk on sidewalks). Through this activity, the team decided to do an interview project where they collected oral narratives of community members that experience race, gender and/or sexuality based
(micro)aggressions and distribute key findings in the form of a manifesto and a zine-like guide on how to respond to (micro)aggressions.

The final element of the participatory diagramming activity was to map these gaps onto a timeline to identify what was feasible. The team accomplished this by physically placing post-its of benchmarks on posters of the remaining calendar months (i.e. October, November, December) with various holidays and term dates written in as references. We started planning from the end of classes and worked our way backwards to make sure we had the time and capacity to meet each benchmark. As a result, the tentative timeline was to draft a written research proposal by 21 October, present the plan to stakeholders on 24 October, finalise a list of interview questions by October 28, finalise consent form by 31 October, interview from 4 November to 14 November, hold zine-making workshops on 17-31 November, and check in with interviewees with results on 1-5 December.

The Faculty Advisor, Carolyne, and I spoke one-on-one after this meeting in which she expressed concern about the timeline and lack of consideration of ethics in our research design, primarily around intentions to interview precarious workers without considering applying for, nor receiving, IRB (Institutional Review Board) ethics approval. I agreed and shared my concern about the scope of the project given the timeline, particularly since we had not met our self-created deadline of completing a research proposal by 24 October and had not included time in the schedule for training, transcription or analysis. I shared these concerns with the team in our next meeting. I suggested we reflect on the work we have done, our future plans, and the time and resources available to accomplish those plans, and that I supported whatever the team decided to do. April wrote and shared a summary of the discussion with the team:
We spoke a lot about how we can be more reasonable with the time we have left and how we can be strategic with the scope of what we can focus on within that time. We talked about how we can look at what we’ve done so far as actually productive as opposed to us always getting stuck just going off on tangents. (April, 23/10/14)\textsuperscript{46}

Dame and Hayaatee added the ‘we have felt that our previously decided methodologies are intangible in the time that we have left, particularly if we have to wait for IRB approval’ (Dame + Hayaatee, 23/10/14)\textsuperscript{47}. April continued her summary with possible alternative project ideas to a self-study and/or public art project. For the former, ‘we could downscale the project to just studying ourselves and how we have built solidarity amongst the different identities within the group’ (April, 23/10/14). Gina concurred and suggested this idea could be informed by the PAR project ‘Fed Up Honeys’ with geographer Caitlin Cahill that we had read about earlier in the term (Cahill, 2007d; Gina, 24/10/14\textsuperscript{48}; see Figure 1 for Gina’s self-description). April suggested presenting findings from the self-study back to the broader campus and members of the Brown community in some public art form, such as betta’s earlier idea of a bonfire, creating a photo project like ITAH, creating a zine to distribute, or the co-researchers individually creating zines and presenting them within the PAR team only. The rationale for such a self-study would be ‘how we ourselves (AND JUST OURSELVES) interact with the micro aggressions we face and giving validity to our own experiences’ (April, 23/10/14).

\textsuperscript{46} Source: April Primavera, 23/10/14, Team Discussion about Finalising Project, took place in classroom at J. Walter Wilson (across the street from the Brown Center for Students of Colour).
\textsuperscript{47} Source: Dame + Hayaatee, 23/10/14, Team Discussion about Finalising Project, took place in classroom at J. Walter Wilson (across the street from the Brown Center for Students of Colour).
\textsuperscript{48} Source: Gina Perry, 24/10/14, Continuation of Team Discussion about Finalising Project, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
In the next meeting, we collectively decided to not move forward with the interview project for the time being, narrowed down possible project ideas, and agreed to do an engaged reflection process in lieu of a research proposal. betta expressed interest in the ‘insular model’ where we can ‘reflect in ways beneficial to others like Fed Up Honeys’ (betta, 24/10/14). Gina explained wanting ‘informal talk on material everyday life’ and orienting that as ‘valid self-reflexive research’ in the vein of the PAR project we had read about (i.e. ‘I learned so much from Fed Up Honeys project’; Gina, 24/10/14). April talked about being ‘hyped’ on the idea that ‘what I’m already doing is enough or valid’ (April, 24/10/14). Kieren expressed an important concern and clarification on this new direction in terms of creating personal narratives or data generation because ‘this group is the right size for personal narratives, but too small for change [beyond this group] at this point in the semester’ and as such ‘I don’t feel comfortable using my experience as representative as seemingly only Latinx person in the room’ (Kieren, 24/10/14). Gina agreed. betta helpfully interjected ‘let’s decide what we’re going to do because we have been talking in circles for 20 minutes’ and added ‘the fact is that it’s past mid-semester’ (betta, 24/10/14). She went on to ask: what is feasible for us to do in that time? April suggested having a bonfire event where we share the manifesto and invite people to share stories, or a fire-safety equivalent. Then Hayaatee suggested the ‘idea of Climate March ribbon’ that she had previously mentioned when she attended the Climate March in New York City in September.

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49 Source: betta newlin, 24/10/14, Continuation of Team Discussion about Finalising Project, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
50 Source: April Primavera, 24/10/14, Continuation of Team Discussion about Finalising Project, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
51 Source: Kieren Perez, 24/10/14, Continuation of Team Discussion about Finalising Project, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
2014 (Hayaatee, 24/10/14). At the march, people wrote on ribbons why they were marching (e.g. name, age, and note) and tied to ribbons to a series of webbed strings or planks that visually demonstrated that we are 'all connected in a beautiful installation' (Hayaatee, 24/10/14). As people walked by the installation during the march, participants read other participants’ ribbons as an expression of walking in solidarity with others throughout the march. Hayaatee attended the march and said it ‘was so beautiful and a wonderful feeling to be part of a community’ (Hayaatee, 24/10/14). The meeting ended and we continued this decision-making via email in which each co-researcher shared with the group their vote on which project to move forward with (i.e. public art, ribbon project, bonfire, group manifesto, photo or video project, zine-making workshop, Tumblr or website). After compiling emails, doing a content analysis, and using definitive majority to make decisions, the group decided to do a public art project in the form of a ribbon project with a group manifesto and photographs on a Tumblr page or website. The design and implementation of this final project is discussed in detail in the following section.

Organising ‘Hurt People, Hurt People’

It took several meetings of participatory diagramming, conversations, and visitors to design the final public art project in the Campus Center at Brown University on 2 December 2014 with financial support from the Office of Institutional Diversity. Once the project idea was finalised, the remaining meetings focused on delegation and organising the event, including details on the decision of the name of the event and data that was gathered at the event, which are

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52 Source: Hayaatee, 24/10/14, Continuation of Team Discussion about Finalising Project, took place at Brown Center for Students of Colour.
discussed throughout this section. For instance, April sketched a design of what the public art event, or ‘open art space’ as the team called it, could look like (see Figure 8). betta worked on publicity and organised for a peer to design images for promotion on social media (see Figure 9). In working toward publicity, the PAR team decided to call the event ‘Hurt People Hurt People’: An Open Art Space for (Micro)aggressions at Brown, the rationale for which is as follows.

Figure 8: Sketch of Ribbon Structure (April 16/11/14)
A team meeting with campus psychologist, Adey Binari, in late October inspired the title of the open art event, ‘Hurt People Hurt People.’ The purpose of the meeting was to discuss methods of coping and healing with stress (since (micro)aggressions are a form of stressors; Sue, 2010) and to get her advice on incorporating that perspective in the event. Given the context of then-recent discussions on social media about implementing trigger warnings in the classroom53, one co-researcher asked Adey about the concern of inviting people to share stories of (micro)aggressions as potentially revisiting trauma and causing compounded hurt. Adey responded by informing the team that ‘naming pain can be

53 In Summer 2014, the blogosphere erupted with articles and conversation across social media about the pros and cons of adding ‘trigger warnings’ to syllabi and in classrooms in higher education. Trigger warnings started in the feminist blogosphere as a practice to warn survivors of sexual assault of content regarding sexual assault.
triggering, but it is not always necessarily a bad thing’ and in fact it ‘can also be healing’ (Adey, 28/10/14). Adey continued by pointing out that ‘from a counselling perspective, avoiding triggers’ does not necessarily result in healing (Adey, 28/10/14). She gave the example of a Take Back the Night event at Brown where staff, such as psychologists from the Counseling and Psychological Services office at the university, were invited and identified as support for participants who felt triggered or wanted to debrief the event with a relevant professional. The PAR team applied this practice to their public art event where various staff members across the university were present as support for participants.

This meeting with Adey was a turning point where emotions and vulnerability emerged for one of the first times in a team discussion. Adey facilitated a participatory diagramming activity where the team collectively brainstormed ways we cope with stress because it can be powerful ‘to make visible or name the different ways we cope with the impact’ of (micro)aggressions and other stressors (Adey, 28/10/14). Examples from the activity included: journaling, eating, crying, solitude, self-policing, and avoidance (for more, see Appendix 6). In debriefing the activity, co-researchers voiced that the process was ‘reassuring’ and ‘cathartic,’ that ‘it feels good to know I’m not alone’ in methods of coping, and that there was ‘no shaming’ in the activity (Multiple Co-Researchers, 28/10/14).

In discussing how to implement things learned and discussed with Adey, in our next meeting we decided to call the public art event Hurt People Hurt People in
reference to Kim Katrin Milan’s quote: ‘Hurt people hurt people. Accountability often requires healing’ (Milan, 2012). Hayaatee explained how the conversation with Adey connected to the team’s goals not to ‘change individual actions,’ but rather focus on ‘why hurt people hurt people’ by ‘connecting systems’ in a ‘more welcoming’ approach (Hayaatee, 31/10/14)\(^{58}\). As discussed throughout this thesis, the importance of researching (micro)aggressions in the literature and elsewhere is to address their felt and material impact on the physical and mental health of marginalised peoples in everyday life, as well as on the creation and maintenance of other structural barriers and violence (see Chapter 2). betta agreed with Hayaatee and said that ‘I keep going back to ‘hurt people hurt people,’ that all people of colour and women need healing and that all liberation is caught up in each other’ (betta, 31/10/14)\(^{59}\). As a PAR project seeking to mitigate (micro)aggressions in an intersectional fashion, the focus on ‘hurt people hurt people’ points to the necessity of accountability and healing in accomplishing that goal, as expounded in the quote opening this section.

In practice, this was accomplished in part by having support staff present at the event and by inviting the campus community to share stories of times they had experienced, witnessed, or produced a race, gender, or sexuality based (micro)aggressions, as previously mentioned. In so doing, the team encouraged participants to have space to name their own hurt and to consider the ways they are complicit in others’ hurt. This was facilitated by the intersectional focus on race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions with which all participants, as

\(^{58}\) Source: Hayaatee, 31/10/14, Debrief of Adey’s Visit and Finalising Project, PAR Team meeting at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.

\(^{59}\) Source: betta newlin, 31/10/14, Debrief of Adey’s Visit and Finalising Project, PAR Team meeting at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
raced, gendered and sexualised bodies, have experienced. To foster a space where participants felt comfortable sharing stories and engage in reflexivity, Gina read aloud another quote by Kim Katrin Milan to open the art making and storytelling part of the event:

_Hurt people hurt people. Sometimes we have insulated ourselves so much due the pain we have experienced that we don’t recognize how we are contributing to and/or perpetuating the same kind of violence we have experienced. Corporate media teaches us to seek power at the expense of other. I think its audre lorde who reminds us that we have to consciously study how to be tender with each other to reclaim what has in some cases been lost. We judge ourselves by our intentions and other by their actions. When it comes to changing our interactions, we have to remember to treat others the way they want to be treated. Our intentions are crafted personally, but our actions are felt communally. We need to be able to examine critiques of our actions regardless of how kind our intentions are. My granny used to say there is many a slip between the cup and the lip, meaning that there is a lot that happens between thought and action. Let us examine our actions together so we can be better at creating a community of practice around love._ (Milan 2013)

This focus on ‘hurt people hurt people’ points to the cyclical nature of violence and pain and the necessity of healing—particularly collective healing—in work that aims to abolish all forms of violence. It also opens up space to consider intersectionality, the ways in which all systems of oppression are entangled, and the ways that one’s hurt and complicity are caught up in another’s. Furthermore the challenge to close the gap between theory and practice, or the ‘slip between the cup and the lip,’ in this event connects to contemporary debates discussed in the Literature Review
that argued for increased consideration of materiality in scholarship in geographies of race as well as queer and trans geographies.

The PAR team curated *Hurt People Hurt People*, the public art event, in the university’s Campus Center (located in the middle of campus; see Figure 19 in Chapter 4) on a weekday evening in early December 2014. Lilah (see Figure 1 for Lilah’s self-description) utilised her construction skills to create two installation structures in the form of two large wood frames (i.e. 5’ x 8’ x 4”) that were wrapped with twine to create a web-like look in order to visually and materially represent intersectionality (i.e. race, gender and sexuality are deeply entangled and mutually constitutive). The event was advertised to the entire campus community (through emails and Facebook) and invited all members to write down stories of (micro)aggressions on colourful pieces of paper and tie them to the twine with colourful ribbons. Staff from various student support offices (i.e. Brown Center for Students of Color, Sarah Doyle Women’s Center, LGBTQ Center, Psychological Services, Health Services, Office of Institutional Diversity) were invited and introduced at the start of the event as resources throughout and after the occasion. The event began with introductions from the PAR team and the support staff. The remainder of the event was an open art space in which participants shared their stories on the structure, read others’ stories, and talked informally over food. April introduced the event to participants, and now to you, reader:

*We are the (Micro)Aggressions at Brown PAR Team. We are made up of different identities and different bodies, and for this past semester we have been conducting research about our experiences with (micro)aggressions, learning about how certain bodies, narratives, and methods of learning are not valued in academia and how our different identities are both rooted in*
oppression and in privilege. Today, we present our semester’s work as a research team, ““Hurt People Hurt People': An Open Art Space for (Micro)Aggressions at Brown.” We have taken careful steps to establish this space, or this piece as a space for everyone, regardless of your identity with the inclusion of support staff for debriefing...We also have consent forms for being transparent about what this research is about, and the actual piece itself as an opportunity to voice the stories that we so often never get to hear. Historically, research and academia have emphasized and valued quantitative data, statistical information, and documentation through the written word. Our piece was created to push back on this systematic oppression through valuing our personal experiences, oral and creative histories, and the celebration of collaboration and community...(April, 2/12/14)\(^{60}\)

As April clarifies in the above excerpt from her introduction, the intentionality behind curating a public art event as a method was to value creative and collaborative methods as well as stories that are historically marginalised by traditional research methods. Furthermore, place was important in designing and implementing this event, as April points to in the ‘careful steps’ the team took to ‘establish this space,’ the ‘open art space’ as noted in the event’s name. These steps included inviting support staff, organising confidential debrief sessions for the days following the event, having refreshments, and the location of the event.

The location of the event was an intentional effort to ‘reclaim space’ (see Chapter 6), as the team called it. The event took place in a large room called Leung Family Gallery, which is in the middle of the Campus Center on the main area of campus. In April’s words:

\(^{60}\) Source: April Primavera, 2/12/14, Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Space for (micro)aggressions at Brown, Speech written and performed by April at the event, held in Leung Gallery in the Campus Center.
We have chosen the Leung Gallery to reclaim a space that was intended to serve the entire Brown community. This space was initially created to be a place of community, socially and academically. But over the years it has adopted a reputation for being silent study only. We hope to revitalize its original purpose as a place for connections to be made, and relationships to be built. So we invite you to use this space as you see fit. We invite you to share your stories, read the stories of others, and most of all, take this experience and this artwork to be self-reflexive, reflecting on where you are in order to grow in love, in healing and in solidarity. (April, 2/12/14)

A few years ago, the Campus Center was renovated, which involved transforming Leung Gallery to keep it as an ‘open community space’ for all members of Brown’s community. In practice, that has translated to a space that is socially produced as a quiet studying space. For instance, if you walk through the room with loud shoes, or cough while sitting in the room, you will likely receive glares from people in the room. The use of this space had impacts for participants and on policy (see Chapter 6). After the event, the frames were installed in the basement of the Campus Center as an exhibition through February 2015 (see Figure 10).

Approximately 75 students, staff and faculty shared 80 stories at “Hurt People Hurt People”: An Open Art Space for (Micro)Aggressions at Brown. Attendees were encouraged to anonymously share as many stories as they desired and on topics ranging from (micro)aggressions they experienced, visited on others, and/or witnessed (see Figures 11-13 for a few examples of the stories shared). For approximately two hours, attendees acted as active participants in writing their stories and/or audience members is reading through other people’s anonymous stories. The art structure was located at one end of a large hall and anyone who walked through the room, which is a central and highly trafficked
space, was invited to participate by writing their own stories and/or reading existing stories. Not all of the narratives made explicit connections to race, gender, sexuality or other identities. Of the 80 stories in the sample, 39 were explicitly race related, 25 gender, 17 sexuality, and 7 mental or physical health related. A few stories touched on the intersections of race, gender and sexuality as well as topics of religion, class, sexual assault, sizism, childhood trauma, and street harassment, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Figure 10: Photograph of Ribbon Structure (Dame 5/12/14)
Text: Do I really have “resting bitch face,” or are you just uncomfortable around brown women???
Figure 12: Story on Ribbon Structure (Dame 5/12/14)
Text: “CS [Computer Science] is so much work. Maybe I’ll switch to Gender/Sexuality Studies, I can learn how to be asexual!” Neither my concentration nor my identity are jokes to me.
I had an undiagnosed ear infection for – 3 weeks – because health services wrote the symptoms off as a part of my Anxiety Disorder.
Ethical Considerations

To protect the anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of co-researchers and other collaborators, pseudonyms have been used throughout this thesis. The institution has not been anonymised to enable a context-based exploration of the geographies at work in order to understand the particular spatialities of (micro)aggressions. As a Brown alumna, I chose this location to utilise my existing experience and relationship with the university to provide me access to conduct research on an understudied topic as well as give back to my alma mater, which I have attempted to accomplish in a respectful and critical manner. The everyday and structural violence present at Brown University discussed throughout this thesis is not an exceptional characteristic of Brown, which is a key argument that I make in Chapter 4. Rather, Brown is merely one example of the dozens of elite and non-elite spaces where micro and macroaggressions take place. In other words, the naming of Brown University in this thesis is not intended to be an indictment or to exceptionalise the university, and instead is meant to facilitate a deep investigation of the relationship between place, power and pain within a case study and highlight alternative avenues.

The security of the data was accomplished by having digital data password protected and physical data stored in a secure location. As a PAR project, data is collectively owned within the team of co-researchers. To balance collective ownership and access with protecting the data, physical data was digitised and uploaded to a shared electronic password protected folder that housed the digital data that each co-researcher could access with their own unique passwords. In addition, the team decided they did not want the data to be destroyed after a
certain period of time because they wanted to have continued access to the data, as aforementioned.

Various strategies were implemented to address potential emotional concern that might arise from this research that included the possibility of triggering traumatic experiences in collecting, analysing and disseminating data on (micro)aggressions. As a result, participants were informed of resources they could contact if they should experience any emotional or psychological issues, namely Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at Brown. Furthermore, I worked closely with a practitioner at CAPS throughout both phases of research to develop and implement sensitivity to these issues. In addition, this research and potential psychological conflicts could have impacts beyond the scope of my research. To be attentive to such reality, this PAR project was purposefully designed in collaboration with the directors of the BCSC, SDWC, and LGBTQ Center in order to maximise support for the populations affected by this research, namely students of colour, women students, non-binary students, and LGBTQA students. Part of this collaboration involved updating the directors about the progress of the research process and inviting their advice. Participants were informed that if they encountered any problems beyond the scope of the research process that cannot be addressed by CAPS, that they can connect with these directors who are professionals in supporting marginalised student populations.

Valuing the labour of co-researchers, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds, is an important ethical tenant of PAR that was enacted through offering students academic credit. In addition, building trust is a significant element of a PAR project in order to develop an accountability structure on the terms of participants. The aforementioned one-year of preliminary research enabled me to
acquire an enhanced understanding of context and build trust with stakeholders and students, which informed the initial design of the PAR project and students’ interest in participating. Once the team was in place, the time devoted to co-editing the consent form ensured that participants were informed, felt ownership of the PAR project, and defined the terms of their participation and how accountability would be managed. The long-term and engaged nature of the PAR project in which the co-researchers met twice a week and began the semester with team-building activities with the explicit goal of building trust also enabled an exploration of (micro)aggressions at the scale of the body and level of emotions within a supportive environment.

Several other ethical considerations were implemented as discussed in the previous sections in this chapter. The aforementioned attention to ethical issues included efforts to confirm I was complying with ethical protocols at the host institution (e.g. discussion with Brown’s IRB and receiving letter of support from Dean of the College), humanise the research process (e.g. meeting with applicants in person and making myself available through multiple communication protocols during the recruitment phase), protect the confidentiality of applicants and guest speakers (e.g. hosting an online application on my personal email and not through Brown; co-writing a confidentiality statement for guest speakers), hold me accountable in the selection process (e.g. organising a selection committee to identify gaps or biases), identify support structures to applicants (e.g. reminding applicants of campus resources at the end of every interview), emphasis on ethical considerations as co-researchers designed the PAR project (e.g. ethics concerns around researching precarious workers without IRB approval), and ensure there
were support structures in place at the final event (e.g. inviting support staff to *Hurt People Hurt People* for participants).

This section has provided an overview of the various ethical considerations enacted in the empirical work outlined throughout this chapter. The following section provides an overview of some challenges that emerged through the empirical work that were formative and informative.

**Challenges of Doing PAR**

Throughout implementation, several difficulties arose that I worked through and learned from. Challenges included navigating the ethical approval process for a PAR project, lack of structure, negotiating positionality, tensions around ‘productivity,’ and confusion about ethical clearance and jurisdiction.

Navigating the ethical approval application for this thesis was a challenge given the cyclical nature of PAR, which is not conducive to a one-off ethics application. For example, I submitted an ethical approval application and it was difficult to figure out what to write because I had not started recruiting the research team, let alone did I know what the team would want to do. In writing the application, I strived to be inclusive of multiple options, and then once the team was recruited, to check in with my supervisors every once in awhile to make sure that what we were doing was within the purview of what had been approved. There was one moment in the middle of research in October where the students wanted to interview several students, faculty and staff at Brown. The question came up: do we need institutional review board (IRB) approval? Are such interviews covered under my ethical approval application? These questions were complicated by the
fact that this thesis is a research project (i.e. PAR team) within a research project (i.e. PAR team’s project); I had ethical approval from a UK institution to conduct PAR at a US university, but not necessarily the specifics of what research the PAR team wanted to do. The team’s decision not to do the interviews resolved some of this confusion and it informed the development of consent forms for participants in the open art space event (see Appendix 5).

As both a co-researcher and facilitator of this PAR project, I struggled with the tensions between enacting PAR’s commitment to emergence and flexibility while also providing some structure to guide the group to make decisions and move forward. There was also a frustration among various co-researchers that the openness of PAR was limiting because it is hard to narrow down and decide on a topic when the sky is the limit. I had several conversations with Professor Higbie about this tension, which further developed my feeling that ‘democracy’ and ‘openness’ and ‘choice’ do not necessarily or inherently result in self-determination, and in fact can often distract from such efforts in the development of a false sense of security. In the final meeting of the team in December 2014, several co-researchers expressed wanting to continue in 2015 and requested more structure. I learned that it could be more feasible to develop a structure after that the team had a chance to get to know each other in terms of interests, work preferences, etc. It is hard to implement a structure based on collective interests when you do not yet have a coherent collective nor know everyone’s interests.

Facilitating ownership of the research process while simultaneously negotiating my positionality and classroom power dynamics was a challenge. The difficulty was facilitating (power with), not dictating (power over) the development of the group into a team and the team’s ownership of the research. That involved
defining my role as one of the co-researchers while practically managing the reality that my teammates viewed me as a professor; since Professor Higbie was at few meetings, I facilitated most of the meetings and I was the one to recruit them. At first, I tried to negotiate this power dynamic by repeating that this is foremost a research team in which academic credit is being offered to value the time, labour and contributions of each person; not a class in which research is conducted. As time progressed and these dynamics barely shifted, I adjusted my strategy to recognise I have the added positionality of ‘professor’ or leader to which I needed to be attentive and negotiate responsibly. In practice, in an effort to distribute decision-making and encourage co-researchers’ ownership of decisions, I started using short online surveys for making decisions to streamline the process and give co-researchers an anonymous place in which to share their thoughts, which they may not feel comfortable or have the space to share during group discussion.

Some difficulties revolved around group dynamics that impeded team building. Several co-researchers spoke more than others in-group discussion, which took space from those who needed silences to think before speaking and/or were shy. To address this challenge I reached out to the co-researchers who spoke less frequently, to check in to see how to get them more engaged, to encourage involvement and remind them that their voices are important. A couple identified as introverts who prefer small group discussions and that they work well with visual methods. Based on that, I changed some activities during meetings to pairs and small group activities where participants get up and do visual things, like participatory diagramming. Several co-researchers gave feedback that they enjoyed the changes I made. I think it helped for people to have time to bond with
one or more people, so that when we are in a large group discussion, some of those difficult group dynamics could adjust.

As a team we struggled with the tension between the theory and practice of ‘productivity’ as we hoped to implement it. There was some tension and anxiety around all the talking we did as a team for the first months and frustration that we were not ‘productive’ enough. From the beginning of the semester, we aimed to re-orient how we see ‘productivity’ beyond the capitalist definition of ‘productivity’ in which the latter is measured by quantity and efficiency in the creation of end products. Instead, our goal was to orient the work done through our conversations, meetings, readings, and activities as productive in a literal sense of the word. It was difficult to try to practically encourage the group to do what they wanted with their time in the PAR team while combating a capitalist sense of ‘productivity’ that just kept coming back, no matter how much we talked critically about it.

This section identified several challenges that emerged in the process of doing PAR, how these difficulties were addressed, and lessons learned as a result. In Chapter 2, I discussed the ways in which lived experience is a form of spatial knowledge, which applies to the context of doing PAR. Prior to this empirical research, I had never conducted PAR and was missing a critical component of spatial knowledge from lived experience that I now have. I learned a great deal in doing this PAR project about PAR that I had not, and arguably could not have, understood based on reading about PAR. For instance, I was prepared to handle emotional issues that might arise due to the content and topic and yet had not anticipated that a great deal of my energy would be expended in providing structure and simultaneously openness. In the future, should I have the opportunity to do another PAR project and depending upon the context, I would consider
recruiting people to participate for a longer time period (e.g. a year instead of three months) upfront to ease pressures to produce something within a shorter period of time (e.g. three months).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the research design and implementation of this thesis, while providing detail of the specific methods utilised and ethical considerations addressed. Implementation was discussed in three different sections, beginning with an overview of recruitment and selection that included an introduction of the PAR team co-researchers in their own words, then the specifics of data generated during PAR team meetings and in our final event, *Hurt People Hurt People*. The final event was described, which sets the stage for analysis and further discussion in Chapter 6 regarding conflicts that emerged after the event. The chapter ended with an overview of ethical considerations, discussion of challenges encountered in conducting the empirical research and the opportunities for learning that those difficulties presented.

The following chapters connect the spatial themes that emerged from the empirical work to contemporary geographic phenomena, primarily in making connections between the everyday experiences of (micro)aggressions and issues of structural violence within the university through the inter-scalar approach of PAR. I accomplish this by starting with more global picture of the university’s location in contemporary geopolitical issues in Chapter 4, then zoom in to the scale of the PAR team to explore locations on campus identified as toxic and safe in Chapter 5, and zoom even further to a deep analysis of the PAR team’s final project and
attempts to make change in Chapter 6. In Chapter 7, I zoom out to make higher-level connections between Chapters 4-6 and the contemporary debates outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2.
Chapter 4. Academic-Military-Prison Industrial Complex

Introduction

‘...there can be no true ‘freedom’ in the academy if there is no such freedom in society at large’

This chapter opens with a vignette in order to illustrate the deeply connected relationships between micro and macro violence at the research site to provide necessary context for the empirical element of this thesis, namely the Participatory Action Research (PAR) project introduced in Chapter 3. As detailed in the previous chapter, PAR is a collaborative research approach that both investigates and attempts to address an issue of social injustice. Due to PAR’s focus on doing research with marginalised populations, PAR often operates at the level of the grassroots (i.e. micro) with the goal ‘to do good on participants’ terms, rather than academics’ (PyGyRG, 2009). To ‘do good’ in practice, PAR requires understanding macro- and micro-level contexts of the issue at hand, as well as their entanglements, in order to inform the design and implementation of effective and sustainable actions. This chapter provides the necessary backstory of US higher education and the specific research site in order to understand the key analytic points illustrated in the empirical research as detailed in the following chapters, beginning with a short example.

In late October 2013, a group of Providence-based community organisers and Brown University students protested at a lecture organised by Brown’s Public Policy Department. Former New York City Police Department (NYPD) police commissioner, Ray Kelly, was invited to lecture about ‘proactive policing’ (Herald,
The organisers shut down the lecture by occupying the hall and reading aloud statements objecting to ‘proactive policing’ that takes the form of racial profiling, stop-and-frisk, and police brutality (NYCLU, 2015). These policing practices disproportionately afflict violence on people of colour through criminalisation, surveillance, police brutality and mass incarceration. Ultimately, university administrators cancelled the lecture due to the protest and Ray Kelly did not speak. In the days and weeks, and months that followed, Brown University administration accused protesters of violating Ray Kelly’s first amendment rights of ‘freedom of speech’ and transgressing Brown’s commitment to a ‘free exchange of ideas’ (Paxson, 2013b). This conversation on ‘freedom of speech’ and ‘academic freedom’ displaced the discussion about police violence against communities of colour, censored protestors, and privileged Ray Kelly’s rights to freedom of speech over that of the protestors, which will be explored later in this chapter.

This vignette is one of numerous examples of the ways in which many US universities mobilise the notion of ‘academic freedom’ in order to rationalise US geopolitical dominance, both domestically and internationally (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014). In the Ray Kelly incident, the university rationalised, probably unknowingly and implicitly, US domestic and global practices of criminalising, incarcerating, and murdering communities of colour largely through the seemingly benign and liberal discourse of ‘academic freedom.’ In this way, the utterance of ‘academic freedom’ is a rhetorical strategy that does not necessarily manifest the freedom of which it speaks (Ahmed, 2007). Academic freedom comes from the Enlightenment and translates into today’s operationalisation of the term in that there is ‘no progressive ethos built’ into the idea, which makes it readily accessible for co-optation by all political leanings (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 39). As detailed later in this chapter,
the US university routinely censors and represses academics through a ‘liberal mantle’ often through the ‘language of diversity, dialogue, and, often, academic freedom itself’ (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 37). The quote opening this chapter succinctly shatters the illusion of ‘academic freedom’ and points to the necessity of contextualising the US academy within geopolitics to discuss ‘freedom’ and social justice, particularly in conducting PAR in this setting.

This chapter begins by providing a macro-level context of structural violence in higher education and at the research site, Brown University, through an exploration of the often-invisible relationships between US geopolitics, everyday life and inequity in US universities, as illustrated in the Ray Kelly incident. This is accomplished through describing the academic, military, and prison industries in the US, how they are entangled (known as the ‘academic-military-prison-industrial complex’ or AMPIC), and the ways imperialism and neoliberalism act as ruling logics within the AMPIC (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014). The analytic framework of the AMPIC is one of many ways to investigate the complexity of universities. Its limitations as an analytic approach are discussed, primarily regarding its capacity to address the multiplicity of institutions. Then, the research site and its attendant geographies are described and situated in the AMPIC through a discussion of case studies at the various yet interconnected scales of international, domestic and local to provide context for empirical research.
Academic Industrial Complex: Imperialism

The US university’s location within the ‘imperial nation-state’ of the US is paramount to the practices, policies, and purposes of the US university (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 6). This ‘imperial university’ is defined as the material reality that:

…all imperial and colonial nations, intellectuals and scholarship plays an important role—directly or indirectly, willingly or unwittingly—in legitimising American exceptionalism and rationalising US expansionism and repression, domestically & globally. (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 7)

Historically, the connections between the US academy and military were enhanced during World War II due to the Manhattan Project and the rise of the US to a global superpower. In a 1961 speech, US President Eisenhower coined the term ‘military-industrial complex’ to warn US citizens and residents about this association (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 17; Oparah, 2014). In fact, Eisenhower had included ‘academic’ in this phrase (i.e. academic-military-industrial complex) in a previous draft of the speech to recognise the entanglements of academic research and militarism (Giroux, 2007). Other ‘industrial complexes’ (e.g. prison-industrial complex) draw upon Eisenhower’s historic phrasing (Oparah, 2014). This language choice and Eisenhower’s warning demonstrate the historicity of the relationships between the construction of knowledge within the ivory tower and militarism: the former is often used to rationalise the latter (e.g. violence, war and empire).

In today’s post-9/11 world, US imperialism largely operates through covert and deterritorialised methods of marginalisation and violence, not solely61 through

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61 The US is a settler-colonial nation founded on stolen Indigenous lands. This territorial or settler colonialism is one of many components of contemporary US imperialism.
territorial or settler colonialism (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 7). The US utilises various control strategies such as ‘proxy wars, secret interventions, and client regimes’ with the purpose of maintaining military, economic, and political dominance throughout the world (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 7). In the context of higher education, US imperialism also operates subtly. For instance, liberal arts colleges and private elite universities play a particular role in US imperialism by providing a moral rationalisation required for maintaining the state’s illusion of benevolence at home and abroad (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 7; Oparah, 2014, p. 101). This is often accomplished through framing US interventions abroad as humanitarian efforts. As with the previous discussion of academic freedom, the rhetoric of humanitarianism and democracy rounds up the support of liberals who may have been critical of prior military interventions (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014).

To illustrate one of many covert ways the US academy is entangled with US imperialism, I discuss the case of Professor Steven Salaita. After being hired in October 2013 to start a new tenured position at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Palestinian American Professor Steven Salaita’s job offer was suddenly rescinded in early August 2014—two weeks before classes started—with no explanation (Rights, 2015). Upon filing a Freedom of Information Request, Professor Salaita uncovered that he was fired due to pressure from wealthy pro-Israel donors who opposed his personal tweets critical of Israel’s July 2014 military attack on the Gaza Strip that killed over 2,000 Palestinians (Fishman, 2015; OCHA, 2014). In January 2015, Salaita launched a lawsuit (currently pending) against the University of Illinois for wrongful termination and violation of his academic freedom, and in protest of the way his termination acts to rationalise ‘a Palestinian exception to the First Amendment and to academic freedom’ (Mackey,
2014). In support of Salaita and his protest, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) agreed to censure (i.e. publicly condemn as antithetical to ethical academic practices) the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Rights, 2015). In this case, the University of Illinois acted covertly as an arm of US imperialism in legitimising Israeli occupation of Palestine and US violation of Palestinian Americans’ first amendment rights through the termination of Salaita's employment due to pressure from wealthy pro-Israel donors. This case also illustrates how the personal interests and politics of donors are increasingly influential in the contemporary moment of neoliberalisation of the US university.

**Academic Industrial Complex: Neoliberalism**

The economics of the imperial university in the post-9/11 moment of the ‘crises of late capitalism in the global North’ are largely centred on the neoliberalisation and privatisation of the US university in which profit is made indirectly and directly through war, incarceration, and militarism (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 12). In the case of public universities, privatisation is deeply entangled with the militarisation of the university. The campuses (e.g. University of California) in which students, staff and faculty have protested against the privatisation of public education (i.e. increasing costs for individual students, state divestment in public education, decreased accessibility and affordability) have often been the same campuses in which armed police forces have been mobilised to squash such dissent (Godrej, 2014). Part of this privatisation takes the form of ‘tuition hikes, budget cuts, and other so-called austerity measures’ that effectively shift the responsibility and, ultimately, ‘the burden of payment for education from
society to individual students’ (Godrej, 2014, p. 125). In this way, access to public education is increasingly limited as it becomes less affordable. Access is guaranteed only for economically privileged students who can pay the exorbitant fees or have the capacity to take out student loans (i.e. good credit history or a co-signer). The material impact of the privatisation of public higher education on society is widening income inequities and, since they are hyper-racialised, racial-wealth disparities. The ideological impact is orienting public higher education as a private commodity rather than a public good.

On the other hand, private liberal arts universities in the US are also becoming increasingly corporatised in order to maintain a competitive edge in today’s global marketplace. The globalisation of the private liberal arts university situates such institutions within the aforementioned global politics of US imperialism (Oparah, 2014). For instance, public scholarship is often a notion promoted in private liberal arts universities where scholars purportedly engage in critical or activist scholarship in collaboration with publics. In practice, many of these institutions use the guise of public scholarship to commodify and pacify activist scholarship into palatable forms that fit within the constraints of ‘appropriate’ politics as defined by the institution (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014). ‘If we cannot—or choose not to—market our scholarship and pedagogies through these programs of funding and institutionalisation, we find our work further devalued within the dominant terms of privatisation in the academy’ (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 10). This is evident in the case of Professor Salaita in which he did not market his public scholarship to the political sensibilities of the university or its donors. As a result, his work was devalued and ideologically criminalised to ‘merit’ terminating his employment.
Salaita has historically used his Twitter account as part of his public scholarship, yet a university official stated that Salaita was fired due to his ‘uncivil’ speech on Twitter in regards to the attack on Gaza (Rights, 2015). Erasing Salaita’s constitutional rights to freedom of speech and established public scholarship on Twitter, this public university transformed his words into something ‘uncivil’ because they threatened the university’s purse strings as controlled by the political leanings of individual wealthy donors. Salaita’s firing demonstrates the limits on the politics of what is acceptable in being a ‘public scholar’ on behalf of a particular institution that is paying one’s salary. Further, this example demonstrates the growing privatisation of public universities and the consequences; in this case private individuals are increasingly controlling the manner and content of academic practices (e.g. hiring practices, producing scholarship) rather than the state.

In the neoliberal university, whether public or private, squashing public dissent often results in dissenters being labelled and treated as criminal or ‘uncivil,’ as in Salaita’s case. In other words, privatisation often criminalises dissent. As the population of ‘criminals’ grows (to include protesters), there is an increased demand for practices to detain and deter these ‘criminals’ such as incarceration and militarisation vis-à-vis armed campus and local police forces. These practices create a high ‘cost’ for dissent (e.g. job loss, jail time, public stigmatisation, police brutality), which is designed to dissuade material manifestations of opposition that disrupt the functioning of the university’s ‘neoliberal logic’ and practices (Godrej, 2014, p. 125). For instance, in the UC Berkeley incident of November 2011, campus police beat non-violent and unarmed student and faculty Occupy protesters. The UC Berkeley administration used rhetoric to criminalise dissent by blaming the protesters for ‘inviting police violence’ despite being unarmed and not
posing physical threats to anyone (Godrej, 2014, p. 133). Furthermore, the administration’s statement that this protest was ‘not nonviolent’ legitimised the militarisation of the campus police force and rationalised the implicit definition of violence as the refusal to obey the police (Godrej 2014: 133).

Embedded in these practices of privatisation is the post-9/11 neoliberal logic that requires ‘the most weaponized, militarized, and militaristic elements of society’ and occasional interruption of civil rights in order to protect against a constant and yet unknown Othered threat (Godrej, 2014, p. 137). In reality, such rhetorical games serve to rationalise state violence against peaceful civilians accessing their First Amendment rights, as evidenced in the examples of Professor Salaita and the protesters in the Ray Kelly and UC Berkeley Occupy incidents. These are material examples of the ways that the violent repression of dissent, whether through police brutality, the loss of a job, or the threat of suspension, act to rationalise the actions of well-documented human rights violations (i.e. stop-and-frisk, mass incarceration, apartheid, genocide, police brutality) and violators through tactics of victim-blaming and the criminalisation of dissent within US universities.

**Prison-Industrial Complex**

Criminalisation itself has been undergoing privatisation as evidenced in the prison-industrial complex. As previously discussed, the term prison-industrial complex comes from Eisenhower’s 1961 speech and phrasing of the military-industrial complex. This linguistic connection is often the only connection made between the prison- and military-industrial complexes, despite the deep material connections between both (Oparah, 2014). One obvious connection is the military
prison (i.e. Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay). However, focusing solely on prisons as an instrument of war as the primary link between the prison- and military-industrial complexes does not consider the ways in which prisons are one of many tactics used in the everyday ‘surveillance, punishment, and incapacitation that includes civilian prisons’ (Oparah, 2014, p. 104). Military prisons are often exceptionalised as ‘outside of the norms of US penal practices,’ which then defines normal US penal practices as different from the spectacle and explicit violence of military prisons (Oparah, 2014, p. 104). This exceptionalism obscures the material realities of violence within civilian prisons and the broader US criminal justice system that incarcerates people at the highest rate in the world (Oparah, 2014).

In addition, the exceptionalism of military prisons ignores the reality that the prison is a historical and contemporary tool used by most territorial colonialisms and occupations. For example, Viviane Saleh-Hanna’s research on prisons in West Africa and Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s research on prisons in California demonstrate the historic and current uses of prisons to remove threats to the current social order or centres of power in the context of colonial states (Saleh-Hanna, 2008). Saleh-Hanna states, ‘prisons have historically provided an essential service to empire by capacititating those deemed to trouble contested relations of ruling’ (Oparah, 2014, p. 106; Saleh-Hanna, 2008). Relatedly, Gilmore highlights how the prison contains and displaces ‘potentially insurgent’ and surplus labour lives in the current neoliberal settler colonial state of the US (Oparah, 2014, p. 106; Gilmore, 2006).

The prison-industrial complex (PIC) is ‘a symbiotic and profitable relationship between politicians, corporations, the media, and state correctional institutions that generates the racialized use of incarceration as a response to social problems rooted in the globalization of capital’ (Oparah, 2014, p. 104). The
United States currently imprisons over 2.3 million people and 5 million more in other aspects of the criminal justice system (i.e. parole, probation; Oparah, 2014). The US holds 25% of the world’s prisoners, however it is composed of 5% of the world’s population (NAACP, 2014). The privatisation of incarceration has led to a demand for criminals and relatedly increased criminalisation, which is historically and currently deeply racialised in the US (Alexander M., 2012). As discussed in Chapter 2, mass incarceration in the US is a present-day manifestation of racialised slavery, which is legal in the context of US prisons according to the 13th amendment (Gilmore, 2006; Crenshaw, 2011; McKittrick, 2013; McKittrick, 2011; Alexander M., 2012). The legalised slavery present in the US criminal justice system is racialised with Black and Latino people incarcerated at a rate of 58%, which is substantially disproportionate with the fact that these populations constitute about 25% of the total US population (NAACP, 2014). As a result, the PIC encourages and capitalises off the ‘racialized fear of crime’ and turns it into an effective tactic for profit making by using the unwaged or very low cost labour of low-income prisoners and prisoners of colour for public and private companies (i.e. Victoria’s Secret, IBM; Oparah, 2014, p. 102; Freestyle, 2008).

The US university is entangled in the PIC through at least four approaches, namely 1) tying endowment to PIC, 2) outsourcing food and health services, 3) training workers for PIC, and 4) data mining prisons and prisoners. The first is the way in which senior level administration embeds the endowment’s success to that of private defence and prison corporations, which creates a stake on behalf of university citizens (i.e. students, faculty, staff) in the success of mass incarceration and prison building. Such investment leads to more profit for the university, which materially results in ‘new buildings, better facilities, improved technology, and even
financial aid packages’ (Oparah, 2014, p. 110). Second, outsourcing services such as food and health makes it difficult for universities to identify suppliers not invested in the military-PIC. Third, effectively acting as corporations, neoliberal universities have responded to the PIC market’s increased demands for workers by developing courses and degrees to train workers in criminal justice and to offer opportunities for existing workers to advance in the field (Oparah, 2014). Lastly, using very questionable ethics, university researchers extract data from prisoners as if objects without agency and produce knowledge that legitimises the AIC and PIC (Oparah, 2014, p. 112). As ‘raw materials for knowledge industries,’ such research is ‘embedded in imperial global inequities and domestic patterns of subordination’ in which relationships between academic researchers (often non-prisoners) and prisoners are laden with asymmetrical power dynamics that, as recently as the 1970s, have involved infecting prisoners with lethal diseases (Oparah, 2014, pp. 111, 112). Similarly, knowledge extracted from prisoners is used to produce academic theories of containment and surveillance that legitimate carceral practices. For instance, ‘Broken Windows’ is a criminal justice theory that argues that the surveillance of everyday life in urban environments and zero tolerance on small crimes can prevent larger crimes and keep communities safe (Morris Justice Project, 2014). In practice, ‘Broken Windows’ is used to rationalise police practices of racial profiling like ‘Stop and Frisk’ that, as aforementioned, disproportionately affect low-income people of colour and siphon them into the criminal justice system. In sum, one function that US higher education serves is to ‘educate a global knowledge elite who will become the “prison wardens”—literally and metaphorically—of the nonuniversitied majority’ and who produce knowledge and technologies used to solve conflicts created by the global flow of capital and
worldwide military occupations (Oparah, 2014, p. 108). At the same time, studying or working at an elite US university does not guarantee safety from the violence of the AMPIC (i.e. entanglement of the recently defined academic-, military-, and prison-industrial complexes) as evidenced in the police brutality in the example of the Occupy protest at UC Berkeley and detailed as follows (Oparah, 2014, p. 108).

**Academic-Military-Prison-Industrial Complex**

The tension between structural understandings of the AMPIC, as previously outlined, and the everyday lived experience of violence in the AMPIC (e.g. university, prison, military; see Chapters 4-6) is at the centre of this thesis and the PAR project. On the one hand they hold the reality of what the neoliberal imperial US university does and is used for in the global and domestic contexts of the AMPIC, and, on the other, the reality of what happens in those sites internally and locally that enables such macro work of the university to function. Through the empirical research of the PAR project on race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at Brown University, this thesis argues that the internal violence within universities as experienced by dissenters and bodies out of place is a surplus of empire and a symptom of these macro dynamics. As detailed in Chapters 5 and 6, this thesis focuses on (micro)aggressions as an everyday, lived, and felt way of engaging in the macro level, which can often seem abstract or distant from the micro as discussed in Chapter 2 regarding issues of dematerialisation in geographies of race, gender and sexuality.

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62 The particular notion of '(micro)aggression' is intentional in order to emphasize the fact that (micro)aggressions are everyday manifestations of structural violence. The rationale for this stylistic choice is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.
According to Oparah’s work, an example of the explicit connections within the academic, military and prison components of the AMPIC is an interrogation of the typical anti-prison slogans ‘Education Not Incarceration’ and ‘Build Schools, Not Prisons’ (Oparah, 2014, p. 109). These campaigns are built on the mostly economic rationale that it costs more to incarcerate youth than to educate them in terms of secondary and post-secondary education. Such dichotomous rhetoric obscures the material realities of the entangled relationship and connections between incarceration and education. For instance, public schools are increasingly surveilled and militarised, particularly schools with large populations of low-income Latino and Black youth. In terms of surveillance, an increasing portion of public school budgets is used for surveillance technology (i.e. cameras, security workers, metal detectors). This excessive policing, and resultant panoptical atmosphere of surveillance, has been denoted as the ‘school-to-prison pipeline.’ Furthermore, the militarisation of public schools is evidenced in the federal legislation that requires public schools to allow army and other military recruiters access to students in what Oparah calls the ‘school-to-war pipeline’ (Oparah, 2014, p. 109). The material realities of the school-to-prison-and-war-pipeline starkly contrast with the rhetoric of the above-mentioned campaigns (e.g. ‘Build Schools, Not Prisons’).

Having outlined the framework of the AMPIC in detail, I now problematize the AMPIC as an analytic approach to institutions, and universities in particular. An institution can be understood through the Deleuzian theory of assemblage, an amalgamation of multiple forces, materials, and scales that are constantly in flux; it is not a singular and fixed entity. In other words, as an assemblage it is problematic to conceptualize a university as a singular entity since it is composed of multiple fluid relations. As a result, when conducting research on universities and
institutions more broadly, it is important to recognize the lack of singularity and fixity of the institution, utilize analytic frameworks that investigate the complexity, fluidity and relationality within and in between institutions, and understand that there are multiple analytic approaches that can be utilized in conducting research on various aspects of universities.

The rationale for my use of the AMPIC, one of many possible analytic approaches, in this thesis is explained through Jasbir Puar’s notion of the “becoming-intersectional assemblage” and Arun Saldanha’s concept of viscosity (Puar, 2012a; Saldanha, 2006). According to Puar, the assemblage is often discussed in opposition to identity politics in that the latter’s presumed emphasis on singularity and fixity (due to the focus on identity) is incommensurable with the multiplicity and fluidity of the former (Puar, 2012a). Puar challenges this claim of incompatibility and presents an alternative ontological model, the “becoming-intersectional” assemblage (Puar, 2012a). This hybrid of assemblage theory and identity politics focuses on the fluidity of identity as processes of social construction in which particular materials, bodies, histories, habits, and relations become “sticky,” gathering into fluid yet tangible identities, power dynamics, and institutional patterns (Saldanha, 2006, p.18; see Chapter 6 for example in empirical research).

In a “becoming-intersectional” framework, an institution is viscous, “neither perfectly fluid nor solid,” in which its physicality informs its movements, and vice versa. Circumstances affect the level of viscosity and velocity, ranging in between an easy flow and a stalling thickness (Saldanha, 2006, p.18). Saldanha uses whiteness as an example of viscosity in that it is not static or essential as an identity or social structure, but rather a “sticky” assemblage of “property, privilege, and a paler skin” (Saldanha, 2006, p.18). The benefit of a “becoming-
intersectional” framework highlights the materiality (e.g. structures of oppression, power relations) of social constructions (e.g. identity as fluid process), as in the example of the viscosity of whiteness. This framework is particularly poignant in addressing the gaps in contemporary debates in geographies of race, gender and sexuality (see Chapter 2) in which the material realities of identity have been under-researched in theoretical and empirical research. In this thesis, I utilize the AMPIC framework from the ontological perspective of becoming-intersectional in order to recognize the multiplicity, fluidity and inter-connectedness of institutions, bodies, and relations while investigating the “sticky” habits and histories of power, control, and oppression. The viscosity of the university within an AMPIC framework is discussed in detail in Chapter 6 in the context of empirical research.

**Insurgent Geographies**

Having outlined the ways in which the AMPIC exists and operates, I consider the implications for aspiring anti-imperialist academics producing scholarship in such context in order to inform this thesis and its PAR project. Creating more critical knowledge within the US university is not the only, or even the best, solution to address the AMPIC. Put simply, the ‘university is not going to the save the world by making the world more true’ (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 42). The truth of this quote lies in the material reality that the neoliberalisation of the US university applies to the knowledge produced within it. As public higher education becomes a private commodity, as previously discussed, so too does academic knowledge. The privatisation of academic knowledge is evident over the last twenty years in which knowledge is purchased through ever-increasing fees to
individual articles or memberships to journals and the shifted control of knowledge dissemination from academics to private multinational companies (e.g. Sage Publications and Routledge; Peet, 2008; Pain, Kesby, & Askins, 2011). The commodification of knowledge on a global scale and its related inaccessibility due to cost or lack of access to university libraries and language (e.g. academic jargon, focus on contemporary academic debates) enables the co-optation of knowledge produced in the academy, however ‘more progressive or countercarceral,’ by the AMPIC (Oparah, 2014, p. 115).

An abolitionist framework is a potential avenue for aspiring insurgent scholars whose end-goal is to dismantle the AMPIC, rather than reform it. Such a framework requires investigating our institutions’ investments and using our positions within the AMPIC to demand divestment from these very industries of incarceration, militarism and occupation, rather than solely focusing on reform strategies such as producing ‘better’ scholarship or improving recruitment and retention of marginalised students, staff and faculty. In practice, abolishing the AMPIC requires creating and maintaining insurgent geographies, or temporary collaborative spaces of resistance, inside the university that directly work with activists within and beyond the ivory tower to support existing efforts to abolish the academic, military, and prison-industrial complexes (Oparah, 2014).

The work of insurgent geographies in the AMPIC involves ‘facing disloyalty to our employers or alma maters’ in whistle-blowing unethical investments and dealing with the real material impacts of our actions on the security of our positions and jobs, as well as the budgets of our institutions (Oparah, 2014, p. 116). The precarity of engaging in insurgent scholarship in US universities is largely implemented through the logics of academic containment that take many forms,
such as ‘stigmatising an academic as too “political,” devaluing and marginalising scholarship, unleashing an FBI investigation, blacklisting, or not granting scholars the final passport into elite citizenship in the academic nation—that is, tenure’ (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 22). The tactics of stigmatisation, devaluing of scholarship and expelling scholars were discussed earlier in the case of Professor Steven Salaita. The method of FBI investigation as academic containment can be understood through several historical case studies ‘where the FBI surveilled and arrested Black Power, anti-imperialist, and radical scholar-activists during the era of COINTELPRO (1956-1971)’ (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 23). This resulted, for instance, in the firing of Professor Angela Davis in 1969 from UCLA for her membership in the Communist Party. Furthermore, COINTELPRO provided rationale for the state-sanctioned execution of many racial justice activists, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as verified in a 1999 public civil trial (Pepper, 2003). Academic containment is a spatial tactic of isolation in marking an academic as criminal and dangerous to divide and conquer resistance.

The collaborative and collective nature of insurgent geographies in the AMPIC is necessary in order to prevent and combat the isolation of academic containment and other material consequences of engaging in insurgent scholarship. In addition, scholar-activism has a long and rich history to inform and support contemporary insurgent work (see Chapter 2). For instance, I situate my thesis in the disciplinary traditions of Radical and Critical Geography, with a focus on Participatory, Critical Race, Queer and Feminist Geographies, in part to learn from these fields, make my work intelligible to Geographic audiences, and have a support network of scholars and scholarship to access if and when my aspiring insurgent scholarship leads me into precarious positions. Further, this thesis
implements a PAR approach because it is a place-making methodology with a radical epistemology that aims to dismantle inequitable power dynamics in higher education (see Chapter 3). In this thesis, I orient PAR as one of many tools for creating insurgent geographies in the context of a US university and in this case, Brown University. In the following sections, I describe the research site and its attendant geographies relevant to this thesis as well as situate the research site within the previously outlined material realities of the AMPIC through case studies.

**Situating the Research Site**

Brown University is an Ivy League institution in Providence, Rhode Island that was established in 1764 – a decade before the founding of the United States. Rhode Island is currently the smallest state in the union and is located in the northeast of the United States, bordered to the north and east by Massachusetts, to the west by Connecticut, and to the south by the Atlantic Ocean (see Figure 14). Due to its access to the Atlantic Ocean, Rhode Island has long been a port for trade and commerce, including the transatlantic slave trade as evident in the state’s official name: Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. The colony of Rhode Island was established in 1636 and two years later, the first enslaved Africans were brought to the colony; slavery continued in Rhode Island for almost two hundred years (Justice B. U., 2007).
As an institution formed in the colony of Rhode Island in this time period, Brown University was deeply entangled with the various industries and practices that enabled the founding of the United States, namely the transatlantic slave trade, settler colonialism and Indigenous genocide. Brown was established in 1764 as an educational institution for white wealthy men\textsuperscript{63} built on stolen Indigenous lands\textsuperscript{64} by the labour of enslaved Africans and Indigenous people\textsuperscript{65} (Justice B. U., 2007; Wilder, 2013). For instance, many of the university’s early donors, and at least thirty members of the university’s governing body, were involved in the

\textsuperscript{63} The first people of colour and women entered the university in the mid to late 19\textsuperscript{th} century (BCSC, 2015). Women did not become fully integrated into the university until the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century (Poulson & Miller-Bernal, 2006). People of colour are not yet fully integrated into the university; after 250 years, it is still a ‘predominantly white institution’ (PWI; Brown University, 2015f).

\textsuperscript{64} Brown University is built on the land of the Wampanoag and Narragansett peoples.

\textsuperscript{65} New Englanders enslaved Indigenous people for free labour before engaging in the transatlantic slave trade in the mid 17\textsuperscript{th} century. Later, Native Americans prisoners of war were exchanged for enslaved West Indians (Justice, 2007).
transatlantic slave trade in Rhode Island through captaining or owning slave ships, or trading or owning enslaved Africans (Justice B. U., 2007). In addition, the university’s first building, University Hall, was built by the labour of enslaved people.

In the contemporary moment, Providence is the capital of the state of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. It is located between two major cities, approximately a one-hour drive from Boston and a three-hour drive from New York City. Since Providence is a small city located between two major economic hubs and in the smallest US state, its own economy is quite local. Brown University is legally registered as a 501(c)(3) organisation, which means it is a non-profit organisation and is exempt from federal and state taxes. However, Brown’s net worth is $4.2 billion, the university is one of the largest employers in the state, and it currently has a large influence over Providence’s and Rhode Island’s politics and economies, as discussed later in the ‘local’ case study and in the remainder of this section on the demographics of Providence (Scholar Punk, 2014). Brown’s location in the smallest state coupled with its historical pull over the local economy points to the spatial uniqueness of this research site and the potential implications of this thesis on informing Brown’s relationship with city and state political economies.

Within Providence, Brown is located in the east of the city in an area aptly called the East Side, which is bordered to the west by the Providence River. The East Side includes several neighbourhoods, namely Hope, Mount Hope, Blackstone, College Hill, Wayland and Fox Point (see Figure 15). Brown is situated in the neighbourhood of College Hill (see Figure 15), which is named due to its physical geography as a hill and the two private universities located there, namely Brown and Rhode Island School of Design (top university for visual artists in the US). The river and hill are physical features and spatial tools that divide the East
Figure 15: Map of Providence Neighbourhoods (City of Providence, 2015)

Figure 16: Race/Ethnicity in Providence Neighbourhoods (Cedar Lake Ventures, 2015)
Side, and College Hill specifically, from the rest of the city. This physical division is coupled by de facto segregation in the city in which residents of the East Side are predominantly white and wealthy, in comparison to residents in the rest of the city who are predominantly people of colour and lower income (see maps of demographics in Figures 15 & 16; Cedar Lake Ventures, 2015). This race and class-based segregation is enabled, in part, by the proximity of two elite private PWIs, one of which is Brown, an Ivy League that historically holds a great deal of power over the city from the comfortable perch of a hill. These physical and social factors are all spatial phenomena that co-construct imagined and material

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66 The demographic maps are based on US Census data, which typically do not consider college students as residents of the university, but rather residents of their respective hometowns. As such, data within the neighbourhood of College Hill is skewed because it does not reflect the over 10,000 students living there.
geographies of Brown University as physically, economically and racially distant from the rest of the city.

The demographic maps in Figures 16-17 are based on US Census data, which typically do not consider college students as residents of the university, but rather residents of their respective hometowns. As such, data within the neighbourhood of College Hill is skewed because it does not reflect the over 10,000 students living there nor the populations of undocumented and international students. Brown’s demographics mirrors that of the East Side in which the undergraduate, graduate, staff and faculty populations are predominantly white and middle to upper-middle class (Brown University, 2015c). For instance, 77% of the faculty, 41.6% of graduate students, 38.6% of medical students and 43.6% of undergraduate students at Brown are white (Brown University, 2015f). These statistics under-estimate the number of white faculty and students at Brown because they do not include people who may also identify as white such as people who did not fill out their race/ethnicity (i.e. 8.6% of graduate students, 4.7% of medical students, and 8.0% of undergraduates), multiracial people (i.e. 0.9% of graduate students, 2.4% of medical students, and 5.4% of undergraduates), and international students (i.e. 34.7% of graduate students, 1.4% of medical students and 11.6% of undergraduates; see map in Figure 18; Brown University, 2015f). In addition, 56% of undergraduates paid the full cost of tuition in 2014 (i.e. $47,433), whereas 44% of undergraduates received financial aid with the average award of $44,268 and 16% of undergraduates are first generation students67 (Brown University, 2015b). This financial data points to a stark contrast in the socio-economic composition of the undergraduate population in 2014 in which it is

67 First generation students are the first in their family to attend an institution of higher education.
predominantly middle to upper-middle class to wealthy (since most are able to afford fees of about $50,000 per year) while a substantial portion of the population receives nearly full financial aid. In addition, most undergraduates come from 7 states (i.e. California, New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Connecticut; see Figure 18) that are on the coast, typically Democrat (or blue) states, mostly located in the northeast of the United States, and several of which were in the top 10 wealthiest states in 2014 (Dill, 2014). The geographical distribution and limited geographical diversity of the undergraduate population further suggest the prevalence of undergraduates from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. The stark racial, ethnic and class composition of the university community lends itself to tension, conflict and (micro)aggressions, as discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

As a residential 4-year undergraduate-focused university, the majority of the undergraduate population (over 6,000 students) lives on campus in residential halls organised by university administration in the Office of Residential Life. Living on campus is required for the first three years. Almost all first-years and most second-years have a roommate. Graduate and medical students (approximately 2,500 students) typically live off-campus, often in the areas surrounding the campus (e.g. East Side). Undergraduates live in several dormitories across campus, which includes Keeney Quad (see E2 on map in Figure 19) where most of the first-year class lives and Wriston Quad (see E3 on map in Figure 19) where most of upper-class students involved in Greek life (e.g. fraternities, sororities) live. I will return to Greek Life in Chapter 5 as a site with a high concentration of (micro)aggressions and cases of sexual assault, according to the empirical research and other related research on ‘safe spaces’ at Brown (see Saraf, 2014). In first-year dorms, three
upper-class residential counsellors live alongside first-years to provide support, mentoring and conflict resolution in their acclimation to university life, dormitory living, and living with a roommate. The three counsellors have different roles and job titles, namely Minority Peer Counsellors (MPCs) who facilitate conversations on race amongst first-years and are specifically trained to support first-years of colour, Women Peer Counsellors (WPCs) who facilitate conversations on gender and sexuality and are specifically trained to support women and LGBTQ students, and Residential Counsellors (RCs) who provide non-specialised support to first-years. In upper-class dorms, one or two upper-class residential counsellors live alongside upper-class students; this job title is Community Assistant (CA). The ‘Cs,’ as they are colloquially called, and officially known as Residential Peer Leaders (RPLs), are employed by the Office of Residential Life; MPCs are dually employed by the Brown Center for Students of Color (BCSC) where they receive their specified training and support. In addition, as a residential university, there are dining halls such as the Sharpe Refectory on Wriston Quad (see E3 on map in Figure 19) for students in which first-years are required to be on the dining halls’ meal plan. About 75% of upper class students continue to purchase meal plans after their first-year to eat at the dining hall (Brown Dining Services, 2015).

Since a vast majority of undergraduates eat, sleep, and study within Brown’s concentrated campus, students rarely leave campus, let alone College Hill. This ‘social withdrawal’ coupled with the ‘enclosure of students’ within Brown University’s campus and College Hill is evident of the way that Brown, like many other universities according to Hubbard, operates as a de facto gated community that contributes to city-wide processes of segregation, displacement and gentrification, as discussed later in this chapter (Hubbard, 2009, p. 1920). As an
Figure 18: Geographic Profile of First-Year Students in 2014 at Brown University (Brown University, 2015f)
anecdotal example, Brown students I have interacted with (during this research and when I was a student myself) have expressed imagined geographies of Providence that view the city as composed only of College Hill and Downtown (where a shopping mall is located). Such imagined geographies do not consider, due to limited or lack of engagement, the dozens of other neighbourhoods and residents of Providence where, not coincidentally, the majority of residents are low-
income people of colour. This erasure of particular racialised and economic locations and inhabitants maps onto McKittrick’s discussion of the ‘ungeographic’ in which people marked as ‘Other’ are often viewed by those in power as not existing (i.e. invisible) or not occupying space (see Chapter 2; McKittrick, 2006).

Having provided a geographical and demographic overview of Brown within the context of the locality, city and state, I now describe the layout of Brown University’s campus (see Figure 19) and focus on spaces and conflicts relevant to the target population (i.e. undergraduates of colour, women, transgender, non-binary and queer undergraduates). The central part of campus is called the ‘Main Green’ (see D2 on map in Figure 19) where student-centred offices that support students of colour, women, queer and non-binary students are located or in the vicinity, including the Office of Institutional Diversity, LGBTQ Center, Brown Center for Students of Color (BCSC), and the Sarah Doyle Women’s Center (SDWC). University Hall is located on the west border of the Main Green. University Hall was the first building on campus (built by enslaved labour as aforementioned) and currently houses administrative offices including the President and the Corporation, which has made it the site of multiple student protests as discussed later in this chapter. Also located in University Hall is the Office of Institutional Diversity, which engages in university-wide efforts to foster diversity and document the university’s progress. Next to University Hall on the north border of the Main Green is the Campus Center in a building called Faunce Hall where the LGBTQ Center (also colloquially known as QRC for Queer Resource Center) and Leung Gallery (location of PAR project event) are located. The BCSC is across the street (to the north) from the Campus Center at the corner of Brown Street and Waterman Street.
in a building called Partridge Hall. South of the Main Green is the SDWC at 26 Benevolent Street (at corner of Brown Street).

In the following paragraphs I provide an overview of the missions and histories of three identity-based centres (i.e. SDWC, BCSC, QRC) in order to contextualise my collaboration with these centres in the empirical research and PAR project on race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at Brown. The Women’s Center at Brown is named after Sarah Doyle who was a life-long resident of Providence and advocate of women’s education. Doyle’s efforts were formative in the 1891 establishment of a college for women, known as Pembroke College, as a sister college of Brown University (Ettelman, 2014; Cohee, 2014). In 1965, Pembroke alum Mary Hepburn Parsons donated a building at 185 Meeting Street (see C3 on map in Figure 19) to Pembroke College that the college repurposed into a meeting place called the Pembroke Alumnae House, which would become the future location of the Sarah Doyle Women’s Center (Ettelman, 2014). In 1969, the Pembroke Study Committee (composed of faculty, corporation members, students, a dean, an alum, and the university president) was formed by the university president and charged with considering the state of women’s education at Pembroke College and coeducational possibilities (Brown University, 1992). Based on the committee’s recommendations, in 1971 Pembroke College was dissolved and merged with Brown University to create one co-educational institution of higher education (Ettelman, 2014). This union left the Pembroke Alumnae House empty and inspired the Committee’s recommendations for the creation of a Women’s Center solely dedicated to women’s issues since the women’s college had been closed (Cohee, 2014). A student group, Women of Brown United, in collaboration with two deans submitted a proposal for the Sarah
Doyle Women’s Center to the university President, who approved the proposal and enabled the opening of the centre in 1975.

Since its establishment, the SDWC has been crucial in providing support for women students and their activism throughout its forty years. In the 1970s, the centre established a library that housed resources in the field of women’s studies that were not available in the Brown libraries; and provided meeting space for student groups such as the Socialist Feminist Caucus, who, alongside other women, established Sojourner House, a non-profit shelter for survivors of domestic violence that still exists today (Cohee, 2014). In 1981, the Pembroke Centre for Teaching and Research was founded as an academic centre for the study and research of gender and women’s studies, which narrowed SDWC’s focus to supporting the extracurricular activities, residential life, activism and health of women students (Centre, 2013). In the 1980s-1990s, there was a great deal of activism protesting sexual assault on campus. For instance, in 1985 a group of women across campus, including women from the SDWC and the Third World Center (as it was known at the time) organised a speak-out where women marched on campus and shared their experiences of sexual harassment and assault on campus (Ettelman, 2014). Due to limited recognition or change initiated by the university administration, in the 1990s women tried to get support and attention by writing names of their rapists on the walls of bathroom stalls in the Rockefeller Library (see D1 on map in Figure 19; Cohee, 2014). This became known as the ‘rape wall,’ which gained national attention and inspired a nation-wide conversation about the efficacy of how universities handled sexual assault on campus (Ettelman, 2014). Student protests of how the university mishandles sexual assault cases are alive and well on campus today and continued to be supported by the SDWC,
which changed locations to its current home on Benevolent Street in 2001. Today, the centre’s mission continues to ‘serve as a central site for the complex discussions around gender, feminism, and the intersections of gender with other markers of identity’ by providing meeting spaces, the aforementioned library, an art gallery, and a welcoming environment for all members of the campus community and the broader Providence community (Cohee, 2014).

The creation of the Brown Center for Students of Color (BCSC), formerly the Third World Center, was made possible in part by a three-day walkout in 1968 by several Black women students at Pembroke College (i.e. Brown’s women’s college, as previously discussed). These students engaged in a walk out to demand an increase in the enrolment of Black students and the development of a Black theatre at Brown (Third World Center, n.d.). The university complied in increasing the matriculation of Black students, creating Rites and Reason Theatre in 1970, and founding the Transitional Summer Program for incoming Black freshman, which became the Third World Transition Program in 1975 for all incoming students of colour (Third World Center, n.d.). In 1973, several African American students founded the Minority Peer Counselling (MPC) Program, which became a multiracial mentoring program in the 1980s (Third World Center, n.d.). In 1975, a team of Asian, Latino, and Black students occupied the main administration building, University Hall, demanding the University comply with commitments made after the 1968 walkout. This led to the 1975 establishment of the Afro-American Studies department and 1976 creation of the Third World Center (TWC), a central location to support students of colour at Brown. In 1985, around 350 students of colour, or ‘Third World students,’ occupied the steps at the John Carter Library demanding documents inside that detail the history of ‘Brown’s slave-holding family’ (Third
World Center, n.d.). As a result of these protests, in 1986 the Centre for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America was established; and in 1987 the TWC acquired a building all to itself (i.e. Partridge Hall). Since 1987, the TWC has provided programming, education, mentorship and a safe space to students of colour. In 2013, a group of TWC students in collaboration with local Providence activists organised the aforementioned protest against Ray Kelly speaking at Brown in support of the ‘proactive policing’ practices of ‘Stop and Frisk’ and racial profiling. In 2014, the TWC changed its named to the Brown Center for Students of Color (BCSC) and clarified its mission as a ‘gathering place for communities of color’ where ‘students are encouraged to build meaningful relationships across difference, develop racial and ethnic consciousness, and enact change at Brown and beyond’ by providing meeting spaces, a welcoming environment, the support of five full-time staff, and a range of programming (BCSC, 2015).

Decades of queer activism at Brown led to the 2004 establishment of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning) Centre. For instance, the 1970s saw the creation of LGBTQ student groups, including the Gay Liberation group in 1970 and Gay Women at Brown in 1976 (Kikuchi & Lee, 2014). In the 1980s, another student group, the Lesbian Gay Student Alliance (LGSA), organised the first educational week on gay experiences in 1982, hosted the 1986 Northeast Lesbian Gay Student Union conference at Brown, facilitated a trip to the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, and established an RI chapter of Act Up in collaboration with local organisers (Kikuchi & Lee, 2014). The LGSA formed the student-led publication NOT GUILTY in 1988 to document the March on Washington and other LGBTQ issues, both of which were under-reported on campus. In addition, throughout the 1980s there was a range of vandalism on
posters and public artwork created by LGBTQ students and student groups. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the LGSA experienced a variety of name changes (i.e. Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance in 1990, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Alliance or LGBTA in 1995, Queer Alliance in 2003), a new student group for queer students of colour was founded in collaboration with the Third World Center (TWC) in 1991, a university committee recommended the establishment of an ‘Office of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Concerns’ in 1994, and a mentoring program was created in 1998 that matched LGBTQ faculty and staff mentors with LGBTQ students (Kikuchi & Lee, 2014). The 2000s to today have seen increased attention to gender identity and supporting transgender and non-binary students, which was made possible by the institutional support created in the establishment of the LGBTQ Center in 2004. For instance, Gender Neutral Housing became available in 2008, the LGBTQ Center worked with Brown’s Human Resources Department in 2009 to create a support structure for transgender or non-binary employees transitioning while working at Brown, the student group Gender Action distributed its first publication of ‘Resources for Trans/Questioning Students at Brown’ in 2009, and transgender inclusive healthcare policies were implemented for students and employees in 2013-2014 (Kikuchi & Lee, 2014).

In this section, I have provided an overview of the research site, Brown University, geographically within the nation, state, city and locality, as well as socio-historically through the histories of the centres for students of colour, women, and LGBTQ students to provide background for a discussion of how the AMPIC manifests in the context of Brown, as follows. The next section provides several case studies at the various scales of international, domestic, and local to illustrate
the ways that the AMPIC, as discussed earlier in this chapter, maps onto the context of the research site.

**Brown University’s Entanglements with the AMPIC**

As argued in the beginning of this chapter, private liberal arts universities like Brown University often provide ‘moral capital’ to the construction and maintenance of US imperialism (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 7; Oparah, 2014, p. 101). In the case of Brown, this is made possible in part by the public perception, or imagined geographies, of Brown as the ‘hippie’ Ivy League university (i.e. the most progressive institution in the Ivy League) and its ranking as ‘one of the most open-minded universities’ in the US (Kwon, 2013). Brown’s ‘Open Curriculum’ is often cited as one of the reasons for such public perception due to its lack of core curriculum or required classes and its encouragement of students to experiment with, and take responsibility, for the ‘freedom to shape their own education’ (Brown University, 2015h). In other words, an individualised or neoliberal notion of academic freedom as a progressive tenet is central to Brown University’s contemporary identity as an educational institution. However, as previously articulated, the concept of academic freedom is neutral and there is ‘no progressive ethos built’ into it (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 39). The rhetorical work of positioning an institution and its practices of academic freedom as ‘progressive’ obscures the material geographies of violent behaviours in which the university engages and invests. Such material violence includes US imperialism, neoliberalism, militarism, and incarceration. Elements of Brown’s relationship with
such structural violence is outlined through the following case studies at the various, yet entangled, international, domestic, and local scales.

The international case study provides an overview of Brown University's investment in Israel's human rights violations (UN International Court of Justice, 2004). Since 2009, Brown Students for Justice in Palestine (BSJP) has been campaigning for Brown's divestment from 'companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories' and those that engage in 'acts of violence against Palestinian and Israeli civilians' such as Boeing and Caterpillar (BSJP, 2015; ACCRIP, 2012). BSJP is Brown’s chapter of the national student-led organisation National Students for Justice in Palestine (NSJP) that is a network of chapters at universities and colleges across the US. BSJP’s and other SJP chapters’ calls for divestment are grounded in the successes and tactics of mid-1980s student organising and boycotts of South African apartheid on university campuses throughout the US (Horowitz, 2012; UCSA, 2015). In considering BSJP’s divestment campaign, in 2012 Brown University’s Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investment Policies (ACCRIP) officially recognised Israel’s actions as abuses as well as Brown’s support of such actions. ‘Brown may be invested in firms whose products and services are being used to commit human rights violations in Palestine’ (ACCRIP, 2012). The divestment campaign is currently in progress and has been endorsed by dozens of students, staff, faculty and alumni, as well as famous figures such as Noam Chomsky (BSJP, 2015).

Student-led campaigns to divest from Israel have expanded throughout the US largely, and beyond, since the 2005 start of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel by Palestinian civil society (BDS, 2015). For instance, one of the largest and most recent victories in the BDS movement
occurred in early February 2015 when the University of California Student Association (UCSA) launched a call for the University of California Regents, the governing body for all ten public universities in the University of California system, to divest from ‘corporations violating Palestinian Human Rights’ (UCSA, 2015). Furthermore a week later on 17th and 19th February, the Stanford and Northwestern University student governing bodies passed resolutions for divestment from Israel (Garduno, 2015; McKeon, 2015).

Brown University has a public history of its divestments on the Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investment Policies (ACCRIP) website. ACCRIP is a group of students, staff and faculty who are tasked with soliciting and considering divestment requests. For example, in 2003 ACCRIP approved divestment from companies that produce or support the production of tobacco; and in 2006 approved divestment from companies that support the Sudanese government ‘in its continuing sponsorship of genocidal actions and human rights violations in Darfur’ (ACCRIP, 2015). As another illustration of the work of ACCRIP, in 2011 ACCRIP approved divestment from HEI Hotels and Resorts on the grounds of its inequitable treatment of workers, including interference with unionising of workers until the company ‘adheres to our high standards regarding respectful and humane treatment of workers, and that workers at HEI-operated hotels are able to seek union representation without fear of intimidation’ (ACCRIP, 2015). These three various divestments range a variety of contexts and topics, from concerns of public health to state-sanctioned genocide abroad to domestic workers’ rights. Brown has set a precedent for divestment from a government perpetuating genocide and human rights abuses, and BSJP argues that Brown do it again by divesting from Israel.
The domestic case study demonstrates Brown University’s investment\textsuperscript{68} in the prison-industrial complex (PIC) through financial connections via Brown’s governing body, the Corporation, and through the aforementioned ‘Ray Kelly incident.’ Members of Brown University’s Corporation invests, in a variety of ways, in the 33 financial investment companies that own the Corrections Corporation of American (CCA) and GEO Group, which collectively control about 75% of the US private prison market (PDC, 2015). The Prison Divestment Campaign (PDC) states that these two companies are ‘financially dependent’ on increasing the demand for prison facilities and, as such, they ‘lobby extensively for state and federal contracts as well as laws and policies’ to accomplish that goal, such as policies that promote the criminalisation, and subsequent mass incarceration, of ‘communities of color and immigrants’ such as stop-and-frisk (PDC, 2015). Brown has relationships with at least 10 of these 33 companies (Muckety, 2015). One of the 33 is Bank of American Corporation whose chairman and CEO, Brian T. Moynihan, is a Brown University trustee. In addition, Nancy Fuld Neff is also a Brown trustee and is the ‘former principal in investment banking’ at Morgan Stanley, another one of the 33 (BluestockingsM, 2015; Rojas-Carroll, 2015). The other connections are by two degrees of separation, many of which involve a Brown trustee who is director of Financial Services Roundtable, of which Ameriprise Financial, Fidelity Investments, Northern Trust Corp, Principal Financial Group, State Street Corp, and Wells Fargo and Co (6 of the 33 companies) are members; and Barclays Global Investors,

\textsuperscript{68} Brown University is one of many universities, including those in the Ivy League, that are invested in the PIC. As the prison abolition movement gains steam, universities are starting to consider their investment in the PIC. For instance, in June 2015 Columbia University divested from private prisons, becoming the first US institution of higher education to do so (Aronoff, 2015; Johnson M. E., 2015).
Blackrock Fund Advisors, and Morgan Stanley are affiliated with BlackRock, Inc. of which the director is a Brown trustee.

Brown’s entanglement with the PIC can be outlined through the four prongs of the AMPIC as aforementioned. First, Brown’s endowment benefits from the success of the private prison industry, as illustrated in the various connections between Brown’s governing bodies and corporations that invest in the prison industry. Second, Brown’s outsourcing of food and health services to corporate entities makes it difficult to trace investments in PIC (Justice P. F., 2015). Third, as a university, Brown trains workers for the PIC in educating, and thereby constructing, a ‘global knowledge elite’ of alumni that become the figurative and literal ‘prison wardens’ of the majority of the world who did not attend university in a variety of fields (Oparah, 2014, p. 108). Fourth, Brown engages in and supports the data mining of prisons and prisoners, as evidenced in a variety of research initiatives at the School of Public Health (i.e. Centre for Prisoners Health and Human Rights; CPHHR, 2015).

Furthermore, the aforementioned ‘Ray Kelly incident’ is an example of the confluence of these four prongs of the AMPIC in the context of an increasingly privatised liberal arts college. Brown University’s Taubman Centre for Public Policy invited Ray Kelly to give a lecture entitled ‘Proactive Policing’ on October 29, 2013. A group of local residents and students organised a petition to cancel the event on the grounds that ‘Commissioner Kelly has a history of implementing aggressive policies that systemically target marginalised communities’ and that providing him a platform ‘sends the resounding message that the Taubman Centre, as well as Brown University, condones policies, such as “Stop and Frisk,” that are proven to be harmful and unconstitutional’ (St. Felix, 2013; Williams & Devereaux, 2013).
When this petition was not granted, the petition organisers engaged in direct action to protest against the lecture. After the event was shut down by the protest, the university swiftly responded with fierce admonition of the protestors (i.e. ‘This is a sad day for the Brown community’) for violating the university’s ‘core values’ of ‘free exchange of ideas’ and, for students, its Code of Student Conduct (Paxson, 2013b). In President Paxson’s two letters to the Brown community after the lecture, she rhetorically and legally criminalised dissent. First, this criminalisation was accomplished through the rhetoric of violating freedom of speech and academic freedom, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Second, she outlined her response to the events would take the form of organising a committee to investigate the protest and to sanction any students who violated the Code of Student Conduct under its jurisdiction that states ‘protest becomes unacceptable when it obstructs the basic exchange of ideas’ (Paxson, 2013a). Furthermore, the committee was tasked with determining whether future events would remain public and open to the community beyond Brown. After releasing two reports, months later the Brown University students involved in the protest were interviewed behind closed doors and informed of any sanctions, which have not been made public. The lack of transparency and delay in information on consequences, coupled with the public letters criminalising dissent at a university that prides itself on progressiveness, created an atmosphere of fear that squashed dissent for the majority of the academic year. In this way, the administration at Brown University used the language and institutional legislation of ‘academic freedom’ to criminalise dissent for both student and local protestors, which ultimately demonstrated the university’s—wittingly or not—support of ‘Stop and Frisk’ policies, racial profiling, police brutality and mass incarceration, which are all tools of the PIC.
The following local case studies illustrate Brown University’s investment in gentrification and neoliberalism, namely through three examples of the university’s occupation of two areas of Providence and its dominance in the local non-profit industry. First, in the 1960s and 1970s Brown University was a key agent in the gentrification of the area adjacent to its southern border, Fox Point. Brown University’s expansion coupled with the state’s urban renewal projects displaced the close-knit Cape Verdean community that had lived there for three generations (Andrade-Watkins, 2015; Andrade-Watkins, 2006). This ‘urban massacre’ involved buying out business, houses, and cheap land in the Cape Verdean neighbourhood to either rent at a higher price to Brown students and faculty or to tear down to make space for highway construction (Andrade-Watkins, 2015; Gold, 2014). Charles Andrade, a former resident of Fox Point, explained, ‘[t]hey priced you right out, so we moved. We didn’t move because we wanted to move, we loved the place...’ (Andrade, 1997). This displacement took place in spite of community resistance. The university and state targeted this area due to the cheap land and buildings, which ultimately affected and displaced immigrant communities of colour.

Second, in the last decade Brown has been gentrifying the Jewellery District of Providence, which is a mile west of the main campus. In collaboration with the city and state, Brown has re-named this area the ‘Knowledge District’ and has been transforming it by buying and renovating 12 buildings as well as leasing some of these spaces to technological start-up companies (Brown University, 2015a). For instance, in 2007 Brown bought a former jewellery factory for over $23 million and spent $45 million in renovations. This former factory is now Brown’s medical school, which opened in 2011, educates over 400 students, collaborates with 43% of physicians throughout the state, and created over 140 jobs (Brown University,
To demonstrate its worth to the city and state\textsuperscript{69}, Brown’s proposal for the ‘Knowledge District’ focused on its contributions to creating a ‘knowledge economy’ that will attract technology-based corporations (Brown University, 2015a). For instance, Hasbro, a corporation that makes toys and video games, promised to create 450 jobs and moved to the Knowledge District ‘because the young talent it needed to attract to its gaming division preferred an attractive, urban environment’ (Abbott, 2011). The construction of the Knowledge District includes displacing blue-collar labour and living that the area historically provided and replacing it with white-collar jobs and living. Urban renewal will go hand in hand in order to construct that ‘attractive, urban environment’ that will entice Hasbro’s workers. Furthermore, given the limited opportunities for education and professional experience in gaming, technology and health-care, as evidenced in the quote, these jobs will largely be given to people from out of state, which in practice does not produce jobs to benefit Rhode Island residents. In this way, the positive rhetoric of contributing to Rhode Island’s economy in practice obscures the reality that Brown is contributing to the displacement of local peoples and economies, as well as the increased militarisation of the city; opening the medical school included the establishment, on the premises, of a Brown University Police sub-station as well as a Providence Police Department sub-station. Unlike buildings on Brown’s main campus, the medical school is secured by two sets of locked doors that can only be opened with a medical school ID card and a security officer stationed inside those doors during business hours. Gentrification of the Jewellery District is in the early stages and while its full impact is not yet known (e.g. will gentrification

\textsuperscript{69} Providence and Rhode Island were hit hard by the recession and do not receive taxes from Brown since it is legally registered as a non-profit institution, which is often the cause for tensions between the university and city.
continue into the neighbouring area of the South Side where the hospitals are?),
the first stage of displacement is already in effect.

Third, the ‘mafia-like’ network of Brown alumni that live in Providence
‘dominate, divert, or pacify’ the non-profit industry and marginalise the leadership
of local residents, particularly low-income youth of colour (Scholar Punk, 2014).
First, non-profit organisations are legally recognised as 501(c)(3) organisations and
were constructed by the state after the protests of the 1960s and 1970s in order to
surveil and control social dissent (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007).
Rhode Island and New York are tied with the highest percentage of nonprofits
workers (i.e. 18%), which includes those employed at Brown University, which is a
501(c)(3) organisation (Scholar Punk, 2014). Given this context, as products of a
‘progressive’ university—and non-profit—Brown students and alumni are
encouraged to do non-profit work during their time at Brown and beyond. Brown’s
Swearer Center for Public Service supports neoliberal education around leading
and starting non-profits in the context of developing student leadership and profit,
but rarely critically or through a lens of community needs or impact on communities
(Brown University, 2015g; Scholar Punk, 2014). ‘Strongly resembling neocolonial
missionary work, the University lauds nonprofit work as a career path in which
students can specialise and develop their skills and expertise in’ (Scholar Punk,
2014). With the non-profit industry composing a large portion of the state’s
economy, the leadership of non-profits largely is largely in the hands of Brown
students and alumni and not in the hands of local organisers.

These three case studies demonstrate Brown’s displacement of the
leadership, communities and economies of predominantly low-income residents of
colour in Providence. Furthermore, these examples illustrate Brown’s investment in
various forms of gentrification, displacement, urban renewal, police surveillance that have the economic and social impacts of displacing blue collar work, outsourcing labour, and dominating local social movements.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the academic-military-prison-industrial complex (AMPIC) and situated the research site, Brown University, within that framework through case studies at international, domestic and local scales. In the following chapters, I discuss how students define their lived experiences with these structural power dynamics and the ways such encounters are intimately felt. The everyday lived experiences of race, gender, and sexuality based (micro)aggressions of students at Brown will be situated within this broader structural context of the university and the AMPIC. Additionally, the following chapters build upon this chapter’s focus on the use of speech-acts to mark institutions or people as ‘progressive’ or insisting upon ‘academic freedom’ as a progressive value, and the ways such rhetoric materially enables a continuation or fortification of the status quo. Applying an abolitionist framework that makes such inconsistencies visible, Chapter 5 discusses the empirical work of constructing an ‘insurgent geography’ within the university through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project on (micro)aggressions led by a team of undergraduates of colour, women, non-binary, and queer undergraduates. The rationale of this insurgent space was to collectively construct a small pocket in which anti-imperialist transgressions can be practiced and supported, while navigating the material precarity associated with insurgent scholarship, and developing a support network.
Chapter 5. The Work of Insurgent Geographies

Introduction

This chapter makes connections between the academic-military-prison industrial complex (or AMPIC) as discussed in Chapter 4 and the everyday lived experiences of race, gender, and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at the case site (Brown University) that emerged through the insurgent geographies of PAR. As a space specifically designed to support students of colour, women, non-binary and LGBTQ students, the PAR team at Brown was intended to be co-constructed as an insurgent geography in which co-researchers could momentarily (attempt to) escape, discuss, research and collectively detox from the violence of the AMPIC.

This chapter begins with an overview of the PAR team’s initial understandings of (micro)aggressions and intersectionality that emerged from the insurgent place-making processes (see Chapter 3). Then the chapter leads into co-researchers’ and participants’ encounters with (micro)aggressions at the case site and their commentary on the relationship between (micro)aggressions, intersectionality and space in the AMPIC and at the research site. In so doing, I outline spatial themes of the shared (micro)aggressions and locations within the university that co-researchers have identified as ‘toxic geographies’ or places they identify as having high concentrations of race, gender, and sexuality based (micro)aggressions.

70 The particular notion of ‘(micro)aggression’ is intentional in order to emphasize the fact that (micro)aggressions are everyday manifestations of structural violence. The rationale for this stylistic choice is discussed in detail later in this chapter.
Initial Understandings: (Micro)aggressions + Intersectionality

In the first month of meeting as a PAR team, each co-researcher (see Table 7 in Chapter 3 for introductions of and by each co-researcher) shared a project that dealt with (micro)aggressions that resonated with them in order to get a baseline of where co-researchers’ were coming from in terms of their location and understandings of (micro)aggressions and intersectionality. This process highlighted a variety of recurring themes that are discussed throughout this section, namely that most of their knowledge came from social media (e.g. Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, websites); many understood (micro)aggressions to be deeply entangled with structures of oppression (i.e. macroaggressions); examples were intersectional (i.e. focused on Black women, other women of colour, and gender non-conforming people of colour) or single-axis (i.e. focused on one variable of identity at a time; e.g. racial (micro)aggressions); and many examples took creative and audio-visual formats that used humour or satire (e.g. independent film, YouTube videos, photography, website, social media). The following baseline of the PAR team’s initial understandings of (micro)aggressions and intersectionality changed over the course of the semester’s project, as discussed later in this chapter. As follows, I provide a summary of each co-researcher’s self-description in Figure 1 by focusing on specific aspects of their positionality, namely whether they experience or produce race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions.

In conversation with the PAR team in one of the first meetings, Gina described the Twitter conversation ‘#lessclassicallybeautiful.’ As a non-LGBTQ ‘African American female’ (see Figure 1), Gina is located at the intersection of race and gender marginalisation. In general terms, she experiences race (specifically...
anti-Black) and gender based (micro)aggressions and produces sexuality based (micro)aggressions. The hashtag ‘#lessclassicallybeautiful’ spoke back to the disparagement of Black women espoused by the then-recent New York Times article ‘Wrought in Rhimes’s Image’ by Alessandra Stanley. Stanley critiqued Shonda Rhimes’s then-new TV show How To Get Away With Murder starring Viola Davis, calling Rhimes an ‘angry Black woman’ and characterising Davis as ‘less classically beautiful.’ Twitter, along with other places on the Internet, protested Stanley’s comments and placed them within the centuries-long history of how ‘Black women’s hairstyles, dance moves, physical features and even slang has been mocked, denigrated and appropriated by mainstream white culture’ (Clifton, 2014). In response, ‘#lessclassicallybeautiful’ became trending\(^71\) as a hashtag on Twitter in which dozens of people broke down the racially gendered coding of Stanley’s words (e.g. ‘@nytimes needs to stop perpetuating harmful Eurocentric (read: racist) beauty ideals #LessClassicallyBeautiful #ViolaDavis is #stunning,’ see Bear, 2014). Gina said she did not know whether this was an example of a (micro)aggression; she considered it a macroaggression since this was an accumulation of many moments and (micro)aggressions of anti-Black misogyny, also known as misogynoir, across various scales (e.g. local, national, international) demonstrating an understanding of the deep entanglement between micro- and macro-aggressions (Gina, 23/9/14)\(^72\). This was an intersectional example of (micro)aggressions in its focus on Black women (and the misogynoir of beauty standards) that took place in social media, namely on Twitter. The hashtag element

\(^71\) ‘Trending’ is a social media adjective popularised by Twitter and Facebook that describes a topic or headline that has become circulated at high volumes to the point of becoming popularised; in other words, a topic or headline that a majority of people are talking about.

\(^72\) Source: Gina Perry, 23/9/14, Sharing (micro)aggressions Projects in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
of Twitter can enable the spatial construction of virtual publics and community spaces that, in this case, push back against public (micro)aggressions and macroaggressions as evident in examples shared by other co-researchers. At the same time, everyday and structural violence undergird the virtual publics of Twitter (to learn more, see Morgan, 2015; Bates, 2013; Fileborn, 2015; Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014).

Hayaatee discussed another Twitter conversation that developed in response to another anti-Black New York Times article (Hayaatee, 23/9/14)\(^73\). As a ‘pansexual Black Syrian ciswoman’ (see Figure 1), Hayaatee is located at the intersection of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation. In general terms, she experiences race (specifically anti-Black), gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions. The discussion on Twitter that Hayaatee brought to the team was about Michael Brown, a Black teenager shot and murdered by Darren Wilson, a white police officer, in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014. The article was an obituary written by John Eligon who called Michael Brown ‘no angel’ because he once stole a box of cigars and got into a ‘scuffle with a neighbor,’ ‘dabbled in drugs and alcohol,’ and recently was writing rap lyrics as if a way to justify his death and blame the victim as ‘deserving’ of being killed (Eligon, 2014). Dozens of people took to Twitter to protest this statement and unpack its anti-Blackness and victim blaming through the trending hashtags ‘#noangel’ and ‘#ideservedit’ (e.g. ‘Wow @nytimes there’s ppl on your staff who dabble in drugs & alcohol. None of them have been executed by cops. Are they still angels or no??’, bro in salmon shorts, 2014). The temporary community spaces of the ‘#noangel’ and ‘#ideservedit’

\(^73\) Source: Hayaatee, 23/9/14, Sharing (micro)aggressions Projects in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
hashtags on Twitter became public places that enabled an identification of the bias in the article and accumulation of personal and famous examples of people who engaged in the activities attributed to Michael Brown, asking if those people deserve to be murdered in to make visible and delegitimise the author’s anti-Blackness and victim-blaming.

April shared another virtual public space curated on Twitter organised by the hashtag '#solidarityisforwhitewomen,' which trended globally in Summer 2013. As a ‘South East Asian American’ and ‘queer woman’ (see Figure 1), April is located at the intersection of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation. In very general terms, she experiences race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions. She informed the PAR team that this hashtag was ‘originally started by women of colour’ who were ‘calling out self-proclaimed feminists’ at the blogs Jezebel and Feministing (April, 23/9/14\textsuperscript{74}; e.g. ‘#SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen when your concept of feminist history starts & ends with middle class white women. Not the WOC doing the work,’ Kendall, 2013). The hashtag started in one particular case where ‘women of colour called [Hugo Schwyzer] out for the way he handled’ a situation and the ‘white feminist comments’ that interjected had ‘more concern about his mental health than his treatment of women of colour’ (April, 23/9/14). ‘Mikki Kendall started the hashtag to criticise daily interactions about feminism and the way it’s convoluted,’ which led to a global conversation (April, 23/9/14). For example: ‘#solidarityisforwhitewomen is when you’re sick of the hashtag for a few hours, and we’re sick of your privilege for a few centuries’ (Bogado, 2013). This is one of hundreds of examples of Tweets and various conversations on Twitter that provide

\textsuperscript{74} Source: April Primavera, 23/9/14, Sharing (micro)aggressions Projects in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
examples of the ways in which mainstream white feminism not only historically and currently excludes women of colour, but also refuses to address these issues (Ryan, 2013). This is an intersectional instance of (micro)aggressions due to its emphasis on women of colour, intersections of race and gender, and historical and contemporary tensions between white women and women of colour.

Nicholas discussed the Twitter-based social movement of Fall 2013 organised by the Black Student Union (BSU) at the University of Michigan. As a ‘mixed, bisexual [closeted]’ man (see Figure 1 for Nicholas’s self-description), Nicholas is located at the intersection of race and sexuality marginalisation. In very general terms, he experiences race (specifically anti-Black) and sexuality based (micro)aggressions, and produces gender based (micro)aggressions. The BSU started the campaign ‘Being Black at Michigan’ or #BBUM in protest of the ‘lack of Black representation, recruitment and retention’ at Michigan (Nicholas, 23/9/14).75 Nicholas continued to explain:

Since the 1970s, there was a movement called the Black Action Movement at University of Michigan by the BSU when they had 3% Black students, which was not representative of the state. Now, Michigan’s demographic is about 14% Black, and that’s just people who have access to the census survey; at the university it’s about 6-7% [Black]. (Nicholas, 23/9/14)

The BSU made demands in Spring 2013 and Fall 2013. Nicholas explained that he has friends at University of Michigan who brought this to his attention by sharing various articles in which BSU ‘made 7 demands of the university’ (Freed, 2014; Byng, 2013). This single-axis example points to the relevance, accessibility and

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75 Source: Nicholas Peterson, 23/9/14, Sharing (micro)aggressions Projects in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
power of Twitter to construct public spaces in which to protest and seek social change, particularly for college students in US universities.

Dame shared the parody website ‘Seeking Asian Bride’ (Mama, 2008). As an ‘Asian identifying woman’ and not LGBTQ (see Figure 1), Dame is located at the intersection of race and gender marginalisation. In general terms, she experiences race and gender based (micro)aggressions and produces sexuality based (micro)aggressions. She described the site as ‘for people looking for a bride’ to ‘think it’s real’ and challenge ‘men trying to find Geisha or super compliant wives’ (Dame, 23/9/14). It was made in 2008 and is currently not active. She expressed that the project stood out to her due to its use of satire and humour to make (micro)aggressions visible, in this case racial, gendered, and sexualised (micro)aggressions. This is an intersectional case of (micro)aggressions in its focus on uncovering stereotypes of Asian women.

Susie expressed being ‘fed up with everyday sexism’ and ‘Googled it and a Twitter handle popped up [@everydaysexism] and so did a website [everydaysexism.com] started by nice British ladies tired of dealing with everyday sexism with the goal to combat the idea that sexism is done, which is an equivalent of ‘we’re in a post-racial era” (Susie, 23/9/14). As a non-LGBTQ ‘person of colour…light-skinned African American…woman’ (see Figure 1), Susie is located at the intersection of race and gender marginalisation. In general terms, she experiences race (specifically anti-Black) and gender based (micro)aggressions and produces sexuality based (micro)aggressions. She explained that it is a

76 Source: Dame Tori, 23/9/14, Sharing (micro)aggressions Projects in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
77 Source: Susie Toro, 23/9/14, Sharing (micro)aggressions Projects in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
‘website where people can post anonymous experiences [including and] beyond (micro)aggressions’ (Susie, 23/9/14).

betta shared a Tumblr called ‘Shit Rich College Students Say,’ which is similar to the ‘Everyday Sexism Project’ in that, as betta explained, people ‘can submit anonymous [class-based] (micro)aggression experienced all over the world’ (betta, 23/9/14). As a ‘Black…pansexual woman’ (see Figure 1), betta is located at the intersection of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation. She experiences race (specifically anti-Black), gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions. She mentioned that many of the entries were ‘triggering’ and spoke to her experience as a working-class person (betta, 23/9/14).

Lilah shared academic Kevin Nadal’s photography project on LGBTQ (micro)aggressions featured on BuzzFeed. As a ‘white…queer…ciswoman’ (see Figure 1), Lilah is located at the intersection of gender and sexuality marginalisation. She experiences gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions and produces race based (micro)aggressions. In Nadal’s project that Lilah shared, multiple people who identified as LGBTQ were photographed with a whiteboard on which they wrote down sexuality or gender based (micro)aggressions they experienced (Nigatu, 2014; Lilah, 23/9/14).

Susie’s, betta’s, and Lilah’s examples are primarily single-axis focused (e.g. sexism, classism, heterosexism and cissexism). The first two solely take place in social media, namely through Tumblr, and use anonymity to curate virtual public spaces in which to make (micro)aggressions visible and maintain the safety of

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78 Source: betta newlin, 23/9/14, Sharing (micro)aggressions Projects in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
79 Source: Lilah Keen, 23/9/14, Sharing (micro)aggressions Projects in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
participants. The latter has a live non-virtual and non-anonymous element where people were invited to a semi-private event in which they shared their (micro)aggressions in person, were photographed, and consented to having their images and stories shared publicly online.

Kieren shared the BuzzFeed YouTube series ‘If ___Said the Stuff White People Say’ and in the meeting screened the video, ‘If Latinos Said the Stuff that White People Say’ (BuzzFeed, 2014). As a ‘Latinx (non-white), non-binary trans, queer’ person (see Figure 1), Kieren is located at the intersection of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation. They experience race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions. Kieren explained that they picked this series because, like Dame, they appreciated the utility of humour to make these racial (micro)aggressions visible (Kieren, 23/9/14).

Relatedly, Coreen talked about the satirical independent film *Dear White People* (2014; Coreen, 23/9/14). As a ‘queer Black American woman’ (see Figure 1), Coreen is located at the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality marginalisation. She experiences race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions. The film *Dear White People* is about being Black at a PWI and discussed a series of promotional videos that take the form of public service announcements (PSA) called, ‘The More You Know About Black People’ (Dear White People, 2014). Similar to a variety of projects shared, this video used humour to illuminate anti-Black micro- and macro-aggressions.

80 Source: Kieren Perez, 23/9/14, Sharing (micro)aggressions Projects in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
81 Source: Coreen D’arcangelo, 23/9/14, Sharing (micro)aggressions Projects in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
In addition, Lilah shared a *College Humor* video called ‘Columbussing’ that uses humour to talk about the histories and current colonialisms and racisms as practiced by white people, particularly the ways that white folks claim we have ‘discovered’ something that has actually existed long before we stumbled upon it, such as a bar or the North American continent (Humor, 2014). All three examples are primarily single-axis focused (e.g. racial (micro)aggressions, anti-Black (micro)aggressions, settler colonial (micro)aggressions), take place in social media through YouTube, and take audio-visual forms that use humour to make (micro)aggressions visible. In addition, the ages of the creators of all three examples are similar (i.e. within 5-10 years) to the ages of the co-researchers.

In sum, the recurring themes of these examples included the emphasis of social media as a location for knowledge about (micro)aggressions, the appreciation for the use of humour and narrative in discussing (micro)aggressions, an understanding of intersectionality as the entanglement of race and gender, and understanding the deep entanglement between (micro)aggressions and structural violence. All ten were projects based on social media, whether it be a Twitter hashtag related to popular culture, current events, student protests, a website or Tumblr where anonymous stories are shared, BuzzFeed photography or video series, an independent movie, or YouTube videos.

The commonality of social media points to the time and location of this PAR group and its insurgent geography, primarily their age (i.e. 18-21) and position as millennials in an age of social media at an elite and liberal institution of higher education. For this team of co-researchers and many of their peers, social media is an everyday part of life and one of many place-making tools to discuss (micro)aggression and make them visible. The fact that social media was the initial
source of knowledge about (micro)aggressions for co-researchers points to the absence of, and limited access to, such knowledge from the institution of higher education that they attend. The co-researchers came into the PAR project with sophisticated understandings of what (micro)aggressions are based on knowledge they sought out via social media, yet most had never been introduced to the over four decades of scholarship on (micro)aggressions. Given the fact that the co-researchers were self-motivated and so interested to learn about (micro)aggressions that they committed one or two semesters to this PAR team, this disparity in their lack of knowledge about such academic work suggests structural issues about the lack of awareness or low priority that faculty and other educators have around topics of (micro)aggressions as well as the inaccessibility of such knowledge without the guidance of a faculty member or material access to relevant journal articles.

Most projects implemented humour, creativity, fiction, anonymity and narrative to make (micro)aggressions visible. The respective co-researchers identified these tools as interesting and potential methods for the PAR project. Their emphasis on narrative aligns with scholarship in Critical Race Theory (CRT) that argues that the perspectives of the marginalised (e.g. people of colour in the case of CRT) are necessary in order to understand the materialities and lived experiences of structural oppression, such as racism (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015). In addition, these examples illustrated co-researchers’ understandings of intersectionality, single-axis issues, and what interested them most within the broad categories of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions, namely the focus on women of colour, anti-Blackness, racism,
whiteness, settler colonialism, heterosexism, classism and sexism in various contexts (e.g. higher education, film, popular culture).

Further, most of these examples demonstrated co-researchers’ sophisticated understandings of what (micro)aggressions are in terms of the relationship between (micro)aggressions and structural oppression. In the next meeting, co-researchers synthesised common themes from sharing their examples in order to get to a mutual initial understanding of (micro)aggressions, quotes from which are used as follows. In that conversation, co-researchers defined (micro)aggressions as deeply entangled with structural oppression and decided as a group to start writing ‘(micro)aggression’ as ‘(micro)aggression’ to communicate ‘the connection of micro to macro’ and how ‘(micro)aggressions are symptomatic of a larger structure.’ Throughout the PAR project, the team’s perspective was that these moments of (micro)aggressions are not insignificant and that they are manifestations of structural oppression, as evidenced in the action research project the team designed and implemented, which is discussed in Chapter 6.

In addition, the team discussed the utility of the term ‘(micro)aggression’ in giving language to often-invalidated lived experiences and the palatability of the language in enabling non-defensive conversation. For instance, Kieren pointed out that ‘the term is useful’ in the sense that (micro)aggressions can describe issues of identity-based violence that are not the result of physical violence such as a ‘slur or beating someone up’ (Kieren, 26/9/14). The utility of the language of (micro)aggressions lies not only in its capacity to speak to everyday lived experiences as Kieren noted, but also, as Coreen pointed out, in its ‘currency of it..."
as an academic term’ that often ‘softens the blow for the perpetrator’ when naming a behaviour or action a ‘(micro)aggression’ (Coreen, 26/9/14)\(^83\). For instance, Susie pointed out that while an academic term, she had ‘had these experiences’ and this term ‘gave language’ to those experiences, which is powerful in and of itself (Susie, 26/9/14)\(^84\). Gina added that the utility of the language of (micro)aggression is that it is ‘more palatable’ (Gina, 26/9/14)\(^85\). Gina continued by sharing that ‘prior to learning the term,’ in high school ‘someone said I was always ‘articulate’’ and ‘I consider her an innocuous racist’ (Gina, 26/9/14). Gina went on to say ‘I have no qualms to say she’s racist’ because ‘she has internalised racism. As a society we like to make things palatable,’ but ‘embedded in the term [(micro)aggression] is racism so let’s call it the way it is’ (Gina, 26/9/14). In this way, Gina argued that the palatability of the language of ‘(micro)aggression’ obscures the reality that when talking about ‘(micro)aggression,’ we are talking about broader systems of oppressions, like racism, that produce and enable (micro)aggressions. Based on this conversation, as aforementioned, as a team we started writing ‘(micro)aggression’ as ‘(micro)aggression.’

Co-researchers’ initial understandings of (micro)aggressions maps well onto the definition of (micro)aggressions detailed in the literature review (see Chapter 2) and elsewhere, namely that the ‘micro’ nature of (micro)aggressions refers to their everyday and often unconscious nature, not their impact. The accumulation of these small slights over the course of days, weeks, months, and years manifests materially in diminished mental and physical health, sense of belonging and safety,

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\(^83\) Source: Coreen D’arcangelo, 26/9/14, Discussing Definition of ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.

\(^84\) Source: Susie Toro, 26/9/14, Discussing Definition of ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.

\(^85\) Source: Gina Perry, 26/9/14, Discussing Definition of ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
and ultimately productivity or capacity to achieve one’s goals (Sue, 2010). (Micro)aggressions manifest in a variety of formats, including interpersonal (micro)aggressions that take place between people through verbal and non-verbal encounters, as well as environmental (micro)aggressions in which places and structures (e.g. portraits of old white men, buildings named after old white men) inflict (micro)aggressions on people. In the context of this thesis, spaces with high concentrations of race, gender, and sexuality based (micro)aggressions are known as toxic geographies (Mahtani, 2014; Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015).

In a meeting towards the end of our first month meeting as a PAR team, we shared with each other stories of (micro)aggressions that we have experienced, witnessed and perpetuated within the context of Brown University. Several co-researchers expressed difficulty in discussing (micro)aggressions that we had perpetuated, such as Nicholas who said he ‘had to think about times I perpetuate’ (micro)aggressions (Nicholas 26/9/14)\(^{86}\). The stories that co-researchers shared focused on (micro)aggressions they perpetuated at Brown versus at home. In their telling of these stories, individual and collective imagined geographies of Brown and ‘home,’ often defined through contrast between the two, came to the surface. Susie talked about perpetuating (micro)aggressions at Brown, but ‘I know I did more at home’ (Susie, 26/9/14)\(^{87}\). Kieren mentioned the experiences they shared were mostly at Brown ‘but at home’ many of their friends go to public schools\(^{88}\) and

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\(^{86}\) Source: Nicholas Peterson, 26/9/14, Discussing Experiences of ‘(micro)aggression’ at Brown, in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
\(^{87}\) Source: Susie Toro, 26/9/14, Discussing Experiences of ‘(micro)aggression’ at Brown, in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
\(^{88}\) Public schools in a US context are state-sponsored institutions that anyone can attend and are rarely elite, unlike private schools.
‘I’m the only one at an elite institution’ (Kieren, 26/9/14). Hayaatee mentioned she focused on (micro)aggressions at Brown and those are the ones she addresses, whereas ‘at home it’s easier to not address’ (Hayaatee, 26/9/14). April followed up by talking about how ‘at home, my friends use words not meant for them’ in which case it is ‘easy to produce’ (micro)aggressions ‘without people to call you out’ (April, 26/9/14). April reflectively admitted, ‘I perpetuate [(micro)aggressions] against the trans community’ since that’s how ‘I’ve been socialised [as a cisgender person]’ (April, 26/9/14). Dame spoke to ‘being complicit with silence around (micro)aggressions’ in an example when she was in a ‘car with friends in Los Angeles in a different neighbourhood’ and they locked the car doors presumably out of a particular racialised and classed fear (Dame, 26/9/14). betta followed up with a similar story about when she and Susie did winter projects last year through Brown’s Center for Public Service in which they ‘lived in a church one week while focusing on education in Providence’ (betta, 26/9/14). When they went to Olneyville, a neighbourhood on the west side of Providence predominantly inhabited by low-income people of colour, a student in charge ‘told us to put our bags in the trunk of their car’ (betta, 26/9/14).

These stories, while distinct, share the commonality of the importance of place in perpetuating (micro)aggressions and the distinct imagined geographies between Brown and ‘home.’ For the former, as April, Hayaatee, Dame, betta and

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89 Source: Kieren Perez, 26/9/14, Discussing Experiences of (micro)aggression’ at Brown, in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
90 Source: Hayaatee, 26/9/14, Discussing Experiences of (micro)aggression’ at Brown, in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
91 Source: April Primavera, 26/9/14, Discussing Experiences of (micro)aggression’ at Brown, in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
92 Source: Dame Tori, 26/9/14, Discussing Experiences of (micro)aggression’ at Brown, in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
93 Source: betta newlin, 26/9/14, Discussing Experiences of (micro)aggression’ at Brown, in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
Susie noted, more (micro)aggressions happen at ‘home’ (or in non-Brown places in betta’s case) than at Brown because there are fewer people at ‘home’ who will ‘call you out’ or it is ‘easier to not address’ or be ‘complicit with silence around (micro)aggressions.’ These comments signify imagined differences between these two places (i.e. Brown and home) based on language and education of the people inhabiting those places. Kieren’s comments paint a similar picture in making explicit connections between the elite-ness and privatised nature of Brown University and the fact they have more conversations about (micro)aggressions there than at home. At the same time, betta’s story reminds us of the reality of multiple imagined geographies of Brown existing at the same time in the fact that her peers locked away their belongings in non-Brown occupied Providence, a behaviour that would be out of place at the elite place of Brown. Such behaviours suggest an imagined geography of Brown as ‘safe’ and Olneyville as ‘dangerous.’ Taking into consideration the demographic differences of these two places (see Chapter 4), where Brown is located on the East Side, a predominantly white and wealthy area, and Olneyville is a predominantly low-income and people of colour place, such imagined geographies of ‘safety’ and ‘danger’ are unsurprisingly racially coded. betta’s story is one of (micro)aggressions perpetuated by her peers based on disparate racially and class coded understandings of place. In sum, these stories illustrate multiple imagined geographies of Brown as exceptional—as often defined in contrast with ‘home’ or Providence—in its whiteness, elite-ness, and educated-ness.

Various co-researchers individually and as a group have explicitly highlighted the inconsistencies between the imagined geographies of Brown University as an exceptional, safe, well-educated and progressive space and its
material geographies within the AMPIC, and identified those as potential issues to address through this PAR project. For instance, Hayaatee discussed her work with a student campaign to pressure Brown to divest from prisons. Based on that experience she expressed that she is ‘so terrified about Brown because I don’t know anything about it’ (Hayaatee, 26/9/14). She explained that comment through a story of how she ‘tried to go to the Investments Office’ to learn about where and how Brown invests (Hayaatee, 26/9/14). She could not find where the office was physically located through Internet searches on Brown’s website or through other search engines. She called to find out and they ‘hung up on me’ when she explained what she was looking for, which she perceived as ‘so shady’ (Hayaatee, 26/9/14). Hayaatee added that based on that experience and others, one goal for herself in this PAR team was ‘to be as transparent as possible and involve as many people as possible’ (Hayaatee, 26/9/14). April responded by sharing a similar goal she has for herself was to share ‘what I learn here [in the PAR team] with administrators and organisations,’ who she identified as ‘the largest perpetrators’ of (micro)aggressions (April, 26/9/14). Kieren affirmed April’s identification of the administration’s perpetuation of (micro)aggressions in pointing out disconnections between their rhetoric and actions around diversity. Kieren stated they ‘want to address the administration’ in our PAR project in order to show administrators ‘what students go through on a daily basis’ and suggested the administration incorporate ‘(micro)aggressions into policies so that it doesn’t take a hate crime for someone to be considered to be violating Diversity™ and Tolerance™ and Acceptance™ policies’ (Kieren, 9/26/14).

Kieren pointed to the neoliberal use of verbal commitments to diversity in institutional life at Brown in that such rhetoric alone does not necessarily manifest
change, as evidenced in the commentary in their usage of ‘TM’ or trademarks. The Brown administration, from their perspective, only responds to ‘hate crimes’ and invalidates the everyday indignities of (micro)aggressions, which are not seen as serious issues on campus:

People still think that racism, misogyny, heterosexism, and other forms of bigotry and oppression can only express themselves in overt instances like a hate crime or explicit admissions of bigotry. For this reason, (micro)aggressions go unspoken about and there isn’t enough support for individuals who face them often. It is especially an ignored issue at institutions like Brown, which has a reputation for being progressive and liberal. I think there is this false belief that Brown is a sort of utopia where all identities are respected and the administration cannot possibly uphold institutional oppression. This common misconception is a (micro)aggression in itself, in my opinion, because people will fall back on it to discount and invalidate the lived experiences of people with marginalized identities at institutions like Brown. (Kieren, 10/5/14)\textsuperscript{94}

The above quoted excerpt from Kieren’s application to the PAR team from May 2014 provides an introduction to the ways that the exceptionalism of Brown University impacts how (micro)aggressions take place. In Chapter 4, I discussed Brown’s exceptionalism at international, domestic, and local scales and in this section, I discuss such exceptionalism through the visceral experiences of (micro)aggressions as lived by the PAR team at Brown. As Kieren notes, the common ‘false belief’ in Brown as a post-racial and post-oppression ‘utopia’ stems, in part, from its perceived character as a progressive ‘hippie’ institution of learning (see Chapter 4). This imagined geography of Brown as a unique place where

\textsuperscript{94} Source: Kieren Perez, 10/5/14, Kieren’s Application to Join PAR Team on (micro)aggressions at Brown, submitted individually via electronic application (see Appendix 1).
oppression is exceptional enables the production of microinvalidations (a form of (micro)aggressions) that not only render marginalised people’s experiences of micro- and macro-aggressions as unfounded and fabricated, but also stereotype marginalised people as hyper-sensitive liars. Such exceptionalism works to displace conversations about oppression and anti-oppression work, which in turn solidifies the place of oppression within the institution.

The next section considers the exceptional geographies of Brown through an exploration of the entangled relationship between (micro)aggressions and space. Based on an analysis of narrative data, the following section provides an overview of spatial themes pertaining to three different kinds of (micro)aggressions (see Chapter 2), namely environmental (micro)aggressions (theme: ‘brick wall’), microinvalidations (theme: ‘ungeographic’) and microinsults (theme: criminalisation), defined in the following three sections.

**Brick Wall: Environmental (Micro)aggressions at Brown**

>Diversity workers acquire a critical orientation to institutions in the process of coming up against them. They become conscious of 'the brick wall,' as that which keeps its place even when an official commitment to diversity has been given. Only the practical labour of 'coming up against' the institution allows this wall to become apparent. To those who do not come up against it, the wall does not appear—the institution is lived and experienced as being open, committed, and diverse. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 174)

Sarah Ahmed’s description of the lived and material experience of structural oppression as a ‘brick wall’ within institutions of higher education is a spatial
metaphor that can be attributed to the visceral experience of environmental (micro)aggressions in institutions. First, I unpack this quote and Ahmed’s notion of the ‘brick wall,’ then I connect Ahmed’s brick wall to the experience of environmental (micro)aggressions, and finally provide examples from my empirical research to support this argument.

Ahmed defines the ‘brick wall’ as the materiality of institutional whiteness and structural racism that consistently resists bodies of colour and other diversity workers despite institutional pledges to diversity (Ahmed, 2012). ‘Diversity workers’ refers to employees of institutions, primarily universities, whose job is to make the institution more inclusive for marginalised occupants. Marginalised occupants are often perceived as doing diversity work by providing the institution with diversity by merely existing as Other (e.g. person of colour and/or woman and/or LGBTQ, etc.).

‘You [as a person of colour] already embody diversity by providing an institution of whiteness with colour’ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 4). In other words, marginalised occupants are often also seen as diversity workers regardless of self-identification or whether they are getting paid for their physical and emotional labour. Returning to the quote above, diversity workers’ positionality provides them with a unique spatial understanding of the inner-workings of institutional whiteness and other forms of structural oppression through inhabiting and their navigation of institutional spaces, lived and visceral knowledge that is largely inaccessible to peers and colleagues at the institution who do not inhabit diversity through embodiment or employment (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015).

Encounters with brick walls are lived, felt and material experiences of structural oppression, the accumulation of which often result in injuring diversity workers and impeding the goal of diversifying the institution. Ahmed uses the
example of diversity workers striving to transform the university to be welcoming for people of colour, which involves making structural racism and institutional whiteness visible to peers and colleagues to whom such walls do not appear. Claims of unseen walls are frequently heard as non-existent problems concocted by troublemakers:

To use the language of racism is to risk not being heard. We keep using the language of racism, whatever they say or do. But to keep on using the language does not mean you get the message through. No wonder that antiracist work can feel like banging your head against a brick wall. The wall keeps its place, so it is you who gets sore. Embodying diversity can be a sore point, but the soreness of that point is either hidden from their view…or attributed to us (as if we talk about walls because we are sore). (Ahmed, 2012: 156-157)

The invisibility of the wall shifts the location of the issue, displacing the concern of institutional racism and replacing it with the diversity worker as the problem and a ‘killjoy’ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 179). The diversity worker is regularly placed into the impossible location of striving to achieve the goal of improving the institution’s inclusivity or merely trying to exist while ‘diverse,’ while being unheard, treated as a problem, and devoid of institutional resources to accomplish such goals. In other words, they are asked to tear down a brick wall with nothing but their bare hands despite existing or resultant injuries. The repetition of such visceral encounters accumulates to create wounds at the scale of the body instead of changes at the scale of the institution (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015).

Given the particular spatiality of the metaphor (i.e. a physical obstruction), this chapter orients the brick wall as the physical environments within a university
(e.g. classrooms, departments, buildings) that inflict harm on marginalised inhabitants. ‘The wall is what we come up against: the sedimentation of history into a barrier that is solid and tangible in the present, a barrier to change as well as to the mobility of some, a barrier that remains invisible to those who can flow into the spaces created by institutions’ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 175). Those who do not inhabit marginalisation and ‘do not come up against’ brick walls have increased mobility within the institution and are not burdened with additional, often devalued, emotional labour and often unseen injury. This positioning of the brick wall as the location of environmental (micro)aggressions is applied to the research site and explored through two spatial themes: toxic geographies (e.g. places with high concentrations of (micro)aggressions) and geographies of safety (e.g. places with low concentrations of (micro)aggressions).

As defined and discussed in detail in Chapter 2, for the purpose of this thesis toxic geographies are defined as places with high concentrations of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions. The locations of toxic geographies at Brown University were identified during four months of meeting as a PAR team from September to December 2014 and through the stories shared at the Hurt People Hurt People open art event in December 2014. Participants pinpointed STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields, the department of Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), specific buildings and adornments (e.g. portraits), and a variety of miscellaneous spaces as toxic geographies at Brown University, detailed as follows.

STEM was identified as an example of a toxic geography due to its lack of active inclusion and accommodation of students of colour, including poor
representation amongst faculty, limited mentors for marginalised students, and feelings of isolation:

*I want my concentration to stop being a (micro)aggression. Every single day, it’s 50 shades of beige: my advisor, the people in my advising group, the professors, students, teaching assistants. Especially in STEM, we need more recruitment because students of colour need support, especially those who are interested in social justice. We literally need to divide our time between STEM and BCSC and it’s a sacrifice to do both. Balancing that time is extremely difficult.* (Kieren, 26/9/14)\(^{95}\)

As a student of colour in STEM and an employee of the Brown Center for Students of Color (BCSC), these comments based on Kieren’s lived experience are a crucial form of spatial knowledge that highlights high concentrations of racial (micro)aggressions in the departments, classrooms, and offices of STEM fields at Brown, largely due to issues of representation. As geographers Joshi, McCutcheon & Sweet discuss in their recent paper, underrepresentation often manifests as a (micro)aggression in the form of both a microinsult and microinvalidation (2015). As a microinsult, the underrepresentation of people of colour, for instance, creates everyday environments where students and faculty of colour are frequently subject to insensitive comments, increased surveillance and implicit messages that they are not valued and not considered intelligent:

*Underrepresentation can be experienced as a microinsult, people of color may feel as though they are in a fishbowl at meetings, stared at by other participants. The lack of people of color also has effects on instructors of* 

\(^{95}\) Source: Kieren Perez, 26/9/14, Discussing Possible Project Ideas and Goals, in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
As a microinvalidation, underrepresentation places students and faculty of colour in a location of marginalisation and marks them as ‘minorities’ given the context of a predominantly white department or institution, despite the reality that they are part of a global majority and may be part of other critical masses of people of colour in other spheres of their lives and histories. In turn, students of colour and early career faculty of colour have few, if any, role models and possible mentors that look like them to provide validation and context-based support, while white students and early career white faculty have a plethora of examples from which to chose and receive validation (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015). The impact of becoming simultaneously hyper-visible and invisible often takes the form of being unheard, unappreciated, and unsupported which can enable feelings of isolation and diminished self-esteem in departmental cultures, as Kieren notes in their experience of STEM at Brown.

Understanding the entangled relationship between an overrepresentation of whiteness and the prevalence of racial (micro)aggressions is so pervasive that April admitted she had previously ‘assumed that STEM fields are not racially aware’ due to the demographics of those fields in which there is a ‘majority of white males in STEM’ (April, 26/9/14). Further, Saraf’s research (see Chapters 3-4) identified STEM fields at Brown as toxic geographies for students of colour based on a qualitative survey she designed and disseminated in which students of colour named places on campus where they feel unsafe and explained why. ‘Student

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96 Source: April Primavera, 26/9/14, Discussing Possible Project Ideas and Goals, in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
aversion to buildings housing STEM programs illuminates the perceived inaccessibility of this field to minorities, and the resulting underrepresentation that occurs’ (Saraf, 2014). In addition, of the approximately 80 (micro)aggressions shared at the *Hurt People Hurt People* event in December 2014, there were seven instances of (micro)aggressions within the STEM fields at Brown that illustrate the ways underrepresentation along lines of race, gender and sexuality facilitates the production of (micro)aggressions. Examples of microinsults included:

“*Being a NEUROSURGEON is too hard for a WOMAN*” thanks mom. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

*Working on shift for Brown EMS, Patient:* “*You’re not going to let her lift the stretcher are you?*” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“How much do you think affirmative action helped you get into [the 8-year undergraduate + medical school program at Brown]?” *A coworker at my summer internship. My acceptance was more than just my skin color.* (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

These microinsults send implicit messages to students of colour and women specifically that they are not intelligent enough nor have the skills to succeed in STEM; and that they gained entry into the field due to their race, ethnicity or gender, not their talent or hard work. Instances of microinvalidations in STEM:

*Whenever I work on problem sets with my (all male) friends for one of my science classes, I notice that sometimes they won’t “hear” something I’ve*
suggested until one of them comes up with the same suggestion. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“CS [Computer Science] is so much work. Maybe I’ll switch to Gender/Sexuality Studies, I can learn how to be ASEXUAL!” Neither my concentration nor my identity are jokes to me! (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

The first microinvalidation is a classic case of being made invisible due to the underrepresentation of women in the department and its classes in which this student is marginalised by being unheard and unappreciated. The second is a complicated example that illustrates the perception of an academic discipline as not rigorous due to its focus on gender and sexuality (i.e. microinvalidation), the disparagement of the sexual orientation of asexuality (i.e. microinsult), and the impact of the underrepresentation of asexual (and other queer) students, faculty and mentors on facilitating the hyper-visibility and invisibility of asexual students and increased experiences of being unrecognised, misrecognised, and hurt through (micro)aggressions. In sum, through empirical research, STEM fields at Brown were identified as locations with high concentrations of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions largely due to the structural issues of underrepresentation that facilitate the construction of toxic spaces in which marginalised students in STEM are forced to navigate and encounter these daily injuries (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015).

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) was also identified as a space of toxic geographies by the PAR team and participants at Hurt People Hurt People. For instance, April shared her personal unease with CAPS and how that
conflicts with her job as a Residential Peer Leader (RPL; see Chapter 4). As a RPL she represents Brown through this employed position in which she lives in residential halls and supports first-year residents. She shared that ‘when I went to CAPS, I was asked if I want to take medical leave, which gave me an uneasy feeling not because I was a student or stressed, but because I’m a person of colour. I can’t trust them—so how can I convince my residents to do so?’ (April, 26/9/14). April points to racial (micro)aggressions she encountered at CAPS, primarily being asked if she wanted to leave Brown and not knowing if that was due to the unconscious racial bias of the counsellor. April added that her mistrust of CAPS based on the previously outlined and other experiences makes it ‘hard as the face of the institution’ as a RPL when ‘I don’t agree with the institution’ to support her first-year students and their mental health needs (April, 26/9/14).

CAPS is a predominantly white department with an underrepresentation of staff and therapists of colour, which can facilitate an environment with an increased expression of racial (micro)aggressions, as explained in detail in the case of STEM. In the case of a non-academic department whose goal is to care for students’ mental health, the impact of underrepresentation requires an understanding of this specific context, namely where mental health is already stigmatised in the national culture and there have been centuries of repeated injuries inflicted by mental health professionals on communities of colour, as well as women, non-binary and LGBTQ people, in maintaining structural racism (e.g. the construction of drapetomania to rationalise enslavement). This context coupled with underrepresentation and the lack of acknowledgement of either enables historically embedded concerns of racial injury to fester, leads to racial microinsults, and facilitates unmitigated mistrust of mental health providers’
capacity to effectively support the health of students of colour and other marginalised students.

Underrepresentation at Brown also manifests amongst the dozens of portraits that adorn the walls of the university that produce environmental microinvalidations largely along lines of race, gender, sexuality and class. Most if not ‘all the buildings’ on campus, as betta noted, have portraits ‘with rich white cisgender males’ that were influential in the establishment of this elite university (betta, 26/9/14)\textsuperscript{97}. Such portraits perpetuate environmental (micro)aggressions against low-income, people of colour, women, and non-binary people who inhabit or pass by those portraits on a daily basis by sending implicit messages that they do not belong, are guests and not at home in this institution, have limited if any mentors or examples that look like them, and that this institution was not created for people who look like them. For instance, several participants in Saraf’s research identified Sayles Hall as ‘unsafe’ to students of colour due to the fact that one of the main defining characteristics of that physical space is the dozens of people-sized portraits decorating the multiple story-high walls:

“\textit{Portraits of white people staring down at you. It's disconcerting.}” (Saraf, 2014)

“All the portraits of old, rich, white men make me uncomfortable. It’s an environmental (micro)aggression.” (Saraf, 2014)

\textsuperscript{97} Source: betta newlin, 26/9/14, Discussing Possible Project Ideas and Goals, in PAR Team Meeting, took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
These two quotes represent the voices of two students who participated in Saraf’s survey; both students identify the visceral experience of encountering these portraits as that of environmental (micro)aggressions, whether explicitly or in description of feeling ‘uncomfortable’ or feeling like they are under increased white surveillance as ‘disconcerting.’ Encountering these portraits everyday produces atmospheres of being unwelcome, not valued, and/or out of place for marginalised students; these visceral geographies of (micro)aggressions are largely unseen and not experienced by dominant students (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015). Given the visceral and material impact of such environmental (micro)aggressions, Kieren ended the conversation by concluding, ‘We don’t need those portraits.’

These instances of underrepresentation in the form of portraits adorning walls and demographics of departments as structural issues that afflict daily injury on marginalised people aligns with Derald Wing Sue’s research on environmental (micro)aggression. For instance, in his 2010 book Sue discussed an encounter he had at an Ivy League university: The university invited him to conduct ‘diversity training’ for deans of the various colleges to teach them how to make the university a more welcoming environment for faculty, staff and students of colour (Sue, 2010, p. 25). Upon being introduced to the audience, he noticed that there were no people of colour and few women in the audience. He shared this observation with them. He asked the audience: ‘Do you know the message you are sending to me and people of colour on this campus?’ (Sue, 2010, p. 26). These messages include: ‘You and your kind are not welcome here,’ ‘If you choose to come to our campus, you will not feel comfortable here,’ and ‘If you choose to stay, there is only so far you can advance’ (Sue, 2010, p. 26). Sue goes on to discuss how institutions in which the senior management is predominantly composed of white
and/or men and/or heterosexual people, or have portraits displayed of former
CEOs from dominant groups, the ‘profound’ message communicated to people of
colour, women, and LGBTQ people is that ‘the chances of doing well at this
institution are stacked against’ you (Sue, 2010, p. 26). (Micro)aggressions can
erode trust and feelings of safety, which often leads to lowered productivity, sense
of belonging and self-esteem. When employees describe their work environment,
or students describe their university, as ‘hostile’ or ‘alienating,’ they can be alluding
to encounters with environmental (micro)aggressions and brick walls.

Saraf’s research identified a variety of places on campus that students of
colour identified as ‘safe,’ which included the Brown Center for Students of Color
and the Sarah Doyle Women’s Center. Saraf’s data supports the data of the PAR
project in which several members of the PAR team argued that toxic geographies
(i.e. places with high concentrations of (micro)aggressions) at Brown are often
places that do not explicitly work to support students of colour, as well as women,
non-binary and LGBTQ students. These views include the identification of spaces
on campus that the PAR team identified as non-toxic or ‘safe’ and toxic:

On this campus, there’s a feeling that conversations about race happen in
spaces like this [PAR team] or the Brown Center for Students of Color, and
the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America, spaces
specifically allocated to issues of race and ethnicity, and places like the
LGBTQ Center. I’d like to see broader discussion on campus…through
Public Policy and Sociology departments. Audre Lorde wrote a great piece
about difference and how it’s important; that we need to recognize
difference to confront the privileges we have. (Hayaatee, 26/9/14)\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{98} Source: Hayaatee, 26/9/14, Discussing Possible Project Ideas and Goals, in PAR Team Meeting,
took place at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
In this quote, Hayaatee points to a broader concern expressed by the PAR team and Saraf, namely that spaces that do not actively or explicitly work to include people of colour, women, non-binary and LGBTQ people or encourage conversations about race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, often result in those spaces being encountered as toxic by those communities. Furthermore, in this context there is a catch-22 in having spaces ‘specifically allocated to issues of race and ethnicity’ as well as gender and sexuality; these spaces are often tokenised within the broader campus and nearly all issues of race, gender and sexuality get siphoned into these few spaces:

There’s Brown, and then there’s the Third World Center. There’s Brown and the BCSC. There’s Brown and then the Sarah Doyle Center. It’s like a very physical othering [Gina: Yes]. It’s like you have to exist in your own separate space in order to have your needs met. And like you have to go to a different building on campus in order to be supported instead of like Brown being a place that like can feel comfortable and can provide that support to the students. And that’s something that’s really been frustrating for me, is that like, ‘oh, you have issues? go to BCSC.’ Or like, ‘oh, you want to talk about your feminism? [laughs] go to, whatever your idea of feminism is, go to Sarah Doyle Women’s Center, but we’re not gonna talk about it in Leung, we’re not gonna talk about it on the Main Green. You have to go to your own separate space. And so like, and then I was also thinking about, like literally every person who is not white is funnelled into the BCSC at some point, and it’s just sort of like, you’re not white—go here. Like this is just your tiny building, like right across from fucking Campus Center and all this shit. (Hayaatee, 7/12/14)\(^99\)

\(^99\) Source: Hayaatee, 7/12/14, PAR Team’s Collective Ethnography/Oral Analysis of Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Event..., took place at Maura’s flat.
This physical tokenisation of geographies of safety on campus is a manifestation of underrepresentation in terms of limited ‘safe’ spaces for marginalised students. As discussed in the previous sub-section, underrepresentation is a form of (micro)aggression. Regardless of the quality of work and support provided at a micro level within these issue-specific centres, at a macro level these geographies of safety are often used as token signs that the university has reached ‘diversity,’ which deflects responsibility and rationalises divestment from doing ‘diversity work’ at a departmental and institutional level. The ramifications of such tokenisation include the (re)production of campus and departmental climates of whiteness and cis-hetero-patriarchal normativity and very few support mechanisms for marginalised students. For instance:

When I had a resident come up to me, she came to me with specific issues with being a Black woman on this campus and not feeling welcome, and the only resources I could give her was the BCSC. And it’s like, if the student is not comfortable going to the BCSC, there is no other support system for them, that’s a problem. Because like, with anyone else, there’s CAPS, there’s the Chaplain’s office, there’s all these other things, but when it comes to the issue of race, that very specific issue, like there’s only one resource, and that’s the BCSC and that’s a problem. (April, 7/12/14)\textsuperscript{100}

The underrepresentation of supportive spaces for marginalised students, particularly for students of colour in this example, is a result of structural oppression that manifests microinsults (e.g. implicit messages that you do not deserve support) and microinvalidations (e.g. being made invisible, having your needs unheard and unmet).

\textsuperscript{100} Source: April Primavera, 7/12/14, PAR Team’s Collective Ethnography/Oral Analysis of Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Event..., took place at Maura’s flat.
Furthermore, issues of internal conflict within these issue-based centres rarely get the visibility, airtime and resources to work towards resolution and growth due to limited institutional investment and resultant student resistance to bring up internal issues in order to not exacerbate the precarity of the centres within the university:

*I love the BCSC, I think it’s great. In fact the BCSC is one of the reasons I came to Brown. I was like, wow, we have this space, it’s hella inclusive… I knew I was coming to Brown when I stepped into the TWC. It was the TWC then. But, the plight of Black students is very different from the plight of Asian American students and before we champion solidarity, we gotta figure out our own shit first. [Snaps101]. And I can’t speak for other communities, but as far as the Black community goes, it’s all kinds of fucked up [laughter] and we need to fix that. And if you don’t have the support…that’s hella frustrating. So just imagine dealing with all of this stuff, dealing with on-going psychological liberation without the support, besides Africana. And if you are a professor in Africana, you already got a lot a shit on your plate because a lot of people are seeking tenure, a lot of folks are pursuing research; they’re preoccupied. And their job is to be a professor and not to be…someone’s therapist. *(Gina, 7/12/14)*102

Gina draws attention to another important ramification of the tokenisation of campus support that funnels the labour of supporting all marginalised peoples into a few spaces and bodies: it forces multiple burdens on marginalised people and spaces (e.g. an Africana Studies professor asked to provide emotional labour like a

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101 When one or more people snap their fingers to demonstrate support for a statement or person speaking. The practice comes from the context of spoken word poetry where people snap in lieu of clapping.

102 Source: Gina Perry, 7/12/14, PAR Team’s Collective Ethnography/Oral Analysis of Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Event…, took place at Maura’s flat.
therapist; students of colour being asked to do all the labour around racial justice while white students or spaces absolve themselves):

…this distinction with the different centres…makes two worlds. It’s like, “oh that’s the centre where students of colour go; I’m not a student of colour, that’s not my place.” And like, I understand that decision, but then it also makes it so that the conversations that need to be had to get to points of solidarity and conversations that need to be had about these larger structures are confined to those spaces that are predominantly for students of colour. And then it extends to a thing where white students wouldn’t necessarily feel like they need to be involved in that conversation…the fact that all students of colour are channelled through that one building and that is a place that is set apart from the rest of campus, which is presumably white…makes it so that conversations that are had at BCSC are physically separated from the rest of white campus, and so it’s like white campus is not engaging in what’s going on at BCSC and BCSC has a whole bunch of shit going on because every single non-white person is told to go there. Or like Sarah Doyle Women’s Center or…all these centres. (Hayaatee, 7/12/14)\textsuperscript{103}

At a macro level, the tokenisation of geographies of safety enables the physical division of Brown University’s campus into various dialectics that Hayaatee describes (e.g. white spaces vs. the BCSC, straight spaces vs. LGBTQ Center).

In addition, the BCSC, LGBTQ Center, and SDWC, for instance, are treated as token spaces at the level of the institution and are often treated as the be-all-end-all for diversity initiatives on campus, which limits opportunities to critique their capacity to support all students with attention to intersectionality:

\textsuperscript{103} Source: Hayaatee, 7/12/14, PAR Team’s Collective Ethnography/Oral Analysis of Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Event…., took place at Maura’s flat.
I think that my biggest problem is just having these centres that... have very much so set issues... I never really went to Sarah Doyle Women’s Center my first year because I just felt like I was surrounded by white feminists [snaps\textsuperscript{104}]. [April: Yes]. And I can’t relate to that. I just think that, it actually kind of frustrates me and annoys me that fake intersectionality approach... I felt closer to the BCSC because... race is what I wear and my Blackness is kind of like the centre of all my various identities, but it’s still really confusing and there was also a lot of anti-Blackness last year that really frustrated me. And even like the QRC, I don’t really feel comfortable there, even though I am pansexual, I am queer [snaps], but that’s not the identity that I necessarily hold strongest. But it’s also still a part of me and why like in a BSU [Black Student Union] meeting, I feel like I can’t sit here and talk about Black solidarity if you’re not willing to talk about how the Black community is hetero-patriarchal. Like that’s just inherently my problem [snaps]. Like solidarity has to be intersectional or its bullshit. And if like being Black means being a Black man, then I’m not about it. [Snaps]... I feel kind of conflicting at times, because there’s just so many parts of me being in pulled in various directions [snaps] and it’s just really confusing. And also class [DD: oh my god, yes; snaps; MRV: oh god]. Like, nobody ever wants to talk about it. I just don’t know, like, I don’t know how many other Black students have that same understanding. Like I went to a public school and it’s like, a public school that no longer exists because it got merged into another school because it was so low performing. And I don’t know how many other people at Brown understand that experience of free/reduced lunch. Or like having a friend pay for their lunch and that be like a surprise. Because everyone else around me, 90% of my school, had free/reduced lunch. And like people of colour who come from private schools and have like a really pretty decent education that prepared them for college and not being able to relate to that adds on another layer that I’ve only been able to talk to like three people. Like my MPCC, who understand the struggles I’ve had with

\textsuperscript{104} When one or more people snap their fingers to demonstrate support for a statement or person speaking. The practice comes from the context of spoken word poetry where people snap in lieu of clapping.
class here and not being able to take Chem100 cuz I didn’t take chemistry in high school because my teacher quit the first semester, things like that. That’s an added on layer, but it’s not really talked about. Like all students of colour get each other, and are in solidarity with each other, but inherently that’s not that case…(betta, 7/12/14)

In this extended quotation, betta points to a variety of limitations within the issue-based centres regarding their capacity, both perceived and material, to support intersectional students, including their tendency to engage in single-axis work. betta highlights such single-axis tendencies throughout all three centres, including the over-representation of white people and underrepresentation of Black people at the SDWC and LGBTQ Center, the over-representation of Black men and underrepresentation Black women, gender non-confirming and queer people in the Black Student Union, and the overwhelming over-representation of economically privileged people at the BCSC and other spaces for students of colour to the extent of silence around class amongst communities of colour.

In sum, this section has introduced the few geographies of safety at Brown as identified by the PAR team and Saraf’s research (e.g. BCSC, SDWC, LGBTQ Center) and argued that these geographies are tokenised within a broader understanding of where diversity labour is located at the level of the institution. As Hayaatee described it, there is a ‘physical othering’ on Brown’s campus that siphons all marginalised people and labour for supporting them into very few spaces and bodies, which absolves the majority of institutional spaces and people from doing the work of diversity and secures the (re)production of Brown as a PWI invested in white cis-hetero-patriarchy. This sub-section fits in within the broader

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105 Source: betta newlin, 7/12/14, PAR Team’s Collective Ethnography/Oral Analysis of Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Event…., took place at Maura’s flat.
section, which has introduced the concept of brick walls as places within institutions that inflict environmental (micro)aggressions on marginalised people, identified those brick walls at Brown as defined by the PAR team and Saraf’s research (e.g. STEM, CAPS, portraits), and located the few spaces with limited brick walls (e.g. BCSC, LGBTQ Center, SDWC). This section attended to environmental (micro)aggressions and the next two sections consider verbal and non-verbal (micro)aggressions vis-à-vis microinvalidations and microinsults, respectively.

**Ungeographic: Microinvalidations at Brown**

*The relationship between black populations and geography—and here I am referring to geography as space, place, and location in their physical materiality and imaginative configurations—allows us to engage with a narrative that locates and draws on black histories and black subjects in order to make visible social lives which are often displaced, rendered ungeographic...Geography’s and geographers well-known history in the Americas, of white masculine European mappings, explorations, conquests, is interlaced with a different sense of place, those populations and their attendant geographies that are concealed by what might be called rational spatial colonisation and domination: the profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, stories, and lands. (McKittrick, 2006, p. x)*

Katherine McKittrick’s description of the spatial processes that dispossess and displace Black lives, rendering them as ‘ungeographic,’ is a spatial metaphor that can be attributed to encounters of race, gender and sexuality based microinvalidations. McKittrick’s notion of the ‘ungeographic’ was introduced in
Chapter 4 (see p. 127), namely as a way to describe the consistent erasure and displacement of Black bodies by those in power. At a micro level, the rendering of Black bodies, spaces and Blackness as ‘ungeographic’ is made possible by the daily production of anti-Black microinvalidations (see Sections 5.3 and 5.4 for definition) that silence Black voices, erase and dispossess agency from Black bodies and spaces. In her 2006 book, McKittrick focuses on the ways Black women in particular are rendered ungeographic. In this section, I focus on the ways that bodies marginalised by race, gender and/or sexuality are rendered ungeographic at Brown as defined by the PAR team and participants at the Hurt People Hurt People event, namely ‘Alien in One’s Own Land,’ colour-blindness, myth of meritocracy, gender and sexuality stereotypes, and silence on mental health issues (Sue, 2010, p. 32).

The theme of ‘Alien in One’s Own Land,’ as defined by Derald Wing Sue, encompasses racial microinvalidations often perpetuated against Latino, Asian, Arab and Multiracial Americans in the form of questions such as ‘Where are you from?’ or comments on speaking English well or without an accent (Sue, 2010, p. 32). The impact of such (micro)aggressions on these populations is having their citizenship consistently doubted, which can diminish their sense of belonging and safety in the places where these (micro)aggressions take place, in this case, Brown University. This theme appeared in the data from this thesis research in several anonymous participants at Hurt People Hurt People noting moments when their nationality was questioned, their English language skills commented on, English language corrected, and consistently being asked to be called by an Anglicised name:
“Where are you from?” “Iran.” “Oh.” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“So where are you from?” “New York.” “No, where are you frooom?” – multiple white males on different occasions. I’m half Asian but I’m from New York…I was born there. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“Wait, you’re from Korea? But your English is so good. I can barely detect an accent.” Didn’t know if I should take it as a compliment or be 210% offended. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“Oh wow, I had no idea you were from there. You have NO accent” – my accent doesn’t define my identity nor does it give you the license to define my identity for me. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

Do NOT correct my English – you know what I meant to say and that I said it well. The way I pronounce my words doesn’t take away from my meaning. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“Do you have an AMERICAN name??” – nearly all of my teachers/friends growing up. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

Several of these stories locate the toxicity, or capacity to inflict material and affective injury (Mahtani, 2014), of these microinvalidations in the cognitive energy expended in trying to determine the intentionality behind a comment (e.g. ‘I didn’t know if I should take it as a compliment or be 210% offended’) and in the stress and anxiety induced in having one’s nationality and speaking constantly policed (Sue, 2010). In efforts to improve ‘diversity’ on campus, increased attention to such

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106 Source: Anonymous Participants, 2/12/14, Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Space for (micro)aggressions at Brown, took place in Leung Gallery in the Campus Center at Brown.
racial microinvalidations and where they occur could facilitate creative methods for enhancing sense of belonging, health and capacity of Latino, Asian, Arab and Multiracial members of the university.

‘Colour-blindness’ is a theme that Sue identified as another form of racial microinvalidation where people, predominantly but not exclusively white people, do not see race as a social phenomenon and often contend that racism does not exist anymore (Sue, 2010):

…”And in a world where you’re surrounded by people who possess a privilege where they don’t have to look at the world through racial lens, right, or through the lens of race, it’s just so taxing [laughs]. I frequently question my sanity, because I’m like, well no one else is seeing it this way, Gina, are you being hypersensitive [whispers]? I fucking hate that, I know I’m not hypersensitive, shit, I know my feelings and my experiences and my emotions are valid, but these motherfuckers are testing me [laughs]…What’s going on? (Gina, 7/12/14)

Colour-blindness often takes the form of comments such as ‘I don’t see race,’ which impacts people of colour by denying their everyday lived experience of race and racism (see Gina’s quote above), the material realities of racialised power, and responsibility for combatting racism. One example of racial (micro)aggressions with the theme of colour-blindness in this sample was:

“I only see one race—the human race.” Congratulations, but I can’t afford to only see the human race. Because that’s not how I’m seen. RACIAL BLINDNESS DOES NOT NEGATE RACISM. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)
The anonymous participant who wrote this story implicitly points to the spatial knowledge inherent in lived experience and also issues of differential power dynamics. Furthermore, the frustration with such colour-blindness is evident in the writing style, including the use of underline and capitalisation, which suggests this is merely one of many examples of the participant experiencing colour-blind racial microinvalidations. Another example is the following:

“You have achieved so much in your life so far. I don’t believe your skin color has limited you. In fact, I never really knew what your ethnic background was and it never was an issue with me.” – High school teacher via Facebook. You’re telling me I succeeded in spite of my skin color. You were happy to erase my Blackness to explain my success. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

The presumed racial power dynamic in the example is complicated by the dynamics of student/teacher and age in which the self-identified Black student has experienced a racial microinvalidation of colour-blindness by their teacher through social media. The participant pointed out the implicit message was in order to ‘explain my success’ the teacher had to ‘erase my Blackness,’ demonstrating implicit anti-Black bias in disassociating academic success or capability with Black students. When educators deliver such implicit messages to their students, they are often cultivating a classroom environment that is hostile to students of colour by invalidating their lived experiences and denying the existence of racism, which can have material manifestations in students’ success in the class, whether due to stereotype threat or bias on behalf of the teacher (Sue, 2010). To further explore the relationship between colour-blindness in classrooms and the success of students of colour, future research could study the perspectives of students of
colour and their professors on colour-blindness in their classrooms, as well as how they perceive that to impact their coursework, grades, and health.

The ‘myth of meritocracy’ is a microinvalidation that assumes everyone is treated equally regardless of race, gender and sexuality, thereby denying the impact of identity in various successes and failures. As a result, if someone has succeeded in a particular goal or goals it is because they worked hard, and if they have failed it is because they did not work hard (e.g. lazy) or are not capable (e.g. not intelligent, bad values). This viewpoint denies the existence of structural inequities that act as barriers to achieving such ‘successes.’ The ‘myth of meritocracy’ often manifests in the form of victim-blaming marginalised peoples for their situation (e.g. unemployed people are lazy, there is nothing systematic preventing them from getting a job) and decrying equity programs and their recipients as unfair. For instance:

“Everyone’s wondering how you got into Brown, but you’re a girl in computer science so obviously you got in.” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“You ONLY got into Brown because you’re HMONG” – said someone who didn’t know how hard I worked to get here. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

Implicit in these statements is the belief that meritocracy exists and as such it is unfair that these students got into an Ivy League university due to their race, ethnicity, or gender, erasing their work and achievements. Another example:

When I sarcastically said, “Then I bet I got into Brown cuz of affirmative action too,” in reply to one of my best friends’ insult toward my other best
friend. “yea, you probably did,” he said. “you should be proud of it.” I didn’t say what we both knew: my grades, rankings, & accomplishments. Yay for best friends! (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

The impact of microinvalidations like these that often accumulate over time, as aforementioned in the discussion of ‘Alien in One’s Own Land’ and ‘Colour-blindness,’ on the recipient is feeling out of place or not welcomed due to an aspect of their identity. In an elite university, having one’s intelligence consistently questioned and attributed to their identities can diminish self-esteem and increase the likelihood of mental health issues such as depression (Sue, 2010, p. 99).

Particular gender and sexuality stereotyping can take the form of microinvalidations in the denial of self-identification and having one’s sexuality or gender identity not acknowledged or made invisible. Based on data gathered from stories shared at Hurt People Hurt People, denial of self-identification took the form of being denied agency to identify their sexuality for themselves:

“You’re not asexual.” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“I just don’t see you as bisexual. You’re so gay to me.” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“If an asexual person has sex with a non-asexual person, they are being a live fuck-doll.” – I can do whatever I choose without my asexuality* or agency being rendered invalid. *Not up for debate.’ (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

These three stories are examples of sexuality based microinvalidations due to the fact that each illustrates an encounter where the participant’s agency to define their
own identity and sense of self was denied. Another theme was being misrecognised:

“Demisexuality is not a sexuality.” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

Someone said “So you’re a real lesbian now” when I got my first woman partner. Being pan doesn’t change based on who I’m with. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

CAUTION: INVISIBLE PANSEXUALS CROSSING! (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

These encounters demonstrate moments where the participant’s sexuality was not acknowledged or made invisible, often due to lack of literacy and awareness around the plethora of sexualities outside of the gay/heterosexual binary (e.g. demisexuality, pansexuality). The impacts of such experiences, particularly when encountered multiple times on a regular basis, on the recipients can include feeling misunderstood, isolated, and out of place at the university.

Silence on mental health is an ability-based microinvalidation that takes the form of stigma surrounding mental health and related lack of knowledge or discussion on how to provide support. For instance:

People are quick to support me when I talk about my experience with race, gender, and/or sexuality BUT when I talk about my DEPRESSION and MENTAL HEALTH I find all of my support systems have DISAPPEARED. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)
“Wow, people who I thought were so NORMAL.” – my high school teacher after I told her I was dealing with mental health issues. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“I had an undiagnosed ear infection for 3 weeks because health services wrote the symptoms off as a part of my Anxiety Disorder.” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“This is where you find your inner strength not a bottle of pills.” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

These stories shared at Hurt People Hurt People illuminate students’ experiences of ability-based microinvalidations in having their mental health issues made invisible, not validated, misrecognised, or misunderstood by educators, friends, health care professionals, and other support networks. These microinvalidations regarding mental health can have real material consequences on health, such as in the example of the misdiagnosis due to poor understanding or misrecognition of a particular mental health issue. Within the context of feeling comfortable at Brown, the daily accumulation of ability-based microinvalidations can lead to feeling isolated, out of place and unsupported at this university, consequences of being rendered as ‘ungeographic,’ which are applicable to the other themes of microinvalidations discussed in this section. Microinsults are explored in the next section through the empirical data.
Criminalisation: Microinsults at Brown

This section explores the ways that race and gender based microinsults mark bodies and spaces as dangerous and criminal. The impact of such microinsults often leads to physical violence and even death, such as the extrajudicial murders of Black people, particularly trans women of colour (e.g. 19 murders of transgender people in 2015 in the US as of August 2015, most of whom were Black trans women and trans women of colour; see Stafford, 2015 and USHRN, 2015). This section explores the criminalisation of race and gender through empirical data shared from Hurt People Hurt People.

Criminalisation can take the form of a racial microinsult in which people of colour, particularly Black people, are feared as dangerous and likely to engage in illegal activities (Sue, 2010). This often takes the form of a store employee following a customer of colour around in their store because they assume the customer will steal. Within the data from Hurt People Hurt People two people shared related examples:


I posted a picture of myself on social media and the first comment I got was “Please don’t rob me.” My reason for posting was to ask opinions on my new haircut. My dark skin does NOT make me an aggressor. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)
In these two examples, participants shared encounters with their Black or dark skin being read as potential thieves in which the aggressors in both scenarios inflicted microinsults on the participants for conflating Blackness or dark skin with criminality. Criminalisation also manifests when a person, predominantly but not exclusively white, embraces or looks at their purse or wallet when a person of colour walks by or locking their car doors when driving through particular areas. For example:

*At home my family and I consciously locked our car doors when driving past skid row or South LA. This (micro)aggression needs to stop and I recognize this. I’m sorry.* (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

Recipients often experience the impact of microinsults consciously as insults based on stereotypes or insensitivity, in these cases the stereotypes that people of colour are thieves and the homeless are dangerous. However, the impact of criminalisation is also experienced in terms of life and death. For instance, the murder of 17 year-old unarmed Trayvon Martin in his own neighbourhood, was in part due to his murderer’s assumption of Martin as criminal for walking while Black. In addition, in 2012 every 28 hours an employee or affiliate of the US government killed a Black person in the US (Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, 2013). The disproportionate amount of violence and murder encountered by Black communities and other communities of colour is due in part to the everyday and subtle microinsult of criminalisation.

‘Traditional gender role prejudicing and stereotyping’ is a theme of microinsult Sue identified in which women, transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary people encounter gender based stereotypes, insults, and bias
(Sue, 2010). One example is the conflation of gender identity and sexuality in order to pressure conformity to gender and sexuality norms. For instance:

"Why can’t you just be a lesbian?" I have heard this from family members and friends. I am a trans person & my gender is not something I chase/it is not any less valid because of what my sexual orientation might be. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

This example demonstrates a microinsult in asking the recipient to assimilate to particular norms and a microinvalidation in the lack of understanding or willingness to understand gender identity, sexuality, and transgender-ness. The impact of such (micro)aggressions, particularly if from one’s primary support network as in this case, can cause the recipient to feel invalidated, unsupported and that their identities are erased or abnormal. Gender role stereotyping was also present in a variety of stories in which self-identified women expressed feeling pathologised for supporting gender equity or for merely existing as a woman of colour:

“She’s a feminist, BUT she’s so nice…” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

Do I really have “resting bitch face,” or are you just uncomfortable around BROWN WOMEN?? (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

In both of these examples, particularly in the second, the implicit messages conflate personality with gender identity, race, and ethnicity. In addition, other participants expressed feeling objectified or ascribed deficiency due to gender:
“I love it when CUTE girls say SMART & AMBITIOUS things.” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

“Girls are just meant to look pretty…” (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

The way that I have been described as crazy or insane for being a woman with an exuberant, passionate personality is dually offensive: from just one word I feel reduced and ridiculed as a woman – exiled from normative femininity because of my personality – and silenced on the subject of the real barriers I experience from mental illness. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

The impact of gender role prejudicing in these examples can result in diminished self-esteem and stereotype threat. In addition, the last example points to the entanglement of gender and ability in which the microinsult pathologises femininity, drawing upon the histories of institutionalising women, transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary people due to an inaccurate conflation of femininity or non-normative gender presentations with mental illness. Another impact of gender based microinsults is an inequitable gendered division of labour as expressed by two different students in regards to group projects in STEM:

When I’m the only female in a group CS project, my team members always assume I’m doing the art and design portion without asking me if that’s what I want or am good at, even if I’d been doing computer science for longer than they have. “Your job is to make it pretty” – my (male) mentor at the company I interned at this summer. (Anonymous, 2/12/14)

Whenever I work on problem sets with my (all male) friends for one of my science classes, I notice that sometimes they won’t ‘hear’ something I’ve
suggested until one of them comes up with the same suggestion.
(Anonymous, 2/12/14)

In the first example, the only woman in the group was delegated with tasks based on gender stereotypes without her consent or consideration. In the second example, repeated from previous discussion about STEM due to mutual relevance regarding gendered microinsults, the only non-male person’s contributions were not heard. Both examples demonstrate microinsults that exercise out-dated gender norms that have the impact of invalidating the intelligence and capacity of women, transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary people, as well as exploiting their labour and denying their agency.

This section discussed empirical data from *Hurt People Hurt People* that highlighted encounters of microinsults in which themes included the criminalisation of bodies of colour (Black bodies particularly), women, transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary people. The theme of the criminalisation of race largely manifested in being perceived as a thief or potential thief, in the context of being at a university dining hall and within social media. The theme of the criminalisation of gender took place in a variety of manners, ranging from requests to assimilate to normative genders, being rendered deficient or not intelligent, and an inequitable distribution of labour.

**Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the voices of the various members of the PAR team and participants in the *Hurt People Hurt People* event, starting with their
perspectives on the exceptionalism of Brown University as an institution, their definitions of (micro)aggressions, and places on campus they identified as ‘toxic geographies.’ This overview made the transition from the broad scale of the AMPIC and geographies of Brown University in Chapter 4 to the smaller and intimate scales of the PAR team’s understandings of place and everyday violence. The remainder of the chapter highlighted the spatial practices embedded in participants’ experiences of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at Brown that emerged from the work of the insurgent geography of the PAR team. Chapter 6 continues this narrative of the importance of place in ‘doing insurgent geographies’ and in experiences of (micro)aggressions in the case study, focusing on the public art event *Hurt People Hurt People* and its aims to mitigate the oft-invisible toxic geographies of Brown University.
Chapter 6. Toxic Geographies of Leung Gallery

Introduction: Brick Walls and Institutional Flows

Things might appear fluid if you are going the way things are flowing. When you are not going that way, you experience a flow as solidity, as what you come up against. In turn, those who are not going the way things are flowing are experienced as obstructing the flow. We might need to be the cause of obstruction. We might need to get in the way if we are to get anywhere. We might need to become the blocking points by pointing out the blockage points. (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 186-7)

We return to Ahmed’s discussion of the brick wall, as introduced in Chapter 5, in order to explore the complexity of fixity and fluidity of space and toxic geographies in particular. Before unpacking this quote, I contextualise it in relation to discussions of solidity in the previous chapter. In Chapter 5, I outlined a variety of places and spatial configurations that student co-researchers and participants in *Hurt People Hurt People* implicitly identified as fixed spatialities due to their disparate experiences of (micro)aggressions in those spaces as tied in part to issues of underrepresentation and overrepresentation. For instance, due to the overrepresentation of white men in STEM, April said she ‘assumed that STEM fields are not racially aware’ (26/9/14), which is a statement of fixity. They ‘are’ unaware as if the unawareness is an unchanging part of the identities of those

\[107\] See Table 7 in Chapter 3 for introductions of and by each co-researcher.

\[108\] The particular notion of (micro)aggression is intentional in order to emphasize the fact that (micro)aggressions are everyday manifestations of structural violence. The rationale for this stylistic choice is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.
departments, as opposed to they ‘have become’ unaware to recognise the malleability and co-constructed nature of those departments.

The perception of solidity implicit in April’s statement brings us back to Ahmed’s quote above, which explores the movement and physicality of encounters with brick walls beyond that of environmental (micro)aggressions as discussed in Chapter 5. April experiences STEM as an unchanging solid because the wall appears for her due to her positionality as a queer woman of colour. The institution that marks her social location as ‘other’ or ‘a blockage point’ obstructs her from inhabiting the way things are flowing in STEM because the institutional flow was not designed with her in mind. April’s encounter of this obstruction is real, material and felt, and does not negate the reality that some bodies experience the flow as fluid or that the flow can change. ‘Even if the wall is a metaphor for immobility, it can move’ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 175). Institutional flows and their attendant geographies, whether experienced as fluid or solid, are malleable. While Chapter 5 explored the experiences of space as fixed, this chapter considers the contingency and relationality of those spaces and their everyday violence.

This chapter investigates the flexibility, mobility and transformative potential of brick walls encountered within the toxic geographies of Leung Gallery through accounts of the lived experiences of (micro)aggressions, as well as the impact of this project in inciting change to transform the flows of Leung Gallery. Before engaging with the fixity and fluidity of these spaces, in the next section I provide background on Leung Gallery and the importance of place in the team’s choice to hold the event there. In the following sections, I detail the toxic and insurgent geographies of Leung Gallery that emerged from this research as identified by the
Participatory Action Research (PAR) PAR team in our collective ethnography and oral analysis of the event, as well as my ethnography of the impact of the event.

**Toxic Geographies of Leung Gallery**

The Leung Family Gallery, or colloquially Leung Gallery, was established as a lounge, ballroom and event space in the early 1980s on the second floor of the Campus Center at Brown University. It has a two-story high ceiling. The room is named after its benefactors, parents of Brown alumni from Hong Kong (Brown University, 2015d). Leung Gallery has a portrait of the Leung Family on display, making it one of very few rooms in the university with a portrait of people of colour and not adorned by portraits of white people, white men in particular (see Chapter 5 for discussion of portraits and environmental (micro)aggressions). The Campus Center was renovated in 2009 and reopened in 2010, which gave Leung Gallery a face-lift including the addition of a small balcony and variety of couches, chairs and tables to make it an ‘open community space.’ In email correspondence with Anderson, one of the administrators that manages the Campus Center, in the context of planning this event, he defined ‘open community space’ as a ‘place you know you can go to sit and study or meet with a small group’ (Anderson, 10/11/14). To preserve that usage of the space, it typically cannot be reserved; Anderson granted us special permission to do so.

In practice, over the last five years since the renovation, Leung Gallery has been transformed into a socially constructed quiet study space in which people, mostly students, sit in the room in silence while studying individually. The silence is

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109 Source: Anderson, 10/11/14, Event Planning for Hurt People Hurt People in Leung Gallery, Email Correspondence Between an Administrator that Manages Leung Gallery + Maura.
heavily policed, as viscerally felt by many people who make noise in the space (e.g. walking through with loud shoes, coughing while studying) as they promptly receive glares from people in the room and feel like they are being watched. The acceptance of such behaviour in this space has been the subject of debate for years because, as a university, there are multiple libraries designed for studying and, within those libraries, rooms designated for quiet study. For instance, in the Humanities and Social Sciences library (i.e. the Rock, short for John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library), there are two large rooms called the ‘Absolute Quiet Room’ (AQR), which is self-explanatory in that students enter those rooms and agree to be absolutely quiet. Leung Gallery has become an environment like the AQR without the mandate or communal agreement that it be used as a quiet study space. Some of the questions discussed in the debate over whether Leung Gallery should be quiet or not include: does Brown need another quiet study space? Why have another quiet study space outside of a library? Why is ‘open community space’ being defined as a hyper-policed solitary silent study space? Who is made to feel welcome and who is made to feel out of place in Leung Gallery as a quiet space?

The PAR team chose Leung Gallery as the location of the event, *Hurt People Hurt People*, to add a perspective of identity and power into this debate and to affect change that would consider the needs of students of colour, women, non-binary and queer students. They identified Leung Gallery as a toxic geography in its current iteration in part due to the disparate impact of silent spaces, and their practices of social policing, on marginalised students. Such implications include the prioritisation of productivity (i.e. quiet individual study space) over community and care (i.e. social gathering space, a central space to support marginalised students) and impacts on the mental health of students of colour, women, non-binary and
queer students (see Chapter 7 for further discussion). In the team’s collective oral analysis, betta highlighted the ways that navigating quiet spaces at Brown are complicated by identity-based stereotypes, particularly in terms of race and gender:

*I just don’t understand why quiet spaces have to be so mean. That’s why I cannot study at a library here at Brown. I actually cannot. I went into like the Rock once, and just moving my bag, my jacket makes noise, one little rustle, “that Black girl over there, she’s so damn loud, this angry Black woman.”* (betta, 7/12/14)

betta indicates that the hostile social policing of quiet spaces fosters anxiety due to the possibility and reality of enhanced experiences of identity-based (micro)aggressions, chiefly given stereotypes about personality, such as the trope of the ‘angry Black woman.’ April concurred and pointed to the ways quiet spaces can inflict ability-related (micro)aggressions and exacerbate mental health issues (e.g. anxiety and panic disorders):

*I walk into these quiet spaces and…I can feel this air is really productive for panic attacks. That’s honestly how I feel. If I were to walk into any quiet space...anxiety builds up and that’s why I just spend all of my time in my room...All these quiet spaces, they literally contribute to anxiety and I literally feel if I go into a quiet space I’m on the verge of a panic attack...It’s just so sad that the university…give[s] you these resources and that’s the only learning that’s going to be valued.* (April, 7/12/14)

As April notes, there’s a visceral experience of the quietness and social policing within Leung and other silent spaces as environmental (micro)aggressions (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015). In addition, the material reality that there are more quiet studying spaces than social community spaces in central parts of campus
provides context for April’s analysis that the university over-values particular types of learning and bodies that inhabit those types of learning.

The PAR team selected Leung Gallery as the location for *Hurt People Hurt People* because they identified it as a toxic geography that they wanted to challenge and transform. At the event, April read aloud a rationale for this decision:

...*We have chosen the Leung Gallery to reclaim a space that was intended to serve the entire Brown community. This space was initially created to be a place of community, socially and academically. But over the years it has adopted a reputation for being silent study only. We hope to revitalize its original purpose as a place for connections to be made, and relationships to be built. So we invite you to use this space as you see fit. We invite you to share your stories, read the stories of others, and most of all, take this experience and this artwork to be self-reflexive, reflecting on where you are in order to grow in love, in healing and in solidarity. Thank you. We invite you to grab some food, chat it up, this is no longer quiet space [laughter] and feel free to write as many experiences and attach them to our artwork. We have several colours for your liking and we want you to do more than one.* (April, 2/12/14)

The team took Ahmed’s advice that opened this chapter by obstructing the flow of Leung Gallery and becoming the ‘blocking points’ in order to point out ‘the blockage points.’ In other words, they reclaimed space and reconfigured it by assembling bodies that consented to collectively transgress the social norms of silence, both in terms of the quietness of the space as well as the invisibility and subsequent absence of discussion around (micro)aggressions.

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110 Source: April Primavera, 2/12/14, *Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Space for (micro)aggressions at Brown*, Speech written and performed by April at the event, held in Leung Gallery in the Campus Center
As Ahmed notes and as discussed throughout this chapter and this thesis, there is a precarity with pointing out ‘blockage points.’ When diversity workers identify issues of structural oppression, as frequently required of their job or existence, they are often experienced as going against the flow and become a ‘blockage point’ themselves:

*Institutions are crowded. In noticing the crowds, we also notice the orientation devices that direct the flow of human traffic in particular ways. We all know the experience of “going the wrong way” in a crowd. Everyone seems to be going the opposite way than the way you are going. No one person has to push or shove for you to feel the collective momentum of the crowd as pushing and shoving. To keep going, you have to push harder than any of those individuals who are going the right way. The body that is “going the wrong way” is the one experienced as “in the way” of a will that is acquired as momentum. For some, mere persistence, “to continue steadfastly,” requires great effort, an effort that might appear to others as stubbornness, wilfulness, or obstinacy…You have to become insistent to go against the flow, and you are judged to be going against the flow because you are insistent. A life paradox: you have to become what you are judged as being.* (Ahmed, 2012, p. 186)

Not only do diversity workers spend labour (emotional and physical) on identifying and solving an institutions’ ‘diversity problem,’ they have to do so while being perceived and treated as a problem for the institution. In other words, as noted in Chapter 5, they are asked to tear down a brick wall with nothing but their hands, regardless of existing or resultant injuries.

The process of ‘reclaiming’ Leung Gallery was an example of this felt and tangible process of ‘going the wrong way,’ which included several moments of being seen as ‘in the way’ and placed in positions of enhanced precarity, discussed
in detail later in this chapter. For instance, two days before the event, Delores, one of several administrators who manage the Campus Center, met with Hayaatee and me to finalise our event plans. The tone of the conversation was quite different from the email exchanges with the Anderson in which he approved our design and explicit rationale to have ‘conversations about marginalisation…in such a visible and central space’ (as I described it; Maura, 10/11/14)\(^{111}\), as long as we didn’t ‘ask anyone to leave who wants to be studying or hanging out in the space’ (as he described it; Anderson, 10/11/14).\(^ {112}\) In meeting with Delores, we were told we needed to be ‘passive,’ ‘quiet,’ and use the ‘corners’ the room (Delores, 24/11/14)\(^ {113}\). In the moment, Hayaatee and I read this as coded, yet unconscious, language saying: ‘marginalised people, stay quiet in the margins of the space.’ In order to negotiate our perceptions with the conversation at hand, we tried to clarify what seemed to be miscommunications about our intentions in using the space and what the department had previously approved. From our perspective, we had been clear about the intentionality of the event (i.e. centring the lives, resistance and marginalisation of queer, trans, non-binary, women, and people of colour on campus) and this was the first time we were getting pushback. Adding to our confusion, we had been working with a couple of directors of the identity-based centres who informed us that we did not need to reserve Leung Gallery, since it was ‘open community space,’ and that it was nice but not necessary of us to let anyone at the Campus Center know of our plans.

\(^{111}\) Source: Maura, 10/11/14, Event Planning for *Hurt People Hurt People* in Leung Gallery, Email Correspondence Between an Administrator that Manages Leung Gallery + Maura.

\(^{112}\) Source: Anderson, 10/11/14, Event Planning for *Hurt People Hurt People* in Leung Gallery, Email Correspondence Between an Administrator that Manages Leung Gallery + Maura.

\(^{113}\) Source: Delores, 24/11/12, Event Planning for *Hurt People Hurt People* in Leung Gallery, Meeting Between an Administrator that Manages Leung Gallery, Hayaatee, + Maura
Through conversation with Delores, we hit a blockage point and struggled to resolve the conflict while not transforming anyone involved into a blockage point. Recognising the entanglement between structural and everyday violence, in our negotiations we attempted to be cognizant of Delores’ location within the hierarchical administrative structure and strived to not have our goals or actions put her into a position of precarity—or enhanced precarity. We achieved this goal by compromising that we would use only half of the room, if there was debriefing it would be in small groups, it would not be a quiet event, and Delores would help us during set up by asking people in our half of the room to move. This was not the only obstacle that emerged and that we addressed. Another conflict surfaced after the event that was ultimately transformative, as discussed later in this chapter.

In sum, this section has provided an overview and background of Leung Gallery as a physical and socially constructed space on campus as well as a location of contention about its use as a silent study space. The PAR team identified Leung Gallery as a toxic geography due to the disparate impact the social policing of silent spaces has on students of colour, queer, non-binary and women students. The team chose this location for *Hurt People Hurt People* in order to challenge and ultimately transform the toxic geographies of Leung Gallery. Drawing heavily from the PAR team’s collective ethnography and oral analysis of the open art event (i.e. *Hurt People Hurt People*), the next sections illuminate the fluid spatial processes at the event that enabled the reconfiguration of space and sharing stories of hurt (see Chapter 5) through narratives of reflexivity, participant engagement, and the experience of briefly transforming the brick walls and toxic geographies of Leung Gallery.
Participant Engagement

As a reminder of the context of *Hurt People Hurt People* in terms of how participants engaged in the space, I provide an overview of the spatial configurations. As noted in Chapter 3, the two frames were located at one end of the gallery where people were standing and walking around the frames in order to interact, whether reading stories, adding their own, or talking with other participants. In that end of the room, there were few chairs, since the PAR team had moved the chairs momentarily out of the area to create a space for participants to easily move through. In the middle of Leung Gallery there were couches and chairs where some participants sat and talked. The opposite end of the room had tables and chairs where non-participants were studying and few participants sat and talked.

Several co-researchers detailed anecdotes from the open art event in which they described and analysed their engagement with participants and cultivation of a supportive and reflective environment. For instance, April described an encounter in helping a friend self-determine how they wanted to participate in the event:

“There’s this really great anecdote…I have a friend that…sat next to me and they were sitting there and they were like “I have this really great microaggression or experience that I really want to talk about, but I just don’t know how to write about it…do I write one quote, do I write an entire story? I don’t know what to do.” And I was helping them process: who are they writing it for? Are they writing it for themselves to see their own story up on a communal exhibit, or are they writing it so that other people know exactly what they had to go through? And I think that was something that really empowered them to realize that you don’t have to explain yourself. And I think they ended up writing up the entire story because they wanted other people to know the entire context because context also is important. But I
saw this shift in what they were thinking when I said “you can write one sentence and let that be it. And then let people wonder because I think it’s sometimes hard to realize that work can just be for yourself and that can be valuable as well.” (April, 7/12/14)

This story points to the importance of trust, context, process and self-determination in promoting participant engagement. As evident in the discussion of the data in Chapter 5, many stories did not provide contexts to their narratives nor capture the lived experiences of participating in the space. This anecdote and the team’s broader ethnography illuminates the engagement and environment of the event, fostered in part by its organisation as an informal space where people were welcome to engage in a multitude of ways (e.g. sit or stand, talk or reflect or read stories quietly) coupled with the accessibility, participation, and familiarity of the organisers (i.e. the PAR team) in collaborating with other participants.

In addition, several co-researchers had friends attend the event and the participants’ familiarity and trust with the co-researchers possibly enabled self-reflective participation. For example, Lilah explained an interaction with an acquaintance in which she encouraged him to write down narratives about (micro)aggressions he produced:

Then this kid, who…never stops surprising me because one minute I think that he is the most problematic human and the next he came to this exhibit and like was really respectful and I was like “What? Who are you? What are you doing?” But it was really nice…He was like, “Can I write down things that I’ve done?” And I was like, “If you think that would be like productive, you can.” (Lilah, 7/12/14)

114 Source: Lilah Keen, 7/12/14, PAR Team’s Collective Ethnography/Oral Analysis of Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Event…, took place at Maura’s flat.
Immediately after Lilah shared this vignette, Dame described a similar encounter:

*The almost exact thing happened to me. My boyfriend came, he doesn’t go to Brown, but he is a cisgendered white heterosexual male, so I was like, “this is going to be interesting.” But he actually spent a lot of time. We said hello, and then he just was like, “I’m gonna go look at the art, goodbye,” and I was like “okay.”...So, he went and he was really taking a lot of time, I was so happy. He was taking a lot of time reading the stories on our art piece and then he came and was like, “Is it okay if I write something? And is it okay if I write something that I retrospectively realize that I’ve done to other people after reading these I realize how hurtful some of the things I’ve done can be.” I was like, “Yeah, that’s kind of the purpose, go do it.” That was something I was pretty proud of. (Dame, 7/12/14)*

Lilah’s and Dame’s pre-existing relationships with these two participants potentially fostered a sense of trust that encouraged them to not only approach these co-researchers to ask about participation, but also to follow through and write down self-reflexive stories. Lilah and Dame were not the only co-researchers to express surprise at the respectful and self-critical participation of people they perceived as lacking critical consciousness. Hayaatee similarly commented on the importance of place in explaining her surprise and pride, namely curating a space where people were willing to share stories (that are typically considered private) in a public space (at a private university):

*I really loved, part of the learning bit, was people being able to hang up things that they did themselves. Every time I saw one, I was really shocked in a good way, just that a person can identify a time when they hurt...*

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115 Source: Dame Tori, 7/12/14, PAR Team’s Collective Ethnography/Oral Analysis of Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Event..., took place at Maura’s flat.
someone and they are willing to acknowledge it and attach it to this web in a public space and say, “Yeah, I hurt someone, I get it now, or I’m trying to get it at least.” I really loved that. (Hayaatee, 7/12/14)

As Hayaatee states, these vignettes illustrate the enhanced confidence of co-researchers through collaboratively designing, implementing, and evaluating this PAR project as successful on their own terms, primarily in constructing a place of respect and self-reflexivity. betta named these successes as creating a new spatial methodology:

That’s beautiful. I think that I’m just really happy that we were able to foster a space like that, that we were able to learn and just use that ability to be self-reflective…[to be] able to process these emotions and say “okay, I know this, what these actions did to other people, I know what this has done to me, I can move from this, I can grow from this, I can do something with this.” That’s really interesting…So just having this space…this is in a way, this was kind of a methodology of healing…we kind of created something new…You know how at the beginning we spent that time reading Decolonising Methodologies?…I just feel, in a way, this was an aspect or kind of a way to do that, we kind of just created a space where people had the ability to learn from people’s experiences and reflect on that. I think that’s a powerful methodology of peer education. (betta, 7/12/14)

betta synthesises the team’s semester-long investigation into the relationships between research, methodologies and power and the aim to mitigate (micro)aggressions in her assertion of this ‘methodology of healing.’ This is a place-based methodology that involves facilitating a space in which participants can be self-reflexive, learn and ‘process emotions’ collectively, requiring knowledge of context and lived experiences in order to effectively implement.
The quality of the open art space, as evidenced in its utility by the target population (e.g. encouraged self-determination, fostered self-reflexivity, curated an environment of respect and trust), indicates that this PAR team achieved our goals of constructing a time and place where the campus community reflectively engaged in stories of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at Brown (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Creating this space and ‘methodology of healing’ required a great deal of emotional and material labour in transgressing the implicit social norms of the previously quiet space of Leung Gallery into the temporary social open art space, detailed as follows.

**Transforming Public Space: Silent to Social**

During the set up of *Hurt People Hurt People*, the process of turning Leung from a quiet space to a non-quiet space was fraught with whispers and social anxiety, which inspired a great deal of discourse\(^{116}\) amongst the PAR team on the materiality of spatial transformation. April described her visceral experience of the room’s silence:

\[\ldots\textit{I was the first person in the room, and I felt like I was entering such a stifling atmosphere. I felt physically like there was this air that...you have to be silent and if you aren’t silent, it will silence you [laughter]. That’s literally how I felt, and as the laughter and the talking spread throughout the room, I felt this atmosphere just break apart and then disappear. I don’t know, it felt like a very visceral, physical thing. (April, 7/12/14)}\]

\(^{116}\) The analysis of this process is based on auto-ethnographic field notes and the collective ethnography and oral analysis of the event as conducted by the PAR team.
In this portrayal, April illuminates her first-hand lived experience of the materiality of what she experiences as a toxic geography. The toxicity of the space is evident in her description of violence in ‘this air’ that she ‘felt physically’ that if she did not conform to the norms of silence that the space would force her to not speak. April’s identification of these feelings as ‘visceral’ aligns with scholarship around visceral geography, which ‘refers to how bodies feel internally in relation with material social space’ (emphasis in original, Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015, p. 300; Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010). In the case of (micro)aggressions, visceral geographies and toxic geographies are deeply entangled in that the former considers the way (micro)aggressions are experienced at the scale of the body and that the latter are the ‘material social spaces’ that interact with those bodies to co-construct such visceral experiences of toxicity (Joshi, McCutcheon, & Sweet, 2015).

In response to April’s description of her visceral experience of the toxic geographies of Leung Gallery, Hayaatee agreed and pointed to the collective social policing of behaviour as part of the reason for that atmosphere. ‘You’re right, the air is thick in there. It’s hard to move. Maybe it’s because eyes are on you when you walk in’ (Hayaatee, 7/12/14). Hayaatee’s account of the thickness of space and diminished mobility in Leung Gallery maps well onto Ahmed’s discussion of considering institutional flows as crowds of people. Hayaatee is describing an experience of being in a crowd and attempting to walk in the opposite direction of the crowd: ‘To keep going, you have to push harder than any of those individuals who are going the right way’ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 186). The institutional flow of the crowd creates a felt and material environment of ‘thick’ air for anyone moving in the opposite direction, requiring a disproportionate amount of energy to accomplish that journey in comparison to those travelling with the flow.
Several co-researchers expanded on Hayaatee’s and April’s comments on feeling forced to be silent and act in particular ways. They shared their experiences of unconsciously self-policing their behaviour to limit the noise they made (e.g. whispers, walking on tip toes) while setting up the event, *Hurt People Hurt People*, when Leung Gallery was initially quiet. Nicholas discussed this phenomenon:

> …I really did enjoy how it became a social space. I thought it was funny how even when I entered the space when I was setting up y’all had to tell me, “speak out; we’re reclaiming this space, why are you whispering? I can’t hear you…” (Nicholas, 7/12/14)\(^{117}\)

This comment points to the power of socio-spatial norms in Nicholas’s change in behaviour upon entering the space to adhere to the unwritten norms of the space and that he required the reminders from his co-researchers that he could and should speak without whispering. In my auto-ethnographic notes, I mentioned a similar experience:

*At the beginning, I walked in and saw Hayaatee and April and we all whispered. April talked about the awkwardness of moving and talking and we all noticed we were whispering. I had a hard time and didn’t speak regularly. betta and Coreen made a point to speak regularly. betta helped check me by saying “I can’t hear you.” At first I didn’t get it, and then she made a face like “no, speak regular, don’t whisper.” Those liminal moments of (not) quiet space making were real, felt and material. It’s amazing the power of social and self-policing. Once the event was in full swing, I wasn’t...*

\(^{117}\) Source: Nicholas Peterson, 7/12/14, PAR Team’s Collective Ethnography/Oral Analysis of *Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Event...*, took place at Maura’s flat.
as self-conscious and think that was likely (maybe) because we had numbers on our side. (Maura, 2/12/14)\textsuperscript{118}

Transforming this space included the particular labour of transgressing social norms, which involve risks of precarity, anxiety, violence and potential social conflict (e.g. push back or harassment by people studying quietly) as well as the possibilities of transforming norms, even if briefly. Having ‘numbers on our side’ (i.e. 11 co-researchers, about 8 support staff and over 60 participants) also assisted in the shift in the atmosphere by gathering bodies that refused to perform the social contract of silence. Applying this to Ahmed’s metaphors, instead of encountering the institutional flow or brick wall or toxic geographies of Leung Gallery as an individual diversity worker, the assemblage of willing bodies created a blockage point that, albeit only momentarily, stopped the institutional flow of structures of oppression and enabled the bodies to interact with the physicality of the space in order to co-construct an alternative place, an insurgent geography, in which to engage with issues of (micro)aggressions, healing and accountability. The dispersion and accumulation of voices throughout the room temporarily displaced the emotionally and materially toxic air and social surveillance during the event.

The felt and material transformation of the space from silent to social, from individualised to communal, prompted feelings of pleasure, enjoyment and self-empowerment as noted by a few co-researchers. For instance, Dame said:

\begin{quote}
The changing space I thought was really, really fun…I wasn’t thinking, and I wore these shoes, which have heals and are really loud. And sometimes when I know I’ll be studying there…I have to where these kind of shoes
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{118} Source: Maura Pavalow, 2/12/14, Debriefing *Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Event*..., Auto-Ethnographic Field Notes.
because they’ll make no sound, when I walk in that room. And so, at first when I first got there we were setting up, I was kind of walking on tip toes because I can’t make noise, and then I was like, no wait, I can make noise because we’re taking back the space. And I had a lot of fun just walking really loudly [laughter]. And I was upstairs and we weren’t really in the third floor, except just videoing, and so there were still people who were really quietly studying, but I purposely stepped louder. [Laughter.] Lots of side eye [Laughter]. (Dame, 7/12/14)

Dame’s account and Nicholas’s comment that he ‘really did enjoy’ the spatial transformation (e.g. ‘And then I just had so much fun talking and being intentional with my voice, it was just like so fun and it felt really good,’ Nicholas, 7/12/14) suggest experiences of pleasure in transgressing norms and asserting agency without violent consequences, which maps well onto arguments that pleasure is central to freedom struggles (hooks, 1994). PAR is informed by a variety of theories of critical pedagogy119, including those of bell hooks who argues that when education is implemented as the ‘practice of freedom’ it is, and should be, experienced as ecstasy and ‘sheer joy’ (hooks, 1994, p. 3). Thus, these accounts of co-researchers’ experiences of joy are evidence of a quality PAR project.

The continued absence of violence coupled with the respectful, reflective and genuine participant engagement throughout the event led to a sense of self-empowerment, individually and as a group. For example, April said the open art

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119 In her 1994 book Teaching to Transgress, hooks used her educational experiences in segregated and desegregated schools in the US to highlight the disparate impact of different pedagogical philosophies on her learning experiences and personal growth. She advocates for approaches, such as the ones she was introduced to in segregated schools by her Black teachers, that emphasise nurturing the curiosity, growth and transformation of the student in a holistic manner that takes into consideration a student’s identities and backgrounds. hooks critiques pedagogies, such as those she was introduced to in desegregated and white schools, that focus primarily on transferring information from teachers to students (e.g. ‘banking model’ of education; Freire 1970) without consideration of the lives of students. The former is ‘education as the practice of freedom’ and the latter is a form of social control that disciplines and produces future workers who will ensure the reproduction of the status quo (hooks, 1994).
space was ‘one of the best moments I’ve had at Brown’ not only because many people attended, but also because participants seemed to genuinely engage in and enjoy the curated space:

Just seeing so many people come out and they didn’t just come out and say hi and put something and walk away, people literally sat there for the entire hour and a half and were just like, “I love this, I want to do this all the time. Can I keep doing this until – how long are you guys going to be here?” And…it was so nice to see people finally be able to step away from the Brown atmosphere and really have the time and space to process what’s been happening. (April 7/12/14)

Hayaatee described the characteristics of the space that she enjoyed, which included the lighting, a feeling of warmth, the informality and intimacy of participant engagement, and momentarily changing the social norms of the space to encourage people who had already been in the room to talk:

I loved how social that space became and like the lighting was really wonderful because it felt so warm. And I had to climb over a bunch of people laying on top of each other on the floor so that I could get to a seat so I could just chill and eat my food. But there were people lounging…when we first started setting up and it was dead silent and kind of awkward, then other groups started talking right next to us. (Hayaatee, 7/12/14)

Hayaatee continued to describe challenges in which a few passers-by or people already in the space did not appreciate the transformation into non-quiet space:

Although I did hear a really fucked up thing…I saw this group of people who I really didn’t like anyway [laughter] and…they said something like, “I feel really (micro)aggressive right now because they’re being really loud” and I
was like lol – you missed the point. [Laughter] You totally missed it. (Hayaatee, 7/12/14)

These individuals did not make a formal complaint or attempt to engage in the event. Hayaatee and the PAR team characterised this encounter as a group of privileged individuals who did not understand nor want to understand topics of identity, power and privilege, particularly given their mocking use of the term ‘(micro)aggression.’ In relation to Hayaatee’s story, Nicholas pointed out that the processes of displacement that took place in order for the open art space to happen was perceived to be minimal and took the form of few people leaving and several people expressing disapproval through body language (i.e. ‘side eyes’), but many people stayed in the space.

In addition to co-researchers’ pride and joy in curating a space that fostered quality participant engagement, several expressed the importance of feeling safe in the insurgent geographies of the open art space and the PAR team given the scarcity of that feeling in other spaces at the university, as discussed in Chapter 5. For example, Hayaatee shared her experience of not feeling safe or welcome or supported at Brown and the daily experience of being out of place suppressed her agency in participating in the daily social constructions of spaces:

I don’t feel safe on this campus and… I feel there are very few places that I can make feel warm. And I feel part of taking over Leung was showing that we can collectively make a space warm and it doesn’t have to be the frigid silence and side eye central in the middle of the fucking Campus Center. Like we can come together and… allow people to talk and allow people to have that space and allow people to feel comfortable. I really agree with what you were saying, betta, that it just feels really nice to know that we can
work towards making a space like that. And so spontaneously too, it was sort of just like a pop up warmth, and then – what are they, death eaters? Then the death eaters came and sucked out the noise again. [Laughter]. (Hayaatee, 7/12/14)

Being part of collaboratively making an unplanned and warm space served to remind Hayaatee of her agency and the reality that spaces are malleable and not pre-determined (Kobayashi & Peake, 1994; Gilbert, 1997; Knopp, 2007; Browne & Lim, 2010).

Hayaatee’s reference to the fictional characters of the death eaters from the Harry Potter series (i.e. flying creatures who suck out souls from the mouths of their victims), while humorous provides a helpful visceral summary of the toxicity of Leung Gallery as frigid, silencing, surveilling, and soul sucking. The PAR team not only identified Leung Gallery as one of several toxic geographies of Brown University, but also applied their research question to the context of that space through the open art space, as discussed throughout this section. The results of their action research project on the long-term toxic geographies of Leung Gallery are detailed in the next section.

**Blockage Point: Multiple Understandings of Place**

This section uses a linear narrative structure to detail the impacts of Hurt People Hurt People on the toxic geographies of Leung Gallery, which ultimately included the development of an advisory board for the Campus Center and change in policy on how Leung Gallery is used. These alterations were made possible in

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120 As Hayaatee noted, after the open art event, Leung Gallery ‘went straight back to silence,’ which April, as well as her fellow co-researchers, found ‘frustrating.’
the aftermath of *Hurt People Hurt People* in which the PAR team was transformed into a ‘blockage point’ by an administrator that manages the Campus Center, overcame that misidentification through careful negotiation and genuine conversation with the administrator, and eventually helped the administrator see the institutional flow as a brick wall that he previously had not encountered, which enabled the aforementioned institutional changes.

The PAR team became a ‘blockage point’ after *Hurt People Hurt People*, however we did not become aware of that until a couple of weeks later. After the event, I set up one-on-one meetings\(^{121}\) with various staff who supported the event, whether through being present at the event, providing funding, or providing the space, to debrief the event, get feedback, and thank them for their support. On December 10, 2014 I met with Anderson, one of the administrators who manage the Campus Center, to thank him for his support with the event, check in to see how the event went from his and his department’s perspective, and invite any and all feedback. The conversation that ensued was helpful in receiving concrete feedback and bringing to the surface a conflict based on a miscommunication due to multiple understandings of places. I pointed out that most of the organising we did was over email and that when I met with Delores, there seemed to be miscommunication and part of my interest in feedback was to see if there were any other miscommunications. Despite having not attended, Anderson gave feedback based on two sometimes-divergent roles that he inhabits, as someone committed to social justice and as an administrator:

\(^{121}\) At the time, it was Finals Period and the rest of the PAR team was preoccupied with exams, which is why these meetings were one-on-one with me.
One, as someone that thinks these conversations are important, who is experienced and passionate about social justice issues, and the other who is [an administrator at] this Campus Center. As the former, I thought it was a great event. As the latter, I was concerned and felt it was misrepresented, and in all honesty I will have to be stricter with future events. I know that another group will come asking to do an event like this and use yours as an example of something that was approved, and it will be difficult to explain why they can’t use it. (Anderson, 10/12/14)122

I asked Anderson to elaborate what he meant that he ‘felt it was misrepresented’ since that was not our intention and yet how he perceived the event. He explained:

The event was bigger than expected and I didn't know there was going to be food. There were about 8 coat racks delivered at around 8-10am, which blocked off a whole part of the room. I thought it was going to be 2-3 people at a time adding to the artwork. I thought it was going to be quiet and transient, not with so many people, though maybe you didn’t realise how many people would come. In my original email, I was clear that debriefs wouldn’t work well in that space and to rather reserve [another room in the Centre] or have small conversations of 2-3 people. And I was clear that the space is a non-reservable ‘open community space.’ I recognise that that designation was made before I came into this role and that it is open to interpretation. The quiet element bothers Delores, but not me as much. My concern is people feeling that they had to leave the space. We have had events before like post-Ray Kelly conversation in that space, where they put up signs from 8am so when people entered the building to study there, they had advance notice. If this event had the purpose like that one, to have difficult and important conversations in a central place, that would have been another story. (Anderson, 10/12/14)

122 Source: Anderson, 10/12/14, Paraphrase of Debrief of Hurt People Hurt People, Conversation Between Anderson and Maura, took place in Anderson’s office.
We engaged in an extended conversation in order to uncover the miscommunications that led to this list of ‘misrepresentations’ and a misunderstanding of the event and the multiple meanings of the space, from both perspectives.

I addressed each of the concerns he pointed out, several of which were inaccurate, likely due to the fact that he himself was not at the event and, as a result, this information came from a second source. I was surprised to hear that the presence of food was a shock let alone a concern, as that is something the team and I thought was an important part of facilitating ‘open community space,’ or as we understood the phrase, since food is often an important element of community-building processes. As for the delivery of coat racks, there were in actuality 4, not 8, and the Office of Institutional Diversity organised their delivery, not the PAR team. However, I did take responsibility for the fact that they blocked off part of the room for most of the day, which was news to me. Anderson’s assumption that ‘2-3 people’ would engage with the artwork ‘at a time’ and that it would be ‘quiet and transient’ with few people was unfounded; at no time during planning did we convey any of those points to him (or vice versa), especially the particularity of the numbers and timing of people interacting with the art. As for his ‘concern’ in ‘people feeling that they had to leave the space,’ that was made clear to us through our email exchange and in meeting with Delores; as a result, we put a couple of mechanisms in place to mitigate displacement. For instance, based on Delores’ suggestion, one of the co-researchers put up signs the morning of the event to let people know who entered the building and Leung Gallery that there would be an event there later. In addition, the same co-researcher walked around the room informing previous occupants and people walking by that the event was happening
and encouraged them to stay in the space and participate if there was interest. In reference to his last point, I reminded him that I explicitly stated in email that this event was in fact about such 'difficult and important conversations,’ namely:

Students expressed interest in Leung Gallery because…having conversations about marginalisation, particularly race, gender and sexuality, in such a visible and central space, in the Student Centre, [can] reach audiences who may not already be having these conversations and, more importantly, to value these conversations as central and vital to the community. (Maura, 10/11/14)

After outlining points of information that countered Anderson’s perception of misrepresentation, while taking responsibility for the few instances of mistakes, I myself had questions and concerns about miscommunication regarding the uses of Leung Gallery and what the PAR team thought that Anderson and his department had approved and vice versa. Some of my questions were: what is the operational definition you are using when you say ‘open community space’? Open for whom? Whose community? Space for whom? What did you imagine the event to be, and what about that was okay? How did that image differ from what happened, and how are those differences not acceptable? Why is the congregation of more than 2-3 people at a time a problem? How did the event transgress your idea of ‘open community space’?

It seemed clear to me through this conversation with Anderson as well as via previous conversations with Delores, the PAR team and Directors of identity-based centres that there were multiple definitions of ‘open community space’ at play and those conflicting imagined geographies resulted in this ‘misrepresentation.’ Part of my concern in being perceived as having
'misrepresented’ an event was having the blockage point that the PAR team was trying to point out (i.e. the toxic geographies of Leung Gallery for students of colour, queer, non-binary and women students) not only be unseen, but also strengthened by being read as a blockage point ourselves. In other words, the impacts of these miscommunications had the potential to enhance rather than transform the toxicity of the space, as evidenced in Anderson’s statement that he would likely be less amenable to student-organised events, particularly those led by and/or for marginalised students, in the space in the future.

I shared my discomfort, which I felt viscerally as something gnawing at the pit of my stomach, with Anderson by returning to his earlier words that he would be less likely to allow students to do events ‘like this’ in the future. This event was about marginalised students, predominantly queer students of colour, discussing their experiences of their marginality at Brown, exercising their voices, and claiming a central campus space as one in which they (should) belong. I was clear that I don’t want this one event to have caused him, as one of several administrators that managed the Campus Center, to penalise the students in the PAR team or future students from wanting to have a space, a central space no less, in which to feel comfortable. At this point, Anderson caught a glimpse of the wall that previously had not appeared to him, and in fact ran into its materiality. He paused, stumbling over his words, and said:

*Are you insinuating that queer students and students of colour do not feel welcome in the Campus Center? Because as someone invested in social justice work, with experience in it, and as a queer man, that really worries me and is honestly surprising. You may not be able to speak to it, but is that the case?* (Anderson, 10/12/14)
Finally, after an hour of conversation, the blockage point was starting to dissipate. In attempting to respond to Anderson, I had an interesting experience of feeling tongue-tied in attempting to explain what the space meant to the PAR team. Until that moment, I had never had to explain the visceral experience of the toxicity of Leung Gallery. Previously, whenever I personally discussed encounters with Leung with the PAR team or peers, the feeling of its toxicity was a common and shared sensation that did not have to be articulated. For instance, when telling a story about walking through the Campus Center and having to walk through Leung Gallery, there has been a common understanding of ‘oh that’s such an awful space’ or ‘how many side eyes did you get when you walked through?’ Attempting to explain a visceral experience to someone who had not lived through it was an overwhelming and frustrating task, similar to the Sisyphean mission of diversity workers attempting to make white people see the brick walls (e.g. structural racism) that the former hit their heads against daily and the latter rarely encounter.

After finding some words despite being tongue-tied, I reminded Anderson that I cannot speak on behalf of the students in the PAR team, let alone all queer students, students of colour and queer students of colour, and that the PAR team picked Leung Gallery for a very specific and intentional reason that they shared at the start of Hurt People Hurt People. For instance, I pointed out that in one of our conversations as a PAR team, several co-researchers pointed out that the Centre’s implicit definition of ‘open community space’ as quiet studying and social silencing can be viewed as a privileging of white Eurocentric norms of community and devaluing social practices outside of such cultural customs. This implicit racialisation of the space is particularly poignant given the name of the space and the portrait of a family of colour on display, which is a point that one of the
Directors of the identity-based centres had mentioned to me several weeks previously. Anderson said he had never thought about the cultural implications of the silence of the space and the multiple ways silencing works in that space. I offered to organise a follow up conversation with the PAR team about the space, who feels comfortable, who does not and why in their words, which took place at the start of the next semester in early February.

After the first thirty minutes or so of Anderson’s meeting with the PAR team in February, there was a ‘breaking point’ as April called it where Anderson stopped asserting his authority as an administrator, started to engage the team honestly with vulnerability, and what ensued was a genuine and powerful exchange. Before the ‘breaking point,’ the co-researchers explained to Anderson how they encounter Leung Gallery as a toxic geography. April talked about the issue of limited spaces on campus for collaborative study and the over-prioritisation of individualised and quiet learning preferences, which exclude collaborative, active and visual learning preferences. Nicholas discussed the awkwardness of the space and the pressure he feels to self-police his behaviour. Gina agreed with Nicholas and pointed out the impact of that self-policing for students of colour, namely how she and other students of colour already self-police their behaviours everyday at a PWI and such burdens are exacerbated in Leung Gallery. April continued Gina’s argument by pointing out that while students of colour and other marginalised students are used to self-policing, they are not accustomed to being actively policed by students and peers, which happens and is normalised in that space, as previously discussed. April said, ‘It’s stifling’ (April, 6/2/15)123. Gina agreed that ‘stifling is a great word’ to

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123 Source: April Primavera, 6/2/15, Discussion of Why Leung Gallery Was Location for Hurt People Hurt People with Anderson, in PAR Team Meeting at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
describe the experience of Leung Gallery, particularly given difficulty she has encountered in attempting to articulate the feelings and experience of this ‘stifling’ atmosphere to peers (Gina, 6/2/15)\(^{124}\). At that point, Gina thanked Anderson for listening, particularly given the fact that many peers often dismiss her for being ‘hypersensitive’ when talking about issues of (micro)aggressions (Gina, 6/2/15).

The conversation shifted to discussing betta’s request, outside of the PAR team, to hold a workshop on the Black Lives Matter movement in Leung Gallery as part of her role as a Minority Peer Counsellor (see Chapter 4 for definition). betta and Gina detailed the importance of Black Lives Matter for the whole campus and that the intention of the workshop is for it to be open to everyone. Anderson shared that he sometimes ‘feels stuck’ in negotiating his personal interests with the limitations of his job (Anderson, 6/2/15)\(^{125}\). He explained that he may personally agree with one thing over the other, but at the end of the day his job involves organising Leung Gallery and he needs a sound rationale for his selection processes regarding what student events can and cannot take place there. The moment of ‘feeling stuck,’ he identified, was in wanting to approve one person’s request to use the space because it is about something he believes in (e.g. Black Lives Matter), but his concern that that would open the doors for someone who wants to do an event on something he doesn’t support such as ‘how the Holocaust didn’t exist’ (Anderson, 6/2/15).

I interjected with a question and a point, highly informed by the fact that I was writing Chapter 4 of this thesis at the time. The question was: ‘what support do

\(^{124}\) Source: Gina Perry, 6/2/15, Discussion of Why Leung Gallery Was Location for Hurt People Hurt People with Anderson, in PAR Team Meeting at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.

\(^{125}\) Source: Anderson, 6/2/15, Discussion of Why Leung Gallery Was Location for Hurt People Hurt People with Anderson, in PAR Team Meeting at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
you need, that we can provide, to get unstuck or to take the risk in supporting an event?' (Maura, 6/2/15)¹²⁶ I read his sticking point to be a concern over the entanglement of his job security and adhering to institutional practices of academic freedom, which can be repressive as discussed in Chapter 4. Since Anderson mentioned denying the Holocaust, I read an excerpt out loud from the book The Imperial University that I happened to have on me:

*In this model, neo-Nazis or antiabortion advocates have the same rights to academic freedom in the university as do queer activists or anti-war proponents. There is no progressive ethos built into the principle of academic freedom, and that is what makes it easily available for recuperation and resort by the right as much as the left.* (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014, p. 39)

I applied this quote to the example of the Ray Kelly incident (see Chapter 4) and the ways arguments of academic freedom were mobilised in that case to silence protestors and deflect from the institution’s engagement with the inconsistencies that protestors were highlighting. My point was to attempt to unpack Anderson’s sticking point as an issue of how he individually negotiates the notion of academic freedom, contextualise it within the broader structure of the AMPIC, and suggest that part of his concern is the personal precarity he might encounter in transgressing a neoliberal notion of academic freedom. In other words, I heard him saying that for him, these questions of whether to host an event or not is directly related to real, material worries about maintaining—and not losing—his job. If supporting events like *Hurt People Hurt People* and a Black Lives Matter workshop

¹²⁶ Source: Maura Pavalow, 6/2/15, Discussion of Why Leung Gallery Was Location for *Hurt People Hurt People* with Anderson, in PAR Team Meeting at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
requires putting him in a position of precarity, whether real or imagined, my previous question (i.e. what do you need?) was trying to tease out what support the organisers of these events can provide to mitigate his precarity so that he can get past his ‘sticking point’ and that these events can take place. At that point, several co-researchers genuinely offered their support and that they know other students who would be happy to stand by Anderson. Gina said, ‘I don’t have the words, so I’m just going to say it: we’re ride or die,’ and betta agreed by saying, ‘we have your back’ (Gina, 6/2/15; betta, 6/2/15\textsuperscript{127}).

It was at this moment, as co-researchers’ expressed solidarity with Anderson, that the aforementioned ‘breaking point’ happened. Anderson shared his career trajectory, including his background in social justice work as well as his discontent with the lack of that work in his current position. He continued by answering my question about his needs, saying that the development of an advisory board would be helpful in being the arbitrator of development selection protocol for events and distributing the responsibility for making decisions that could be perceived as being ‘in the way’ of the institutional flow. However, regarding betta’s request to use Leung Gallery for the Black Lives Matter workshop (in four days), there was not enough time to set up an advisory board. He decided that upon leaving our meeting he would talk to his superiors to get approval for the Black Lives Matter workshop and would get back to us by the end of the day.

Before he left, the team thanked him. Gina said, ‘thank you. It’s weird, but it was beautiful for lack of better word to see you struggle, to know it’s not just us’ (Gina, 6/2/15). The interaction with Anderson was one of several moments in the

\textsuperscript{127} Source: betta newlin, 6/2/15, Discussion of Why Leung Gallery Was Location for Hurt People Hurt People with Anderson, in PAR Team Meeting at Sarah Doyle Women’s Center.
PAR project where co-researchers made connections between (micro)aggressions and the AMPIC. In this case, they recognised that the issue of (micro)aggressions is an experience that students share with staff and faculty, and the invisibility of (micro)aggressions and precarity in addressing them as a structural phenomenon. For instance, April shared with Anderson that we read an article the semester prior called *Neocolonial Providence* by a local resident and activist in Providence, which discussed the negative implications of Brown University as an institution on low-income communities of colour in Providence (see Chapter 4). April described her experience of reading that article, which was ‘hard to read at first’ and difficult to negotiate, ‘wanting to do something but recognising where you’re located’ in systems of power, to relate to Anderson’s situation of ‘being stuck’ (April, 6/2/15). Gina had a copy of the article on her and lent it to Anderson. After he left, April explained why she brought up *Neocolonial Providence*: ‘I hear him saying he wants to do something, but there’s the conflict of his location, and I recognised that’s similar to us and conversations we had last semester’ (April, 6/2/15). April’s identification of the ‘conflict of location’ of one’s positionality, beliefs, and employment maps onto spatiality of Ahmed’s metaphor of blockage points, brick walls, and institutional flows. Namely, April analyses Anderson’s personal ‘sticking point’ as the conflict between going along with the institutional flow while wanting to change its direction without hitting brick walls or encountering precarity by becoming a blockage point. As previously discussed in the case of *Hurt People* *Hurt People*, one tactic for mitigating this spatial struggle is by gathering bodies who resist the institutional flow to bear the resistance together as a force, rather than be crushed by the burden of doing it alone. For long-term change, the gathering of bodies often requires a continued engagement and effort of sustained
community building to resist and ultimately transform the flow over time. For instance, *Hurt People Hurt People* was successful in reconfiguring Leung Gallery to a social space where conversations about race, gender and sexuality were central for a few hours, and then silence and social policing, or death eaters as Hayaatee put it, returned.

A variety of material changes took place due to this exchange with Anderson and his efforts to take the PAR team's insights to heart. First, later that day, Anderson informed betta that she had approval to use Leung Gallery for the Black Lives Matter workshop, which took place and was successful. Second, a few days later Anderson emailed with a thank you and shared the ‘challenging’ and positive impact of our conversation on him as ‘one of the more important conversations I’ve had in my time at Brown’ (Anderson, 10/2/15). In that email, he shared updates including an invitation to a forum he was organising to request community perspectives on the use of Leung Gallery, which several co-researchers suggested to Anderson in our meeting. The forum description was:

> *When Faunce House was renovated in 2010 to become the Stephen Robert '62 Campus Center, one of the goals was to create more "open community space," and one of the main focuses for this goal was the Leung Gallery. What does open community space mean to you? Is the Campus Center and Leung achieving this goal? For whom? Join us for a conversation on these questions and more.* (Anderson, 10/2/15)

Anderson also informed the team that the Campus Center staff put paper and markers in Leung Gallery to invite responses ‘on the question of how Leung is

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128 Source: Anderson, 10/2/15, Email + Thank You to PAR Team for Conversation on 6/2/15.
currently used.’ A couple days later he shared a call for undergraduates to join an advisory board for the Campus Center and encouraged co-researchers to apply:

Now that the Stephen Robert ’62 Campus Center is approaching five years post renovation, we would like to form a temporary advisory board to discuss some current topics pertaining to the space. We are looking for two undergraduate students to serve on the advisory board. The time commitment would be two or three meetings over the next few months. If you are interested, please fill out the Google form by clicking on the link below by Friday, February 20th. (Anderson, 13/2/15)

Later in the term, Anderson shared the outcomes of these various initiatives with the PAR team, namely that as of April 2015 the Campus Center did outreach through a variety of formats (e.g. forum, survey, responses on paper in Leung) to invite feedback on the use of the space and what ‘open community space’ means to participants:

We had four people come to our forum, however, they did bring very differing perspectives and we ended up having a good conversation. We had nearly 700 students respond to our survey and received many comments on the open response sheets we hung around the Campus Center. I was also able to have a number of individual and small group conversations with students and other stakeholders including student government members, students & administrators involved in communities discussing mental health and accessibility, the BCSC Student Advisory Board, folks in the LGBTQ community and a few others. There were diverse and strong opinions on the use of the space in each group. From the feedback gathered, we drafted guidelines, which we hope will balance the

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Source: Anderson, 13/2/15, Email with Updates re: Leung Gallery to PAR Team.
need for quiet space, social/gathering space, and events. We have some technical things to figure out to play some music in the space at some times, and will be looking at student art and furniture as opportunities exist in the coming months. We took these guidelines to the newly reformed Advisory Board who, after some discussion and tweaks, has approved them. The event guidelines, which are not significantly different than what we had before, but are better articulated, will be in effect immediately with a new request form online. (Anderson, 8/4/15)\(^{130}\)

Anderson cited the PAR team as seminal in making all of this research and the subsequent changes, such as the establishment of the advisory board and request form for reserving the space, possible and thanked us. In addition, one of the PAR co-researchers, Gina, became one of two undergraduates on the advisory board.

In addition to the material changes in Leung Gallery, there were also emotional material changes in the validation and recognition the PAR team received not only at Hurt People Hurt People, but also in its aftermath in enacting the material changes as well as a couple of co-researchers developing mentoring relationships with Anderson outside of the PAR context. Both impacts were made possible, in part, by the institutional rarity of Anderson’s putting in the emotional and physical labour to not only encounter previously unseen walls, but also to work towards removing them. The impact of such generosity was evident in the follow-up email that Gina and Nicholas sent to Anderson, on behalf of the PAR team, to thank him for his vulnerability:

\begin{center}
On behalf of (micro)aggressions at Brown, we would like to thank you for stopping by the other week. Your listening to our opinions really meant a lot to us, and we sincerely appreciated your candour and willingness to
\end{center}

\(^{130}\) Source: Anderson, 8/4/15, Email with Updates re: Leung Gallery to PAR Team.
embrace the space as your own. Should you ever want to join us again, please know that the invitation is always open to you. We also want to reiterate that we are here to support you. Please let us know any tangible ways in which we can do so. (Gina + Nicholas, 17/2/15)\textsuperscript{131}

The influence of the exchange had emotional material benefits on Anderson, which he articulated as ‘powerful,’ as apparent in his response to Gina and Nicholas:

Thank you for the support and for engaging in the conversation. I really do appreciate it. As I’ve mentioned to individuals in passing and in my previous email, the conversation was really powerful for me. One of the reasons for this was the genuine support you all expressed as I shared where I was stuck. (Anderson, 18/2/15)\textsuperscript{132}

This exchange suggests that the experience of mutual support is especially ‘powerful’ given the context of it taking place in a PWI where toxicity is normalised and a particular neoliberal toxicity is operationalised that emphasises individualisation, meritocracy, and decreased opportunities for human connection. After daily encounters with brick walls, moments without resistance, let alone with genuine support, can feel viscerally exceptional.

In sum, this section has overviewed the development, negotiation, and resolution of a conflict in which the PAR team and our event, *Hurt People Hurt People*, were initially misrecognised as a ‘blockage point.’ Through the willingness and emotional labour of the PAR team and Anderson, the toxic geographies of Leung Gallery were made visible and addressed through policy changes, fulfilling the aims and objectives of the PAR project that the PAR team established. As a

\textsuperscript{131} Source: Gina Perry + Nicholas Peterson, 17/2/15, Email + Thank You to Anderson for Conversation on 6/2/15.
\textsuperscript{132} Source: Anderson, 18/2/15, Email Response to Gina + Nicholas re: Conversation on 6/2/15.
result of this action research project and in collaboration with the administrators who manage Leung Gallery, an advisory board of staff and students (including a PAR co-researcher) was developed, a written policy on what events are permissible in the space created and made public, and different practices enacted (e.g. playing music) to discourage the social construction of the space as quiet and ‘mean,’ as betta put it (betta, 7/12/14).

**Conclusion: Visceral Geographies of (Micro)aggressions**

As discussed throughout this thesis, place and scale are important factors in the construction and experience of (micro)aggressions. As Joshi et al illustrate in their 2015 paper, (micro)aggressions happen at the scale of the body in the way they are felt and internalised. Due to the often-invisible nature of (micro)aggressions, they infrequently travel beyond the scale of the body and stay a private matter known by the body or bodies in question or in proximity. Whether conscious or not, the power in sharing stories of (micro)aggressions at *Hurt People* *Hurt People* outlined in this chapter (e.g. pride, joy, satisfaction, reflexivity, change in policy) and in conversation with Anderson (e.g. powerful, willingness, candour, genuine support) in part stems from transforming the spatiality of (micro)aggressions, dispersing their location from the scale of the individual private body to a shared collective or public in people gathering to be vulnerable and share intimate stories of hurt they have experienced or inflicted on others. This chapter has explored a micro spatial analysis of the toxic geographies of race, gender and sexuality in Leung Gallery in the Campus Center at Brown University. In the following chapter, I connect this micro level impact of the PAR team’s efforts in
Leung Gallery to a broader critique of the university at a macro level by situating it within the AMPIC, particularly regarding the impacts of neoliberalism on the mental health of students of colour, women, non-binary and queer students.
Chapter 7. Intersectionality in the Neoliberal University

Introduction

As evident in the three scale-based empirical chapters (i.e. macro, meso, micro) and in this concluding chapter, scale is crucial for understanding and mitigating (micro)aggressions. While (micro)aggressions happen at the scale of the body (i.e. micro), they are symptoms of issues at the scale of the institution (i.e. macro). Inter-scalar methodologies like PAR are essential to shift the location of (micro)aggressions from the scale of the body to the scale of the PAR collective (i.e. meso) to make these wounds legible, understand how (micro)aggressions stem from structures, and use that information to enact change at the level of the institution and the scale of the body. Further, intersectionality is an important inter-scalar epistemology for conceptualising how (micro)aggressions are manifestations of structures of dominance and marginalisation mapped inequitably across raced and gendered bodies (McKittrick, 2006). This chapter begins with a second order interpretation of the empirical work through the lens of intersectionality. Following the application of the analytic concept of intersectionality to the context of the empirical research on (micro)aggressions, the chapter returns to an engagement with literature reviewed in Chapter 2 to clarify the thesis’s key contributions to contemporary debates in Intersectional Geographies. Then I provide a detailed illustration of one contribution, namely how this thesis sheds a light on the particular impact of the neoliberal university on the mental health of students who live at the intersections of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation. The chapter

133 The particular notion of '(micro)aggression' is intentional in order to emphasize the fact that (micro)aggressions are everyday manifestations of structural violence. The rationale for this stylistic choice is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.
ends with an analytic reflection on the utility of “toxicity” as both metaphor and literal phenomenon in the framework of toxic geographies utilized in this thesis.

**Looking Through an Intersectional Lens**

This section provides an overview of how this thesis defines intersectionality (as discussed in detail in Chapter 2) and applies an intersectional lens to the PAR project of this thesis. I explicate how the empirical research, and PAR in particular, contributes to contemporary geographical understandings of intersectionality.

Intersectionality is a Black feminist epistemology that understands the interdependency of race and gender, rejects single-axis frameworks (e.g. focus on only gender or race), and centres the lives, leadership, and creativity of Black women, other women of colour, and gender non-conforming people of colour. In the context of activism, intersectionality is often mobilised as an abolitionist framework that centres the aforementioned subjectivities to dismantle all systems of oppression. As repeated from Chapter 2, ‘If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all systems of oppression (The Combahee River Collective, 1977, p. 4). Intersectionality fulfils a Radical Geography definition of ‘research’ in that it rigorously critiques injustice, is based on a hope that better worlds are possible, and requires action to combat multiple systems of oppression, as evident in this quote. In this thesis I enacted intersectionality through an empirical focus on the entanglement of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions and a PAR approach that centred the leadership of people living at the intersections of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation to collaboratively address injustice in the academy.
In Chapter 2, I reviewed relevant geographical literature that engaged with intersectionality and highlighted the under-researched areas to which my thesis contributes. My goals were to reject whitewashed uses of intersectionality, explore student experiences of racial-gender marginalisation in spaces of higher education, queer Intersectional Geographies, and materialise geographies of gender, sexuality and race. I accomplished the former by implementing a framework of intersectionality informed by its Black feminist genealogies (i.e. entanglement of race and gender) rather than its mainstream uses in gender studies scholarship (i.e. all differences are entangled) in which the latter erases the legacies and whitewashes the mission of the former (Crenshaw, 2015). A great deal of scholarship in Intersectional Geographies has been written on the daily visceral experiences of marginalisation of women of colour faculty and graduate students in Geography departments. Such scholarship raises questions about similar experiences in spaces of higher education more broadly and those encountered by undergraduates, which this thesis answers in later this section and in the next through empirical research. Further, there are theoretical and empirical gaps in the relationship between race and non-binary genders as well as the entanglement of race, gender and sexuality; I address these under-researched areas by queering Intersectional Geographies in centring race and mobilising conceptualisations of gender and sexuality beyond the binary and beyond single-gender desire. Last, I materialise geographies of gender, race and sexuality through PAR to attend to McKittrick’s argument that the ‘secretive histories’ of structural violence must be

134 Instead of centring people living at the intersection of race and gender marginalisation as argued by Crenshaw in coining the term (1989), the term’s mainstream use today often re-centres white women, relegating women of colour and gender non-conforming people of colour to the margins (Puar, 2012a; see Chapter 2).
accessed directly from the lived experience, creativity and struggle of ‘ungeographic’ or marginalised people (McKittrick, 2013); and by focusing on the daily experience of (macro)aggressions in order to investigate the capacity for the institutional curation of ‘emotionally toxic material spaces’ that inflict harm on students who live at the intersections of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation.

Having provided a summary of the definition of intersectionality and under-researched areas to which this thesis aims to contribute, I now apply an intersectional lens to the empirical work on (macro)aggressions. In Chapter 3, this thesis explored the spatiality of intersectionality through the methodology of PAR in processes of recruitment, selection, research focus, facilitation of team meetings, and the final PAR event. As discussed in Chapter 3, intersectionality was a guiding principle in recruitment and developing selection criteria in the project’s explicit focus on race, gender and sexuality (i.e. to focus on the interdependency of race and gender) as well as the eligibility criteria that co-researchers had to identify as a person of colour, woman, and/or LGBTQ (i.e. to centre lives, leadership and creativity of Black women, women of colour, and non-binary people of colour).

Interestingly, most applicants, and ultimately members of the PAR team selected in part through representative sample, identified as Black women or women of colour. PAR is conducive to enacting intersectionality’s aims to centre lives, leadership and creativity due to its aims to distribute power regarding the production of knowledge and efforts towards social change through a team-based co-researcher model, as discussed further through two examples of how intersectionality took place in the PAR process.

For instance, the process of collaboratively editing the co-researcher consent form facilitated the development of a framework of gender from which the
team would initially operate. In editing, Susie questioned the language of ‘identify as a woman’ as part of the eligibility criteria (i.e. ‘Identify as a person of colour, woman and/or LGBTQ’) and asked ‘why specifically woman and not female identifying?’ (Susie, 16/9/14). Susie’s question inspired a conversation about gender identity and transgender-inclusive language, which changes over time and is context-specific. Kieren responded that they ‘don’t like female-identifying’ because in the media ‘female is [about] bodies’ while ‘woman is [about] gender and identity’ (Kieren, 16/9/14). Kieren further described while they didn’t like the ‘identifying’ element of ‘female-identifying’ because mainstream language about transgender people is about “they identify as such” instead of “they are” [trans],’ microinvalidations that subtly undermine the self-determination and self-definition of transgender people’s gender (Kieren, 16/9/14). Since the common concern underlying the conversation about language was to make sure this research was trans-inclusive and inclusive of all people marginalised by gender, the team adopted the language of ‘identify as…woman’ and added ‘non-binary’ to the list of identities. What emerged from this conversation was a complicated understanding of gender that considers the differences between gender, sex and bodies, as well as the fluidity and limits of language, as informed by the lived experience and leadership of the PAR team.

In addition, brainstorming potential project ideas was productive in clarifying the team’s understanding of intersectionality through the specific research focus on race, gender, and sexuality based (micro)aggressions. For instance, a clarifying

135 Source: Susie Toro, 16/9/14, Co-Editing Consent Form + Co-Defining ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR team meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
136 Source: Kieren Perez, 16/9/14, Co-Editing Consent Form + Co-Defining ‘(micro)aggression’ in PAR team meeting, took place at Brown Center for Students of Color.
question about our aim and audience kept coming up from several co-researchers: ‘is our aim to give voice to those who have experienced (micro)aggressions or to educate those who perpetuate (micro)aggressions?’ This question and its repetition highlighted that the individuals in the team were operating under different understandings of (micro)aggressions and the goals of the research (i.e. to focus on the connections between race, gender and sexuality). Based on the framework of this thesis, nearly everyone perpetuates and experiences (micro)aggressions depending upon their multiple identities (e.g. race, gender, sexuality, class, ability). I intentionally selected a team of co-researchers who individually both experience and perpetuate race, gender, and/or sexuality based (micro)aggressions due to the multiple identities each co-researcher holds in order to enable conversations across difference on lived experiences of the entanglement of race, gender and sexuality as well as the production and visceral experiences of (micro)aggressions. This recurring question implied the operationalisation of a single-axis framework, as opposed to an intersectional framework (see Chapter 2), based on a false binary that some people do and do not experience (micro)aggressions. It was helpful for that question to come up to address it, remind the team of the explicit focus on race, gender, and sexuality based (micro)aggressions at the same time, and engage in a conversation to clarify any confusion as well as explore the intended focus. This encounter points to the complexity of intersectionality as a practice that cannot merely be achieved through recruitment (e.g. an ‘add-and-stir’ approach) and rather requires multiple and sustained methods to maintain a focus on the interdependency of race and gender as well as encourage self-determination and leadership in both implicit and explicit manners.
Engagement in critical citational practices was another method through which this thesis mobilized intersectionality and explored Intersectional Geographies. This is an implicit and performative method implemented throughout the enactments of citationality and crediting sources in this thesis that considers the question I posed in Chapter 1: what is my citationality doing? As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, citation has long been an often-invisible tool used, frequently unconsciously, to reproduce dominant canons that enact epistemic violence in excluding, erasing, and plagiarising marginalised knowledges and knowledge producers (Ahmed, 2013b; Tuck, Yang, & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2015), as in the case of intersectionality. In this thesis, I have strived to use citationality and an extensive discussion of context and history in the literature review to resist the now-mainstream practice of co-opting intersectionality as an analysis for difference generally, rather than the entanglement of race and gender, and without citation or reference to Kimberlé Crenshaw who coined the term, let alone the centuries of Black Feminist Thought that inform the concept of intersectionality. This experiment of citationality was rewarding in multiple capacities: first content-wise in getting to learn more about the context and history of intersectionality that I had previously been ignorant of, as discussed in Chapter 1; and personally in reading incredible literature for the first time about topics and methods that I am passionate about written in often accessible and honest language. These citational practices coupled with the PAR methodology facilitated my consistent encounters with joy in conducting this PhD and experiencing ‘education as the practice of freedom,’ for which I am grateful (hooks, 1994).

Chapter 4 situated the research site, Brown University, within structures of state violence via the materialist framework of the academic-military-prison
industrial complex (AMPC) as an implicit enactment of intersectionality since ‘state violence is both racialised and gendered’ (Elia, 2014). As previously mentioned and argued throughout this thesis, intersectionality brings the entanglement of race and gender to the forefront of any analysis, including this framework of violence in the AMPIC. For instance, the illustration of Brown University’s location in the AMPIC was accomplished through case studies regarding prisons, occupation, and gentrification, which are examples of state violence that overwhelmingly affect women of colour and gender non-conforming people of colour, particularly Black women and Black gender non-conforming people.

In US prisons, Black and Latina women are incarcerated at substantially higher rates than white women (i.e. Black women compose 30% of prison populations, Latina women 16%, and white women 7.5%; INCITE!, 2015) and nearly 50% of transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) people of colour have experienced incarceration (Forge, 2015; Shugrue dos Santos & Lopez, 2015). While in prison, these populations encounter extreme levels of sexual and physical violence (see ACLU, 2015; Forge, 2015; Shugrue dos Santos & Lopez, 2015; INCITE!, 2015). In addition, Israel’s pinkwashing and homonationalism (i.e. rhetoric of promoting LGBTQ rights for predominantly white queer people in Israel is used to garner support in the global arena to mask its occupation of Palestine and its genocide of and human rights abuses against Palestinians) particularly affects women, queer and TGNC Palestinians of colour (see Puar, 2007; Maikey, Page, Gossett, & Shanks, 2014; Vaid-Menon & Balasubramanian, 2014).

Last, low-income women, queer and TGNC people of colour are the most vulnerable to the effects of gentrification in the US due to the interlocking issues of the high rates of poverty, homelessness and unemployment among these
populations (Charleswell, 2015; Lees, 2000; Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, & Keisling, 2011; Browne & Lim, 2010). The racial-gendering of poverty is evidenced, in part, in pay gaps in which for every dollar earned by a white man, Latina women earn 56 cents, Black women earn 64 cents and white women earn 77 cents (Charleswell, 2015). These figures do not take into consideration the location of TGNC people of colour in pay gaps and the impact of their increased likelihood to earn an income under the federal poverty line, to experience hiring or housing discrimination or losing a job due to gender bias, and be subject to high unemployment rates (e.g. amongst the TGNC population, 28% of Black, 24% of American Indian, 18% of Latino, and 12% of white people are unemployed, in comparison to the US unemployment rate of 7%; Grant, Mottet, Tanis, Harrison, Herman, & Keisling, 2011). In sum, Brown University’s investment in the private prison industry in the US, Israeli occupation of Palestine, and gentrification in Providence are intersectional issues because they predominantly exert structural violence against, and thus affect, women, queer and TGNC people of colour. Chapter 4 implicitly set up a materialist intersectional framework of the AMPIC in which to contextualise students’ first-hand experiences at Brown to make connections between structural violence and race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions in Chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 5 explored student experiences of (micro)aggressions at Brown University through the lens of intersectionality via the co-construction of the PAR team, PAR open art event *Hurt People Hurt People*, and identification of locations at Brown and beyond with high and low concentrations of race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions. In terms of the former, and as previously discussed, the PAR team was intentionally designed as an intersectional space to
support students of colour, women, non-binary and LGBTQ students at Brown University by centring their leadership and the interdependency of race and gender. For instance, remember the narrative in Chapter 5 about one of the first PAR team meetings when each co-researcher informally presented a project on (micro)aggressions that inspired them; many of the projects focused on the lives of Black women and other women of colour (e.g. ‘#lessclassicallybeautiful,’ ‘#solidarityisforwhitewomen,’ Seeking Asian Bride) and were suggested by Black women and other women of colour in the PAR team. Further, while some of the projects focused on single-axis issues individually, the collective nature of PAR enabled a discussion about the relationship between the issues raised in each project (e.g. misogynoir, marginalisation of women of colour in feminist movements, criminalising Blackness, racisms, whiteness, settler colonialism, sexism, classism and heterosexism) and encouraged the group to consider (micro)aggressions through the lens of intersectionality and learn from previous work that effectively mobilises that framework.

In addition, later in Chapter 5 the PAR team considered the environmental microinvalidation of how inhabiting the exceptional place of progressiveness that is Brown transformed their perceptions of their previous residence (i.e. typically their hometowns or the places they grew up) as ‘problematic’ in comparison. Since the majority of co-researchers (7 out of 11) live at the intersection of race and gender marginalisation, the phenomenon of being often-unwittingly convinced one’s home is ‘backward’ is imbued with intersectional ramifications on sense of place, belonging and home for students of colour, women, queer and TGNC students. This phenomenon could be explored in future research, particularly to ascertain whether it is specific to students from these particular marginalised backgrounds.
and/or the context of Brown University and, if so, to investigate the attendant Intersectional Geographies.

The empirical research discussed in Chapter 5 illuminated that students of colour, women, queer and TGNC students in the sample feel safer in places that centre their needs, identities and specific issues (e.g. Brown Center for Students of Color, Sarah Doyle Women’s Center, LGBTQ Center), and less safe in places that do not (e.g. STEM fields, CAPS). These findings align with the tactics of political intersectionality that argues centring the needs of people who live at the intersections of race and gender marginalisation in anti-oppression work will lead to the liberation of everyone (The Combahee River Collective, 1977). At the same time, these institutional ‘safer’ spaces and workers are susceptible to being tokenised by the neoliberal university to signify that the institution has done good ‘diversity’ work in order to rationalise diminished resources or delays in expanding the work of ‘diversity’ beyond these few spaces and workers. Such tokenisation can deny provision of context-specific support to Black women, women of colour, queer and TGNC people of colour.

For example, the impact of tokenisation on limiting access to support for students living at the intersection of race and gender marginalisation is evidenced in an anecdote that April shared and as discussed in Chapter 5. A Black woman student sought support from April (who is a Residential Peer Leader, see Chapter 4 for definition) about feeling unwelcome at Brown and the only resource April could in good conscience suggest was the Brown Center for Students of Color (BCSC). However, April pointed out, ‘there is no other support system for them’; if this student were uncomfortable with the BCSC, she would fall through the cracks (April, 7/12/14). Another example is betta’s extended quote in Chapter 5 where she
explained her discomfort at the LGBTQ Center and being ‘surrounded by white feminists’ at the Sarah Doyle Women’s Center (SDWC) because the lived experiences and issues centred in those spaces were not ones she related to as a queer Black woman (betta, 7/12/14)\textsuperscript{137}. betta’s experience aligns with centuries of critiques, scholarship and activism by Black feminists about the centring of white subjectivities and practices in single-axis feminist and queer spaces, as discussed in Chapter 2. betta expressed feeling more at home at the Brown Center for Students of Color because, for her, ‘my Blackness is kind of the centre of all my various identities’ (betta, 7/12/14). betta shared her commitment to intersectionality (i.e. ‘...solidarity has to be intersectional or its bullshit’) and frustrations with the single-axis focus of the Black Student Union that often centred Black men and was yet another space that marginalised Black (queer) women, which aligns with aforementioned Black feminist critiques of single-axis anti-racism work (betta, 7/12/14; see Chapter 2). betta also explained her visceral experience of embodying intersectionality in general and within the context of Brown University as ‘really confusing’ and ‘conflicting at times’ in ‘being pulled in various directions’ and yet not having one place in which her needs are centred and thus met (betta, 7/12/14).

Chapter 6 explained that at our open art event (i.e. *Hurt People Hurt People*) the PAR team enacted particular spatial conditions (e.g. gathering a critical mass who refused to perform the social contract of silence in terms of being quiet and not discussing (micro)aggressions; having support staff available; co-researchers engaging with participants) for the emergence of ‘secretive histories’ of everyday and structural violence based on an intersectional framework (McKittrick, 2013).

\textsuperscript{137} Source: betta newlin, 7/12/14, PAR Team’s Collective Ethnography/Oral Analysis of *Hurt People Hurt People: An Open Art Event...*, took place at Maura’s flat.
Co-researchers’ collective ethnography of the event illuminated the relationship between spatial norms, behaviour and identity performance, such as Dame wearing light shoes that make minimal noise when walking through Leung Gallery to avoid stares, betta’s designation of quite spaces as ‘mean’ (e.g. stereotype threat: experiencing heightened surveillance by her peers as judgement of her as the ‘angry Black woman’ stereotype; betta 7/12/14), and the pleasure co-researchers’ encountered in transgressing the social norms of silence and over time intentionally being loud in the space.

This section provided a reminder of the definition of intersectionality that is operationalised in this thesis and the key under-researched areas in Intersectional Geographies to which this thesis contributes. In addition, this section put the on the ground empirical work on (micro)aggressions through the higher-level conceptual framework of intersectionality. The next section engages in a deeper application of intersectionality in the empirical research by shedding light on the impact of the university’s neoliberal priorities on the mental health of students living at the intersection of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation.

**Toxic Geographies of Mental Health in the Neoliberal University**

Returning to the title of this thesis and discussion in Chapter 2, toxic geographies are emotionally material spaces that inflict short- and long-term wounds on people of colour, women, queer and non-binary people, given the intersectional scope of this thesis. Minelle Mahtani coined this term in her 2014 paper and purposefully used the language of toxicity to focus on the capacity of the relationship between the production of space and (micro)aggressions to ‘destroy
an organism’ and negatively impact mental and physical health (360; Sue, 2010). The empirical research of this thesis illuminated the relationship between the neoliberal culture of the academy, Brown University in particular, and the destructive impact of (micro)aggressions on the mental health of students of colour, women, queer and non-binary students (Puar, 2012b). This section explores this relationship by again engaging with the PAR team’s\textsuperscript{138} collective ethnography and debrief of \textit{Hurt People Hurt People} where we discussed impacts of the university’s over-valuation of individualised forms of learning on mental health (e.g. anxiety, depression) and markers of student success (e.g. retention rates, grades).

For instance, in the oral analysis April identified several toxic elements of the neoliberal university as experienced at a micro level by students, namely the impact of its over-valuation of grades, de-prioritisation of health, and conflation of mental health issues with normative conditions of higher education. She said:

\begin{quote}
I’ve been trying to reach out to friends like, I’m having such a hard time but all I can do is lie in bed and not do anything. And to them, it’s not productive, in the long run. For example, if I get distracted from my work, they always say like, “well, April, in the long run, that’s your grade,” and I’m like, “in the long run, my health.” And it’s really interesting to see how different people put different value on things…it saddens [me] to think that a lot of people at Brown put their study and their grades at a higher priority than their health [snaps\textsuperscript{139}] and the fact they might not even consider mental health a health issue [snaps]. They really aren’t aware if you’re literally on the verge of breaking down every time you have a paper, some people might think that’s
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{138} See Table 1 in Chapter 3 for introductions of and by each co-researcher in the PAR team.

\textsuperscript{139} When one or more people snap their fingers to demonstrate support for a statement or person speaking. The practice comes from the context of spoken word poetry where people snap in lieu of clapping.
just the culture of education and they might not consider that a mental health issue and that’s just, I feel sad, but I don’t know how to do anything about that. (April, 7/12/14)

The multiple and conflicting definitions of productivity (e.g. grades, health) that April noted map onto neoliberal pressures to over-work and exploit labour, which are evident in students’ lives at Brown University. betta described this phenomenon:

It’s actually ridiculous how many hours you’re expected [snaps\textsuperscript{140}] to just put into doing this work and this writing and this paper. All-nighters are part of the culture here, it’s something that happens, you kind of take pride in doing it, and I’m just like, “no.” It should not be acceptable for people to only work on four or five hours of sleep. And just the amount of people I know who are not getting enough sleep or not eating regular meals because of college classes…[sigh]. So much of your health and mental well-being goes into being a productive member of society. Health and capitalism. (betta, 7/12/14)

The toxicity of neoliberal productivity is at work at Brown University, and likely other Ivy League and higher education institutions, in the cultural pressures to over-work yourself and not take care of your health. The pride that is socially fostered in over-working can tie development of self-esteem with a neoliberal sense of productivity (e.g. feeling good about oneself for doing an all-nighter), which is often not a healthy avenue for development of self-esteem or studying skills (e.g. not sleeping or eating; Puar, 2012b).

These anecdotes highlight the role of the neoliberal university in socialising, disciplining and otherwise training future labour forces for industrial complexes that

\textsuperscript{140} When one or more people snap their fingers to demonstrate support for a statement or person speaking. The practice comes from the context of spoken word poetry where people snap in lieu of clapping.
benefit US imperialism (e.g. literal and figurative ‘prison wardens,’ see Chapter 4) from the perspective of students living at the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality marginalisation. April provided an example on immigration:

*betta, what you said, oh my gosh, it just reminded me, did you guys watch Obama’s speech about immigration? It was like, thank you for extending an invitation to these undocumented citizens, but all of his reasoning was because they can contribute to our economy…because they have great skills sets [laughs] and I’m like, so we are only going to accept these people into our country because they can contribute to the system that will eventually oppress them later on, or currently, or in the past…*(April, 7/12/14)

Hayaatee agreed and provided another example within the context of prisons:

*That’s the rhetoric that’s used, the “productive member of society”…that’s used a lot to describe people who are incarcerated: we need to rehabilitate them so they can become “productive members of society,” Who said they were living their lives the wrong way to begin with? …I hate talking about being a “productive member of society.” We all get productive in our fucking ways. (Hayaatee, 7/12/14)*

*betta, April and Hayaatee identify the process of defining a person’s worth based on their capacity to produce as toxic due to the way such neoliberal values displace values of health and practices of self-care, as betta describes:*

*One of my close friends said something that still sticks to me to this day, “self-care is productive, and we as a society do not view self care as productive and that’s why people feel bad when you take time to just*
disengage”…Self-care can save people’s lives. So how is it not productive? (betta, 7/12/14)

Betta’s observation brings us back to the relationship between micro and macro aggressions, chiefly in the daily comments and behaviours that devalue practices of self-care that accumulate over days, weeks, and years to affect mental health and life-threatening conditions. In the context of Leung Gallery and according to the PAR team, the daily experiences of anxiety, feeling silenced or watched, having limited spaces to engage in collaborative studying, being sent implicit messages that one’s worth is tied up in a neoliberal sense of productivity, and the collective complicity in this daily production of space makes Leung Gallery ‘toxic.’

The PAR team’s investigation and identification of the toxic geographies of Leung Gallery contributes to the field of Intersectionality Geographies an understanding of the relationship between student experiences of racial-gender-sexuality marginalisation, diminished mental health, and neoliberal priorities in the US university. As explored in Chapter 2 and the start of this chapter, a great deal of scholarship in this field has focused on the racial-gender marginalisation of women of colour faculty and graduate students in the discipline of Geography, which presents under-researched areas for undergraduate experiences of racial-gender marginalisation beyond binary genders and considering sexuality marginalisation beyond single-gender desire and in multiple university spaces. Centring the entanglement of race, gender and sexuality marginalisation amongst undergraduates in a case study at Brown University led to the emergence of mental health as a prominent issue amongst students of colour, women, queer, and TGNC students and one that is connected to neoliberal norms of productivity,
understandings of success, and pressures. The relationship between neoliberalism and toxicity (i.e. the capacity to ‘destroy an organism’; Mahtani, 2014, p.360) maps onto the intersectional framework of the AMPIC from Chapter 4 that recognises structures of oppression are both racialised and gendered, often making Black women, other women of colour, queer and TGNC people of colour the most vulnerable.

**Reflecting on “Toxicity”**

The concept of “toxic geographies,” posited by Minelle Mahtani and utilized in this thesis, uses the word “toxic” not as metaphor, but to intentionally describe the phenomenon of spaces causing literal physical and psychological harm, as discussed in Chapter 2 and repeated in the previous section (Mahtani, 2014). In this thesis, “toxic geographies” are defined as spaces with high concentrations of race, gender and sexuality-based (micro)aggressions since they are forms of psychological and physical harm (see Chapter 2). In this section, I reflect on the utility of toxicity in the framework of toxic geographies literally in regards to the material impacts they have on the health and well-being of students of color, women, and TGNC people, as well as metaphoric possibilities of the framework.

According to four decades of psychology scholarship, (micro)aggressions are “stressors,” or “external events or situations that place a psychological or physical demand on targets,” that people of color, women, LGBTQ, and other marginalized people experience *in addition to* everyday life stressors (Sue, 2010, p. 88). The cumulative negative impact of these extra life stressors, also known as “chronic microaggressive stress,” can manifest through biological, cognitive, emotional and behavioral pathways and its cumulative effects can be similar to the
effects of individual incidents of trauma (Sue, 2010, p. 97). Several studies have shown that biological effects of chronic microaggressive stress can weaken the efficiency of the immune system and increase the risk for specific illness, such as coronary heart disease, allergies, diabetes, asthma, and hypertension (Sue, 2010, p. 98). Emotional effects include increased susceptibility to depression and low self-esteem (Sue, 2010, pp. 99-100). Cognitive effects can take the form of “cognitive disruption,” in which cognitive functioning is impaired by “draining psychological energy or detracting from the task at hand” when trying to identify covert racism, sexism and/or heterosexism in “constant, vague” (micro)aggressions (Sue, 2010, p. 101). Behavioral effects involve the adoption of a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with the daily onslaught of (micro)aggressions.

Toxic geographies, or spaces that have high concentrations of (micro)aggressions, pose serious mental and physical health concerns for people inhabiting and traversing those spaces. The toxicity of toxic geographies is literal in describing the capacity to “destroy an organism” and useful in adequately naming an often unseen and under-valued public health issue (Mahtani, 2014, p.360). The capacity to research and address the toxicity of (micro)aggressions is difficult due to the viscosity of place in which different people can encounter the same space as toxic or non-toxic (e.g. as having brick walls or not), as was the case in the empirical research as discussed in Chapter 6. The PAR team identified Leung Gallery as a literally toxic space for students of color, women, queer and TGNC students regarding mental health, as discussed in this chapter, while the administrators of the space did not. It was the lack of visceral experience of this toxicity that momentarily enabled the administrators to not see this “brick wall” and
rather experience the wall as an institutional flow (see Chapters 5 and 6 for brick wall and institutional flow metaphors).

The multiplicity and fluidity of space poses limitations and a challenge for the framework of toxic geographies as applied to (micro)aggressions in that the spatial conditions of invisibility and visceral knowledge act as barriers to acknowledging, let alone addressing, the toxicity of (micro)aggressions. Furthermore, toxicity often elicits images of toxic waste, landfills, and pollutants, which are large-scale and highly visible environmental issues that pose physical and psychological harm primarily to low-income communities of color (Pulido, 2000). These images of toxicity (e.g. large-scale, visible) do not readily align with the issues previously outlined regarding toxic geographies of (micro)aggressions (e.g. everyday, scale of the body, invisible), which poses limitations for the use of toxic geographies as a metaphor both in terms of addressing issues of (micro)aggressions and environmental justice concerns. In sum, the concept of toxic geographies as a literal phenomena is viable for conducting geographical research on (micro)aggressions and future research should be attentive to the limitations of using toxicity as metaphor.

Conclusion

This chapter presented a high-level analytic summary of key findings regarding intersectionality that emerged from the empirical research and citational practices used in this thesis. I reiterated the thesis’s main methods for contributing to contemporary debates, namely: rejecting the whitewashing of intersectionality via citationality and methodology, exploring undergraduate experiences of racial-gendered marginalization in spaces of higher education via PAR, queering
Intersectional Geographies by considering gender beyond the binary and sexuality beyond single-gender desire, and materializing geographies of gender, sexuality and race vis-à-vis the framework of the AMPIC. I provided a detailed discussion of one significant finding and direction of future research, which is the impact of the neoliberal university (e.g. over-valuing grades, de-prioritizing health) on the mental health of women of colour and queer and TGNC students of colour. This chapter closed with a reflection on the utility of “toxicity” as a metaphor and literal phenomenon. The next and final chapter summarises the thesis and its key contributions to the field of Intersectional Geographies.
Chapter 8. Conclusion

Thesis Summary

As noted in Chapter 1, this thesis focused on US-specific understandings of race, gender, sexuality, and higher education due to the location of my empirical research in the US and in the context of elite and predominantly white institutions of higher education in the US. In this section, I provide an overview of the key arguments that emerged from my inquiry of the inter-scalar relationships between (micro)aggressions and structural violence in US higher education through the methodology of PAR and epistemology of intersectionality. In sum, I contextualised the relationship between (micro)aggressions and structural violence in the AMPIC; demonstrated how the imagined exceptionalism of Brown University requires (micro)invalidations; argued that diversity work often results in wounds at the scale of the body rather than changes in the institution; contributed visceral understandings of ‘toxicity’ and confirmation of the entanglement of underrepresentation and (micro)aggressions to literature on visceral geographies of (micro)aggressions; revealed that the few ‘safe’ spaces are often tokenised and over-burdened at an institutional level to absolve the university and most internal spaces from doing the work of diversity; highlighted the utility of PAR as a spatial practice and its capacity to enact material change; and illuminated the negative impact of the neoliberal university on the mental health of students of colour, women, queer, and TGNC students in a US context.

I have situated the research site, Brown University, within a material intersectional framework of US higher education through the academic-military-prison industrial complex (AMPIC). I demonstrated how the logic and pressures of
the interconnected and neoliberal industries of prison, military and academy in the US routinely legitimise the operationalisation of US exceptionalism at home and abroad through the neoliberalisation of the production of knowledge and workers in public and private universities. I argued that the impact of the AMPIC on the culture and daily operations of the US university has resulted, in part, in the commodification of public education, increasingly inaccessible tuition fees at both public and private institutions, individualisation of higher education, and the high cost of dissent and protest for students, staff, faculty, and local residents (e.g. diminished job security, academic containment), which bleeds into everyday life and affects the particular manifestations of (micro)aggressions in such contexts. In order to challenge the AMPIC and its relationship to daily life at the research site, this thesis utilised an abolitionist and insurgent framework informed by intersectionality through an inter-scalar approach, PAR, that includes investigation of an institution’s investments and demanding divestment, rather than merely through reformist efforts of creating ‘better’ scholarship or improving recruitment and retention practices. I revealed the importance of collaborative approaches to insurgent work (e.g. PAR) in order to resist being placed in positions of precarity and to mitigate the aforementioned costs of dissent, as evident in the history of academic containment detailed in Chapter 4 and ‘blockage point' in the empirical research discussed in Chapter 6.

I argued that Brown operates as a de facto gated community that is physically, economically and racially distant from low-income communities of colour throughout the city. Internally, despite public images of the university as a liberal elite utopia, Brown’s university population has stark racial and class divergences coupled with limited investment in resources for campus-wide support
or education around topics of race and class, which often leads to a hostile campus climate for students of colour, low-income and first generation students. The PAR team and I established that the gap between the university’s rhetoric (and the attendant imagined geographies of the institution as exceptional) and the university’s practices (or material geographies) leads to the maintenance of (micro)aggressive encounters at a micro level, limited institutional engagement with diversity efforts equitably across campus at a meso scale, and production of moral capital in support of US exceptionalism and imperialism at a macro scale.

In making connections between the macro nature of the AMPIC and daily experiences of (micro)aggressions through the PAR process, my fellow co-researchers and I contended that Brown’s rhetoric of exceptionalism facilitates a campus culture committed to co-constructing the appearance of Brown University as exceptionally liberal, open and diverse, which ironically enables the production of (micro)aggressions, particularly microinvalidations. Maintaining such an imagined geography requires orienting anything that transgresses the image of enlightenment as out of place and exceptional (e.g. the presence of practices of marginalisation), which lends itself to an invalidation of the daily reality and experiences of (micro)aggressions, making it difficult to genuinely attend to this issue. I used Sara Ahmed’s brick wall metaphor to illustrate the phenomenon of the invisibility of (micro)aggressions despite the felt and material impact they have at the scale of the body. I demonstrated that lived experience is a necessary form of spatial knowledge to not only investigate where these brick walls are located, but also their qualities, how they take place and shape on and within bodies, and what actions could effectively transform them. One of the key points that I learned from this element of the thesis is that diversity work at the level of the institution (e.g.
identifying and attempting to transform brick walls) often results in wounds at the scale of the body (e.g. hitting your head against a brick wall makes you sore), rather than changes at the scale of the institution (e.g. the wall stays in place).

Another main point that I learned from the empirical research is a visceral understanding of ‘toxicity’ (e.g. ‘the air is thick,’ ‘it’s stifling,’ ‘I can’t breathe’) and ‘safety’ (e.g. ‘felt so warm,’ ‘really fun,’ ‘felt really good’). In addition, I demonstrated a relationship between spaces participants identified as ‘toxic’ and an underrepresentation of people of colour, women, non-binary and queer people and overrepresentation of white, men, binary and straight people coupled with a lack of commitment to address issues of identity and power. I argued that the relationship between representation, intentionality, level of toxicity, and the production of space supports the mutually entangled relationship between (micro)aggressions and the production of space. For instance and based on the empirical data, spaces that intentionally assess and produce space based on the needs of students of colour, women, queer, and non-binary students are more effective in creating less-toxic spaces for these students, whereas spaces that do not assess nor consider the needs of these specific marginalised communities are more effective at producing toxic spaces for these students. Furthermore, I learned that these ‘safe’ spaces are tokenised within the university as the labour and resources for supporting all marginalised students are placed on few bodies and departments, which limit the capacity of these spaces to support all marginalised students all the time, let alone in complex ways that consider intersectionality. In addition, the tokenisation of the labour of diversity and lack of a campus-wide commitment to such labour absolves the university as a whole and most other spaces from doing this work, rendering intersectional bodies at the university as ungeographic, or as not occupying space.
and not worthy of university-wide understanding of, let alone sustainable efforts towards mitigating, toxic geographies.

I demonstrated the utility of PAR as a spatial practice in enabling co-researchers to realise the malleability of space and their agency in the production of space (e.g. ‘...I feel like part of taking over Leung was showing that we can collectively make a space warm’) and inciting social change as evident in policy changes in the use, and silence, of Leung Gallery. The policy changes were made possible by putting multiple understandings of place of Leung Gallery (e.g. definitions of ‘open community space’) under the microscope through an honest conversation between the PAR team and an administrator at the Campus Center, Anderson. Students had an opportunity to consider and verbalise why they encounter Leung Gallery as a toxic space (e.g. over-prioritisation of individualised and quiet learning preferences; social policing and self-policing of behaviour exacerbated), of which Anderson had not been previously aware. Anderson generously listened and shared how he ‘felt stuck’ in addressing this issue while navigating his multiple positions, namely his personal convictions and job security in feeling the need to adhere to a neoliberal notion of academic freedom supported by the institution in order to maintain his job (see Chapter 4). In a problem-solving discussion between Anderson and the PAR team, several co-researchers identified his dilemma as a ‘conflict of location.’ I argued that his ‘conflict’ was a manifestation of the deep entanglement between (micro)aggressions and the AMPIC in that the continued production of toxicity in Leung Gallery (that impacts students of colour, women, non-binary and/or queer students) was safeguarded by an institutional culture of academic containment and neoliberal commitments that were ultimately thwarted by the collective power of PAR.
In this section, I have provided a summary of the thesis and an overview of the key points I have made in the empirical chapters. The next section explicitly highlights the critical contributions these main points, and this thesis in general, make to under-researched topics in Intersectional Geographies and geographies of gender, race and sexuality.

**Taking Intersectionality Forward**

In this thesis, I addressed the decades of calls for geographical investigation that centre the entangled processes of the racialisation and gendering of bodies and spaces (i.e. the framework of intersectionality) by focusing on undergraduate encounters with race, gender and sexuality based (micro)aggressions in US higher education. The breadth of geographical scholarship on experiences of belonging, or lack thereof, of women of colour as faculty and graduate students, as previously reviewed, raised broader questions about university spaces and their entanglement with sense of place, belonging, identity, performance, well being, and (micro)aggressions. Despite existing scholarship on faculty and graduate students within Geography departments, there has been limited exploration of related experiences of undergraduate students in university spaces beyond Geography. My thesis attended to this gap in scholarship through empirical research on undergraduate experiences of racial-gender marginalisation in higher education. In the context of the research site, one of my key findings is that displacement of community spaces by non-mandatory quiet study spaces exacerbates the anxiety of students of colour, women, queer, and TGNC students. The social policing amongst peers maintains these non-mandatory quiet spaces at the university and
is a broader tactic of social control that contributes to the AMPIC’s goals to produce disciplined workers.

In addition, while a great deal of scholarship in Intersectional Geographies focuses on the lived experiences of race and gender, there is a dearth of empirical or theoretical work that complicates gender nor considers the relationship between non-binary genders and race as well as that between sexualities and race. My thesis attended to these absences by queering Intersectional Geographies and materialising geographies of gender, sexuality and race through empirical work that centred race in entanglement with gender beyond the binary and sexuality beyond single-gender desire and mobilised a materialist intersectional framework of structural violence in the academic-military-prison industrial complex (AMPIC). In addition, in utilising a Black feminist genealogy of intersectionality and rejecting a whitewashed framework of intersectionality, I contributed to a growing interdisciplinary critique of mainstream misuses of intersectionality (see Puar, 2012a; Crenshaw, 2015).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have summarised the key arguments of this thesis and its main contributions to contemporary debates in Intersectional Geographies and geographies of gender, race and sexuality, namely considering the spatial story of both (micro)aggressions and intersectionality. In addition, I have enacted a critical and reflective citational practice in this thesis to practically explore the relationship between the production of space, knowledge and (micro)aggressions, as well as to
fulfil my personal goals of learning about the histories of intersectionality as stated in Chapter 1.

This thesis and its empirical focus on the experience of students contributes to gaps in literature and illuminates avenues for future research and practice surrounding diversity work in higher education, particularly for institutional diversity efforts such as Athena Swan. In today’s culture where overt bias is generally viewed as taboo, coupled with the climate of higher education where departments are dedicated to preventing and handling claims of harassment and sexual assault, subtle bias is more frequent and manifests in the form of (micro)aggressions that often slip through existing institutional structures. As I have argued throughout this thesis, (micro)aggressions affect the production of space at the scale of the body, classroom and department to create toxic environments for marginalised students, staff and faculty. Efforts to mitigate (micro)aggressions will, thus, require a reconfiguration of space in ways we may not be able to visualise, and using methods with which marginalised people may have insight since they hold the ‘secretive histories’ of structural violence and cope with them by ‘creating counter-spaces’ (McKittrick, 2013; Joshi et al, 2015).

Departments and institutions that seek to foster more hospitable cultures for students and employees marginalised by race, gender and sexuality could benefit from researching and implementing needs-based practices that address (micro)aggressions in order to identify places, people and spaces where particular (micro)aggressions surface or are in high concentration, and what communities they affect. As McKittrick, Joshi et al and Domosh argue, narratives of these encounters first need to be heard, taken seriously, digested, and then acted upon in a collaborative way where storytellers are invited to the table to consider ways to
change the production of space (McKittrick, 2013; Joshi et al, 2015; Domosh, 2015). Unfortunately, one of the main barriers to conducting research on (micro)aggressions and challenging toxic geographies within institutions of higher education is the fact that (micro)aggressions are frequently invisible and too-often disregarded as unimportant or non-existent or claims from ‘hyper-sensitive’ people.

This thesis serves as a call to faculty and staff, as well as students, to consider how our daily comments, behaviours, interactions, and citational practices may unwittingly be producing toxic environments for already and multiply marginalised students, staff and faculty. I encourage us to note when we are being defensive (e.g. ‘I’m not racist’), what tactics we use to not listen (e.g. telling someone they are ‘too sensitive’), what emotions come up for us that limit our capacity to hear people’s stories of being hurt (e.g. guilt, shame, anger), how we can work together to curate spatial conditions in which ‘secretive histories’ of violence are heard and taken seriously, and to be ready to apologise for and learn from the countless mistakes we will inevitably make along the way.
Appendices

Appendix 1. Application to Join PAR Team (28/4/14)

Fall 2014 Undergraduate Research Opportunity
Microaggressions at Brown

Co-researchers will investigate undergraduate experiences of race-, gender- and sexuality-based microaggressions at Brown University in Fall 2014. This research is part of a graduate student’s dissertation research. For more information and for details on eligibility, please see http://tinyurl.com/MicroaggressionsResearch

To apply for this team-based research opportunity, please fill out this form. If you prefer to complete the application in person or through another manner, please contact the principal investigator, Maura Pavalow, at mpavalow@gmail.com

[Update:] Application opened on April 28. The final application deadline is July 1, 2014.

* Required

Name *

What are your preferred gender pronouns (PGPs)? *
Ex. they/them/their, she/her/hers, he/him/his, ze/zer/zirs, etc.

Email Address *

Class Year *

Concentration *

Phone Number

Are you 18 years of age or older? *
- Yes
- No

Do you identify as a person of color? *
- Yes
- No
- Other: _______________________

Do you identify as a woman? *
- Yes
- No
Do you identify as LGBTQ? *
- Yes
- No
- Other: 

What are other aspects of your identity? (Ex. class, ability, age, etc.)
This is not a required question. Please answer if or however you feel comfortable.

Please describe your interest in investigating undergraduate experiences of race-, gender- and sexuality-based microaggressions in general, and at Brown specifically. Maximum 250 words. *
See flyer for details on microaggressions: [http://tinyurl.com/MicroaggressionsResearch](http://tinyurl.com/MicroaggressionsResearch)

Please describe your interest in learning about Participatory Action Research (PAR) and how to create social change as a direct outcome of research. Maximum 250 words. *
See flyer for details on PAR: [http://tinyurl.com/MicroaggressionsResearch](http://tinyurl.com/MicroaggressionsResearch)

What extracurricular activities are you involved in (if at all)? *

Is there anything else you'd like to share? Or questions you may have? *

How did you find out about this opportunity? *

Submit
Appendix 2. Initial Consent Form (6/9/14)

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION AS CO-RESEARCHER (9/9/14)
Brown Undergraduate Experiences of Race-, Gender-, & Sexuality-Based Microaggressions

Primary Researcher: Maura Pavalow
Type of Project: PhD Dissertation Research, Human Geography, University of Exeter
Estimated Start Date and Duration of Project: September 2014; 3 months
Contact: Maura_Pavalow@brown.edu

Purpose of the project: To collaborate with undergraduate students at Brown University to explore and develop action around lived experiences of race-, gender-, and sexuality-based “microaggressions.” Microaggressions are everyday experiences of subtle put-downs (i.e. being ignored, feeling unwelcome, etc.) based on often-unconscious prejudices regarding various identities, including race, gender and sexuality. Co-researchers will identify and enact recommendations for mitigating these microaggressions at Brown University through Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is a team-based research approach in which those who are often subjects of research are repositioned as co-researchers who define the terms of the research agenda based on their lived experiences.

Participants will be asked to:
- Participate in meetings at least twice a week (approx. 1.5 hours per meeting) from September 3, 2014 to December 19, 2014 (e.g. throughout Brown University’s Fall 2014 semester)
- Attend all meetings, barring sickness, emergencies, etc.
- Read and discuss relevant scholarship on microaggressions and inequity in higher education
- Collectively develop an action-based research agenda informed by personal and peers' experiences of race-, gender-, and sexuality-based microaggressions at Brown

Eligibility:
- Identify as a person of color, woman and/or LGBTQ.
- Are 18 years of age or older.
- Are interested to investigate undergraduate experiences of race-, gender- and sexuality-based microaggressions.
- Are interested to learn about PAR and how to create social change as a direct outcome of research.

Benefits:
- Academic credit: Participants will be offered academic credit (mandatory S/NC) for their labor and contributions as co-researchers through a Departmental Independent Study Project (DISP) with faculty sponsor
- Research experience: Participants will gain experience in PAR and can request letters of recommendation.
- Impact at Brown: Participants will have an opportunity to create knowledge and action that can have a positive impact on mitigating microaggressions for undergraduates at Brown University.

Risks:
- Emotional distress: The research involves collecting, analyzing and disseminating data on microaggressions, which can be triggering and can have emotional or psychological impacts. If you encounter any psychological problems through the course of this research, assistance is available through Brown University’s Psychological Services (401-863-3476) and Office of Student Life (401-863-3145).
- Impact beyond research: Conversations about experiences of race, gender and sexuality that emerge from this research can have impacts beyond the scope of this project. Should you encounter any problems or require support as a student of color, woman student, and/or LGBTQ student, assistance is available through the Third World Center (401-863-2120), Sarah Doyle Women’s Center (401-863-2189), and LGBTQ Center (401-863-3062).

How confidentiality will be maintained: All the information will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be utilized in any write-up or publication of research and any identifying will be removed. Hard data will be stored in a secure location. Electronic data will be protected through data encryption, password protection, and storage on a secure server. Upon completion of this project, all data will be stored in a secure location and destroyed after 10 years.

Institutional Support:
- Interim Dean of the College at Brown University granted permission to conduct this doctoral research with Brown University undergraduate students in a letter of support dated 1/14/14.
- The Ethics Committee of the Geography Department at University of Exeter granted this doctoral research “Ethical Approval” (IRB-equivalency) on 1/23/14.
- The Directors of the Third World Center, Sarah Doyle Women’s Center, and LGBTQ Center, in addition to Dr. Maura Pavalow of Psychological Services, have advised the design and methods of this project.
Voluntary Participation:
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate there will not be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may stop participating at any time and you may decide not to answer any specific questions.

By signing this form I am attesting that I have read and understand the information above and I freely give my consent/assent to participate.

Adult Informed Consent:
Printed Name of Research Subject: __________________________

Date Reviewed & Signed: __________________________

Signature: __________________________
Appendix 3: Re-Written Consent Form (22/9/14)

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION AS CO-RESEARCHER
Brown Undergraduate Experiences of Race-, Gender-, & Sexuality-Based Microaggressions

Team of Co-Researchers:

Type of Project: PhD Dissertation Research, Human Geography, University of Exeter

Estimated Start Date and Duration of Project: September 3, 2014 to December 19, 2014 (15 weeks)

Purpose of the project: We, undergraduate students at Brown University affected by microaggressions, will explore and develop action around lived experiences of race-, gender-, and sexuality-based “microaggressions.” We understand microaggressions to be subtle forms of bias and discrimination (i.e. being ignored, feeling unwelcome, being tokenized, having one’s experiences invalidated, etc.) perpetuated by dominant or “privileged” groups or individuals based on often-unconscious prejudices regarding various identities, including race, gender and sexuality. We will identify and enact recommendations for mitigating these microaggressions at Brown University through Participatory Action Research (PAR).

PAR is a team-based research approach in which we will be both subjects and co-researchers who define the terms of the research agenda based on our lived experiences.

We will be engaging with this research by:
- Participating in meetings at least twice a week (approx. 1.5 hours per meeting) from September 3, 2014 to December 19, 2014 (e.g. throughout Brown University’s Fall 2014 semester)
- Attending all meetings, barring sickness, emergencies, etc.
- Reading and discussing relevant scholarship on microaggressions and inequity in higher education
- Collectively develop an action-based research agenda informed by our and peers' experiences of race-, gender-, and sexuality-based microaggressions at Brown

Eligibility:
- We each identify as a person of color, woman, non-binary genders, and/or LGBTQA.
- We are each 18 years of age or older.
- We are all interested to investigate undergraduate experiences of race-, gender- and sexuality-based microaggressions.
- We are interested to learn about PAR and how to create social change as a direct outcome of research.

Benefits:
- Personal Growth: We will share a space where we can discuss lived experiences otherwise left out of academia, gain the language to articulate these experiences, and examine how we ourselves perpetuate microaggressions by engaging in self-reflexivity.
- Impact at Brown: We will have an opportunity to engage with knowledges that can have a positive impact on mitigating microaggressions for the Brown University community. This process will culminate in an action-based research project for which there will be a separate consent form.
- Academic credit: We will be offered academic credit (mandatory S/NC) for our labor and contributions as co-researchers through a Departmental Independent Study Project (DISP) with faculty sponsor


CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION AS CO-RESEARCHER

Brown Undergraduate Experiences of Race-, Gender-, & Sexuality-Based Microaggressions

- Research experience: We will gain experience in PAR and can request letters of recommendation.

Risks:
- Emotional distress: We understand this research to be connected to our own lives and know that being steeped in a difficult topic can be upsetting. We acknowledge the many different ways that people need to take care of themselves (stepping out of the room, detaching from the conversation, taking a mental health day, etc), and recognize all of them as legitimate; we also believe it is important to never assume how someone wants to be cared for, and thus will always ask - while understanding that not everyone can always articulate their needs at a given time. While we are a team which will support each other, we acknowledge that we are not experts and that coping with these issues may require more support than we can provide. We understand the Brown Center for Students of Color (401-863-2120), Sarah Doyle Women’s Center (401-863-2189), and LGBTQ Center (401-863-3062) are resources we can utilize, as well as Brown University’s Counseling and Psychological Services (401-863-3476) and the Office of Student Life (401-863-3145).

- Impact beyond research: We acknowledge that conversations about experiences of race, gender and sexuality that emerge from this research can have impacts beyond the scope of this project. To reiterate, if we require support as a student of color, woman student, and/or LGBTQ student, we know that assistance is available through the Brown Center for Students of Color (401-863-2120), Sarah Doyle Women’s Center (401-863-2189), and LGBTQ Center (401-863-3062).

How confidentiality will be maintained: To respect privacy and protect ourselves, we will keep information confidential. There will be a consent form to follow that will outline more specifically our understanding of confidentiality and data as well as how this will be utilized in future products (e.g. Maura’s dissertation). We intend for all information and/or data to be preserved and not destroyed, for posterity and for those who may want to access it in the future.

Institutional Support:
- Interim Dean of the College at Brown University granted permission to conduct this doctoral research with Brown University undergraduate students in a letter of support dated 1/14/14.
- The Ethics Committee of the Geography Department at University of Exeter granted this doctoral research “Ethical Approval” (IRB-equivalency) on 1/23/14.
- The Dean of the Brown Center for Students of Color (401-863-2120), Sarah Doyle Women’s Center (401-863-2189), and LGBTQ Center (401-863-3062) have advised the design and methods of this project.

Voluntary Participation:
We understand participation in this study is completely voluntary. We may decide not to answer any specific questions or stop participating at any time, understanding that there may be consequences for our withdrawal (i.e. not receiving academic credit).

*By signing this form I am attesting that I have read and understand the information above and I freely give my consent/assent to participate. I acknowledge that another consent document will follow that will continue to outline the scope and impact of this project.

Adult Informed Consent:
Printed Name of Co-Researcher

Date Reviewed & Signed:

Signature:
Appendix 4: Grading Rubric (17/10/14)

DISP/PAR Project: Microaggressions at Brown 10/17/14

GRADING

- Journals (10%)
- Participation (30%)
- Midterm (10%)
- Final Project (50%)

Journals: Weekly written reflection (1-2 pages) on readings, meetings, and/or the ways this research impacts your everyday life. Guiding questions per week will be provided by Faculty Advisor and/or collaboratively by the research team. Creative and non-written journal entries are welcome and must be accompanied by a short written description of the journal entry. Journals are due anytime during the week, at the latest by the start of our Friday meeting (3/3:15pm).

Participation: As this is a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project, your participation is central to the project and makes up a large percentage of the grade. This includes participation in meeting discussions, collaborative planning, and tasks/readings assigned outside of meetings. In addition, prompt attendance at all meetings, barring illness & emergencies, is expected (see consent form).

Midterm: The midterm is in two parts: 1) Research Plan for Final Project, and 2) Evaluation. The first is a collaboratively written document that overviews the team’s research plan for the Final Project. This document should include an introduction, detailed aims, objectives, methodology, timeline, and delegated tasks amongst the co-researchers. The research plan should be written for an audience external to this project and who does not know what we’ve been doing; that includes defining terms (e.g. microaggressions, PAR, Brown, etc.). This is due Tuesday, October 21st. The second part of the midterm is a written evaluation of the research experience, including a reflection on your contributions and effort, in addition to the process and progress of the team. Tentatively due Friday, October 24th.

Final Project: The Final Project is a collaboratively designed and implemented PAR project that generally explores, and attempts to mitigate, race-, gender-, and sexuality-based microaggressions at Brown. As a PAR project, the action-research element is also central to the project and thus makes up a large percentage of the grade. Final Project should be completed by Reading Period.
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION

I, ________________________, agree to voluntarily engage in the “hurt people hurt people: an open art space for microaggressions at Brown” art project hosted by the PAR Microaggressions Cohort’ (aka “the Cohort”). By participating, I agree to the following statements:

1. I agree to share my story or stories anonymously on the cardstock provided.
2. I agree to allow the Cohort to quote or use my story as an incorporation of their socially engaged art project (e.g. a rotating public exhibit of microaggression reflections, with the possibility of continued incorporation into a manifesto, internet source, paper, or video project).
3. I agree to allow Maura Pavalow of the Cohort to quote or use my story in her doctoral dissertation and subsequent publications on microaggressions in higher education for the Department of Human Geography at the University of Exeter. If I have any questions or concerns, I can contact Maura at mp360@exeter.ac.uk or maura_pavalow@brown.edu.
4. I agree to allow the cohort to display my story publicly as a rotating art exhibit.
   a. Locations of display intended: Brown Center for Students of Color, Sarah Doyle Women’s Center, LGBTQ Center, Faunce Student Center Lower Lobby.
5. If at some point I no longer wish for my story to be a part of the Cohort’s project and/or doctoral dissertation, I can opt out and request removal of my story from the structure and/or dissertation.
   a. To do so, I will contact the Cohort members if this is the case and reference which story is mine. My anonymity will continue to be honored and only the Cohort will know my identity.
6. If at some point today or in the future I realize I would like support to cope with microaggressions at Brown University, I know that some of the resources I can contact are: Brown Center for Students of Color, LGBTQ Center, Sarah Doyle Women’s Center, Office of Institutional Diversity, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and Office of Student Life.

Multimedia Release. Please check the relevant boxes below:

☐ Yes, I give permission to the Cohort to record audio and/or video, and/or take photographs of myself taken at “hurt people hurt people…” and to use this multimedia so taken for the purposes of:
   ☐ The socially engaged art project (defined in item #2).
   ☐ The doctoral dissertation and subsequent publications (defined in item #3).
   By this authorization, I agree that I shall not receive any fee and that all rights, title, and interest to the multimedia and its use belong to the PAR Microaggressions Cohort.
☐ No, I do not give permission to the Cohort to record audio and/or video, and/or take photographs of myself taken at “hurt people hurt people…” for any purposes.

Anonymity. Please check one of the boxes below:

☐ Yes, I voluntarily give permission to the PAR Microaggressions Cohort to use my name alongside a photo of myself or alongside my story.
☐ No, I do not give permission for the PAR Microaggressions Cohort to use my name in any capacity. I prefer to be anonymous.

This consent form is for the purposes of the PAR Microaggressions Cohort only. The identity of participants will not be public or released unless I have checked the additional box above.

Printed Name of Participant: ____________________________
Signature: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________

PAR Microaggressions Cohort Members: Andrea Chin (Andrea_Chin@Brown.edu), Danii Carrasco (Danii_Carrasco@brown.edu), Donovan Dennis (Donovan_Dennis@brown.edu), Hassani Scott (Hassani_Scott@brown.edu), Jada Pulley (Jada_Pulley@brown.edu), Mae Verano (Mae_Richelle_Verano@brown.edu), Malana Krongelb (Malana_Krongelb@brown.edu), Maya Finoh (Maya_Finoh@brown.edu), Maura Pavalow (Maura_Pavalow@Brown.edu), Paige Vance (Paige_Vance@brown.edu), Rheem Brooks (Rheem_Brooks@brown.edu)
Appendix 6: Participatory Diagramming on Coping (28/10/14)

METHODS of COPING

journaling eating debriefing wine chocolate crying solitude silence music cooking netflix self-policing avoidance physical labor

staying quiet laughing engaging cuddles sex

long showers meditating getting into a relationship avoiding relationship

seeking companionship drinking partying anxiety

busy work avoiding work reorganizing priorities

apathy pain anger writing

fixing other's problems giving up turning up humor - throwing shade deflection wallowing
therapy
seeking support
rejecting support
denying there's a problem
mentorship
burrito-ing in soft things
internet
buzzfeed quizzes
lipstick
dressing up
taking it till you make it
lying
being blunt
#nofucksgiven
fuck your feelings
making this list

- feels good
- non judgemental
- reassuring
- self-assuring
Electronic Second Consent Form

Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com> 21 September 2015 at 23:09

To: [Redacted]

Dear [Redacted],

I am writing to formally seek permission to use the "data" we collectively generated in a physical and electronic copy of my PhD thesis and subsequent publications.

The "data" is everything we generated as members of the PAR project "(micro)aggressions at Brown" and in our shared folder on Google Drive called "Microaggressions Research Team" that includes, but is not limited to:

- Notes, content + quotes from weekly meetings (pseudonyms used)
- Reading list and grading rubric for Fall 2014 semester DISP
- Images and contents of diagramming activities (e.g. word association for "participatory," "action," and "research"); post-it planning or using post-its to brainstorm aims, objectives and methods; word association for coping methods)
- Collaboratively edited consent form for participation in PAR team
- Consent forms for participation in Hurt People Hurt People
- Videos of Hurt People Hurt People (use of these videos is subject to the terms each participant agreed to on their consent form)
- Transcript of PAR team debrief of Hurt People Hurt People (pseudonyms used)
- PAR team's Disorientation Guide for Brown University 2015-2016
- Tumblr account: http://disorientationatbrown.tumblr.com/
- Gmail account: DisorientationatBrown@gmail.com
- Electronic second consent form

My thesis will be made available within the University of Exeter's online theses repository (https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository). The repository is non-commercial and openly available to all.

While the data generated from the PAR team is collectively owned amongst the PAR team, I wanted to be sure I reached out to personally request your permission; and to let you know, should you agree, that this data will be in my thesis.

If you consent to give me your permission, please let me know by replying to this email by October 5th. Suggested language for your reply is:

I, [Insert First + Last Name], consent to the "data" (as defined in this electronic second consent form) that I collaboratively generated with the PAR team "(micro)aggressions at Brown" be used in a physical and electronic copy of Maura Pavalow's PhD thesis and in her subsequent publications. Since I own the "data" collectively with the PAR team, should I wish to use this data in the future, I agree to contact the PAR team to inform them how and where I want to use our data and to request their permission do so. I agree to use the following electronic signature in lieu of a written signature. Electronic Signature: [Insert First + Last Name].
Date: [Insert Date].

If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know! I'd be happy to adjust this second consent form. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Maura
Appendix 8: Written Permission for Use of Figure 8

Since the creator of the image in Figure 8, April (pseudonym), is a member of the PAR team, I have redacted identifying information in order to protect anonymity.

---

Image Permissions Request

To: Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com>  
21 September 2015 at 20:13

Yes, you can use it!

---

On Sep 21, 2015, at 4:55 PM, Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com> wrote:

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I am contacting you to formally seek permission to include the following image in a physical and electronic copy of my PhD thesis. 

The image is a photograph of your drawing of the “ribbon structure” on November 16, 2014 used to brainstorm what the structure at the Hurt People Hurt People exhibit would look like (see image below). 

While the data generated from the PAR team is collectively shared amongst the PAR team, I wanted to be sure I reached out to personally request your permission; and to let you know, should you agree, that your image would be in my thesis. 

The thesis will be made available within the University of Exeter’s online theses repository (https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository). The repository is non-commercial and openly available to all.

If you have any questions, please let me know!

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Maura

---

Maura Pavalow
PhD Candidate Human Geography
University of Exeter
MPavalow@gmail.com | MP360@Exeter.ac.uk
914-419-4408
Appendix 9: Written Permission for Use of Figure 9

Since the creator of the image in Figure 9, betta (pseudonym), is a member of the PAR team, I have redacted identifying information in order to protect anonymity.

---

Image Permissions Request

26 September 2015 at 11:31

To: Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com>

Hi Maura,

I also consent to you using this image!

---

26 September 2015 at 6:00 PM, Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com> wrote:

I am contacting you to formally seek permission to include the following image in a physical and electronic copy of my PhD thesis.

The image is a screenshot of the Facebook event for Hurt People Hurt People that you created (if I remember correctly). In the thesis, your name on the image (see "hosted by...") would be covered to protect your anonymity and the image would be attributed to your pseudonym.

While the data generated from the PAR team is collectively owned amongst the PAR team, I wanted to be sure I reached out to personally request your permission; and to let you know, should you agree, that your material would be in my thesis.

The thesis will be made available within the University of Exeter's online theses repository (https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository). The repository is non-commercial and openly available to all.

If you have any questions, please let me know!

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Maura
Appendix 10: Written Permission for Use of Figures 10-13

Since the creator of the images in Figures 10-13, Dame (pseudonym), is a member of the PAR team, I have redacted identifying information in order to protect anonymity.

Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com>

Image Permissions Request

21 September 2015 at 17:26

Hi Maura,

Of course! You have my full permission to use any of the images I took from the HPHP exhibit (any location/time) for your thesis.

Thank you very much for reaching out and I hope you are doing well!
Best,

I am contacting you to formally seek permission to include the following photographs you took in a physical and electronic copy of my PhD thesis.

The images are the photographs you took of the Hurt People Hurt People exhibit when it was in the basement of Faunce House and at the Brown Center for Students of Color, including photographs of the entire structure as well as the photographs of each individual story that was attached of the structure.

While the data generated from the PAR team is collectively shared amongst the PAR team, I wanted to be sure I reached out to personally request your permission; and to let you know, should you agree, that your photographs would be in my thesis.

The thesis will be made available within the University of Exeter's online theses repository (https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository). The repository is non-commercial and openly available to all.

If you have any questions, please let me know!

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Maura

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Maura Pavalow
PhD Candidate Human Geography
University of Exeter
MPavalow@gmail.com | MP360@Exeter.ac.uk
914-419-4408
Appendix 11: Written Permission for Use of Figure 15

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RE: Law Department | Contact Us

Southgate, Adrienne <asouthgate@providenceri.com> 23 September 2015 at 11:19
To: Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com>
Cc: "Bailon, Adolfo" <abailon@providenceri.com>

Maura, that document is in the public domain. You are welcome to use it.

---

From: Maura Pavalow [mailto:mpavalow@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2015 3:55 PM
To: Southgate, Adrienne
Subject: Law Department | Contact Us

Submitted on Monday, September 21, 2015 - 3:54pm Submitted values are:

Email: mpavalow@gmail.com
Daytime Phone: 914-419-4408
First Name: Maura
Last Name: Pavalow
Address: 75 Brook Street
City: Providence
State: Rhode Island
Zip: 02903

Your message:

To Whom it May Concern:

I am contacting you to seek permission to include the following image in a physical and electronic copy of my PhD thesis.

The image is a map called "Neighborhoods At A Glance" copyrighted in 2015 by the City of Providence and available on the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services (see https://www.providenceri.com/print/ONS/neighborhoods). If you are not the rights holder for this material I would be grateful if you would advise me who to contact.

The thesis will be made available within the University of Exeter's online theses repository (https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository). The repository is non-commercial and openly available to all.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Maura

--
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914-419-4408
Appendix 12: Written Permission for Use of Figure 18

Image Permissions Request

Hi, Maura.

My apologies for not responding earlier. Yes, you may use those images. Thank you for asking and good luck with your thesis!

Karen

On Mon, Oct 5, 2015 at 9:00 AM, Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Karen,

I am writing to follow up regarding my permission request to use images from the Office of Institutional Research in my doctoral thesis. If you are not the rights holder, could you please advise me who to contact?

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Maura

On 21 September 2015 at 16:16, Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Karen Baptist:

I am contacting you to seek permission to include the following images in a physical and electronic copy of my PhD thesis.

The images are two maps, one is "Home State of U.S. Residents, Fall 2014" and the other "Home Country (excluding United States), Fall 2014." Both are available under the tab "First-Year Geographic Profile" on the Institutional Research website under "Factbook" and "Undergraduate Admission" (see link). You are listed as author on Tableau for these images dated August 21 2015.

If you are not the rights holder for this material I would be grateful if you would advise me who to contact.

The thesis will be made available within the University of Exeter's online theses repository (https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository). The repository is non-commercial and openly available to all.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Maura

--

Maura Pavalow
PhD Candidate Human Geography
University of Exeter
MPavalow@gmail.com | MP360@Exeter.ac.uk
914-419-4408

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Karen Baptist
Associate Director of Institutional Research
Office of Institutional Research
Brown University
University Hall, Room 013
Box 1862
Providence, RI 02912
401-863-2952
Appendix 13: Written Permission for Use of Figure 19

Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com>

Re: Image Permissions Request

Cass Ciatt <cass_ciatt@brown.edu> 5 October 2015 at 21:24
To: mpavalow@gmail.com

Ms. Pavalow,

Your request to reproduce an image of a 2008 campus map of Brown was forwarded to me because my office manages name use and image permissions for the University. I wanted to confirm that you have an interest in this specific map, rather than the current map of campus. If so, you have our permission, provided that the 2008 Copyright Brown University appears in your thesis, along with a notation citing that the image use is granted “Courtesy of Brown University.” Thank you for your diligence in seeking this permission.

Regards
—Cass

Cass Ciatt
Vice President for Communications
Brown University
O: 401.863.2453
E: cass_ciatt@brown.edu
@CassCiatt

-------- Forwarded message --------
From: Maura Pavalow <mpavalow@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Oct 5, 2015 at 9:39 AM
Subject: Image Permissions Request
To: Monty_Combs@brown.edu

Dear Monty Combs,

Deb Dunphy suggested I contact you. I am writing to seek permission to include the following image in a physical and electronic copy of my PhD thesis.

The image is a 2008 map called "Brown University Campus Map" that I found on mappery.com (see link) and the copyright is attributed to Brown University. I could not find the same image on the website of the Department of Facilities Management (where there is a list of other maps).

If you are not the rights holder for this material I would be grateful if you would advise me who to contact.

The thesis will be made available within the University of Exeter's online theses repository (https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository). The repository is non-commercial and openly available to all.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,
Maura

--
Maura Pavalow
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University of Exeter
MPavalow@gmail.com | MP360@Exeter.ac.uk
Appendix 14: Timeline of Key Meetings and Narrative Data

2014

9 September  **First PAR Team Meeting:** An Informal Needs Assessment was conducted where co-researchers anonymously wrote their needs on a post-it at the end of the meeting, which took place at the Brown Center for Students of Colour (BCSC).

14 September  **PAR Team Retreat:** A Participatory Diagramming activity was conducted to collectively define 'participatory,' 'action,' and 'research,' which took place at the Sarah Doyle Women's Center (SDWC).

16 September  **PAR Team Meeting:** The team co-edited an informed consent form and developed a collective definition of '(micro)aggression.' The meeting took place at the BCSC.

23 September  **PAR Team Meeting:** Each co-researcher briefly shared a (micro)aggressions project that resonated with them.

26 September  **PAR Team Meeting:** The team discussed definitions and personal experiences of '(micro)aggression' and possible project ideas/goals at SDWC.

4 October  **PAR Team Meeting:** A Participatory Diagramming activity was conducted to brainstorm aims, objectives, research questions, and methods for a PAR project, which took place at BCSC.

17 October  **PAR Team Meeting:** Susie shared her experience at the Blacktivism Conference at Harvard and the team discussed possible implications of the conference on the PAR project. The meeting took place at the SDWC.

23 October  **PAR Team Meeting:** The team discussed finalising the PAR project design, which took place at J. Walter Wilson (across the street from BCSC).

24 October  **PAR Team Meeting:** The team continued discussion about finalising the PAR project design, which took place at BCSC.

28 October  **PAR Team Meeting:** Adey Binari visited the meeting at BCSC to discuss coping + healing regarding stress.

31 October  **PAR Team Meeting:** The team debriefed Adey's visit and finalised PAR project design at SDWC.
10 November  **Email Correspondence**: Maura and Anderson, one of the administrators that manage the Campus Center, were in correspondence over to email to plan the PAR project event called *Hurt People Hurt People*.

24 November  **Meeting with Delores**: Hayaatee and Maura met with Delores, one of the administrators that manage the Campus Center, to finalise event plans for *Hurt People Hurt People*.

2 December  **PAR Event, Hurt People Hurt People**: The PAR project event took place in the evening in Leung Gallery in the Campus Center. April performed a speech she prepared to explain what the event was to the audience and Gina read aloud a quote to invite people to participate in the art project. Participants wrote anonymous stories of (micro)aggressions they had produced, experienced or witnessed on colourful pieces of paper that they attached to a web of string wrapped around two standing wood frames. These stories are key narrative data used in this thesis.

7 December  **Retreat + Collective Ethnography**: The PAR team gathered for a retreat and to conduct a collective ethnography and oral analysis of *Hurt People Hurt People*.

10 December  **Meeting with Anderson**: Maura met with Anderson to debrief and receive feedback on *Hurt People Hurt People*.

2015

2 February  **PAR Meeting**: Anderson visited the meeting at SDWC to learn why the team chose Leung Gallery as the location for *Hurt People Hurt People*.

10 February  **Email Correspondence**: Anderson sent an email to the PAR team to thank us for our conversation on 2 February.

13 February  **Email Correspondence**: Anderson sent an email to the PAR team with updates on his efforts to gain campus-wide perspectives and desires for the use of Leung Gallery.

17-18 February  **Email Correspondence**: Gina and Nicholas emailed Anderson to thank him for our conversation on 2 February and his follow up actions. Anderson replied.

8 April  **Email Correspondence**: Anderson sent an email to the PAR team with updates on his efforts throughout the semester to gain campus-wide perspectives and desires for the use of Leung Gallery.
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