Geography, Geographers, and the Geographies of Antiracism

by

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Abstract

This research builds upon contemporary understandings of the roles of race, whiteness, and antiracism within the practice and profession of geography in North America. A Foucauldian approach to intellectual genealogy, Critical Race Theory, and the experiences of geographers of colour are used to trace the development of antiracist thought within dominant approaches in human geography. The biographies, personal narratives, and professional genealogies of antiracist geographers of colour in the United States and Canada reveal the connections between personal experiences of racism and a relentless push for antiracist research and practice. An in-depth analysis of the scholarly contributions of three prominent antiracist geographers of colour further highlights the relationship between identity and personal experiences in the advancement of geographic theory. In identifying geographers as geographic subjects, an emphasis is placed on the hierarchy of racial knowledge and the importance of the location from where, and by whom, geographic knowledges are produced.

While efforts to attract more people of colour into the profession of geography have been made since the 1960s, the practice and production of geography in the United States and Canada remains deeply racialized. The consistently small number of geographers of colour in North America geography departments and geography’s limited engagement with critical race research points to the continued power of whiteness in shaping the production of both geographers and geographic knowledge. Despite the more than 50-year age span between the youngest and oldest geographers interviewed, troubling thematic trends of experiences of racism as geography graduate students and as faculty members emerged. Whiteness and racism continue to pervade the discipline of geography in North America and the barriers discouraging the practice and development of antiracist geographies remain strong.
Dedication

To the trouble-making, back-talking, day-dreaming, question-asking, racialized, and rebellious kids of Scarborough who refuse to be crushed by the education system—you are more brilliant and brave, limitless, and powerful than you can ever imagine
Acknowledgements

In many ways, this PhD project started twelve years ago while in the middle of my undergraduate degree. I came across an article by Audrey Kobayashi on whiteness and representation in the discipline of geography and soon found myself combing through journal articles on racism and whiteness, feeling lucky to have stumbled into an intellectual space that actually made sense to me. Thank you, Audrey, for your unwavering support of my academic pursuits, and your leadership, and dedication to transforming the discipline of geography.

Thank you to all the antiracist geographers of colour who shared their stories and participated in this research project—I find comfort in knowing you are out there doing great work. I would especially like to thank Harold Rose and Bobby Wilson for generously sharing their stories and insights with me. Engaging with your life histories was profoundly moving and I am tremendously grateful for having the opportunity to learn from both of you.

To my family, friends, and colleagues who cheered me on, provided support, and have shown great kindness and patience: thank you. In particular, I would like to thank Beverley Mullings for your support and encouragement over the years. Your remarkable ability to instill a sense of calm and clarity as I navigate graduate school is cherished. A special thank you to the lifelong friends I have made at Queen’s: Hannah, Christine, Jie, and Vanessa. The epic shared meals, nights out, and laughter have kept me going. Mom, Dad, and Andy: thank you for your love, support, and patience.

Lastly, and with love and gratitude, I would like to thank my sister, Lisa, for her unconditional support, encouragement, and humor. There’s no other person I would want more on this surreal journey with me.
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# List of Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAG</td>
<td>Association of American Geographers</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLS</td>
<td>Critical Legal Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMGA</td>
<td>Commission on Geography and Afro-America</td>
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<td>CRT</td>
<td>Critical Race Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTF</td>
<td>Diversity Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida A&amp;M</td>
<td>Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University</td>
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<tr>
<td>HBCUs</td>
<td>Historically Black Colleges and Universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>REP</td>
<td>Race, Ethnicity and Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>UBC</td>
<td>University of British Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCLA</td>
<td>University of California, Los Angeles</td>
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# Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Antiracism</td>
<td>The practice of challenging racism through societal and institutional means; actions that oppose white hegemony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiracist geography</td>
<td>Challenging racism through the institution of geography or a geographic lens; actions and research that oppose white hegemony within geographic thought and practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negro [sic]</td>
<td>A contested term used widely in North America from the 19th century until the 1960s, referring to people who appear to have black skin; since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Black and African American have largely been used to replace the term Negro due to the history of slavery and discrimination associated with the term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People of colour</td>
<td>See: racialized minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>A social construction that seeks to categorize people based on physical appearance, predominantly by the colour of one’s skin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racialized minorities</td>
<td>Determined through social processes of ordering and categorizing people who do not belong to the racial group that is predominant or holding power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/whiteness</td>
<td>A socially constructed category designating power and privileges to white people; possession of white racial power is historically rooted and reflects the belief that whiteness possesses an inherent superiority over other racialized groups; is predominant and reflected throughout social, political, institutional, cultural etc. realms of society.</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Antiracism and Whiteness in Geography

The slow-growing population of racialized geographers in North American geography departments raises a number of vital questions about the discipline. Reoccurring themes in antiracist geography literature include: the lack of racial diversity of those practicing within the discipline (Deskins 1969; Horvath et al 1969; Kobayashi 2002; Pulido 2002; Price 2010; Choi 2016) and how racial homogeneity of researchers plays a role in the types of research produced (Kobayashi 2002; Berg 2011); the unchecked racial biases perpetuated through mainstream geographical perspectives (Bonnett 1997); the Eurocentric nature of geography courses (Deskins et al. 1971; Delaney 2002); and the barriers in attracting racialized minority graduate students to the discipline (Mahtani 2002; Yasmeen 2002; Sanders 2006). Despite a steady increase in racialized minority populations in both the United States and Canada, the practice of geography and the bodies of geographers remain predominantly white. Although geographers of colour greatly outnumber white geographers at the global scale, a focus on racialized representation, whiteness, racism, and antiracism in the discipline of geography within a North American context allows for a situated examination of social and political factors influencing knowledge production.

Beginning in the late 1960s, a small number of geographers in the United States problematized the lack of Black students and faculty in American geography departments, as well as the inadequacy of geographic research on Black America (see for example Deskins 1969; Horvath et al. 1969; Deskins and Speil 1971; Deskins and Sibert 1975).
America is in crisis. Times of crisis are times for reassessment. It is appropriate that the geography profession assesses its position on the matter of race relations in America to determine if the profession is making any significant contributions to a solution to the racial dilemma facing America today. (Horvath, Deskins, and Larimore 1969, 137)

This group of geographers began to raise questions about the types of involvement, participation, and consideration of Black America and Black Americans in the practice of academic geography in the United States. In 1968, Horvath, Deskins, and Larimore distributed a survey to 111 predominantly white geography departments offering M.A. and PhD programs in geography and found there were only two Black geographers who held faculty positions at the selected universities (Horvath, Deskins, and Larimore 1969).

Spearheaded by Donald Deskins Jr., a number of questions were asked that would profoundly change the trajectory of the discipline of geography. In his 1969 article in The Professional Geographer, Deskins makes a plea to geographers to think more critically about American racial problems. Deskins subtly yet brilliantly provides the link between the racial make-up of those practicing geography and the lack of socially significant geographical research about minority communities. In this early article, he points to the inadequacies of geographical literature in addressing racial issues. Alluding to the politics of representation of racialized people in geographic texts, Deskins argues the discipline of geography should be doing more to recruit Black students into the discipline. Displeased with the descriptive nature of articles on “the American Negro,” Deskins concludes the article by pointing to the unbound potential of the discipline of geography to become more relevant, revolutionary, and socially-conscious.
Echoing Deskins’ concern, geographical analyses with elements of race often remain descriptive and do not always recognize how the social construction of racial categories continues to play a role in geographic research. Geographic inquiries on racialized people happen “out there,” in places that have the ability to capture the geographic imagination. Given the predominantly white demographic of geographers and the continuation of geographic literature being produced about racialized peoples, there remains a tendency in the discipline of geography to focus on the “Other.” This persistence of “a western-centric impulse when encountering the non-western body” (Toila-Kelly 2010, 359) in geographical research continues to assume the location of racialized bodies as non-western. Widening the demographic pool of North American geographers shifts the terrain from where the practice of geography is situated and allows for the possibility of incorporating alternative forms of geographic knowledge.

More than forty years have passed since the acknowledgment of geography’s embedded whiteness, and throughout this time a handful of scholars have reiterated Deskins’ concerns (for example Kobayashi 2002; Mahtani 2002; Pulido 2002; Yasmeen 2002; Sanders 2006; Price 2010; Choi 2016). Beyond recognizing the need simply to recruit Black students, geographers have widened the demographic net and have shifted the focus towards increasing racialized minority representation in geography as a whole. The involvement of both Black and racialized minority faculty in geography departments at Canadian and U.S. universities, however, remains disproportionately low when compared to other academic departments, including disciplines within the social sciences (Berg 2011).

The call for increasing the representation of racialized groups within the discipline of geography in North America has persisted for over four decades—and as the continued
production of the handful of geographic texts on racism and whiteness in geography might suggest, the discipline remains resilient to increasing inclusivity. In 2002, Kobayashi reports approximately 9.0% of geography faculty in Canadian universities were racialized minorities although 18.7% of Canadians with PhDs were racialized minorities; and in 2016, Choi reports approximately 9.8% of geography faculty in Canadian universities were racialized minorities although 24.0% of Canadians with PhDs were racialized minorities (HRSDC 2009). Comprehensive studies on the racial breakdown of geography faculty in American universities has yet to take place; however, a 2001 study examining the membership data of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) reports approximately 8.0% of AAG member identify as racialized minorities with 1.2% of AAG members identifying as Black, 1.3% as Hispanic, and 5.5% as Asian (Pandit 2004). With the amount of geographic literature being produced about racialized peoples in North America, these data illustrate that in terms of both pedagogy and practice, the bodies of geographers often do not reflect the bodies being taught about, spoken about, or written about.

Nevertheless, simply enlarging the number of racialized minority people practicing geography in Canadian and U.S. universities does not necessarily equate to the development of antiracist geographies—the addition of racialized minority bodies does, however, decrease the “outsider status” of racialized minority geographers. Mahtani (2004) outlines the importance of increasing the number of women of colour in geography in order to combat the whiteness of the discipline. She argues that by increasing minority representation in geography, there is the potential for reducing tokenistic attitudes towards racialized geographers, decreasing the prevalence of minority stereotyping, encouraging the production
of alternative perspectives in geographic thought, and encouraging the development of new theoretical and empirical geographic knowledges.

Despite efforts by geographers to increase racialized minority representation in the discipline in North America, the whiteness of geography remains. These previous studies on racism within geography are commendable due to the monolith of what they seek to challenge, and because of the extent to which whiteness permeates geographical thought. Aside from the lack of racialized minority geographers who experience the whiteness of the discipline, a primary weakness in the study of racism within the practice of geography is the relatively small number of geographers who are committed to addressing racial inequality in their workplaces as a central tenet of their published work. The novelty of studies on race within the practice of geography encourages whiteness to remain at the center, swaying support away from ant-racist centered research. Geography’s pervasive whiteness within the North American contest contributes to the lack of multifaceted analyses of how racism impacts the everyday realities of racialized minority geographers.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this research is to build upon analyses of how race and racism influence the practice and production of antiracist geography by geographers of colour at universities in the U.S.A. and Canada. The primary research question is: how did we get to this moment in critically engaging with race in the discipline of geography? The genealogy of antiracist thought in the discipline of geography is explored through the application of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the centering of the stories gathered from interviews with antiracist geographers of colour. The experiences and memories of antiracist geographers of colour in
North America are gathered and placed in conversation with one another across several decades to highlight the points of resistance in the creation of antiracist geographies.

The persistent whiteness within the practice of geography points to the need for further examination of the multiple barriers contributing to the exclusion of racialized minorities. Although critical race scholarship in geography has become more common over the last decade, contemporary practices of knowledge production within North American geography continue to remain deeply racialized and produced by a predominantly white demographic of geographers. Whiteness remains prevalent and powerful in the production of geographers and geographies, yet racialized power relations in the production of geographers and the production of geographic knowledge are seldom discussed or considered in geography’s disciplining process.

Reoccurring racialized encounters experienced by geographers of colour while working within geography over the course of the last 50+ years and the consistent limited engagement with critical race geographies points to the omnipresent power of whiteness and the continuation of racial domination in current practices of knowledge production within geography. Drawing together the genealogical ties between past and contemporary challenges in the pursuit of antiracist objectives within geography reveals the continuing power of racialized processes that shape and influence the production of geographic knowledge in the present.

Antiracist geographies are acts of resistance to dominant (white) ideologies/geographies. This investigation into the genealogy of antiracist geographies is an attempt at making a small contribution to the field of critical race geography. By focusing on the experiences of antiracist geographers of colour and by identifying the motivations and
barriers to engaging in critical inquiries into topics of race and racism, I highlight the
importance of attracting people from underrepresented groups into the discipline of
geography. Fostering the development of antiracist geographies informed by critical race
theory cannot occur without an ongoing examination of the power of whiteness within the
discipline of geography and the ways whiteness operates to inhibit the participation of
geographers of colour.

A Foucauldian approach to genealogy and Critical Race Theory (CRT) are combined
to create an enriched, complementary and overlapping methodological and theoretical
framework. A common practice within CRT is to emphasize and center the stories and
experiences of people of colour. The genealogy of antiracist geographies in the discipline of
geography are uncovered through the application of CRT and the use of the stories and
experiences of antiracist geographers of colour. Together, this approach aims to: 1)
investigate the development of antiracist thought within the discipline of geography; 2)
uncover the challenges in engaging with antiracist geographies (scholarship, practices,
initiatives), and; 3) draw the connection between the identities and experiences of
geographers of colour in the making of antiracist geography.

Using both Foucault’s methodology of genealogy and the CRT methodology of
counter-storytelling allows for an illustration of the persistent barriers within the discipline of
geography for developing antiracist thought. The detailed life stories and lived experiences of
three prominent antiracist geographers of colour are used to contextualize historic events and
concerns within the discipline. In addition to the three highlighted stories, the experiences
and perspectives of eight geographers of colour who wished to remain anonymous will be
used as supporting narratives.
1.2 Outline of Chapters

Following the Outline of Chapters is an in-depth literature review of antiracist geography and in Chapter 2, I discuss the development of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and review the application of CRT in geographic literature. In conjunction with a Foucauldian approach to genealogy, I demonstrate the utility of combining CRT and genealogy as a theoretical approach for investigating antiracist geographies. Essed's (1991) theory of everyday racism and the heuristics of comparison are presented as analytic approaches. I then review the methods used for this project and include discussions on selecting participants, pilot interviews, and the interview process.

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I highlight the life stories of three prominent antiracist geographers, Harold Rose, Bobby Wilson, and Audrey Kobayashi. Their personal, familial, and professional experiences of racism give glimpses into the motivations for their commitment to developing critical race geographies. In Chapter 6, I briefly review theoretical approaches within human geography and situate Harold, Bobby, and Audrey's critical race scholarship within the larger intellectual contexts of the discipline.

In Chapters 7 and 8, I identify thematic topics arising from the interviews with the antiracist geographers of colour who wished to keep their identities confidential. Chapter 7 focuses on personal experiences growing up in North America as a person of colour and the paths that led them to become antiracist geographers. I emphasize the barriers and challenges they faced during graduate programs in geography and highlight the ways racism and whiteness are embedded within the professionalization process of becoming a geographer.

In Chapter 8, I focus on interviewees experiences of racism as faculty of colour at predominantly white universities in North America. Racism and whiteness were perpetuated
at the departmental, university, and at the discipline-wide levels. Common barriers to conducting critical race research included: having to endure everyday and frequent incidences of racism within the department, the expectation to publish in high-ranking journals that seldom engage critically with race, and the expectation to volunteer additional labour on diversity/recruitment/curricular/tenure committees. Chapter 8 concludes with interviewees' reflections on the current state of geography. Lastly, in Chapter 9, I provide a synopsis of my findings, reflect on the research process, and assess the current state of the discipline.

1.3 Literature Review

Black America and Geography: 1960s to 1980s

The formal practice of university geography dates to the mid-18th century and includes a long history of race science (Livingstone 1992). Understandings of race in geography during the 18th to mid-20th centuries were heavily influenced by imperial desires to justify European colonial expansion. A racial hierarchy was devised, asserting positive moral and intellectual characteristics to those deemed as white, while naming all other races as primitive and inherently inferior. Environmental determinism and biological racism were endorsed by the Royal Geographic Society (Nayak and Jeffrey 2011) and were enacted by geographers to validate and propel the expansion of the British empire. Classifying non-European bodies of colour as less than human allowed for the commodification, export, and exploitation of Black Africans as slaves to the British Empire’s colonies to cultivate and extract resources from Britain’s newly appropriated territories. The inherent role of geography and geographers in encouraging colonial processes, transatlantic slavery, and racial violence is often
disconnected and disregarded as having an influence on contemporary geographic thought. Arguably, the discipline of geography is a result of a blood-soaked history that continues to implicate racialized communities in the present day. As McKittrick reiterates:

the history of transatlantic slavery and racism in the Americas has adversely shaped the geographies of black diasporic communities, not only demonstrating the spatial contours of racial violence and dispossession but also identifying the ways in which analyses of blackness reify racial-colonial categories. (2011, 948)

The slow growth of literature on Black geographies and geographic analyses of blackness from within Black diasporic communities in the Americas are the remnants of racial power being exercised by the colonizing empires. The effect of the reproduced racial violence of geography’s history continues to shape how and by whom geography is practiced.

It was not until the mid-1960s, however, that geographers began to question the social construction of race. In 1965, Richard Morrill published “The Negro Ghetto: problems and alternatives” in the Geographical Review. Morrill’s article is cited as an influential piece of its time (see Dwyer 1997; Peake and Schein 2000) because of how conceptions of race were presented as the divisive factor in the creation of the ghetto. Rather than a discussion of the inferiority of minority groups, Morrill illustrates the connection between marginality and spatial exclusion. Beyond describing settlement patterns and repeating racially charged sentiments of mainstream discourse, this ground-breaking article provides the connection between race, equal rights, and spatial segregation. The activist nature of the subject matter becomes evident when considering the time period during which this work was written. Conceived during the Civil Rights Movement, the political impetus of Morrill’s article within
geography is seen through subsequent publications by geographers on topics questioning the roots of race, segregation, and inequality.

During the mid-1960s, “geographers signaled a willingness to use their science for social ends” (Dwyer 1997, 446) and began to investigate the connection between racialized identities and the construction of social ills. Several factors contributed to the progression of antiracist/race-conscious geographical research: the Civil Rights Movement, the sheer number of Black Americans residing in the United States, and the existence of institutions of higher learning geared towards Black students lead to the rise of pivotal questions regarding the participation of African Americans in the discipline of geography.

The involvement of geographers of colour within the emerging field of critical race geographies was crucial. Although analyses of race and racism within the discipline of geography are a relatively new area of research, there is a long history of geographers studying racialized peoples by exploring exoticified regions, distinct cultural practices, and all things outside of white Euro-America. It was not until the late 1990s and early 2000s when a handful of geographers began to question how race and racism play a vital role in the theory and practice of the discipline. Works on race and racism within geography published in the 1960s and 1970s, and articles published in the 1990s and 2000s, marked a shift in the types of questions being asked, as well as a demographic shift in who is asking the questions.

Laying the early groundwork for inquiry on the role of race in geographical analyses were geographers such as Morrill (1965), Rose (1964, 1965, 1969, 1970; see Chapter 6, p.153 for an in-depth review of Harold’s work), Deskins (1969), and Bunge (1976) (published in 1976 but written in 1965). In 1968, Donald Deskins became the Association of American Geographers’ founding director of the Commission on Geography and Afro-
Deskins was the first geographer to critically question the racial composition of geography departments and the types of research being produced on the “American Negro.” In 1969, he wrote:

Before geographers can address themselves to the question: What research contributions can the geographical profession make that will contribute to a solution of the racial dilemma presently facing America, they have to answer the question: What have geographers done in the past to contribute to the resolution of American racial problems? (Deskins 1969, 145)

This quote is the opening line in the article, “Geographical Literature on the American Negro, 1949–1968: A Bibliography,” and points to his concerns and questions about the racial composition of American geography departments, and the potential of geography to aid in the reduction of racism.

More specifically, Deskins highlighted a profound failure of the profession. During the year the COMGA was formed, Deskins conducted a survey of Black faculty and graduate students in American geography departments. Unlike previous geographical research concerning African Americans and spatial distribution, migration and settlement patterns, or ghetto developments, Deskins sought to investigate the research being conducted about Black America in addition to the rate of participation of Black Americans in university geography departments. The survey conducted on geography departments in the U.S. reveals there
were twelve Black geographers teaching in geography graduate programs but only two held permanent tenure-track positions (Deskins and Speil 1971); one of whom was Harold Rose. The survey was repeated in 1974 and found although the number of Black geographers teaching in geography graduate programs did not change, ten out of the twelve held permanent tenure-track positions (Deskins and Sibert 1975).

Surveying geographic literature published in the United States between 1949 and 1968, Deskins also found the average number of geography articles primarily discussing the “American Negro,” or a racial issue more generally, was between two and three publications annually. In this same issue of *The Professional Geographer*, Deskins, Horvath, and Larimore published an article about the rate of participation of Black faculty and graduate students as well as the number of active research projects on Black America taking place in American geography departments at that time. In 1971, Deskins and Speil published their findings from the 1968 survey entitled “The Status of Blacks in American Geography: 1970.” In this same year, Deskins, Speil, and Cohen published a paper on the importance, objectives, and strategies for improving the participation of Black Americans in university geography programs through the Commission on Geography and Afro-America. Upon the formation of COMGA and the research undertaken by Deskins in the late 1960s, the discipline of geography began to see a few articles on Black America. In 1971, the *Southeastern Geographer* published a special issue on Black America, which includes contributions by Richard Morrill and Donald Deskins Jr. Shortly thereafter in 1972, the journal *Economic Geography* published a special issue titled “Contributions to an Understanding of Black America.” Contributors include Harold Rose, Richard Morrill, Fred Donaldson, and Donald Deskins Jr.
In 1972, a symposium on “Black Perspectives on Geography” was held at Clark University. The notes from this meeting were compiled by Bobby Wilson and Herman Jenkins, and were published in a 1972 issue of *Antipode*. Geography’s “white epistemological framework,” “the inconsistencies between the Black imagination and the Geographical imagination,” and increasing Black student enrollment in geography departments were a few of the concerns outlined in the published document (Wilson and Jenkins 1972, 42). As geographers published on the poor level of participation of Black Americans in the discipline and the dearth of geographic research on Black America in the early 1970s, still, during this time, geographers had yet to publish articles pertaining to other groups of colour in the U.S. or Canada.

By the 1980s, geographic studies on Black America was becoming increasingly commonplace. Research on urban issues such as segregation (see Darden 1985; Farley 1986; Wilson 1985, 1989, see Chapter 6, p.184 for an in-depth review of Bobby’s work), ghetto formation (see Rose 1970, 1971; Darden 1981; Deskins 1981), and housing (see Wilson 1977) were popular thematic categories. Although research on Black America had gained in popularity in geography by the late-1980s, relative to the volume of articles published in geography journals annually, geographic research pertaining to Black America remained small (Dwyer 1997).

**Nazism and Geography**

As illustrated by Morrill, Deskins, Rose, and Bunge’s works on race and inequality amidst the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, the production of geographic knowledge occurs within a wider context that is both temporal and local. Arising from the Civil Rights
Movement in the U.S., geographers such as Horvath, Deskins, and Larimore (1969) began writing about “the racial dilemma facing America.” Ironically, or perhaps as a reflection of the embedded racism within the discipline, accolades were awarded to Walter Christaller, a known Nazi Party member, just as the topic of race began to forge a path within the discipline. In 1964, Christaller was awarded the Association of American Geographers’ Outstanding Achievement Award for his work in Central Place Theory (Barnes and Minca 2011) and contributions in designing plans for “an expanding greater Germandom as Aryan space” (Barnes and Minca 2011, 3). Christaller’s spatial theory was celebrated despite the horrific implications and objectives for creating Central Place Theory as geographic law. Although “Christaller provided an explicit geographical contribution to the realization of the Nazi dream of a Greater Germandom” (Barnes and Minca 2011, 13), the inhumanity of his actions was overlooked and diminished in the name of geographic theory.

Regardless of the justifications supporting the development of Christaller’s theory, it was more than twenty years after his involvement with the Third Reich when geographic associations began praising his role in developing spatial theory. Incidentally, Christaller’s recognition coincides with the emergence of questions connecting racism and geography, and at the height of the civil right movement in the United States. As Kobayashi contends, “There are some aspects of spatial theory itself, in the way that it defines ontological subjects and the laws of spatial process, which worked against the study of racism” (2014a, 645). It was known that “Christaller…worked for the Nazi regime to develop applications for his theory in the areas of Germany and Poland in which the original inhabitants had been removed by genocide. Central place theory was to guide the grand plan of Aryan resettlement” (Kobayashi 2014a, 646). As Barnes and Minca (2011) reiterate, “Christaller was busy with
the details of geographical prescription, [he] became part of the more general discursive formation that fed into geopolitical and biopolitical Nazi ideology” (14). Thus, the disregard the AAG held towards Christaller’s role in supporting Nazi objectives was not simply a reflection of oppressive forces of the time, but rather, an indication of how larger systemic climates and attitudes towards race were replicated and fueled by knowledge-producing organizations.

Aside from the ethical and moral arguments that can be made regarding the AAG’s celebration of Christaller’s spatial theory, questions must be raised regarding how institutional bodies promoting geography are implicated in encouraging the practice of geography as a space of exclusion, whiteness, and at worst, genocide. The praise that Christaller received despite the simultaneous rise of geographic inquiries on Black America reflects the importance of the larger social factors and the epistemological biases influencing the validation of some knowledges over others.

Knowledge-producing organizations like the AAG hold tremendous power in shaping consciousnesses and directing future research through the legitimization and celebration of ideas. When the AAG celebrated a white supremacist war criminal at a time when Black Americans were fighting for racial equality, the AAG also sent a clear message about whose knowledge and what types of knowledge are considered outstanding. To celebrate Christaller’s geographic theory—knowing it was developed for Nazis to carry out genocidal practices and alter socio-spatial arrangements to proliferate the power of the white race—is to celebrate white supremacy. Considering the social context at the time the award was given, recognizing the contributions of a Black American for their contributions to
geographic thought, for example, would have signaled a very different political stance on the types of people and knowledge welcome in the discipline.

David Sibley (1995) argues the control over knowledge and the maintenance of areas of specialization allows for the preservation of knowledge hierarchies, social order, and larger power structures. While the AAG was giving accolades to Christaller, they were also reinforcing geography as a white discipline. Sibley notes:

The issue of what, within the academy, counts as legitimate knowledge is a complex one […] There is clear evidence, however, that the work of some researchers is marginalized and supressed. The exercise of power, both by groups and individuals within disciplines and by outside agencies, can be an important influence on the production of knowledge […] an observation on the power/knowledge nexus as it is demonstrated in the suppression, neglect or dismissal of ideas on the organization of social space produced by marginalized others, particularly black and female academics. (1995, 121)

Expressing his concern over the whiteness of human geography and the exclusion of Black scholars and their contributions to the development of geographic theories, Sibley highlights the significance of W.E.B. DuBois and The Philadelphia Negro (1899). Sibley argues The Philadelphia Negro is an important and impressive study in urban geography by a Black scholar whose contributions were disregarded by geography.

The neglect of a black perspective has resulted in a white view of blackness as ‘other’, and the perceived ‘problems’ of black people are essentially problems defined in terms of a white world-view. (Sibley 1995, 153)
DuBois analysed spatial processes at multiple scales, surveyed households, identified migration patterns between states and towns, mapped areas of residential segregation, and drew the relationships between racism, economic exploitation, and job and housing discrimination in a Black community in Philadelphia. DuBois applied multiple methods to gather and analyse his data and included a number of comparative perspectives to further compliment his findings on the social geography of Philadelphia. *The Philadelphia Negro* was the first study to combine economic and social analyses from a spatial perspective (Sibley 1995).

Despite the significance of *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) in contributing to spatial analyses, it took until the turn of the 21st century for geographers to engage with the work of DuBois (1868-1963) in geographic literature. Interestingly, the referencing of DuBois in geography coincides with the push for “diversifying” the discipline and the subsequent slight increase in the presence of geographers of colour in North American geography departments.

DuBois’s analysis is in marked contrast to some more recent studies of urban black populations by white academics which have ignored black perspectives and draw only on the ideas of other whites—the geographical ‘self’ observing the ‘other’ as an object. (Sibley 1995, 147)

Although Sibley’s preceding statement was made over two decades ago, the sentiment still applies given the persistent predominance of white geographers within the discipline of geography.

In many ways, it is often easier to provide criticisms of the past than it is to connect geography’s violent history with the privileging of certain bodies and ideas within the discipline that continues today. In addition to documenting these “Dark Geographies,” it is
important to understand how the past is an indication of the present, to investigate the things in history that often go unnoticed, and to ask who are the people dictating what ideas should be celebrated, and from which bodies are these discourses being developed.

**Urban Geographies and Race**

Geographers who have documented turning points in antiracist histories in geography include scholars such as Owen Dwyer (1997), and Trevor Barnes and Nik Heynen (2011). In 1997, Dwyer published a paper in the *Professional Geographer* surveying the prevalence and tone of geography articles about African Americans from 1911-1995. In this article, Dwyer points to concerns surrounding geography’s engagement with the topic of race over time. They include: the “mood” within geography towards “the racial dilemma,” the persistent lack of minority representation within the discipline, and the thematic trends of the articles on African Americans.

Barnes and Heynen take a different approach to antiracism’s history in geography by focusing on one geographer and his work, William Bunge. Originally published in 1971, Bunge’s book *Fitzgerald: Geography of a Revolution* received a mix of praise and criticism. Barnes and Heynen contend that *Fitzgerald* marks a turning point in the discipline of geography (2011). They argue, “One of Bunge’s ends in Fitzgerald was to practice geography differently. He pushed the discipline in a new direction, helping to transform it into something else” (ibid., vii). More specifically, they identify a number of elements distinguishing *Fitzgerald* from other geographical works of its time:

Fitzgerald introduced the city to North American geographers in a way that it had never been seen by them before. Bunge takes readers into the inner city,
to a primarily African American space, and to the crushing racism, patriarchy, and economic deprivation associated with it. (Barnes and Heynen 2011, xi)

Prior to the publication of Fitzgerald, a handful of geographers critically engaged with the topic of “the Negro ghetto” (See Morrill 1965; Rose 1970); however, the approach, level of engagement, depth of analysis at a neighborhood level, the raw depiction of the realities of racialized poverty, and Bunge’s commitment and engagement with the Fitzgerald community are what distinguishes Fitzgerald from other geography publications. Barnes and Heynen reiterate:

Until Bunge’s work, the inner city was generally ignored by urban geographers. … African Americans already had been in America for several generations. But having moved into inner cities like Detroit’s Fitzgerald, they were unable to move out … living conditions were dreadful—dilapidated buildings, poorly maintained public space, underfunded schools, high rates, unchecked crime. But urban geographers didn’t know, or didn’t want to know. (2011, viii)

Although Bunge is often heralded as one of “the very figures who had acted as godfathers at geography’s positivist baptism” (Livingstone 1992, 329), he is also cited as one of the first to reject positivism’s touted objectivity and neutrality. Bunge led by example and pushed geographers to make a difference and to conduct research that is relevant to real-world problems.

In his work, Bunge revived sentiments from early practices of imperial geography by emphasizing the importance of exploration and on-the-ground interactions with local, racialized, inner-city populations in urban Detroit. Recognizing the voyeuristic and
patronizing nature of this model of participatory geography, Bunge stressed the role of locals as students and professors. In capturing the human experiences of urban and racialized poverty through the study of Fitzgerald, Bunge’s unorthodox approach to understanding urban problems undoubtedly inspired and encouraged a new train of geographic thought:

Fitzgerald was clearly no old-time, ideographic descriptive regional study. It was a book that tried to change the world and along with it, change the discipline of geography. (Barnes and Heynen 2011, xi)

Bunge’s vision for incorporating human elements into geographical inquiry through the study of Fitzgerald is not only relevant when tracing the development of antiracist geographic thought, but also represents a vital moment in the discipline of geography for promoting qualitative, radical, critical, and transformative forms of geographical theory and practice.

**Shifting Geographies**

The 1980s marks another turn in the discipline of geography as analyses of race, racism, and geography shift in focus from the absence of not only Black Americans in geography, but of racialized minorities in North America (Anderson 1987, 1988; Shrestha and Davis 1989). In 1987, Peter Jackson’s edited volume, “Race and Racism, Essays in Social Geography”, was published in the U.K. As one of the first book-length volumes on racism and geography, this book is often cited as the springboard text encouraging a new uncharted path in the discipline. A primary weakness of this book, however, is the perspective from where the book’s contributors are situated. Unlike earlier works on Black America and geography in the 1960s, the majority of geographers published in this text do not personally experience the racism they are writing about. Although the contents of this book are unarguably important
and informative, this celebrated text in antiracist geography mimics the traditional geographic framework for research and writing—seemingly objective, neutral, and from a distance as an observer of a phenomenon rather than as someone writing from personal experience. What is most interesting about this publication is the praise it receives for being ground-breaking in the realm of antiracist geography despite the fact it post-dates the efforts of Black geographers amidst the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. The politics of legitimizing knowledge through citation are evident here, further pointing to the continued tendency in the discipline to value works being written from certain bodies over Others.

Despite the criticism of Peter Jackson’s edited volume, the publication of this book also marked a shift in how racial categories and geography were conceptualized. Prior to this edited volume, discussions of race and racism in geography were primarily investigated through a black-white binary. Beginning in the late 1980s, geographic analyses of race transitioned away from studies on Black America and started to encompass Other racialized groups. Coincidingly, geographers were beginning to recognise the poor levels of participation of other racialized groups within the geography profession. In a 1988 report sponsored by AAG, Shrestha and Davis conducted a study on minorities and representation in geography and found only five percent of faculty in North American geography departments were people of colour. Discussions about race and racism in geography moved away from specific forms of racialization and Black America and towards broad descriptors of identity through such terms as racialized, minority, diverse, underrepresented, and ethnic groups.
Discursively, the change in language from “Black geography” to “race and geography,” in many ways, disregards and erases the significance of Blackness in geography’s antiracist struggle. As McKittrick argues:

> the locations of black history, selfhood, imagination, and resistance are not only attached to the production of space through their marginality, but also through the ways in which they bring into focus responses to geographic domination. That is, black geographies cannot be fully understood if they are primarily conceptualized through utterances such as “invisible” or “peripheral.” (McKittrick 2006, 6)

Although it is necessary to acknowledge the multifaceted myriad of racial oppressions, the homogenizing of racialized peoples inadvertently pushes Black geography’s history to the periphery. McKittrick’s assertion that “black lives are necessarily geographic, but also struggle with discourses that erase and despatialize their sense of place,” (2006, xiii) points to the necessity to recognize the power of discourse and the complex political implications of language.

Importantly, the rise of research on feminist geographies along with the advent of discussions on race within geography, fueled by the civil rights and feminist liberation movements of the 1960s, gained ground in the Euro-Anglo-American academy in the mid-1980s. Feminist of colour, or “U.S. third world feminists,” pointed to how whiteness and racial power undermined and ignored intersectional forms of oppression (see for example, Moraga and Anzaldua 1983; Spivak 1988; Mohanty 1991; Sandavol 1991). Influenced by the feminist movement of the previous decades, the 1990s was another critical decade for the development of literature on race and geography.
In 1990, Rickie Sanders published a critique in *The Professional Geographer*, drawing attention to the white male demographic of geographers and the failure of recognizing the interconnected relationship between race, class, and gender in geographic analyses. As the only Black woman on an AAG panel on gender, race, and ethnicity, Sanders reflects on the panel discussion and poses vital and provocative questions about the presence of racism and sexism in the discipline. She asks:

Where are minorities and women? Why are they missing? … What is the impact of this omission on the discipline as well as on those who have been marginalized? Geography as a discipline needs to make a more concerted effort to attract minorities and women. It is naive to think that any discipline made up predominantly of white, middle class males can conceptualize, elaborate, and successfully deal with the worlds pressing social problems.

(Sanders 1990, 230)

Echoing Deskins’ concerns from 1969, Sanders confronts geography’s failure in integrating geographers from various racial backgrounds and ponders the potential for geography to aid in addressing social problems when people of colour, people from lower class backgrounds, and women appear to be excluded from becoming geographers. She argues the discipline of geography has yet to recognize that people of colour and other minorities have valuable and important contributions to the advancement of the discipline. In a complimentary article in *Antipode*, Sanders (1992) argues the discipline of geography is rooted in Eurocentric thought and bound by Eurocentric bias.

In the early to mid-1990s, white feminist geographers began to consider the implications of failing to consider differences among women when developing feminist
political and theoretical geographic thought. Gillian Rose’s chapter, “A Politics of Paradoxical Space,” in *Feminism and Geography, The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (1993) draws upon theorists such as bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins to explore the paradoxes and contradictions of the Other spaces created by feminist geographies. In 1994, Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose published the edited volume, *Writing Women and Space, Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*. Despite the important contribution that this work makes towards the development of feminist geographies, they also highlight the whiteness of feminism within the discipline during the early 1990s as evidenced by the absence of discussions of race and racism in analyses of colonial and postcolonial geographies. Similar to Rose’s earlier work on paradoxical space (1993), the names of feminists of colour are briefly mentioned in the first few pages of *Writing Women and Space*, but become invisible throughout the rest of the book.

The whiteness of feminist geography in the early 1990s, however, serves as a reminder of how easily race and racism can become obscured when race, racism, and difference are analysed and theorized from a white epistemological framework. Although interconnected, studies on racism and whiteness in geography are not mutually exclusive. The tendency of geographic texts on race within the discipline to study one’s own whiteness poses concerning dilemmas. Price (2010) suggests, “the popularity of white studies in geography may in fact simply reflect the whiteness of geographers” (156). While some discussions of race and racism in geography critically examine the whiteness of the discipline, inversely, studies on the subject position of the white researcher reaffirms the white body as central and powerful. Self-reflectivity, nonetheless, should still be practiced but with an awareness of the potential for re-centering whiteness at the expense of ignoring
the voices of people of colour. The primary task is to refocus strategically on those who are underrepresented in geography and on the reasons for their exclusion.

Intersectional analyses of race and gender in geography came to the forefront in a meaningful way with Audrey Kobayashi’s seminal work in *The Professional Geographer*, “Coloring the field: Gender, ‘race,’ and the politics of fieldwork” (1994; see Chapter 6, p.195 for an in-depth review of Audrey’s work), and Kobayashi and Linda Peake’s article, “Unnatural discourse: ‘Race’ and gender in geography” (1994) in the journal *Gender, Place and Culture*. More than simply hypothesizing that race impacts the practice of geography, Kobayashi and Peake assert and attest to the reality of racism and sexism in the field of geography. These articles reiterate the concerns of the handful of Black geographers in the 1960s regarding the lack of racial minorities entering the profession, in addition to incorporating analyses of sexism. These articles broke ground in geography by not only centering arguments around the existence of multiple forms of simultaneously experienced oppressions, but by also incorporating personal experiences of racism and sexism while engaging in the profession.

As the language of antiracism, whiteness, and broadening participation among diverse groups in geography resurfaced in geographic scholarship in the mid-1990s, meetings among geographers to develop pragmatic approaches to disrupting the continuing reproduction of an almost exclusively white professoriate in North American geography departments. Akin to the advent of the COMGA program spearheaded by Saul Cohen in the 1960s, discussions on race, racism, and diversity within the discipline of geography were taking place with the objective of remedying geography’s poor record of recruiting and supporting people of colour within the discipline. The re-emergence of studies on racism in geography in the mid-
1990s provided fuel for the development of a collective group of geographers interested in addressing the racism in their profession and in 1998, a meeting of geographers concerned about race in U.S. and Canadian geography took place in Lexington, Kentucky. Sponsored by a US National Science Foundation grant and the Canadian Embassy, a group of twenty-one academics came together as the Concerned Group on Race and Geography to discuss geographic research on race and the underrepresentation of people of colour in the discipline (Darden 2000).

Participants at the Concerned Group on Race and Geography workshop composed four commitments geography department chairs could implement to improve the status of racialized peoples in the discipline (Darden 2000). The four commitments were 1) to enhance diversity within the department by committing to recruit and fund at least one domestic graduate student who is of a racialized minority for each of the next seven years; 2) to enhance diversity within the department by committing to recruit and fund at least one international graduate student who is not of European background for each of the next seven years; 3) to design and implement programs to support the professional, personal, and political growth and success of the students recruited in commitments (1) and (2) as well as other graduate students for the next seven years. The programs will intend to transform the racist heritage and practices of the discipline of geography. The department will share plans for the programs, and the successes and failures of the programs with the AAG and CAG to aid in the development of similar programs; and 4) to offer at least one course per year engaging in processes of racialization and the intersection of racism and other forms of oppression at national and international scales. From this meeting, a pledge titled a “Call for Direct Action Now on Race in U.S. and Canadian Geography” was drafted (ibid.). In 2000,
the Concerned Group on Race and Geography mailed the pledge form along with a letter explaining the rationale for the initiative to eighty-four geography departments with graduate programs in the U.S. and Canada (ibid.). Few department chairs bothered to reply, with only seven departments pledging to enact the four “diversity enhancing” commitments (Darden 2000). The lack of responses by geography chairs, as well as the responses giving reasons for not signing the pledge, were indicative of what the group sought to combat. Coinciding with the meeting of the Concerned Group on Race and Geography and the circulating of the pledge form, a new cohort of geographers of colour were graduating from PhD programs and were making a notable presence in the discipline.

The practice of antiracist geography emerged as a subfield in geography as a new cohort of geographers of colour completed PhDs at U.S. universities in the mid to late-1990s. Critical empirical work was being conducted by geographers of colour, resulting in an influx of geographic publications challenging social constructions of race and geography’s white epistemological framework. Laura Pulido, Ruthie Gilmore, and Clyde Woods are three examples of geographers of colour who received PhDs in the 1990s and contributed extensively to geographic literature by publishing their activist-oriented research rooted in political struggle. Pulido (1996) examines discourses surrounding the environmental justice movement, environmental racism, and constructions of race and class; Gilmore (1999) ties the relationship between racism, capitalism, and the growth of the prison system in California; and Woods (1998) traces the plantation history in the Mississippi Delta and draws the connection between African American identities, the development of the blues, and the use of a blues epistemology to resist oppressive forces and fight for cultural, social, and economic justice.
In 2002, Pulido, Gilmore, and Woods contributed to a special issue on race and geography in *The Professional Geographer*. The collection of articles in *The Professional Geographer* critique the production of geographic knowledge applying a critical race lens and demonstrate the ways in which racism and whiteness are upheld through geography’s disciplinary culture (Anderson 2002; Delaney 2002; Gilmore 2002; Kobayashi and Peake 2002; Pulido 2002; Schein 2002; Wilson 2002; Woods 2002). Five of the nine contributors are geographers of colour, and three are women of colour.¹

Since the 2002 issue of *The Professional Geographer*, there have been few geography journals that have published “special issues” concerning race and geography written predominantly by geographers of colour. In 2002, *The Canadian Geographer* published a “special focus section” on Equity for women in geography; however, only two of the eight articles discussed the topic of race as an equity concern (Kobayashi 2002; Yasmeen 2002). The two authors of these articles on race, women, and geography are written by women of colour, and the remaining six authors examining the role of gender in geography are white. Conversely, the 2006 issue of *Gender, Place and Culture* featured nine articles, eight of which were authored by women of colour. Further reiterating the relationship between identity and the types of knowledge produced, all of the articles written by women of colour focus on analyses of race and gender. The six articles by geographers who are women of colour critically interrogate the systemic mechanisms perpetuating whiteness, racism, and sexism within the discipline of geography and the reasons for the low number of women of colour employed as academic geographers in North American geography departments (Akinleye 2006; Kobayashi 2006; Liu 2006; Mahtani 2006; Sanders 2006; Sioh

¹ I believe this is the first-time the majority of contributing authors in an issue of a major North American geography journal were geographers of colour.
The ongoing low level of participation of women of colour in geography as well as people of colour more generally throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, sparked another “diversity enhancing” initiative by the AAG.

Along similar motivations as the objectives set forth by the Concerned Group on Race and Geography, the Diversity Task Force (DTF) was established in 2003 by the AAG President, Duane Nellis and the AAG Executive Director, Douglas Richardson as an initiative to enhance diversity within geography. The Diversity Task Force had five goals: 1) to develop initiatives for enhancing the diversity of the most underrepresented groups in geography; 2) to facilitate AAG initiatives on diversity; 3) to recommend long-term goals for enhancing diversity to the AAG; 4) to build on previous AAG Affirmative Action and Minority Status Committee reports; and 5) to promote AAG panels, forums, and workshops on enhancing diversity. In 2006, the AAG published “An Action Strategy for Geography Departments as Agents of Change: A Report of the AAG Diversity Task Force.”

The DTF was given three years to report back to the AAG and dedicated considerable efforts in surveying levels of diversity at various stages of professionalization. The DTF found:

geography departments indicated the severe under-representation of and the difficulty in recruiting racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African American and Latinos, at every level of the discipline, including undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. (2006, 7)

Reflecting on past efforts of the AAG for enhancing diversity such as the COMGA program and the AAG Affirmative Action and Minority Status Committee report on the “Status of Minorities in Geography” by Shrestha and Davis (1988), the DTF reported the discipline of
geography continues to be caught in the same cycle Shrestha and Davis identified in 1988—the negative cause and effect of a shortage of minority students and the resultant shortage of minority faculty.

The 2006 DTF Report is based on surveys conducted in 2004. The DTF surveyed geography departments at 74 post-secondary institutions in the United States and found: 85.6 percent of undergraduate students and 87.6 percent of graduate students in geography programs were white; and 88 percent of tenure or tenure-track Professors in geography departments were white (84.5 percent of Assistant Professors, 87.7 percent of Associate Professors, and 91.2 percent of Full Professors) (2006, 49). Of the 74 geography departments who responded to the DTF survey, 49 departments had no Black faculty, 61 had no Hispanic faculty, 31 had no Asian faculty, and 70 had no Native American faculty (2006, 47). In a separate survey by Darden and Terra (2003), they identified seven geography departments in the United States with more than one Black geographer.

The DTF’s recommendations for enhancing diversity focused on efforts at the departmental level and included an extensive list of action items. Recommendations encompassed both basic essential as well as more ambitious tasks for improving diversity in individual geography departments. Recommendations of the DTF included: holding discussions with faculty and staff about the importance and need for increasing the diversity of the students; keeping a database of student recruitment and retention; conducting yearly reviews of diversity goals and monitoring departmental climate; developing strategic partnerships with public, private, post-secondary, and other schools, especially Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and minority serving institutions for recruitment into undergraduate and graduate programs; developing mentorship programs and facilitating
access to academic, social, and personal supports for minority students; and targeting and recruiting outstanding minority students for PhD programs in geography and providing financial support for the duration of the doctorate until completion (2006, 70). While the recommendations of the AAG DTF were broad and required a substantial level of commitment and dedication as well as the allocation of financial resources by the chair or head of each geography department, the necessity of the long list of recommendations for supporting and sustaining increased diversity reflects the persistent failure in attracting and retaining people from minority racial groups into geography departments. As evidenced by the contributions of geographers of colour to the development of antiracist geographies, the recruitment and retention of people of colour to the discipline of geography is beneficial for fostering and advancing geographic thought.

Articles on racism and/or persistent whiteness within the discipline of geography have on occasion come to the surface outside of “special journal issues on race”—but they remain few (see Kobayashi 2003, 2005; Nash 2003; Mahtani 2004, 2014; Price 2010; Tolia-Kelly 2010; Berg 2011; Joshi et al. 2015). And even fewer publications critiquing racism, antiracism, and whiteness in the discipline from the perspective of geographers of colour in North America. One exception of a major contribution to critical race geographies, however, is Katherine McKittrick’s book *Demonic Grounds*.

Developing the intersections between race, blackness, gender, place, and geography through Black women’s experiences and stories of the diaspora, Katherine McKittrick’s *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (2006) is a ground-breaking critical race intervention within geographic theory. More than a multidimensional account of transatlantic slavery, McKittrick connects complex historical spatial
conceptualizations of Black women’s geographies with present-day understandings of a black sense of place. She contends:

Geographic domination, then, is conceptually and materially bound up with racial-sexual displacement and the knowledge-power of a unitary vantage point. ... It is meant to recognize the hierarchies of human and inhuman persons and reveal how this social categorization is also a contested geographic project. (2006, xvi)

*Demonic Grounds* interrupts traditional geographic knowledge production by drawing attention to ongoing relations of racialized power in the construction of geographies. While narrating stories of the diaspora and Black women’s geographies, McKittrick reiterates the archaic reality of geographic knowledge production: dominated by white, Eurocentric, patriarchic, and heterosexual origins. She situates Black women’s experiences as in place, intertwining archive materials with creative texts to resist, challenge, and reclaim constructions of Black femininity and Black womanhood. McKittrick argues:

Black discourses and sites of contestation, conflict, and displacement advance a different sense of place, which is tied to alternative geographic agendas: exposed are cartographic impossibilities, surprising black geographies, and black geographic subjects who are otherwise understood as beyond the comprehension of traditional Euro-white geographies and geographers; spatialized are different formations of black geographies and new analytical sites of social difference and social justice. (2006, 106)
In presenting Black geographies as places of struggle as well as places of unbound possibility and potential, McKittrick’s *Demonic Grounds* is an example of an alternative and emancipatory theoretical and methodological approach for reimagining geography.

Clyde Woods’ “Sittin’ on Top of the World” The challenges of Blues and Hip Hop Geography” (2007) is another example of a critical race and alternative methodological approach within geography. In “Sittin’ on Top of the World” (2007) Woods critiques the construction of geographical knowledges and argues the academy and its intellectual traditions reproduce classed and racial power relations. When understood and conceptualized through narrow epistemological positions, geographic knowledges from historically marginalized bodies and communities are delegitimatized by default. Woods applies critical race methodology by challenging the assumed neutrality of Master or majoritarian narratives within curricular and philosophical content. He explains:

Despite notable efforts to integrate different texts and idea into university curriculums and philosophical frameworks, social research disciplines appear to be ontologically incapable of systematically incorporating new and older forms of social justice-centered indigenous, and subaltern knowledge. (2007, 50)

Further, Woods disrupts geography’s knowledge claims as objective, meritocratic, and impartial by stating:

geography and geographers must first formally acknowledge the presence of the institutional knowledges that shape the discipline. Therefore, human geographers must formally recognize the particular role that the state plays in shaping the discipline. (2007, 52)
In addition to highlighting the difficulties in establishing alternative methodological and theoretical approaches within a discipline built on imperial interests, Woods also present the importance of dismantling disciplinary boundaries guarding against the inclusion of intellectual traditions stemming from poor and racialized communities while simultaneously meeting the interests of the state.

Woods extends his work on a blues epistemology from *Development Arrested* (1998) in “Sittin’ on Top of the World” (2007) by tracing the formation of the blues as an intellectual, political, economic, and social movement of Black Americans in the Mississippi Delta to challenge traditional forms of knowledge production, dominant ideologies, and white epistemological frameworks within geography. The blues epistemology reflects a critical race methodology of exposing ‘deficit informed research’ (see Yosso and Solórzano 2002, 2005; McCoy and Rodricks 2015) by pointing to the ignored, silenced, and distorted epistemologies of Black Mississippians. Rooted in social justice,

the core of this tradition revolves around proceeding from a particular social position. Therefore, those who are marginalized based on their culture, ethnic, race, class, gender, and regional position find this epistemology and its analogic reasoning empowering. It enables them to reach inward to explore new depths while simultaneously allowing them to reach beyond enforced boundaries in order to unite with other demonized communities—the “wretched” of the earth. (Woods 2007, 74)

The blues epistemology and the blues as geographic knowledge are examples of sites of transformative intellectual traditions. Excluding the participation of those from marginalized communities in the production of geographic knowledges results in the maintenance of
power among dominant class, race, gender, and cultural groups. Greater social justice through the discipline of geography must begin with geographies and geographers from different epistemological and social positions. The continued production of geographic knowledge from sites of cultural, social, racial, and class homogeneity, in turn, perpetuates oppression and maintains the existence of demonized communities and the “wretched” of the earth.

In “Visceral Geographies of Whiteness and Invisible Microaggressions” (2015) Joshi et al. investigate experiences of whiteness and racism within geography by naming the discipline of geography as a site of geographic knowledge production. Through the application of CRT, Joshi et al. use storytelling to examine how racial microaggressions silence and shape the experiences of people of colour within geography. Focusing on the subtle forms of racism permeating throughout geography, Joshi et al. demonstrate the all-encompassing power of whiteness within the multiple physical and intellectual sites of geography. They found graduate students and faculty of colour in geography were consistently questioned about their academic credentials, teaching ability, curricular content, physical appearance, and clothing choices. The prevalence of racial microaggressions in the discipline of geography is a strong reason for the poor level of representation of people of colour.

The extensive evidence demonstrating the strength of whiteness and presence of racism within geography indicate substantial targeted efforts are still needed in order for people of colour to be able to thrive in the intellectual and physical sites of geography. Existing critical race literature in geography indicates there is a consistently small number of geographers of colour in North American geography departments despite a long history of
antiracist initiatives seeking to attract people of colour and as a result, the body of critical race literature from the perspective of geographers of colour remains small. As Peake and Sheppard stress:

Although women have made increasing forays into the discipline, people of colour still find geography institutionally racist, a space that has not only proven difficult to enter but also one that a number who found a way in have subsequently decided to leave. (2014, 319)

In this thesis, I build on literature critiquing the continued failure of the discipline of geography in adequately addressing the perpetuation of racialized power via intellectual traditions and the constructions of geographic knowledge. Interviews with antiracist geographers of colour and the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and genealogy as methodology are used to uncover the genealogy of antiracist thought within geography, the barriers inhibiting the progression of antiracist geographies, and the factors dissuading the participation of people of colour within the discipline.
Chapter 2

Methodology and Methods: Critical Race Theory, Genealogy, and Interviews with Antiracist Geographers

2.1 Critical Race Theory (CRT)

The categorization of people according to social constructions of ‘race’ remains a prevalent and powerful ideology with profound implications. Although many scholar-scientists over the last century conclude that ‘race’ is biologically insignificant, social constructions of race remain a predominant tool for maintaining hierarchies of power and justifying racial discrimination. In 1941, anthropologist Ashley Montagu declared that the concept of race was devoid of meaning (Brattain 2007) and pushed for further validation of this theory. Consequently, in 1950, he acted as a central force for UNESCO’s first published article on the myth of race (ibid.). Regardless of the long history research that denounces the biological imperatives of race, racially-based acts of hatred, genocide, and discrimination remain a lived reality for many people of colour.

Despite scientific verification supporting the evidence that race is an essentialist category, early neoliberal sentiments of privatization and state roll-backs in the United States in the late 1960s caused strides made in the Civil Rights Movement to slowly diminish (Delgado and Stefancic 2012). As a result, subtleties of racism began to creep back into political discourse, though not without being noticed. Rights through the rule of law for people of colour were deemed contradictory because of the continued racial subordination of those seeking to exercise their rights during the Black empowerment and the Civil Rights Movements (Crenshaw et al. 1995). This prompted small groups of lawyers and legal scholars in the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement across the United States to band
together in the 1970s. Together, they discussed the ramifications of racism and the failure of the legal system to recognize how racism is perpetuated through the justice system (Delgado and Stefancic 2012). The CLS movement would later form the foundations for Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Stemming from the CLS movement of the 1970s, Critical Race Theory (CRT) sought to challenge the assumed neutrality of law by pointing to power imbalances upheld by social constructions of race (Crenshaw and Peller 1995; Delgado and Stefancic 1995) that worked to uphold social hierarchies and encourage systems of oppression (Tate 1997). This work evoked a racial consciousness for a small group of CLS scholars and prompted the reimagining of how laws could become more just for minority groups (Tate 1997). However, due to the predominantly white and male demographic of those involved in the CLS movement (Delgado 1984), the voices and concerns of critical race scholars were negated and deemed inferior to the seemingly race-neutral objectives of the white-elite majority developing CLS theory.

As a response to the lack of engagement within legal discourse in acknowledging how race impacts the practice and teaching of law, Critical Race Theory arose from the Critical Legal Studies movement’s failure in considering how laws and legal systems are upheld by hegemonic and raced structures of power (Crenshaw et al. 1995). As Williams (1995) argues, “it is true that the constitutional foreground of ‘rights’ was shaped by whites, parceled out to blacks in pieces, ordained in small favors, as random insulting gratuities” (92). The origin and biased application of rights were identified as the primary factors in the practice of law aiding in the perpetuation of a race hierarchy when seeking formal legal justice. Using the outcomes of select civil rights trials, Delgado (1984) argued that there were
biases in whose voices were heard in civil rights legal cases. Correspondingly, Williams (1987) argued there was a selective application of rights when dealing with civil rights legal cases that thereby ensured the maintenance of a raced underclass.

Alternatively, rather than homogenizing race into the pool of factors contributing to class subordination, CRT further complicated analyses of law and questions how legal rights can act as an oppressive force for some racialized groups. Focusing on factors contributing to racial oppression in legal analyses allowed race to be re-conceptualized as an analytic tool to understand inequality (Ladson-Billings 1995) rather than a given category. Narratives of personal encounters with racism acted as starting point for illustrating how legal rights and law were used selectively to reinforce the status quo, while also ensuring the maintenance of an underclass (Williams 1987).

By questioning how legal structures encouraged racial marginalization, scholars such as Bell, Ladson-Billings, Williams, Crenshaw, and Delgado moved beyond conventional analyses of race, racism, and hierarchies of power, towards an intersectional approach that interrogated the very foundations of liberal thought. As Delgado and Stephancic state:

> critical race theory questions the very foundation of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principals of constitutional law. (2012, 3)

Challenging the taken-for-granted origin of ideas revealed how epistemological biases and historic structures of power influenced what was believed to be rational, impartial and just.

In addition to its beginnings in CLS, CRT also borrows from feminism and questions the ways that power is operationalized to socially construct and reinforce
“appropriate” roles for gendered and raced bodies. Since the early 1990s, CRT has moved beyond the confines of legal discourse and is used in a wide array of academic disciplines and activist circles; however, the use of CRT remains on the margins of mainstream theoretical frameworks. For example, in education research, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) pointed to the need for applying Critical Race Theories to address some of the ills of the education system in the United States. They argued race must be transformed into an analytical tool for illustrating how race, the education system, and inequality were mutually constituted. Thus, when processes of racialization and the lived realities of racism are recognized as factors contributing to class inequality and education inequality, the implications of racism become deeply significant elements influencing economic and educational outcomes.

Presently, CRT continues to aid in the identification of ways in which the formal education system remains a prevailing and powerful factor influencing the fate of groups of people through the racial prejudices perpetuated vis-à-vis such elements as curricular content and pedagogical approaches.

Critical race theory sees the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script. (Ladson-Billings 1998, 18)

Education, as Ladson-Billings (1998) argues, functions as a sorting mechanism to reinforce racial hierarchies and instills ideas about which knowledges are valuable, and which are not. The application of CRT in analyses of educational attainment is a cornerstone example of how CRT is operationalized outside of legal studies. By centering race as the primary
variable for understanding educational outcomes, the use of CRT in education thereby helps
to illuminate how racism remains deeply embedded in everyday lives.

The seemingly unorthodox approach of CRT reflects the relationship between who
has the power in processes of knowledge production as well as the value placed on certain
types of knowledge. Often cited as a non-traditional theoretical framework:

- CRT shifts paradigms from the goal of equality, to that of social justice
  through radical reform. ... Thus, from its outset and despite the central
  position of ‘theory’ in its name, CRT has explicitly centralized activism.

  (Price 2010, 151)

Speaking from experience and applying critical race theories to grounded and situated
encounters of racism is a central tenet to CRT. Conversely, this method is often attacked by
the dominant class as a significant weakness of the theory. Critiques noted the lack of diverse
racial representation of those producing the legal scholarship connected to the Civil Rights
Movement as they remained largely homogenous, white, and male until the mid1980s
(Delgado 1995). Arguably, legal scholarship—and North American scholarship more
broadly—has yet to adequately address the patriarchal and white supremacist biases held
within mainstream academic discourse.

The difficulty in shifting mainstream epistemologies remains an arduous task. In
1995, Delgado commented on the tendency for critical race scholars’ work to be cited as too
emotional, lacking objectivity, and written in self-interest. This backlash and resistance to
CRT can be explained through the perceived and real threats of recognizing one’s own racial
privileges. Since CRT points to socially embedded norms impacting everyday lives—the re-
telling of Eurocentric histories, pedagogical approaches in education, political
representation—concrete illustrations of how each of these aspects are saturated with racial biases and narratives upholding racial power structures are highlighted. Consequently, the work of CRT scholars is perceived as an attack on liberalism and the ability of individuals to exercise agency by the majority group. By illustrating how race impacts one’s ability to access goods and services, including governmental services, CRT debunks myths about meritocracy and shows how power is distributed unjustly across racial lines. CRT’s call for redistributing power in a more equitable manner requires the ruling classes to acknowledge the existence of racial power and then be willing to exchange some of their power in the name of greater equity. The end goal of greater social justice for all requires radical reform through sustained commitment by all peoples, especially by those who are already in positions of power.

**CRT in Geography**

CRT in geographic analyses has unbound possibilities as an analytic tool for understanding how the practice of geography remains deeply racialized; however, Price (2010) argues the use of CRT in geographic analysis remains underutilized. Those who have employed a CRT lens in geography (such as Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Delaney 2002) have illuminated pressing challenges in understanding and analyzing how racism permeates the discipline. The telling of stories, providing oral histories, and recounting experiences from non-dominant subject positions are acts of resistance to the status quo. Through CRT and by evoking the personal narratives from geographers of colour about their experiences navigating the discipline, the whiteness of the discipline is placed on the backburner and geography’s racial injustices step up to the forefront.
Geography’s white epistemological framework is challenged when CRT is used in conjunction with a Foucauldian approach to genealogy. Genealogy as a tool for analysing the relations of power that enable the production of knowledge and CRT as a method for centering race are combined to trace the development of antiracist thought in geography and to investigate relations of power in the production of antiracist geographies.

2.2 Genealogy

Genealogy as a historical approach became popularized thorough the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault (1976) argues genealogical examinations require a focus on often forgotten and taken-for-granted events, tracing ideas and contexts to emphasize the relationship between power and knowledge. Rather than pursuing the origins of phenomena in a linear fashion, genealogy examines networks of power structures in the present as an indication of the past, and points to possibilities of resistance for the future (Foucault 1976). Genealogy as methodology shifts attention from historic accounts and phenomenon of the past and focuses on the uses of history in order to engage with current day concerns.

Paraphrasing Foucault, Mahon states, “Genealogy, as history of the present, begins with a question posed in the present.” (Mahon 1992 interview from “Le souci de la verite” in Dits et Ecrits 1984, 159). Examining history as a social construction produced by the exercising of power/knowledge thus reveals subjugated histories that help to explain present-day inequalities and injustices that are often perceived as given. Developing the concept of genealogy amid the rise of poststructuralism, Foucault begins with the concept of archeology to questions the social construction of history.
Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1975) marks a shift in Foucault’s methodological approach from what he names as archeology to what he calls genealogy. The phrase ‘history of the present’ is coined in Discipline and Punish and remains a central concept within Foucault’s genealogical approach. Foucault’s application of genealogy places an emphasis on the implications of history on the present day and can be seen as an improved version of archeology as methodology. As Green explains: “Foucault’s approach to history began to change from what he had called ‘archeology,’ the main focus of which was archive documents, to what came to be known as ‘genealogy,’ which was more oriented towards practice and the exercise of power” (2004, 121).

There has been considerable contestation surrounding the intentions of Foucault’s introduction of genealogy as methodology: some have characterized genealogy as an entirely different methodology and a replacement for archeology, while others have positioned genealogy as a more developed or improved version of archeology. The overlap of similarities between the two approaches, however, suggests they are complimentary rather than being opposed to one another. Despite notable distinctions, Foucauldian scholars (see Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983; Davidson 1986; Mahon 1992; Green 2004) argue genealogy was not a replacement of archeology but an improvement of archeology. Rather, Foucault’s implementation of genealogy as methodology does not signify a complete departure from his archeological work. Instead, the introduction of genealogy through the integration of archeology and genealogy marks an important turn in the politicization of Foucault’s writing. As Barry writes, “genealogy as Foucault made clear, is a political enterprise … moreover, the genealogist does not treat concepts merely as concepts, but as political technologies,
entangled in complex assemblages of relations: of discipline, government, of biopolitics” (2015, 89).

Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) characterize Foucault’s genealogist as someone who challenges ideas about origins, absolute truths, and beliefs about progress. Hence, the genealogist:

looks to the play of wills. Subjection, domination, and combat are found everywhere he looks. Whenever he hears talk of meaning and value, of virtue and goodness, he looks for strategies of domination. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 109)

Focusing on the forms, functions, and systems of power when revisiting history has the potential to unearth past conflicts and excluded histories. Examinations of history using genealogy as methodology begins with the questioning and denouncing of what is thought to be true, and the careful reflection and analysis of what conflicts, struggles, and knowledges have been masked. The genealogist recognizes the presence of trapped, hidden, and forgotten knowledges existing throughout history. Dreyfus and Rabinow elaborate further on the role of the genealogist:

Its alleged hiddenness plays an essential role that is directly visible, once it is pointed out by the genealogist. The methodological point (to be spelled out in Foucault's detailed analyses) is that, when viewed from the right distance and with the right vision, there is a profound visibility to everything. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 107)

The genealogist refuses to accept an unchanging or original truth and actively seeks to uncover what the powerful have sought to subjugate and exclude from history. Elusive at
first, what was once uncertain, unclear, and hidden from view gains clarity, becoming stark and obvious once identified.

**Genealogy and Subjugated Knowledges**

Focusing on power and applying genealogy as a mode of historical inquiry begins with identifying moments of resistance to dominant ideologies. The application of genealogy as methodology includes the reclaiming, uncovering, and validating the past/present struggles and the subjugated knowledges formal systems of governance seek to bury and illegitimate. Uncovering hidden and subjugated knowledges buried by the powerful disrupts notions of a unified version of history and subsequent misrepresentations of conflict and struggle. Here, subjugated knowledges are defined by Foucault as “a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down of the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity” (1980, 82). Genealogy as methodology thus seeks to uncover the parts of history that the powerful do not want us to know because the accumulation of such knowledge by subjugated groups threatens the status quo. Foucault explains the relationship between genealogy and subjugated knowledge:

> By comparison, then, and in contrast to the various projects which aim to inscribe knowledges in the hierarchical order of power associated with science, a genealogy should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledges from that subjugation to render them, that is, capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse. (Foucault 1980, 85)
Genealogy as methodology provokes a strategic discourse with the potential to disrupt the power/knowledge structures that suppress subjugated knowledges. By documenting the knowledges disqualified as illegitimate, inferior, and at the bottom of the hierarchy of what constitutes science, one is actively opposing formal power structures shaping the production and reproduction of popular discourse.

Exposing the genealogy of antiracist geography unearths subjugated knowledges from where they are buried, and challenges the systems that seek to exert power over certain kinds of knowledges. The naming of antiracist geography as a form of subjugated knowledge simultaneously asserts both power and subservience to the area of study. In recognizing the position of antiracism in geography’s hierarchy of power, knowledge of antiracism in geography becomes operationalized as it challenges the very system that seeks to silence and subjugate. The discursive formation of antiracist geography can therefore be seen as a process whereby it constitutes itself, interacts with the institution of geography, and subsequently inflects and reforms the practice of geography. As Stuart Hall argues, "Not only is discourse always implicated in power; discourse is one of the ‘systems’ through which power circulates" (1992, 294). Far from powerless, the discourse of antiracism in geography cannot be developed without the presence of power.

**Foucault’s genealogy as methodology for tracing antiracist geographies**

By identifying the key moments in the development of antiracist geographical thought, the larger contextual picture, and the hierarchical ordering of knowledges based on power, sheds light on antiracism’s struggle within mainstream geographic discourse. Mahon (1992) elaborates on one of the primary objectives when applying genealogy as methodology:
there is no sense of forgetting, either active or passive, in Foucault’s
genealogies. Too much forgetting has already gone on, too much discourse
has been systematically excluded. The task of the Foucauldian genealogies is
to provide a counter-memory. The task is to dredge up forgotten documents,
minor statements, apparently insignificant details, in order to recreate the
forgotten historical and practical conditions of our present existence. (8)

The naming of race and racism in the practice of geography as subjugated knowledge reflects
a “historical knowledge of struggle,” and illuminates Foucault’s genealogical method of
emphasizing the history of the present. Geography’s racial struggle lies in “the memory of
hostile encounters which even up to this day have been confined to the margins of
knowledge” (Foucault 1980, 83). Tracing geographies of antiracism through genealogy
allows the location of “the points where the instances of power have secured and implanted
themselves by a system of organization” (Foucault 1980, 62).

The application of genealogy as methodology for analysing power and the power that
enables the production of knowledge allows for the framing of educational institutions and
academic disciplines as linked to large-scale political organizations of power. If knowledge
and the processes leading to its formation are reflections of governing bodies and the larger
political enterprise, academic disciplines as bodies producing knowledge are the mechanisms
carrying out the bio-political technologies of those in power. Naming the discipline of
geography as a system of organization and a site for the maintenance and reproduction of
political power through the production of knowledge draws attention to the political impetus
for supressing the development of antiracist theory. The application of genealogy for
analysing power and knowledge production in geography allows for the situating of
geography within the larger knowledge-producing institution of the academy. As a bound and controllable entity within the institution of education and under the auspices of the government, the discipline of geography and the rules and boundaries in the production, establishment, and dissemination of geographic knowledge become politicized and contestable.

Disciplinary boundaries are maintained through the exclusion or rejection of ideas that are seen as threatening because they do not reflect established ideologies. Sibley (1995) points to studies on the behavior of academics revealing the common practice of rejecting knowledge and, in turn, membership to a disciplinary community.

The compartmentalization of knowledge is a characteristic of academia associated with the growth of specialisms. It secures monopolies and insulates the purveyors of knowledge from the threat of challenging ideas.

Compartmentalized knowledge, kept within secure boundaries, gives power and authority to those who peddle it. (Sibley 1995, 122)

Sibley (1995) expands on the relationship between disciplinary boundaries, ideologies, and ideas of dissidence:

New ideas or subversive ideas can be as threatening as images of alien others. This reaction to certain kinds of difference is bound up with questions of power. A fear of mixing unlike things often signifies a reluctance to give ground and relinquish power. (183)

Antiracist thought, then, can be viewed as in opposition to the established racial organization and hierarchical ordering of knowledge/power. Understanding antiracist theory as a threat to the status quo aids to illuminate the forces inhibiting its development.
Although tracing antiracist geographic thought allows for documenting of a history that is often ignored, unacknowledged, and undervalued within the discipline of geography, there is a tension in using genealogical methods for discussing race and racism within geography. That is, to write about, make a claim, and to stake a place within the institution that is geography, one must succumb to the hegemonic, colonial, and oppressive systems that govern knowledge production. McKittrick and Woods (2007, 5) ask, “are reclamation, preservation, and remembrance merely a question of re-enacting hegemony?” Historicizing antiracist geographical knowledge through genealogy is in itself an exertion of power; however, when unearthing histories in opposition to and in challenge of white hegemonic narratives and truths, the revival of such histories is not simply and solely an assertion of power. The use of history to challenge racism is not a re-enactment of hegemony but are attempts to destabilize white power and privilege in the name of self-determination. This is not synonymous with the desire to claim white power or re-enact hegemony, but instead are instances of counter-hegemony. In remembering and centering antiracist geographies, the objective is not to replace one hegemonic power with another. Reclaiming, preserving, and remembering the stories of antiracist geographers of colour and antiracist geographies point to the depths of the discipline’s hegemonic whiteness and makes visible a history that is made invisible under the cloak of whiteness.

The overlap between CRT and genealogy

The combined application of CRT and genealogy as methodologies places an emphasis on the relationship between racism, power, and knowledge. Sol´orzano and Yosso (2005) identify five objectives of critical race research: 1) center race and racism at all stages of the
research process; 2) challenge dominant ideologies, white epistemological frameworks, and traditional theories/texts; 3) reflect a commitment to social justice; 4) center experiential knowledge; and 5) draw from an interdisciplinary perspective. A strengthened theoretical framework is established when the five objectives of critical race research are used as guiding principles in the search for the genealogy of antiracist geography.

By borrowing theoretical elements from Foucault’s genealogy as methodology and combining them with the tenets of Critical Race Theory, I develop a strengthened theoretical framework. In this thesis, Critical Race Theory and the personal narratives of geographers of color point to the racial tensions and experiences within the discipline. Examining personal narratives and the development of antiracist geography through the concept of genealogy allows for the tracing of ideas and contexts with an emphasis on the relationship between power and knowledge. Genealogy as methodology points to the key moments within the development of antiracist thought within geography and emphasizes the disciplining processes and techniques within the discipline of geography that seek to control and limit the participation of antiracist geographers of colour. Rather than pursue the origins of phenomena in a linear fashion, genealogy as a means of historical enquiry examines power structures of the present as an indication of the past, and points to possibilities of resistance for the future. Drawing the connections between the personal and professional experiences of geographers of color engaged in antiracist research sheds light on the ways systemic and institutional forms of racism are embedded within the production of geographic thought.
CRT and Everyday Racism as an Analytic Framework

Criticisms of the white epistemological framework, the privileging of whiteness through assuming its neutrality, and the canonization of (white) knowledge production in the academy provide the necessary foundation for asking about the struggle against racism within higher education. While the academy has been identified as a central site for producing Eurocentric and westernized notions of universality from within colonial frameworks and an important institution for reproducing white privilege (Grosfoguel 2012; Rivera Cusicanqui 2012; Gomes 2015) considerably less attention has been paid to the nuanced experiences on the ground and in the everyday (Essed 1991).

Philomena Essed’s theory of Everyday Racism (1991) will be used to analyze the personal narratives and experiences of the antiracist geographers interviewed. Everyday racism is a process through which racism is reproduced and reinforced during common, daily, normalized interactions between a racialized person and someone from the dominant group. Essed defines everyday racism as:

the integration of racism into everyday situations through practices that activate underlying power relations. This process must be seen as a continuum through which the integration of racism in to everyday practices becomes part of the expected, of the unquestionable, and of what is seen as normal by the dominant group. When racist notions and actions infiltrate everyday life and become part of the reproduction of the system, the system reproduces everyday racism. (1991, 50)

Everyday racism is experienced by individuals and can cause unintentional or intentional harm through insults, unconscious hostility or negative reactions, avoidance, exclusion,
tokenism, and patronizing behavior. Although expressed as singular encounters, the accumulation of normalized everyday racist incidents reflect the larger racialized social structure.

Racism is transmitted in routine practices that seem “normal,” at least for the dominant group, this can only mean that racism is often not recognized, not acknowledged—let alone problematized—by the dominant group. To expose racism in the system we must analyze ambiguous meaning, expose hidden currents, and generally question what seems normal and acceptable. (Essed 1991, 10)

Using the heuristics of comparison as a method of analysis, Essed (1991) identifies commonalities and consistencies between individual experiences of everyday racism and others’ experiences of racism to demonstrate that these seemingly routine and unproblematic practices are a reflection and reaffirmation of the social group in power.

The application of CRT and the centering of experiential knowledge of racism within the discipline of geography was accomplished through in-depth interviews with antiracist geographers of colour in North America. Commonalities between individuals’ challenges in developing antiracist theory in geography aid in highlighting how racism, white epistemologies, and racial power are perpetuated within the discipline of geography.

2.3 Methods

The focus of this project is to centre the history of antiracist geographic thought and to highlight the experiences of geographers of colour who have been central to the development of critical race geographies within the discipline. Primary data were collected through
interviews with geographers of colour who are engaged in antiracist research within the
discipline of geography and who are faculty members at universities in the United States or
Canada. Semi-structured interviews are used to gather the oral histories of geographers of
color engaged in antiracist research, to explore the motivations for their work, to draw the
genealogical connections between geographers, and to identify the factors perpetuating the
racial struggle while working within this white discipline. Fourteen interviews were
conducted, transcribed, and analysed using the data analysis software, Nvivo. One panel
session was conducted at the Race, Ethnicity, and Place (REP) conference at the University
of Puerto Rico in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 2012 October. Trends within the interview data
aided in identifying commonalities between people, places, and influencing factors shaping
the research interests and career trajectories of geographers who have been vital to
developing antiracist thought within the discipline of geography.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the personal narratives of geographers of color
point to the racial tensions and experiences within the discipline. Examining history through
the concept of genealogy allows for the tracing of ideas and contexts with an emphasis on the
relationship between power and knowledge. Genealogy as methodology focuses on often
forgotten and taken-for-granted events. Rather than pursuing the origins of phenomena in a
linear fashion, genealogy as a means of historical enquiry examines power structures of the
present as an indication of the past, and points to possibilities of resistance for the future.
Drawing the connections between the personal and professional genealogies of geographers
of color engaged in antiracist research sheds light on the ways systemic and institutional
forms of racism are embedded within the production of geographic thought.

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The selection of interview participants was premised on the methodological frameworks of genealogy and CRT. Centering the stories and genealogies of geographers of colour who have played a role in shaping how race is discussed and understood within the discipline reveals clues about the prevalent barriers and challenges, the role of life experiences in shaping research interests, and the importance of fostering the development of critical research on race. Although a large proportion of antiracist literature and research within geography is conducted by geographers who identify as white, I sought to interview racialized minority geographers active in researching and promoting the practice of antiracist geography to investigate the relationship between individual identities and research. The scholarship and initiatives led by antiracist and critical race geographers who are racialized as white, however, will be included to support larger contextual and theoretical arguments, as I recognize that advancements in antiracist geography did not and cannot happen without the dedication and involvement of geographers who do not experience racism.

Combining CRT and Foucault’s genealogical approach for reclaiming subjugated knowledges encourages narratives from those who encounter the structures of racial power within the discipline of geography. Identifying geographers as geographic subjects allows for the hierarchy of racial knowledge to become exposed, and emphasizes the importance of the location from where and by whom geographic knowledge is produced. By highlighting the stories and discourses from the mouths and bodies of the Other within geography’s racist paradigm, we are opposing the active burial of the institutional knowledge that geographers of colour hold. Centering on the contributions and knowledges of geographers of colour is a reflection of antiracist practice through the explicit recognition of racial hierarchies of knowing and to trouble race-neutral assumptions about the research process.
Interviews

In-depth interviews were semi-structured and sought to uncover the nuanced and everyday experiences of racism within the discipline, and to explore antiracist motivations, as well as genealogical connections with other geographers. I began each interview by elaborating on the objectives of my dissertation research and began with demographic questions, followed by open-ended questions. Individual, educational, and professional histories were queried to draw the connections between how both professional and personal genealogies impact research interests. Oral histories were gathered as I asked about the geographic and social context in which they grew up, the life events that encouraged their development of a critical consciousness surrounding race, and the factors leading them into the discipline of geography. I traced intellectual and professional genealogies by inquiring about the works within geography influencing their own thinking and the geographers who acted as mentors, advocates, and allies. Oral history as method provides insights into the individual life experiences and the social and historic circumstances leading them to the practice of antiracist geography.

There are a number of key moments where geographers of colour were advocating for antiracism or were challenging geographic perspectives on how race is understood. Of particular interest were the geographers of colour who were active at the beginning of the movement for increasing minority representation in the discipline in the 1960s. The racialized minority geographers who contributed to the early literature on Black America are key informants for understanding the short history of evolution of studies on race and geography. Other notable instances include: the meeting of the Concerned Group on Race and Geography in 1998 at the University of Kentucky, funded by the National Science
Foundation and the Canadian Embassy; the 1999 issue of *The Journal of Geography* on race and geography education; the special issues in the journal *Social and Cultural Geography* in 2000, and the special issue in *The Professional Geographer* in 2002 on race and geography, which were both inspired by the 1998 meeting at the University of Kentucky; the focus section on *Equity for women in geography* in the 2002 issue of *The Canadian Geographer*; and the 2006 issue of *Gender, Place and Culture* that contains a number of articles authored by and are about women of colour in geography.

A list of the Key Participants from the above cornerstone moments in antiracist geography was compiled. A total of 52 people participated in one or more of these “key moments.” Twenty two of the 52 participants were identified as people of colour, and twelve were identified as people of colour who: 1) are/were either a faculty member in, or, cross appointed to a geography department in the U.S. or Canada, or, have a PhD in geography and are a faculty member in an interdisciplinary discipline or are at a school without a geography department (in one case this does not apply); and 2) publish critical research on race and/or racism in geography journals. Due to agreements around disclosure, the identities of Key Participants will remain confidential. In addition, during the duration of the research project three of the twelve people I identified as Key Participants passed away. Harold Rose was interviewed prior to his death in 2016.

My thesis supervisor, Audrey Kobayashi, was in correspondence with Harold Rose and was scheduled to interview him for another project in 2014. Financially and logistically, I was unable to travel to Milwaukee to interview Harold. And at the age of 84 and with age-related health considerations, a Skype interview was not a viable alternative. Together we decided that it would be best if Audrey asked my interview questions on my behalf since she
was already planning on meeting with Harold in Milwaukee.

I corresponded with the other nine geographers I identified as Key Participants and inquired about their interest in being interviewed for this research project. In my initial email, I stated I sought geographers who self-identify as a member of a racialized minority group and who advocate for antiracism within the discipline of geography. I started with this list of nine geographers with intent on using these interviews as a starting point for identifying other potential interview participants through the “snowball” technique. Questions in the interview guide such as, what was an influential scholarly piece that attracted you into the discipline, and, who are the geographers who have most influenced your work on race and/or racism, were asked with the hope that geographers I may have overlooked for participating in this research project would be identified. Objectives of the interviews included: identifying personal factors or experiences influencing their decision to study geography; identifying the scholars who were influential in their antiracist work; identifying geographers of colour who have conducted antiracist research while under their supervision during a graduate degree; and identifying the challenges or barriers to conducting antiracist research through the discipline of geography.

I sought to conduct in-person interviews because direct observation and the nuances of in-person conversations provide a richness to the interview data that other avenues for interviewing can seldom provide. I strategized to conduct as many in-person interviews as possible by scheduling interviews during two geography conferences. The Race, Ethnicity and Place conference was one of the interview sites due to the tendency for this conference to attract the unique participant population I am seeking to interview. Primarily attracting geographers from the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico, this bi-annual conference focuses on
racialized experiences and analyses of place.

In 2002, the inaugural *Race, Ethnicity, and Place* (REP) conference was held. Spearheaded by the Department of Geography and the University Administration at Binghamton University, this conference marked the beginning of what was to become a bi-annual meeting of professionals and students interested in discussing issues surrounding race, ethnicity, and place. The conference is partnered with the American Association of Geographers (AAG) and the AAG’s Ethnic Geography Specialty Group and encourages the participation of people from diverse interdisciplinary backgrounds and geographical regions. Co-sponsorship of the REP conference by the AAG is a result of one of the recommendations by the AAG Diversity Task Force (2006).

For the first time in history, the 2012 *Race, Ethnicity and Place* was held outside of the continental U.S. at the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan, Puerto Rico from 24–26 October. The REP conference in October 2012 was my preliminary research site. The 2014 Association of American Geographers’ annual meeting was my second research site as it attracts geography faculty from both the U.S. and Canada, and is one of the largest gatherings of geographers internationally. The 2014 AAG took place in Tampa Bay, Florida from 8–12 April.

Four of the ten geographers were scheduled to attend the 2012 REP conference in Puerto Rico. One of the four attendees was my PhD supervisor, Audrey Kobayashi and I made arrangements to interview her at Queen’s. I emailed the other three geographers in early September 2012, inquiring about their interest in participating in my research project and the possibility of setting up an interview during the REP conference. All three agreed and were interviewed in Puerto Rico from 24–26 October 2012.
Pilot interviews and revising the approach

The criteria for interview participants were deliberately narrow because I was trying to find out why there are so few geographers of colour who conduct critical research on race, racism, or racial constructs. The small size of the group of people I was seeking to interview was worrisome because I was not sure if I would be able to gather enough data, made me think I must be missing people from my list, and caused concerns around protecting confidentiality. For these reasons, I widened the parameters for interview participants. One of my primary objectives was to test to see if my criteria for interviewees was too narrow and exclusionary.

Although I prioritized arranging interviews with those on the list of the ten geographers I generated from the ‘key moments’ in antiracist geography, I recognized the biases and research design flaws of how the list of geographers was compiled. To remedy this bias, I used the REP conference as a pilot test to see if I should expand the criteria for interview participants to include geographers who conduct research pertaining to race but do not expressly engage with critical race theory or critical examinations with race. For example, one does not necessarily have to publish an article discussing antiracist practices in a geography journal in order to be influential in the production of antiracist thought within the discipline. People may hold antiracist values and apply antiracist theory in their teaching and work without explicitly naming the research as antiracist, or, they may have other unstated personal or professional reasons for why they have chosen to conduct research pertaining to race.

I asked my PhD supervisor, Audrey Kobayashi for help with identifying additional possible participants to interview. Prior to the conference, we went through the on-line REP program and I jotted down the names of people who she thought might be helpful.
interviewees for my research project. Audrey is one of the ten key geographers I sought to interview and is one of the pioneers of intersectional and critical race theory in geography. Her established position in the field of geography, expertise in the topic of critical race theory, and her familiarity with the objectives of my research project made her an invaluable resource for helping me identify other geographers who were attending REP and who could possibly fit the criteria for interview participants.

While Audrey’s supervisorial and advisory roles in addition to her participation in the research project presents a conflict of interest, the decision to include her as a key interviewee was reflective of the severity of whiteness and intensity of racism within geography. The number of antiracist geographers of colour present in the discipline ended up being significantly smaller than anticipated and interviewee’s experiences of racism and subsequent sense of job precarity resulted in trepidation around sharing their experiences and stories. Only three interviewees gave consent to being identified and all other interviewees cited vulnerability and a fear of personal and professional repercussions if they spoke candidly about the racism they have endured from fellow geographers and colleagues. The dilemma of choosing whose stories to engage with diminishes when permission is granted for so few narratives because racism and whiteness are so powerful within the discipline of geography that they silence the majority of the stories being told.

With Audrey’s guidance in selecting interview participants, I emailed five additional geographers of colour who conduct research on race and whose work could potentially be seen as critical, and inquired about setting up an interview at REP. One person agreed to set up an interview time during REP prior to the start of the conference, one person happened to be passing through Toronto when I was also in the city and so we arranged to complete the
interview in Toronto, and the three other potential interviewees instructed me to arrange interview times with them upon arrival at the conference. Two of the geographers were interviewed at REP, one did not end up attending the conference, and one person, once we met in person, said they did not want to be an interview participant but would talk to me off the record.

I conducted two additional interviews at REP with geographers of colour who were not on my initial list of key participants but were identified as potential contributors to the project. Both interviewees conduct research on race but it was unclear if their work was intended as critical of race. The information gathered from these interviews had minimal use for this research project. Much of the interviews were consumed by questions about the project and providing general clarification around how racism exists within geography.

Based on the interviews at the REP conference, there was a discernable difference in the conversations that ensued with people who were identified as Key Participants versus those who were identified as potential constructive contributors to the research project. I conducted three additional interviews (two in person and one via Skype) with geographers of colour who were not on my list of key participants. I was slightly more selective with these three interviewees and sought geographers of colour who had demonstrated critical engagement with issues of racism or whiteness but not necessarily as a central part of one or more of their published works. Similarly, in an attempt to trace the genealogical production of geographers, I asked interviewees about how their PhD supervisor encouraged or influenced their research on race and racism and if they had or currently have any graduate students in geography who are of a racialized minority and who conduct research on race.
and/or racism. Two of the interviewees were past PhD students of one of the key participants and now hold tenure or tenure-track faculty positions at universities in North America.

Of the ten key participants, three were interviewed at the REP conference in Puerto Rico in 2012 October, one person was interviewed at the AAG Annual Meeting in Tampa in 2014 April, one person was interviewed over Skype in 2014 April, one interview was conducted on the Queen’s University campus, Audrey conducted the interview with Harold Rose in 2014 March, and three people declined interviews. Seven additional interviews were conducted and two were identified through interviews with their PhD supervisors. The additional five interviewees were identified with the help of my PhD supervisor. Three of these seven participants were interviewed at the REP conference in Puerto Rico in 2012 October, one person was interviewed at the AAG Annual Meeting in Tampa in 2014 April, one person was interviewed over Skype in 2014 March, one person was interviewed in Toronto, and Harold Rose was interviewed by Audrey in Milwaukee in 2014 March.

**Panel Session at REP**

In addition to the 14 interviews, I ran one panel session with three established geographers and where I was the moderator. All panelists were tenured Associate or Full Professors at universities in the U.S. Two of the panelists were also on my list of ten key participants and were interviewed individually at the conference. The third panelist was an academic who discusses race in their work and has an online presence that suggests they are applying race critically in their work. Although the third panelist was not one of the people I initially listed as a key participant, they were one of the people Audrey and I identified as a potential antiracist geographer. In the email script, I explain my project and explicitly state that I am
seeking participants who self-identify as a racialized minority person and who conduct antiracist research. All three panelists responded saying they fit the criteria for the research project and would be happy to participate.

The panel session was open to the public and advertised in the conference program. The session details were unintentionally omitted from the conference program and the session simply appeared in the program as, “The Practice of Antiracist Geography” Chair: Andrea Choi, Queens University, Canada. Despite the lack of information provided about the session, in addition to the panelists and myself, a dozen additional people were in attendance. I introduced my research project, explained the objectives and format of the panel session to the audience, and used a prepared list of panel session prompts to help stimulate the conversation. Upon conducting the panel session at REP, I ceased organizing panels because I found them to be unproductive for generating discussions with theoretical depth and were often derailed and easily pushed off-topic.

The panel session was just over an hour and a half long. Interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to 2 hours and 20 minutes. The average length of the interviews was 1 hour and 15 minutes. Interviews and the panel session were transcribed verbatim and included notes of auditable cues such as “umm” and “hum.” Pauses in speech and laughter were also noted in the transcripts. During the transcription process, the interviews and panel session were listened to several times. I took written notes and jotted down key points during each of the interviews and during the panel session. Once transcribed, I compared the interview and panel transcripts and my hand-written notes to ensure they were consistent.
Selecting Interviews

This project focuses on the stories and experiences of ten of the fourteen geographers interviewed. The four interviews not included in the project were selected when I: 1) attempted to broaden my participant pool and speak to geographers researching topics of race but do not explicitly engage with concepts of antiracism or critical race analyses, 2) or were former students of one of the geographers identified as a key contributor to antiracist geography. I hypothesised there may be some geographers of colour who research race but chose not to engage overtly with antiracist politics in their published work. With optimism, I hoped maybe because race and racism remain contentious, there were geographers of colour who were strategizing around antiracist objectives, publishing subversively to a wide audience with the objective of drawing otherwise indifferent readers into a conversation about the significance of race and racism. With optimism, I thought, perhaps geographers of colour were engaging with antiracist practices in other parts of their professional lives. After a few interviews, it became clear that awareness of antiracist politics is not necessarily tied to being a person of colour or having experienced racism. Focusing on the stories and experiences of geographers of colour who challenge racism through their published work allows for a certain level of coherence and relationality when developing a storyline of antiracism in geography.

One of the objectives of this project was to show the relationship between geographers of colours’ personal histories and antiracist research endeavours. Although all ten geographers of colour are/were faculty in a North American university and are either currently a tenured or tenure-track, or a formerly tenured and now retired or deceased, I unintentionally drew heavily from eight of the ten interviews. The eight interviewees were all
born in North America—one’s country of birth and the location where one is raised matters. Due to the scope and limitations of this research project, and with such a small number of interviews conducted, it would be difficult to claim North American born antiracist geographers of colour are better able to identify and articulate the nuances of racism within the discipline of geography than geographers of colour who were born and raised outside of North America. Undoubtedly, there are geographers who were born and raised outside of North America who have contributed tremendously to the development of antiracist theory in geography within North America. Through the pilot interviews, however, the geographers of colour who were born and raised in North America were more likely to connect their experiences growing up as a racialized person in the U.S. or Canada with their academic work.

The interviews with critical race and antiracist geographers of colour revealed a strong connection between the development of antiracist theory in geography and their personal or familial experiences of a racism and racial violence in North America. The politicization of many of the antiracist geographers of colour occurred as a direct result of living as a racialized person in a white supremacist society. Using Foucault’s theorization of genealogy, interviewees’ experiences within the discipline of geography, I highlight the connection between moments of resistance, personal experiences of racism, racialized knowledges, and the relationship between racialized power and knowledge production in the discipline of geography.

Of the 14 geographers interviewed, three granted permission for the contents of the interview to be used without keeping their identities confidential. Harold Rose, Bobby Wilson, and Audrey Kobayashi allowed their stories to be shared and were also among the
most senior ranking geographers to participate in this research project. Harold had been retired for nearly 20 years at the time of the interview and Bobby has retired from geography since the interview. Those who chose to keep their identities confidential cited concerns about professional and personal implications if their names were revealed. For reasons of confidentiality and anonymity, additional demographic information about the participants has not been included due to the small number of interviewees as well as the relatively small number of antiracist geographers of colour in North America. Even among the tenured faculty of colour, threats to job security, promotion, and the potential for worsening collegial relations were named as potential consequences of sharing their stories without concealing their identities.

As prominent geographers of colour who have played a significant role in pushing for and developing antiracist geographies, Harold’s, Bobby’s, and Audrey’s biographies are highlighted in the following three chapters. I apply CRT by recounting the personal paths leading to becoming a critical race geographer and by centering their experiences navigating the discipline of geography as people of colour. Harold and Bobby’s childhoods growing up in the American South and Audrey’s childhood in the interior of British Columbia, Canada, their personal experiences and knowledge of racism, and the social contexts of the times and places in their lives were all influential in the establishment of their political commitments and the trajectory of their research.

Bobby and Audrey’s biographies are derived solely from the interviews and Harold’s biography is primarily based on the interview and supplemented with Conversations with Geographers: Career Pathways and Research Styles (1982) by Clyde Browning. Due to logistical reasons and Harold’s age, I was unable to personally interview Harold or to ask
follow-up questions. *Conversations with Geographers* is a collection of ten interviews with notable geographers and includes an interview with Harold. The book gives a glimpse into the lives, career trajectories, and research styles of a handful of geographers. Coincidentally, many of the interview questions Harold was asked for the book in 1982 were strikingly similar to the interview questions in my interview guide, and aid in filling in the details of Harold’s life that were not captured in the 2014 interview for this project. Harold’s childhood, time as a university student, and early career experiences draw heavily from *Conversations with Geographers*. While he touches on his childhood, time as a university student, and early career experiences in the 2014 interview, the details and nuance from the 1982 interview allow for a richer narrative.
Chapter 3

Harold Rose - In-depth Interview

“I helped the Department of Geography, you know. They knew that. But they were satisfied never to hire another Black man. They had their Black. … They weren’t interested. They didn’t want any more.” - Harold

Harold Rose received a PhD in Geography from Ohio State in 1960 and became the first Black American to hold a doctorate in Geography from a predominantly white American university. Although Harold was trained in physical geography, the social unrest and racial conflict in the U.S. in the 1960s and the racism being perpetuated by geographic scholarship at the time made it important for him to use his position as a scholar to challenge racism and shed light on the racial injustices shaping the lives of Black Americans. Harold used the discipline of geography as a platform for engaging in pressing social and political topics such as segregation, racialized poverty, and the Black ghetto. He urged geographers to become aware of the lived realities of racism in America and to conduct socially relevant research addressing the racial injustice. His work was often met with controversy and received negatively by geographers. Regardless, Harold was unyielding and pushed the boundaries of the discipline to include critical examinations of racial spatial patterns and the social and economic forces creating high stress environments, Black ghettos, and geographies of despair. As the first Black American to hold a PhD in geography, and as the first, and to date the only, Black President of the AAG, Harold’s leadership and scholarship were pivotal in the formation of critical race geography. His life story provides a glimpse into the
motivations and influences that shaped the trajectory of Harold’s research and his career-long commitment to antiracist scholarship.

3.1 Early Years and Educational Path

Harold Rose was born in 1926 and was raised by his grandparents in a small town in the American South in the state of Tennessee (1982). Harold’s grandparents worked for the owners of a large manor, or the “Big House,” and they lived in a small house on the estate (1982). His grandparents were employed by the landowners to take care of the household needs as well as the large farm (1982). His grandparents worked in the manor doing household jobs for the owners such as washing clothing and whatever else that needed to be tended to (1982). There was a large farm on the property and Harold’s grandparents had a garden and borrowed a few farm animals such as chickens, ducks, and cows from the main farm, which was owned by the people who lived in the manor (1982).

When Harold was still too young to start school, he spent much of his time playing with the children who lived on the property adjacent to the estate (1982). He did not have much contact with his neighbors once they started school: Harold was Black, his neighbors were white (1982). Although his grandfather was illiterate, both grandparents encouraged Harold to seek out educational opportunities. His grandmother had a fourth-grade education and placed a high value on education and encouraged Harold throughout his childhood and youth to push himself and to excel at school. Harold did well in school and was well liked by his teachers because of his intellect (1982).

Harold went to high school in Tennessee and was one of twelve students in his graduating class. Though he was an excellent student in high school, he and his grandparents
never discussed going to college because the family did not have any money and it was never seen as an option. People knew his grandparents were very poor, so despite being exceptional academically, only one teacher ever suggested to Harold that he should go to college. In high school, one of his teachers urged Harold to go to law school but the cost of law school ruled it out as an option (1982). The family’s dire financial situation made it seem impossible for Harold to go to college.

If it were not for one of his high school classmates, Harold might never have had the opportunity to attend university. The summer after graduating from high school, Harold was ironing clothing for $30 a week. He figured he would just press clothes for a living and would probably iron clothes for the rest of his life. One day one of his former classmates from high school visited Harold and told him about how he got a job at Tennessee State to help pay tuition. Harold asked his classmate about how he got the job. His friend’s sister was on the staff at Tennessee State and managed to get her younger brother a work study job to help support himself through college.

With the $40 he received from his high school graduation, Harold went to Nashville (1982) and tracked down the person who managed the university cafeteria at Tennessee State. He asked the manager if he could give him a job, and two weeks later, he was working in the university’s cafeteria and had started summer school at Tennessee State as a freshman. Harold worked in the school cafeteria and made barely enough money to cover the cost of room and board (1982). He kept the job at the university’s cafeteria for the four years of his undergraduate degree and only owed the university $40 at graduation. Harold graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Tennessee State with a major in history and a minor in geography in 1950.
Towards the end of his bachelor’s degree, Harold began to look for work in order to support himself. He received one job offer and reluctantly moved to Camden, Mississippi. Harold finished his undergraduate degree in 1950, a few months prior to the start of the Korean War. On his first day of work, Harold received a draft notice from the U.S. Army. Convinced he would not pass the physical due to a heart condition, he contacted the office responsible for conducting the physical exam to explain his health situation. He told the office he was not going to show up for the physical fitness test because he was sure his heart condition would prevent him from passing the physical. They made him show up for the physical and to his surprise, he passed. He served for nearly two years (1982) in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Germany.

When Harold returned from serving in the army in 1953, the G.I. Bill provided financial support for Harold to attend graduate school (1982). Since he already had his undergraduate degree, he used his GI benefits to attend graduate school. If he had not been drafted into the U.S. Army and did not have the financial support through the GI Bill, Harold thought there was a good chance he would not have pursued graduate school. He chose to pursue graduate school in geography over history because he thought he would have a better chance at being able to teach at the university level. He decided to pursue a graduate degree in geography because most people teaching geography at Black colleges did not have a geography degree so he knew there would be job opportunities to teach (1982). A Master’s degree in geography would insure he would be able to teach at any number of Black colleges and universities. He thought he might like to one day teach at a white institution, but in order to be able to teach outside of a Black university, he knew he would have to gain experience at a white institution.
Harold’s undergraduate advisor at Tennessee State, Mazie Tyson, recommended working with her Master’s supervisor, Alfred Wright, at Ohio State (1982). He moved from the American South to Ohio State University in the Northeast to begin a Master’s degree in geography, leaving the South prior to the start of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1950s. In the autumn of 1953, Harold began a Master’s degree at Ohio State University under the supervision of economic geographer Professor A.J. Wright (b. 1897, d. 1964). In an interview from 1982, Harold remarked:

I think Professor Alfred Wright has had the greatest influence on me in terms of wishing to be a scholar. I probably manifest a lot of his traits; some of them I might add, not always very good traits. (111)

At the height of the Civil Rights Movement, Harold was already well connected to white institutions in Northern states, moving back and forth for a few years between graduate studies in Ohio and teaching at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (Florida A & M). After completing his MA, Harold received job offers to teach at a number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (1982). He taught at Florida A & M for three years before taking a leave of absence and later returned to Ohio State in 1957 to begin a PhD, again under the supervision of Professor Alfred Wright (1982). Harold’s PhD research was in physical geography, resources management, and conservation (1982).

Although Harold thinks of himself as a Southerner, he accredited elements of his upbringing in Tennessee as influential in his success in being able to navigate the white academic world (1982). The socialization process for children in the American South was vastly different from the socialization process for children in other parts of America (1982). He recognizes both the positive and negative aspects from growing up in a time when being
both Black and assertive would have likely resulted in a dangerous situation for the individual (1982). Black parents in the South would teach their children to behave obediently and compliant in the hopes of decreasing the likelihood of violence directed at their children (1982). Harold was socialized to not be assertive and believes the social conditions shaping the behavior of Black people in the South during the Jim Crow era contributed to shaping his demeanor as an adult (1982). He attributes his non-threatening presence as positive and helpful when working with colleagues and suspects his personality is what has enabled him to access opportunities that he would have otherwise been denied had he been more authoritative (1982).

As the only Black graduate student in the geography program, Harold was acutely aware of the racial tensions in the geography department at the time and found it frustrating when he was treated differently from his white colleges (1982). He found it irritating when job postings were advertised in the geography department for faculty positions at white institutions and only the white students were encouraged to apply (1982). When Harold applied to become a teaching assistant, he was assigned the task of assistant map curator instead (1982). The chair of the geography department told Harold he would not be given a teaching assistantship because white parents would not approve of a Black person teaching their children (1982).

Harold was quite fond of the chair of the department despite the chair’s tendency to make racist remarks (1982). The chair viewed himself as liberal and demonstrated an awareness—albeit, inappropriately—of the isolation as a person of colour in a white discipline (1982). He once remarked to Harold: “Rose, next year we’re going to have several colored people here; a Ugandan and a Chinese woman from Hong Kong so you’ll have
company” (1982 p. 106). In the last semester of his PhD, the chair of the department relented and gave Harold a teaching assistantship and said, “I’m going to give you an assistant and then you could say you had a white boy working for you” (1982 p. 106). At the end of Harold’s last term at Ohio State, the chair offered him a teaching position at Central State, Ohio State’s Black College, to which he declined (1982).

Despite being treated unfairly by the chair of the geography department, Harold considers his time at Ohio State as a positive experience (1982). Harold believes his treatment at Ohio State was as good as it could have been given the overall climate towards Black people at the time (1982). He explained:

As a black person who had received his advanced degrees in white institution,
I felt that much of what I was taught and read was written from the
perspective of white persons, some of which I did not agree with from my
own background. You want to say, “No, it’s not exactly like this.” (1982, 112)

He expected he would be treated differently from his white peers while at Ohio State and believes he received as fair treatment as possible because of the era in which he attended graduate school.

Harold was awarded with a PhD in geography in 1960, making him the first Black American scholar to receive a PhD in geography in North America. Immediately after finishing his PhD in early1960 at Ohio State University, Harold began a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Chicago. He figured a postdoctoral fellowship would help establish himself as a scholar. He elaborated:

I studied in the population research center there for a year. I did that primarily
to legitimate what I was doing. People saying, ‘You don’t have any
credentials to allow you to do this kind of stuff. Where are your credentials?’

So, I got this postdoc to ward off any naysayers and those who were oppose to the kind of stuff I was doing.

After spending some time conducting post-doctoral research at the University of Chicago, Harold returned to Florida A & M from his leave of absence with a PhD in hand. Once back at Florida A & M, the chair from Ohio State asked Harold if he was interested in a teaching position at Temple University in Philadelphia (1982). The chair remarked: “Temple is in the midst of a Black neighborhood and you’d feel right at home there” (1982 p. 106). The position at Temple University was the only job posting at a white institution that the chair at Ohio State told Harold about (1982).

During his time at Florida A & M, Harold was the only Black geographer with a PhD in geography teaching at a Black institution in the American South (McKee and Wilson 2004) and was likely the only Black, American-born, geographer with a PhD teaching geography at any university in North America. In “Conversations with Geographers”, Harold recounts his time teaching at Florida A & M where he was content to socialize within a Black environment and actively engage with the college community. He really enjoyed working and teaching at a Black college and felt comfortable in his surroundings.

3.2 Tenure-Track Position at the University of Milwaukee

“I had some obligations to Milwaukee. They hired me at the time when white institutions weren’t hiring Blacks. After 1968, things began to change, you know, everybody wanted Black faculty.” - Harold

Harold interviewed for a position at the University of Milwaukee while attending the AAG
Annual Meeting in Miami in 1962. They told him he would hear from them in the next week or so because they had a number of potential candidates for the job. Over a month later, on the first of June in 1962, Harold received a phone call while teaching at Florida A & M from the University of Milwaukee. Harold was offered a job at the University of Milwaukee. While recounting the story about the position in the geography department at the University of Milwaukee, Harold was sure to emphasize that the job offer was not an affirmative action initiative.

Harold took another leave of absence from Florida A & M and began at the University of Milwaukee teaching geography as a tenure-track assistant professor in September 1962. He managed to keep his position at Florida A & M as a security measure in case things did not work out in Milwaukee. There was a cut in his salary when he started at the University of Milwaukee, but the pay cut was outweighed by the prospect of a permanent position. All of the professors were paid the same salary at that time, so there was no room for negotiating a higher salary.

The move to Milwaukee was difficult because he did not know anyone in the Black community and felt alone and isolated at both the university as well as in the surrounding city (1982, p.107). When Harold moved to Milwaukee in 1962, public schools were still segregated, and housing and employment practices were highly discriminatory. The move from a school with an active, social, and supportive Black community at Florida A & M to the white town of Milwaukee and a white school, the University of Milwaukee, was a “very traumatic” experience for Harold (1982, p. 107).

After his first academic year of teaching at the University of Milwaukee, he reconnected with friends in Tallahassee and returned to Florida A & M to teach summer
school. When he returned from Milwaukee to teach over the summer, the administration thought Harold had come back to stay permanently at Florida A & M. Harold wanted to stay at Florida A & M and asked the Dean of the department if he would contemplate expanding the geography program and offer a minor in geography. He knew a number of professors at Florida A & M were preparing to retire and they would soon need to fill a number of positions. The Dean refused Harold’s request and was not willing to consider offering anything other than basic introductory courses in geography. “He didn’t relent and I left”, recalls Harold, and so he reluctantly made the move to Milwaukee once again.

Once he knew he was staying in the City of Wisconsin for good, Harold was determined to adapt to his new environment (1982) at the University of Milwaukee. He realized he would not be able to recreate the kind of support network and friendships he had in Tallahassee because, simply, there was no Black community to create one with. Harold came to terms with this reality and decided he would just have to live without a social life (1982). There were three Black faculty members at the University of Milwaukee in the year prior to his arrival, and an additional two Black faculty members arrived in the same year as Harold. The number of Black faculty members at the University of Milwaukee remained small for years. Reflecting on this, Harold remarked, “my life as a Black scholar in a Black institution would have been very different than my life as a Black scholar in a white institution” (108). He recognized the lack of Black people willing to give up ties to their own communities in order to take up positions at white universities and saw the decline in his overall social engagements as a survival mechanism for existing at a white institution (1982).

The focus on his scholarly pursuits intensified and the lack of a social scene allowed him to devote all of his time and energy to his work (1982). Four years after beginning at
Milwaukee, Harold received tenure and began a joint appointment in geography and urban studies. Upon receiving tenure in 1966, Harold and his wife moved into the predominantly white neighborhood where they currently reside. They were the second Black family to move onto the block. The other family lived on the other side of the street and there were no additional Black families in the neighborhood. Within a short time-period, the neighborhood became predominantly inhabited by Black families.

**Commission on Geography and Afro-America (COMGA)**

In 1964 when Saul Cohen was the AAG Executive Director, Harold Rose was the sole Black geographer with a PhD in the United States. Cohen was troubled by the lack of Black geographers at U.S. universities and sought to use his position within the AAG to increase the level of participation among young Black Americans within the discipline of geography. Cohen developed the Commission on Geography and Afro-America (COMGA) with the intention to train young Black geographers, prepare them to teach, and to promote the discipline of geography upon returning to Black colleges and universities in the American South. Harold Rose recounts the idea behind the COMGA program and explains how Cohen was the one who initiated the formation of COMGA as a sub-committee of the AAG:

> We started the COMGA program. What we wanted to do was create a cadre of young Black PhDs who could strengthen geography in the Black institutions in the southern United States. … Saul did more to promote the advancement of Blacks in geography than any individual I know. And was very successful. Don Deskins did the legwork. But Saul initiated the idea. Saul was the Executive Director of the association one year … and when he
went back to Clark he’d flown in a number of young Black students from around the country. And I think Clark probably initially had the largest impact on providing future young Black scholars in the country.

In the late 1960s, Cohen began to connect with faculty members at HBCUs and small universities in the American South in order to identify and recruit promising undergraduate students from these schools into the COMGA program.

Harold attributes Theodore Speigner at North Carolina Central University as a key resource for suggesting potential COMGA participants. North Carolina Central was one of a few Black state colleges in North Carolina with a geography department where Speigner was the Chair. Speigner was extremely dedicated and actively encouraged, prepared, and helped undergraduate students in the geography program at North Carolina Central find opportunities to attend graduate school. Describing Speigner, Harold recalls:

He did probably more to get his students in graduate schools around the country than anyone else. … He was from North Carolina Central University which is one of several Black state colleges in North Carolina. And, of course, he died long ago. But the early Black PhDs for the most part came out of North Carolina Central. That is, they went to schools around the country but they originated in North Carolina Central University. And that provided, I guess, some evidence that it was okay to try to promote higher education for Blacks who were interested in geography, PhDs in particular, some Master’s degrees, some PhDs. [Bobby] Wilson was one of his students.

Harold contends that most of the first Black graduate students in geography during the late 1960 and early 1970s were from North Carolina Central and were former students of
Speigner. Speigner is an exemplary example of one person’s dedication to increasing the representation of Black Americans in geography graduate programs can shift the demographics of who completes graduate degrees in the discipline.

The COMGA program not only encouraged students from Black colleges in the south to pursue graduate studies in geography, but it also connected Black geographers with one another. In the late 1960s when COMGA was just beginning to form, Cohen was at Clark University while Don Deskins was a graduate student at the University of Michigan. Cohen enlisted Deskins to help him develop and implement the COMGA program. The COMGA program started in 1966 and, in 1968, Deskins became the AAG founding director of the COMGA program (AAG 2006). In 1969, there was a meeting among supporters of COMGA. It was at this meeting where Harold and Deskins first met.

Harold explained that, prior to the start of COMGA there were already a number of strong advocates of the discipline of geography within Black institutions in the United States. With the establishment of a formal group dedicated to increasing the participation of Black Americans in geography through the AAG, faculty at Black institutions were able to further contribute to the aims of the program. Alabama State, Tennessee State, and Central State Ohio were among the half dozen Black colleges actively involved with the COMGA program. Thelma Glass was a geographer at Alabama State and became heavily involved with COMGA and got to know Harold quite well through their involvement in the COMGA program. Princess Bowen taught at Tennessee State and was one of the earliest supporters of developing and improving access to geographic education in Black institutions. She was a geography teacher at Tennessee State when Harold Rose was an undergraduate student in the early 1950s. Mazie Tyson was another early supporter of geographic education in Black
colleges. She was also at Tennessee State and was Harold’s undergraduate advisor. Tyson completed a Master’s degree in the geography department at Ohio State University in 1937 (Ohio State University, Department of Geography Alumni 2018) and went on to pursue a PhD in the geography department at Syracuse University (Syracuse University, Department of Geography Newsletter 1961).

In addition to Theodore Speigner at North Carolina Central, Henry Hymes was another key individual teaching geography at Harold Rose’s undergraduate institution, Tennessee State. Harold explained that Henry Hymes was one of Mazie Tyson’s undergraduate students at Tennessee State and also went on to pursue graduate studies in the department of geography at Syracuse University. Hymes obtained a Master’s degree from Syracuse and then began a PhD in geography at Syracuse. Upon completing his Master’s degree, Hymes returned to Tennessee State to teach in the geography department. Tennessee State had a strong geography program with four or five faculty members teaching in the department. Harold explained that although Tennessee State did not have as many geography undergraduate students go on to become professional geographers as North Carolina Central, a number of Henry Hymes’ students went on to pursue graduate degrees in geography at universities from all over the country.

Social Climate

Harold saw the importance of having Black scholars at white institutions, especially during times when there is conflict between different groups in the wider society. He began his professional career as a geographer in 1962 at the University of Milwaukee in an era of mass protest movements for desegregation, civil rights, and racial justice. He explained:
Pressures against the local university was so strong. Things began to change outside the university environment, then the pressure to change inside the university environment became more intense. … The things that changed outside, I think, moved universities to take actions that they would not have ordinarily taken at that time.

The desegregation of public education occurred a few years prior, and there were mounting concerns over the integration of Black and white students. Despite great strides in fighting for access to predominantly white university institutions, the climate for Black students on white campuses remained hostile throughout the 1960s.

As social movements surrounding fair access and treatment of Black students within U.S. higher education institutions gained momentum, attitudes towards Black faculty members began to change. In the early 1960s, there were very few Black faculty not just at the University of Milwaukee but at white institutions throughout North America. By the late 1960s, the Black Student Movement successfully pushed university administrators to actively seek Black Faculty to add to their teaching rosters. For the first time in history, American universities with almost exclusively white faculty were actively recruiting Black faculty members.

In 1969, while already a tenured professor at the University of Milwaukee, Harold received job offers from three institutions. When Harold was a visiting professor in the sociology department at Washington University, the chair offered him a position in the sociology department and was willing to not only match his current pay at the University of Milwaukee, but also offer a raise. Harold enjoyed his time at Washington University and liked that the campus was small and informal. However, the primary deterrent of Washington
University for Harold was its lack of a geography department.

The most attractive of the three job offers was from UCLA. Harold sometimes thinks about what would have happened if he had accepted the position at UCLA. There were a number of attractive incentives at UCLA such as the facilities and the courtyards and outdoor spaces. He reveled at the thought of the weather in the winter. The job offer at UCLA, however, was at the same pay rate as what he was already receiving at the University of Milwaukee. As tempting as it was to avoid the winter weather in the north of the country, without an increase in salary, it did not seem worthwhile to make the move to UCLA.

The third university to offer Harold a position in 1969 was Kent State. The chair at Kent State aggressively tried to recruit Harold on to their faculty. Kent State offered Harold a substantially higher salary than he was receiving at the University of Milwaukee; however, Harold felt he had a commitment to the University of Milwaukee for hiring him at a time when it was not fashionable to hire Black faculty at white institutions. Even though Kent State offered Harold a significant pay raise, he had no inclinations to move to Kent. When the chair at Kent State did not hear back from Harold about the job offer, he flew up to Milwaukee and took Harold and his wife out for dinner in a last attempt to entice Harold into considering the position.

Several universities showed an interest in having Harold join their institutions. Harold was approached by department chairs from all over the United States and contemplated a few of the job offers. But by the time hiring Black faculty members became trendy, Harold had already been at the University of Milwaukee for several years and was settled in both the geography department and in the City of Milwaukee. He finally felt rooted and was quite certain he would stay at the University of Milwaukee indefinitely:
The environment out there was positive. I really liked it. But then I said to myself, I had some obligations to Milwaukee. They hired me at the time when white institutions weren’t hiring Blacks. After 1968, things began to change, you know, everybody wanted Black faculty.

Harold had a strong loyalty to the university because he recognized and was appreciative of the institution for offering him a job at a time when there was strong opposition towards desegregating the education system. As the presence of Black faculty in white institutions slowly became tolerated in the late 1960s, research and discussions surrounding race and racism were still actively discouraged and often met with fierce opposition.

**Publishing and Black America**

In the interview with Browning in 1982, Harold remarked that scholarship on Black people in the U.S is largely done by people who are not Black. He stated although the research on Black America is rarely carried out by Black scholars, this is not necessarily a bad thing. Depending on how one views the situation, it could be seen as either progress or evidence of regression. He argued scholarship on Black America by non-Black people is good because prior to the 1980s, anything representing the Black position would not have been considered scholarly. “Until rather recently no one would permit a Black to say that race was responsible for anything” (109). The existence of research addressing an issue affecting Black communities in America could not have surfaced in mainstream academic circles at an earlier date.

Using an example from his own experience, Harold recalls a situation in the early 1970s when he submitted an article to the journal *Economic Geography* on the racial
composition of communities and a change in retail trends of businesses (1982). His paper was rejected because the editor felt Harold did not present a sound argument. The editor could not fathom how the racial composition of a neighborhood could have possibly influenced a shift in trends among retail businesses. For Harold, there was ample evidence showing the connection between the racial composition of an area and the movement of retail businesses in and out of neighborhoods. He considered the article as a summary of his findings rather than a critique or criticism of changing retail trends, and described what he thought was an obvious phenomenon. He explained:

To me it was quite obvious that race had a lot to do with the changing types of stores in an area undergoing racial change, and I wasn’t making this observation in a negative sense but simple as a statement of fact. (109)

The relationship between demographic shifts in neighborhoods and changes to retail practices has become such a common geographic study that it is now considered, as Harold remarked, were predictable and seemed rather commonsensical. The strong opposition to his article submission to the journal was reflective of general attitudes towards scholarship on Black America as well as the racism within the academic publishing process at the time.

During the interview in 2014, Harold once again referenced his experience of submitting an article to *Economic Geography*. The editor replied and told Harold his colleagues would not be interested in reading this kind of research. Harold explained how, during this period, you would see a few one-time studies in geography on Black America by prominent geographers such as John Fraser Hart (b. 1924). It was difficult to find an editor willing to publish articles on Black America and it was even harder to find an editor willing to publish articles on Black America written by Black Americans.
Harold encountered many moments of hostility and discouragement towards his research, especially in the early stages of his career. Despite the negative reception of his work, Harold persevered and continued to research and write on Black America. Although there were countless numbers of geographers who devalued and opposed Harold’s research, the unsupportive atmosphere did not change what he researched. Even the threat of not receiving tenure did not change how he positioned his research. Prior to receiving tenure, Harold published two articles, one in the journal *Economic Geography* and the other in the *Geographical Review*. These two publications resulted in being disciplined by the chair of the geography department:

My chair called me in and I thought she called me in to congratulate me. She called me in and told me, ‘This is not the kind of research we brought you here to do.’ And nobody ever said anything about the kind of research they expected of me when I came but that was her response…the attitude toward the legitimacy of studying Blacks in America was negative.

He experienced tensions and discouragement from colleagues in the geography department at Milwaukee: “the geography department was not too friendly about the idea of somebody doing stuff on Blacks” (interview). It took years before other faculty members in the geography department at the University of Milwaukee began to consider Harold’s work on Black America as geographic. Though they eventually accepted him as a colleague, the geography faculty continued to question the legitimacy of his research as an aspect of geography—geographers did not do research on race in America and therefore addressing problems with race in the United States was not seen as an acceptable area of study. Attitudes began to change in the late 1960s and early 1970s and slowly, issues concerning race became
recognized as a justifiable topic for scholarly investigation. Harold cites the increase in the number of people entering the specialty of urban geography as a key factor making it difficult for geographers to ignore the race issue in the discipline.

Experiences at the University of Milwaukee

Harold chaired three departments at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. From 1970 to 1976, he was the chair of Urban Studies, and for a year he was the acting chair of American Studies until they could find someone from outside of the university to fill the position. He also held the position of the chair of the African American Studies program for one-year terms at multiple points in his career. As the chair of African American Studies, Harold never taught in the department but rather was tasked with taking care of the paperwork for the program. Harold was brought in to ease a situation in the program—a Black professor who had been serving as the chair of African American Studies program was denied tenure. Harold was asked to serve as the acting chair while they tried to sort out how the program was going to proceed. Harold suggested that they have one of the many white faculty members in the African American Studies program to do the job of the chair but there was strong opposition to having a white faculty member fill the position. The faculty felt it was politically important to have a Black person as the chair of the African American Studies program. The person who was the chair and was initially denied tenure in African American Studies eventually gained tenure and ended up becoming the chair of the program for over twenty years. The former chair of African American Studies passed away in 2013. Harold found it difficult to operate in each of the distinct departments because the worlds were all so different. Harold described himself as a burning liberal and the geography department as very
conservative. The African American Studies program was more liberal than geography and the Urban Studies program was ‘middle of the road.’

Harold was shuffled around between programs and departments but his ‘home’ department was in geography. He represented the one Black man in the geography department and he knew that his identity was beneficial to the geography department. Having a faculty member who was a Black man was helpful for the image of the department. He explained:

So, I helped the department of geography, you know. They knew that. But they were satisfied never to hire another Black man. They had their Black [laugh]. ‘Why do we have to hire another Black?’ You know, the Dean’s Office and geo department had additional funds…to create a…try to recruit a Black scholar.

That didn’t help them much. They weren’t interested. They didn’t want any more.

Although it was known having Harold as faculty was good for the geography department, he believes his presence in the department was also the reason why they never hired another Black man. The Dean’s office took notice of Harold’s role in the geography department and even allocated additional funds to geography with the intention of recruit another Black scholar in the department. Despite the efforts of the Dean’s Office, the geography department at the University of Wisconsin failed to attract and employ another Black geographer to join the faculty.

Harold guesses he supervised about three Black graduate students in the geography department throughout his career. He could not recall of any American-born Black students
receiving a PhD in geography at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. Most of the Black PhD students in the department were African and a few were West Indian. Harold explained how the perception of the geography department by Black people was somewhat negative—but not without reason. There were times when the department recruited Black students into the department, only for them to arrive and experience unfair treatment. Harold recalled an instance where a young man from a Black college in Mississippi enrolled to pursue a Masters in the geography department at Milwaukee. The student spoke with a heavy southern accent and was ostracized and ridiculed by people in the geography department. Racist rumors claiming the student was unintelligent spread around the department.

But all it took was two or three people in the department who were looked up to by others to make this kind of accusation against him. They just didn’t understand, he wasn’t stupid. They implied that he was stupid. He was stupid because he possessed the outward traits of southern Blacks whose language skills were deemed by them as inadequate. Here they would never have accepted him.

Harold took this student under his wing and advised him on the situation. It got to the point where no matter what the student said or did, people believed he was inadequate and treated him with disrespect. Harold reassured the student of his aptitude and suggested it might be best to change schools and programs. The student transferred to another university and completed a Master’s degree in education and then went on to complete PhD in education.

3.3 Involvement with the AAG

From 1976 to 1977, Harold Rose was the President of the AAG. He was actively involved
with the AAG and was on the Executive Council for three years prior to becoming the president. He considered his experience with the AAG as overall positive and enjoyable, serving for 6 or 7 consecutive years working directly with the association. His first three years in an administrative role with the AAG was as the national councillor. He then became the vice president prior to serving as the president and then the past president. He enjoyed travelling around the United States giving talks and lectures at universities through the country. He has travelled to over 62 universities to give talks over the course of his career.

Despite holding the respected position as the President of the AAG, the undertones of racism still permeated many of his interactions with colleagues in geography. Harold warned about appearing too politically liberal when travelling the country representing the discipline of geography:

this is not the place to demonstrate liberality... This is, this is a hostile country.

There’s so many places I’ve been down south [with] that sense of hostility throughout … among the faculty. I mean, nothing that just jumps out at you. He often sensed hostility among the faculty when he visited geography departments, especially in the American South. Most of the time the hostility was subtle and elusive. The hostility was undoubtedly there but never overt enough to pinpoint.

Two instances while travelling the country as the AAG President stood out for Harold. One was when he was at South Dakota State in Providence and the other was when he was at the University of Kentucky to give lectures. South Dakota State was a small school that he had never heard about prior to receiving an invitation to visit. On his way in from the airport on the outskirts of town, there was a large sign on an automobile tire that read: “Hello Rose! Welcome to Prov!” That evening he gave his talk to a packed audience. There was not
even one Black person in the entire room. He laughed as he recounted the experience: “the only Black I saw was probably, was in the airport, and he was a janitor in the airport. It was, it was interesting”. Harold travelled to places he would have otherwise never visited if he were not the AAG President. He gave lectures in parts of America that were almost entirely populated by white people and noticeably even more white than his hometown of Milwaukee.

The other instance was at the University of Kentucky. Of the universities Harold visited, he only once felt an underlying animosity towards him. Harold explained what happened during when visiting the University of Kentucky to give a lecture:

I remember I was giving a talk at the University of Kentucky once and the guy came to pick me up to take me to give the talk for the department. There was a little hotel near the campus of the university and he said, pick up Professor Rose. They said, ‘see that n***** upstairs?’ [laughs] I don’t know. I didn’t know what to expect University of Kentucky. That was one of the southern institutions. Completely as open and whatever as any … I went to the department and the community, the university was open. I was treated very nice by them. But I remember I got that harsh treatment. Got my stipend and they asked me to give my stipend to the Black Studies unit. [laughs] All in a day’s work!

Even with these experiences of racism while travelling around the United States as the AAG President, he enjoyed his time travelling, giving talks, and representing the AAG and the discipline of geography. Harold’s positive attitude towards his work as a geographer, his perseverance, and his unwavering dedication to promoting the discipline continued to remain
consistent regardless of how fellow geographers treated him.

In 1978, Harold delivered his Presidential Address at the AAG Annual Meeting in New Orleans. He felt it was not well received because of the number of people who found the address offensive. He initially titled his talk “Your Geography and Mine” but ended up changing the title to “The Geography of Despair” due to the level of opposition Harold received once word got out about the original title. Harold knew the title for his Presidential Address would stir some controversy because of its stark political nature and its difference in approach to past presidential addresses. Harold was persistent, dedicated, and determined to introduce new perspectives, approaches, and methodologies for challenging perspectives and norms within the discipline of geography. He wanted to investigate issues and conduct research from a point of view that reflected his position as a Black man in a white discipline. Presenting research on the systemic racial violence against Black men in America was a radical and transgressive act, especially because Harold was explicitly naming phenomenon of deep political significance to the attention of a constituent of geographers who were predominantly white, positivist, and void of critical engagement with the rampant racial violence, segregation, and premature death of Black men taking place within the urban geographies that many of those in the audience were considered experts. In naming the problem of lethal violence against Black men, Harold laid bare a social issue being ignored by geographers. He illustrated the connection between racial segregation, environmental stressors, poverty, and homicide—and the relationship between despair and violence.

Harold began by acknowledging he was aware his address would probably be viewed as an inappropriate approach for the Presidential Address. It was expected that the Presidential Address was intended as an assessment of philosophical developments over the
past year within the practice of geography. The president was to report on the status of the discipline, any disciplinary developments, or to muse over contributions that they themselves have made to geographic thought. The gaping distance between geographic theory and the social ill of racism at the time of his address reflected the lack of American born geographers who were also racial minorities present in the discipline. Prior to Harold’s presence in geography, the perspectives and presentation of geographic knowledge within American universities had never stemmed from the position of a Black, American-born geographer.

A few years after his Presidential Address, Harold was asked in an interview if he had any hope in one day seeing the issues from “The Geography of Despair” being remedied. He responded:

No. [pause] I don’t think there can be any significant external changes. As long as there is blocked opportunity in an environment where there is rapid social change, what we are observing is simply going to continue unless special effort is made to intervene and I’m not sure there is going to be any special effort. (Rose 1982, 113)

Harold predicted there would be a lack of an intervention in addressing the prevalence of geographies of despair, the proliferation of high stress environments, and the subsequent high rates of Black men becoming victims of homicide in America. Nearly 40 years after Harold’s Presidential Address, premature death among Black men in America continues to occur at an endemic frequency. In Harold’s research, he primarily focused on homicides carried out within despairing environments and among members within the same community. The perpetrators of violence were those living in high stress environments, namely neighborhoods facing stark socioeconomic disparities. State interventions into curbing homicide rates in
America has taken a turn for the worse and now includes the alarming prevalence of increased police violence against racialized communities. Not only has the State failed to ameliorate the racialized socioeconomic inequalities that foster the geography of despair, actors of the State—the police—have increasingly become the culprits in the murder of Black men and boys in America.

Geographers Bill Bunge and Don Deskins

Harold considered many of his fellow geographers good friends. Bill Bunge and Harold were well acquainted—Bunge would send Harold long letters in the mail, call to catch up over the phone, and always make sure to stop in and visit Harold whenever he was in Milwaukee. Sometimes Bunge would even bring his daughter along with him for a visit. Bunge was always urging Harold to speak up against racial discrimination against Black people in the discipline. Bunge would call Harold up and try to convince him to respond to offensive comments and articles appearing in the discipline. Bunge persistently pleaded with Harold to make an official statement to geographers on the racially-charged prejudices regularly occurring within geography. One particular prominent geographer at the time was known for making inappropriate and demeaning comments about Black people and he, in particular, consistently hit a nerve with Bunge and caused him great strife. On one occasion, this geographer said something so offensive and terrible that Bunge called Harold in distress pleading with him to publicly respond to the racial prejudiced being perpetuated by this prominent geographer. Bunge felt Harold had a responsibility to speak out against this geographer’s bigoted remarks and the blatant racism. They often argued over ideas and situations happening within geography. Harold’s response to Bunge was that he did not have
any responsibility to speak out against the things he thought were terrible in the discipline.

Don Deskins was another good friend of Harold’s—a very good friend. Deskins and Harold first met in 1969 at a meeting on what the AAG could do to help facilitate the goals and objectives of COMGA. At the time, Deskins was the Director of the COMGA Program while he was a lecturer and PhD student in the Department of Geography at the University of Michigan and Harold was a tenured professor at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. They remained good friends until Deskins’ death in 2013.

In 2013, the AAG founded the *Harold M. Rose Award for Anti-Racism Research and Practice*. The award was created to honor the work and dedication of geographers who have made considerable contributions to promoting antiracism within the practice and discipline of geography. When names were being accepted for the naming of the award, Audrey Kobayashi wrote to Harold asking if she could submit his name for the award. Harold agreed to the use of his name and was flabbergasted when Deskins’ daughter called Harold after she went to Los Angeles to receive the *Harold Rose Award* on her father’s behalf. The inaugural award was awarded to Don Deskins at the 2013 AAG Annual Meeting in Los Angeles for his numerous accomplishments in addressing racial tensions in geography. Since his graduate school years, Deskins was outspoken and dedicated to improving conditions both within and outside of the academy.

“I wanted to open the discipline up…”

Slowly, over the course of 33 years, Harold established himself as a fixture of the department, became a senior member of the faculty, and eventually his legitimacy as a geographer became established and others began to accept his work as geographical.
Regardless of how often his legitimacy as a geographer was questioned, Harold believes he was treated fairly by the geography department and as a member of the university.

To some extent I wanted to open the discipline up … and we had some success. … But I was a Black guy. I encountered more positives than negatives. I definitely encountered negatives but they were outnumbered by the positives. And the university here gave me respect.

Harold retired from his position as a Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Wisconsin in 1995 at the age of 65. Harold Rose passed away in February 2016 at the age of 86.
Chapter 4

Bobby Wilson – In-depth Interview

“I wanted to do my research on the South because I don't believe you can study race in America without beginning with the American South.” - Bobby

Bobby Wilson was among the first Black Americans to pursue a PhD in geography and was also one of the pivotal geographers who centred his research on the tensions between Black academic geographers and geography’s white epistemological framework in the early 1970s. Bobby Wilson’s contributions and commitment to the discipline of geography and to the development of antiracist theory and practice in geography is reflected through his scholarly works on the Black experience in the American South. Throughout Bobby’s career, he has written extensively on economic, social, and political injustices faced by Black Americans. His life experiences growing up in the South and fighting for civil rights cannot be separated from his scholarship in geography.

4.1 Childhood, Youth, and the Civil Rights Movement

Bobby Wilson grew up in Durham, North Carolina, where Bobby’s family had been farming for generations. His grandfather and great grandfather were farmers and his grandfather owned the land on which they lived. Bobby and his parents were tenant farmers until both of his parents began to work at the local textile mill. Bobby’s father grew up farming with his father and was given a plot of land to cultivate crops. Bobby’s father continued to farm when Bobby was young but once he was a teenager, it was Bobby’s responsibility to take care of the farm and tend to the crops.

It was a pretty hard work in North Carolina. The major cash crop was tobacco.
I grew up on a tobacco farm. In North Carolina that was the major cash crop. The other major crop was cotton. And during the summertime we grew cucumbers, which was hard, backbreaking work. Well, tobacco was tough too, but the cucumbers... You were constantly bending down like this. ... And during the summer too, because cucumbers were being prepared to be harvest in the summer months. The hottest months. And the tobacco came later on, in the later part of the summer.

During the 1950s it was common for children to help cultivate and harvest crops and, ever since Bobby was a child, he grew up tending to the farm. Beginning from a very young age, Bobby was expected to do labour intensive tasks on the farm. Like many children who grew up on farms in the South, Bobby tended to and cultivated crops of tobacco and cucumbers as a young child and missed several weeks of school each year during harvest season. Nonetheless, even while tending to the farm, Bobby fared well in school and excelled at math.

From picking and priming the tobacco, to wrapping and curing the leaves, he learned early on which tobacco leaves were ripe from picking and how to properly break them off the tobacco stalk. He would then wrap the leaves onto a stick and put the tobacco in the barn to cure. Keeping an eye on how quickly the tobacco was drying, he had to get up early in the mornings to check if the tobacco had properly cured and was ready to be moved to the pack house. The tobacco could not be moved around in the day because the sun and dry air would cause the tobacco to become too dry and brittle. The moist night air would linger in the barn and the tobacco would absorb just enough moisture to make the tobacco soft so that it could be handled and moved to the pack house where the tobacco was stored until it needed to be
graded, sorted, and bundled for the market to be sold. Bobby would go with his grandfather to the market to sell the tobacco. They would load the truck with tobacco and head towards the Virginia border.

The markets in Virginia would open earlier than in North Carolina, so Bobby and his grandfather would cross the Virginia line to the early market to sell their tobacco. Bobby found the market to be particularly interesting. He would unload the tobacco from the truck and put it into piles. He would wait around near their pile of tobacco with his grandfather, alongside rows and rows of farmers with their piles of tobacco. The farmers would sit and wait for people to inspect their crop of tobacco and determine how much you would get for it. The people would come by and look at the pile of tobacco closely and then mark a card with a grade for the crop and then leave it on the pile of tobacco. The farmer then takes the card to the cashier and you would be given the amount of money based on the grade of tobacco marked on the card. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, tobacco would be sold at about 70¢ or 80¢ per pound. Bobby’s grandfather’s truck could hold about a thousand pounds of tobacco, so for each truckload taken to the market, they would receive around $700 or $800 dollars. The profit from the sale of tobacco was a substantial source of income for the family.

Civil Rights Movement
In addition to going to school and working on the farm, Bobby would regularly participate in Civil Rights protests, pickets, and demonstrations even as a child. Bobby was in grade school when the Civil Rights Movement began and his experience and involvement in the Movement was largely a result of his grandfather’s dedication and commitment to Black
liberation. Bobby’s grandfather was politically conscious, radical, and very active in the Civil Rights Movement. His grandfather insisted that all his grandchildren needed to participate in local protest movements despite the objection by the parents of his grandchildren. Bobby’s mother did not want her children to participate in the local protests because of the probable violence her children would encounter.

But my mother, she was afraid, she was very afraid. But my grandfather was very insistent. He's gotta go. I don't think then, I could really appreciate it, because I was pretty young at that time. I couldn't appreciate the severity of what I was doing in that sense. In much later years, I was able to appreciate, you know, what was involved.

Rather than a conscious choice to participate on his part, Bobby’s grandfather insisted and expected all his grandchildren to be involved in protests. Bobby was partaking in sit-ins and protests before he was even old enough to understand the significance of what he was told to do. It was not a conscious choice to engage in activism as a young child, nor, was he old enough to comprehend the scope of the movement he was involved in. Protests and sit-ins were just a part of growing up for Bobby, and were an activity he would continue to be actively engaged in throughout his high school years.

The heart of the Civil Rights Movement was between 1960 and 1963 when Bobby was in high school. Along with his responsibilities on the farm, Bobby attended high school in a rural and white community in North Carolina. Although the high school had a lot of resources and academic opportunities, it also had a fair amount of discrimination.

Part of Bobby’s childhood and youth includes having numerous violent and dangerous interactions with the police because of his activism. As a high school student,
Bobby regularly participated in sit-in in his local town. One of the protests he was active in was to integrate the lunch counter at the Five and Ten Cents Store. Bobby and some of the other young people in town chose to picket the Five and Ten Cents Store because the owners did not allow Black customers to sit at the lunch counter to have their soda, ice cream, or meal. The kids gathered and sat in front of the entrance of the store in protest. The police routinely came by to try to clear away the children and remove the protesters in front of the store’s entrance. In a soft-spoken voice, Bobby recounted how the police immobilized the children in order to dismantle the groups of young people protesting. He motioned to the side of his torso when he explained:

during that time, they had these electric cattle probes. You know, those electric cattle probes where you could shock the cows. And they would use them on us, and they would jab us in the side, there. Trying to get us to move. And they would finally drag us out. And then we would go to jail. And I spent... I don't know how much time I spent in jail but I do remember spending some time in jail.

Bobby elaborated and emphasized how the Civil Rights Movement’s demonstrations of the 1960s were often entirely comprise of children and youth. Children played a major role in the Civil Rights Movement as they were often the majority of the population protesting and were used strategically to promote nonviolence. Black children and youth who protested for their rights were brutalized by the police and thrown into jail. The police would jab the sides of the children’s bodies over their ribcages with the cattle probes and electrocute the children and youth so they could be dragged to the police cruiser and taken to the jailhouse. Bobby was taken to the jailhouse on several occasions and spent time in jail cells as a youth because of
his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Adults and parents were largely absent from many of the protests on the streets that were led by local high school kids.

Organizers of the Movement strategized to use children as protestors to minimize the level of violence and brutality enacted on those in the streets fighting for justice. Bobby explained how police officers were more likely to retaliate against the parents of the children and to use deadly force. Adults and parents were not allowed to gather in groups or partake in civil rights demonstrations because of the likelihood of violence if police and civil rights demonstrators confronted each other. If an adult became angry with the police and spoke out against their actions, fights would break out and people were killed. Children, on the other hand, were perceived as less threatening to the police because it was assumed that they would do as they were told. Thus, Bobby stressed just how many demonstrations were exclusively carried out by children and teenagers and how young people and high school students were pivotal in conveying civil rights demands though protest. Children were especially tolerated and allowed to protest because they were seen as nonviolent and complacent, and the parents of the children participating in sit-ins were advised to not accompany their children downtown. The Civil Rights organizers encouraged their fellow comrades to stay away from areas where the children were protesting for the safety of everyone; the parents of the children demonstrating were especially told to stay away from the downtown area during protest because if they witnessed the police brutality inflicted on their children, there would undoubtedly be fatal consequences.

Now, many years later, Bobby has come to understand his grandfather’s devotion to the Civil Rights Movement and his insistence that his grandchildren actively participate. Bobby recalls how white people would often tell Civil Rights leaders to wait for their
liberation—that it would come soon enough. No matter where you were in the South, white people would advise protesters and demonstrators to hold off on their actions because they could work things out and they would eventually resolve the issues of racial injustice together. Bobby exclaimed: Martin Luther King even wrote a book called *Why We Can’t Wait* because Black leaders who were fighting for freedom were so frequently told to just wait. Bobby’s grandfather even wrote an article in the local newspaper explaining why they could no longer wait. Bobby vividly remembers his grandfather saying in the article, “We can’t wait because we’ve been waiting for over 100 years.” Demonstrations were happening across America and Bobby is really proud to have been an active part of civil rights history. As time passes, Bobby explains how he has become more and more appreciative of his grandfather and the ways in which his grandfather’s radicalism has influenced his own engagement with activism over the course of his life. Bobby’s grandfather was radical in many ways and it was important for him to ensure his grandchildren became radicalized while fighting for justice. Bobby reflects: “more and more days go by I appreciate more and more what he did and what he went through.” He is thankful for his grandfather for leading, teaching, and showing him the importance of fighting for racial justice even though he was just a child at the time.

4.2 **Becoming a Geographer: North Carolina Central and Clark University**

Bobby graduated from high school in 1964, at a time when civil rights organizing was just beginning to slow down in the American South. Having worked on the farm his whole life, Bobby remarked: “no one had to convince me as a young child to go to college.” He was used to doing hard manual labour on the farm and saw college as an easy escape from the
physically grueling reality of farm life. Compared to the work he did on the farm, Bobby figured college would be easy. He remembers saying: “hey, Ma, I want to go to college” and she was nothing but supportive. Few Black children who lived in the area had parents who finished high school. Bobby’s mother was the exception—she not only finished high school but she was also the valedictorian of her class. When he expressed his desire to go to college, she wanted to make sure he would have the support he needed to be able to go. She never had the opportunity to attend college but was aware of the importance of a college degree. Bobby’s mother was going to make sure her son was going to go to college. After she finished high school, his mother got married and raised a family. Bobby’s father had a tenth-grade education and was less enthusiastic about the idea. He would ask Bobby why he would even want to go to college and never really understood what the purpose of college was. Bobby’s grandfather reacted in a similar manner to his father when Bobbly told him he wanted to go to college. His grandfather was raised on the farm and did not see the value of pursuing a post-secondary education:

And I remember the day that I left to go to college and my grandfather was at the house there, in that sense, and I was getting ready to go to college and he said, well, you got this opportunity and don't go up there and mess up.

None of Bobby’s cousins or second cousins had gone to college and Bobby was among the first generation in his family to pursue an undergraduate degree.

Bobby began his undergraduate degree at the nearby North Carolina Central in 1964. He excelled at math in high school and for the first two years at North Carolina Central he majored in math. In his second year, Bobby enrolled in a geography course taught by the chair of the geography department, Theodore Speigner and decided to switch from majoring
in math to majoring in geography. Very few Black colleges had a geography department and North Carolina Central was one of about seven Black colleges to have a geography department during the time Bobby was an undergraduate student. While in his second year, he decided to change his major to geography because he really enjoyed the geography course he took with Dr. Speigner.

The switch from math to geography was worrying for Bobby’s parents. He was already in his second year and now he was starting a completely different program than what he had originally set out to do. Tuition at the time at North Carolina Central was about $400 a year and his parents provided some financial support so Bobby could attend. During the 1960s, $400 was a significant portion of his family’s income—the amount the family would receive for cultivating, harvesting, curing, bundling, transporting, and selling a half a truckload of tobacco. Even while in college, some of Bobby’s family members would continue to question his decision to pursue an undergraduate degree. Family members would remark:

‘What is this!? Why are you going to school? Why are you taking all this time to go to school? And studying geography? And studying geography! Okay, what’s this geography?’

To help pay for school, Bobby became a work-study student in the geography department. Through his work-study job, the chair of the geography department, Theodore Speigner, got to know Bobby and ended up taking him under his wing and acted as his mentor.

Theodore Speigner saw something in Bobby and knew he had the intellect to thrive in graduate school. Dr. Speigner believed in Bobby and was tremendously supportive and encouraging as Bobby worked to complete his undergraduate degree. When Bobby was
nearing the end of his bachelor’s degree, Dr. Speigner walked into the geography office
where Bobby was working and announced, “uhh, you’re going to Clark University.” At the
time, Dr. Speigner was heavily involved with the Association of American Geographers
(AAG) and the Commission on Afro-American Geography (COMGA) program. Dr. Speigner
knew that if Bobby went to graduate school at Clark, he would have access to fellowships as
well as other supports while he pursued a graduate degree. Even before the COMGA
program began, Dr. Speigner, had strong ties to Clark University and had been preparing to
send undergraduate students from North Carolina Central to Clark University’s graduate
program in geography for years. Theodore Speigner ensured Bobby would have full funding
for his studies at Clark. There was no consultation or input from Bobby, as it was already
decided by Dr. Speigner that he would be starting a Master’s degree in geography at Clark.
Bobby received a bachelor of science in geography from North Carolina Central in 1969
before moving to Clark.

When Bobby announced the news about graduate school to his family, they we even
less supportive and more skeptical about what he wanted to do than when he began his
bachelor’s degree at North Carolina Central. He was one of the first in the family to attend
college and was the first to pursue graduate school. No one else in the family was familiar
with the idea of graduate school and the thought of continuing in school beyond a college
degree was foreign to everyone: “They would say, ‘you went to college and now you are
going where? You're going where? Clark University? What's that?’” North Carolina Central
was the local Black college and was close by to the family’s farm. Clark University, on the
other hand, was a wealthy, prestigious, white institution in the northeast. As confusing and
nonsensical as the idea of graduate school seemed to Bobby’s family, Bobby began a
Master’s degree at Clark University in the fall term shortly after graduating from North Carolina Central.

Graduate School at Clark University and COMGA

Prior to arriving at Clark, Bobby heard there was a graduate student in the geography department from North Carolina Central who had already been studying at the school for a year or two. The student from North Carolina Central also received funding to pursue a graduate degree in geography but he was not supported through the COMGA program because the fellowship was still being developed by the AAG and people such as Saul Cohen, Theodore Speigner, and Deskins Deskins.

When Bobby arrived at Clark University, he met with another geography graduate student who had also completed an undergraduate degree at North Carolina Central. To Bobby’s surprise, he learned there were two students from North Carolina Central who already completed Master’s degrees in geography at Clark. Neither of the two students from North Carolina Central ended up going into academia and Bobby became the first person from North Carolina Central to receive a PhD in geography from Clark.

During the same year when Bobby moved to Worcester, Massachusetts to begin graduate school at Clark University, a few of Bobby’s fellow students from North Carolina Central also moved to universities across the United States to begin graduate programs in geography. Theodore Speigner had set up a program at North Carolina Central to help prepare students for graduate school and facilitated the transition for six or seven promising students into geography graduate programs each year beginning in the late 1960s up until the early 1970s. Two of Bobby’s classmates were sent to Berkeley and others were sent to places like the University of Minnesota, the University of Maryland, the University of Michigan,
and Michigan State University. All the student being sent to geography graduate programs across the country were being funded through the COMGA program.

The critical mass of COMGA fellows began their graduate programs in geography at the same time as when Bobby began his MA in 1969. A whole year had passed while Bobby was at Clark where he believed he was also a part of the COMGA program. He was talking to Saul Cohen, then director of the School of Geography at Clark University, when Cohen told him he was not actually a COMGA fellow. Bobby’s funding was coming from another source and was never in the COMGA program. Bobby explained how Cohen was always moving money around trying to find funds for fellowships to support Black students in geography graduate programs. He asked Cohen if he had been moved from the COMGA program and into another fellowship program but Cohen told Bobby he was never a recipient of funding from COMGA. Bobby’s graduate school funding was from The Triple T Program.

The Triple T Program, or the Training of Teachers of Teachers, was a fellowship program that included workshops and seminars emphasizing the development of the student’s skills as teachers for graduate students who were also educators. The idea was that if Bobby was in a PhD program, he would eventually be training teachers because as a university professor, he would have students in his classes who were preparing to become teachers themselves. Unlike the COMGA program, the Triple T Program was not solely intended for Black graduate students, nor was it only for geographers. Although there were several Black people in the Triple T Program, there were people from many racialized groups. The Triple T Program ended up being especially beneficial for Bobby because it gave him the opportunity to interact with people from all over the university, from different departments, and who had an array of interesting life experiences. The Triple T Program
facilitated his interactions with students and faculty from outside of the geography department, allowing for a larger, stronger, and more diverse support network of people.

Having begun graduate school at Clark when he was in his early 20s, Bobby was the youngest fellow in the Triple T Program. Through the program, he met other Black graduate students on campus and developed mentor-mentee relationships with older students who were several steps ahead of him in their careers. Most of the people in the program were much older than Bobby and had already been teaching in high schools and colleges for several years. Since he was significantly younger than the other student, Bobby received a lot of support from his peers in the Triple T Program. Several of the Black fellows in the program already had lots of experience teaching young people who were similar in age to Bobby and soon became his mentors. Through the Triple T Program, Bobby developed a strong network of older and more experienced graduate students who were extremely supportive of Bobby throughout his graduate education.

Believing he was a COMGA fellow when he first began at Clark helped him create ties to other geography graduate students and receiving funding from the Triple T program gave him access to resources to help him develop as a teacher and to build connections with graduate students and faculty from across the university campus. Although Bobby was never formally a part of the COMGA, he recognizes the many ways he benefited from both the Triple T and the COMGA programs.

University Climate

In a time when Black students were just beginning to enroll at white institutions in the United States, the sudden presence of Black students on campus created tensions with some of the
white faculty members. Fellowships and recruitment initiatives such as COMGA in the late 1960s and early 1970s allowed for small groups of Black students to find support in one another. In the geography department at Clark, graduate student from across racial groups were well acquainted and generally got long quite well. There were no Black geography faculty members at Clark when Bobby was a graduate student and the only other people doing research on Black people in America or issues of segregation were fellows in the COMGA program.

In Bobby’s experience, the primary source of racial conflict at Clark was with professors. There were several occasions when Bobby was caught in racially charged incidences brought on by faculty members who were open about their racial prejudices and who were uninhibited about expressing them. For Bobby, faculty members were the primary instigators and the most vocal about their displeasure, dissatisfaction, and objection to having Black students attending Clark. Some of the faculty Bobby encountered were of the generation who supported, implemented, or complied with strict segregation policies or Jim Crow laws; some faculty would have had little to no interaction with Black students, peers or colleagues while attending school.

Although the types of racist incidences Bobby encountered may no longer appear to be present in North American universities, he warns that, despite a decreased frequency of obvert racist incidents, the presence of more subtle forms of racism remain prevalent. During his time in academia, Bobby has seen the scale and severity of racism transform into a smaller, subtler, yet persistent entity. Still, today, Bobby states there remains a cohort of people who have expressed a preference for excluding Black people from being involved in the AAG or in the academy in general.
The severity of racial prejudice in the late 1960s is what makes the cohort of Black students at Clark that much more remarkable. The backlash and objection to the presence of Black students in white institutions and the depth of racial tensions of the time did not deter Saul Cohen from forging forward and taking action for a cause he believed in. Bobby considers Cohen as an example of how an individual can use their position of power to implement change. Cohen saw the importance of having Black geographers in the discipline and recognized the structural, institutional, and financial barriers preventing bright Black students from pursuing graduate degrees in geography. Undeterred by the enormity and difficulty of the task, Cohen was determined to make the most out of any one of the privileged positions he held, as the Executive Director of the AAG or the Director of the School of Geography at Clark. Cohen believed in the COMGA program, the graduate students in Geography, and the potential for these students to contribute to making the geography department at Clark thrive. Cohen created opportunities to ensure the success of the Black students he recruited to the graduate program and would do whatever he could to support and encourage their academic pursuits. Bobby recognized what Cohen was doing and took advantage of any opportunities presented to him.

The COMGA program was initially developed to provide access to graduate education in geography for promising Black students. By facilitating the training of graduate education in geography, COMGA fellows would return to teach geography in Black colleges, thus strengthening the geography programs at the Black colleges in which they taught. It was hoped that the COMGA fellows would act as ambassadors and recruit students into the discipline. In theory, the objective of COMGA should have paved the path for students at Black colleges to enrol into geography graduate programs.
Bobby explained that the majority of COMGA fellows returned to teach at historically Black colleges; however, the objective of training Black geographers and then encouraging them to teach at Black colleges was also one of the primary weaknesses of the COMGA program. The COMGA program helped to facilitate connections between participants and Black colleges and students who were in the COMGA program. Fellows were connected to Black colleges with the expectation that once they completed their degree they would then transition from their respective graduate programs in geography, they would then go on to teach geography at a Black college. Most of the COMGA members ended up doing just that and became geography teachers at Black institutions.

The initial cohort of Black geography graduate students was strong in the 1960s and early 1970s but the failure to continue to recruit and provide financial supports to Black and minority students over time contributed to the loss in continuity of Black graduate students in geography. Many of the COMGA fellows completed a Master’s degree in geography and did not continue to pursue a PhD. A Master’s degree in geography was needed to teach geography at Black Colleges and Universities, so many COMGA graduates began teaching upon receiving a Master’s degree. Although the initial objective of COMGA was achieved by providing graduate training in geography for individuals who wanted to teach at Black Colleges and Universities, in retrospect, Bobby thinks one of the mistakes of COMGA was to stop at the Master’s level and not encouraging students to continue in geography and pursue a PhD.

The short 1 to 2-year master’s program in comparison to an additional 4 to 5 years of graduate training in geography during a PhD discouraged COMGA fellows from establishing themselves within the geography community and creating ties to other geographers. Once the
COMGA fellows were hired into faculty positions at Black Colleges and Universities, their engagement with the discipline remained isolated to the schools in which they were teaching, as there was limited correspondence between COMGA graduates and the geographers at the white institutions. Without consistent and regular contact with other geographers, one’s ability to contribute to geographic discussions and debate is limited. The lack of communication and collaboration between geographers at Black Colleges and Universities and white institutions was, and continues to be, one of the significant barriers to increasing the level of participation of Black graduate students within geography.

Although Bobby was highly connected to people in the COMGA program, he was not officially a member. Bobby never questioned Saul Cohen about why he was placed in the Triple T Program instead of the COMGA program. Bobby figured that since he received his funding, the two programs were “kind of the same thing” and it did not really matter which pool of money his funding came from. In retrospect, Bobby considered perhaps his funding from the Triple T Program and not the COMGA program may have been a key factor resulting in his career trajectory teaching at a white institution instead of a Black college. Recalling his personal experiences, Bobby thinks he may have been the only one to be hired into a white university of the COMGA members, notwithstanding his informal and unofficial designation as a COMGA member. He did not set out to teach exclusively at white universities—Bobby wanted to teach at a Black college and applied to several teaching positions at both Black colleges and white institutions when he was nearing the end of his degree.

Because Bobby was in the Triple T Program, he, on the other hand, did not receive the same kind of encouragement or had the same kind of expectations of him to fulfill the
objective of COMGA and teach at a Black college. Bobby’s colleagues in the Triple T Program were not working on making connections with Black colleges with the hopes of gaining future employment opportunities. Several of his mentors in the program were already established in their teaching careers. They were mature individuals with a wealth of experience teaching in colleges, junior colleges, and high schools. When his friends who were COMGA fellows were engaged in COMGA seminars aiding them in establishing connections with geography programs at Black colleges, Bobby was taking part in teaching development seminars in the Triple T Program. The program allowed Bobby to engage in conversations with experienced teachers as they worked together to improve their pedagogical approaches and teaching strategies. The Triple T Program was not only the place where Bobby met some of his strongest supporters and mentors, but it is also where he learned how to be a teacher. In terms of his own education, being a part of the program proved invaluable when he finished his PhD and immediately started teaching at the University of Alabama, Birmingham.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham called Bobby for an interview and he and his wife went to Birmingham together to get a sense of the city. His wife really liked the City of Birmingham, the position at the university seemed like a great opportunity, and they had already met a few people they thought were pleasant. When he was offered the position at the University of Alabama, he was certain Birmingham was where he wanted to live and work, and so, he accepted the job. After he had accepted the post at the University of Alabama, one of the Black colleges he applied to contacted him to see if he was still interested in in a teaching position. By the time the college contacted him, it was too late. Bobby was already preparing to move to Birmingham to join the faculty in the Urban Studies Program.
Immediately after finishing his PhD in geography at Clark University in 1974, he and his wife moved back to the American South where Bobby began teaching at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The friendships Bobby made as an unofficial member of the COMGA program were long-lasting. Bobby was close to a number of COMGA fellows and remained in contact with many of them for years even after program was discontinued. Over the course of 40+ years since Bobby was in graduate school, his ties to past COMGA fellows have become more and more distant. As time passes, he has lost contact with many of them, and even more so as past fellows retire or are approaching retirement.

**Mentorship and Support in Geography**

The transition to graduate school for Bobby was challenging. The stark contrast between Worcester, Massachusetts and his home in North Carolina created a considerable amount of anxiety for Bobby. The City of Worcester was vastly different from any place he had ever been—the people and culture in Worcester were nothing like what he was used to in rural North Carolina. The drastic change in environment from completing his undergraduate degree at the local Black college near his family’s farm in North Carolina to moving to a predominantly white northeastern U.S. state was a difficult adjustment. Thinking about having grown up on a farm in North Carolina, having been of the first generation in his family to attend college, and being the first in his family to attend graduate school created anxiety.

When Bobby arrived at Clark University to begin graduate school, he was extremely anxious. Clark University was a school with a prestigious reputation where the student body
and faculty were almost entirely white, and coming from wealthy backgrounds. Bobby explained:

It was the first time I'd been in a white institution. I graduated from a Historically Black College and went to a Black high school. It was my first time...so you can imagine how that was in that sense. Trying to be successful at that time in that sense. And I'm very grateful for Anne Buttimer for taking me by the hand, you know, and guiding me throughout the whole graduate experience. And then you had Saul Coen who had my back. And so, I had those two people. It worked out very well.

It took a while for Bobby to connect with a faculty member in the geography department at Clark who took an interest in his academic development. Bobby was in his second year of graduate school when he and Anne Buttimer began talking:

It took me, what, two years of sort of floating around. And that's what happens to minority students, you know? They often don't have an adviser when they go in because it's not common for them to know what they want to do, you know.

Buttimer began to play a mentorship role and soon became his PhD supervisor. With guidance and encouragement from Buttimer, Bobby received the direction he needed in order to shed some of his anxiety around graduate school.

Once he had Buttimer on board as a supervisor, Bobby’s mindset began to change and he could channel his energy into developing a research topic and really begin to focus on research. Bobby decided to research Black migration and quickly became the local expert on the topic. Whenever students or faculty at Clark had questions about Black migration, they
were almost always referred to Bobby. His research project was on Black migrants within the Bedford-Stuyvesan community of Brooklyn, New York. Because Bobby had relatives living in Brooklyn, he always had a place to stay and could spend ample time on the ground and in the field working on his research.

Bobby’s PhD dissertation was heavily influenced by Buttimer’s work on social space. Buttimer’s expertise in social theory, her education in the French school of social geography, and her role as Bobby’s supervisor were what sparked his interest in philosophy and social theory. As Bobby progressed through his research he became increasingly interested in Buttimer’s ideas on space, philosophy, phenomenology, humanistic geography, and existentialism. When he was developing his own theories on Black migration, he would often refer to how Buttimer conceptualized space. Buttimer encouraged Bobby to continue to pursue his interest in philosophy and insisted it was very important for him to not only understand but also apply and develop concepts from social theory in his own work.

Bobby soon found himself with a group of supportive faculty members in the geography department at Clark. Anne Buttimer was Bobby’s thesis supervisor and Saul Cohen and Dick Peet were on his dissertation committee. He always felt his dissertation supervisor and committee members were there for him when he needed them. When his committee was preparing for Bobby’s defense, Buttimer, Cohen, and Peet all wanted Bobby’s dissertation defence to be as relaxed as possible and wanted to do whatever they could to ensure a calm and stress-free exam. Bobby thinks his committee did an excellent job setting the tone and he quite enjoyed the experience of defending his research. He was relaxed and felt incredibly supported. When asked what his dissertation defence was like he responded, “it was sort of amazing.”
As Bobby’s primary mentor in the geography department at Clark, he grew to become very fond of his supervisor, Anne Buttimer and found her very interesting. She was a Sister in the Catholic Church and Bobby would call her Sister Annette. Although Buttimer was a part of one of the liberal orders of the church, Bobby often felt she was torn between the two worlds of the church and the academy. Buttimer eventually left Clark and returned to Ireland, and Bobby figured she had also left the sisterhood. He warmly recalled when he received correspondence from Buttimer in the mail:

> I remember getting this card. It had her picture on it: it was her and her husband. They just got married. And I said, ‘go sister! And we’d have a lot of fun. She was really a lot of fun.

In addition to a supportive dissertation committee, Bobby also had several older peer mentors from outside of the department through the Triple T Program and had a number of close friends in the graduate program in geography who were COMGA fellows. Bobby attributes this strong support network of people who were in different stages of their careers at Clark as vital to his own success as a graduate student. He saw so many of his peers struggle with finding and developing a support network to help them get through their graduate degrees. A number of the students ended up dropping out of graduate school because they did not have people encouraging and guiding them through the process of obtaining a graduate degree. Without his network of people behind him through the course of his time at Clark, Bobby imagines the outcome of going to Clark would have been quite different.
4.3 Recruiting Students into Geography Graduate Programs

In the 1960s, geographers such as Don Deskins and Saul Cohen investigated why there were so few African American students in graduate programs in geography. The lack of exposure to geography courses and geography curriculum at Black colleges was identified as one of the primary reasons few Black Americans chose to pursue geography degrees at the graduate level. A half century later, the rate of participation in geography graduate programs among Black Americans remains low. Akin to the studies in the 1960s, Bobby believes the lack of exposure to geography courses at the undergraduate level is still a prevalent factor contributing to the small number of Black students entering geography graduate programs.

In addition to the lack of exposure to geography courses, Bobby described the discipline of geography as being stuck in a cycle of producing certain types of research and only building on the things that are commonly studied. He hypothesized the small number of Black students in graduate programs in geography contributes to the lack of research on the recruitment of Black students into geography since people often conduct research on things they are interested in or impacted by. The scarcity of geographic research critically engaging with race remains a primary deterrent discouraging students from analysing at racism through a geographic lens. Without geographers actively researching issues pertaining to race and Black America, it is difficult to stimulate an interest in the area. Further, if very few geographers are doing research on issues that are of interest to Black students, then it is unlikely the discipline will be able to attract Black students into graduate programs.

Bobby also attributes the general lack of graduate students in geography to the nature of the study of geography. Since geographers do not study a particular phenomenon but rather take an integrated science approach to research, the lack of specificity about what and
how geographers conduct research contributes to the difficulty in ‘selling’ the discipline. He explained:

See, geographers don't study a particular phenomenon. Sociologists study social relationships. Political scientists study politics, in that sense. What particular phenomenon does geography study? You know? And we haven't done a very good job the explaining what geography, you know, is.

Racialized students often do not enter geography programs because if they wanted to study an issue related to race, they often choose to pursue degrees in other departments or disciplines with clear ties to theories on race. In Bobby’s experience, he has noticed a trend among the students who engage with his work as well as the work of other geographers but who are in other disciplines. All of Bobby’s students who are from racialized minority groups and who study issues of race are in departments other than geography and tend to be of an African American or Hispanic background. More broadly, his intellectual interactions have been with scholars in other social science disciplines, predominantly through anthropology, sociology, and political sciences.

Though he has had many geographers take an interest in his work, Bobby has the sense that his scholarly contributions have been more impactful in other disciplines and less so in geography. The lack of engagement with Bobby’s work by geographers and geography graduate students is of great concern because his theorizations of the spatialities of racism and capitalism continue to have enormous potential in contributing to the development of geographic thought. The geographic significance of Bobby’s relational analysis of race and capital are in danger of being lost if his work is only interpreted through disciplines that do not consider the spatial element within his publications. Especially with the general scarcity
of geography graduate students of colour, the intellectual chain of ideas between generations of geographers is at stake. With so few graduate students of colour engaging with literature on race in geography under the supervision of Black geographers and other geographers of colour who were of the first faculty members hired in North American geography departments, the stories and history of experiences and struggles within the discipline as people of colour becomes faint and will eventually be erased from the geography’s institutional memory.

In addition to the lack of correspondence between HBCUs and white institutions, Bobby notes the absence in political will at the administrative level within universities for funding and supporting underrepresented students in graduate programs is not necessarily the culprit for the relative racial homogeneity of geography graduate students. Rather, Bobby attributes the lack of Black and minority graduate students in geography to the lack of racialized students interested in pursuing graduate degrees in geography. Even if financial supports were available, Bobby believes a primary challenge in increasing the number of graduate students of colour in geography is in finding students interested in and wanting to study geography. Geography continues to repel graduate students of color--despite the incremental growth of faculty of colour in North American geography departments and the presence of small bodies of literature engaging with race through a geographic lens, these factors are clearly not enough to entice underrepresented students into the discipline.

**The Role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**

Unlike geography, many of the social science disciplines with a high proportion of minority students studying at the graduate level are disciplines with a strong presence at Historically
Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Bobby explained how sociology tends to have a much stronger presence at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and has a much longer history of attracting minority students into the discipline. It is much more common to have a Black student go to graduate school in sociology than in geography. There is more research in sociology that engages with race and is of an interest to Black students and so it is easier to continue to attract, encourage, and support minority students in disciplines with long established histories of supporting research on race. These fields also tend to already have a more notable presence of scholars of colour.

Bobby did not go to college to pursue a geography degree but rather stumbled upon it. He explained how he was first exposed to a geography course:

When I went to college, I didn't end up going for geography. I was lucky that North Carolina Central had a geography department. And it was purely accidental that I took that geography course, in that sense. And I think the reason why I took a geography course was because I needed some credits. I needed some additional credits. I'm sure that's what it was. And when I got there, I was like, man! And so, there are a lot of people, if they were exposed to it, they would probably like it, in that sense. But you have you get them exposed to it.

Bobby explained that very few Black colleges had a geography department. Without a person teaching geography at many of the historically Black colleges, students simply would not be exposed to geography. The absence of someone teaching geography or geographic concepts almost guarantees the students at the school would not study geographic texts or develop an interest in geography. Some colleges might offer an introductory course or two in geography.
and most schools would only have one person teaching all the geography courses. A lack of opportunities to engage with geographic literature from a variety of perspectives and a weak presence of geographers at any institution makes it difficult to foster and promote geographic education at the undergraduate level.

Throughout the interview, Bobby was soft-spoken. When I asked him about geography education at Historically Black colleges and Universities he became animated and exclaimed:

[. . .] there are only two historically Black colleges today with a department. Only two! Only two historically Black colleges with a department of geography. Only two! The most we've ever had was seven. The most we've ever had was seven. So how can they be exposed? Seven! Seven geography departments at historically Black colleges! Only seven historically Black colleges had separate geography departments, now, okay? And now we're down to two!

Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the American South have seen a sharp decline in courses being offered in geography, and as Bobby explained, an abysmal drop in the number of geography departments. The problem of having weak geography programs and only two geography departments at Historically Black Colleges and Universities mirrors the issue identified by Cohen in the 1960s. A half century ago, Cohen developed the COMGA program with the intent to stimulate and improve geography education in Black colleges in order to create an interest in geography and to potentially recruit students from Black colleges into established geography graduate programs after they finished their undergraduate degrees.
In a similar vein, Bobby suggests that the AAG makes more of a concerted effort in reconnecting with Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Bobby would like to see the AAG take greater initiative in improving ties with Historically Black Colleges to encourage more students from these schools to consider a degree in geography as an option for graduate school. If only two historically Black Colleges and Universities in the American South have a geography department and if geography courses are offered at less than half of the universities with predominantly Black students, the lack of Black students in graduate programs in geography is expected.

Bobby sees the AAG as a vital tool for assessing how geography curricula in Historically Black Colleges and Universities is being presented to students. The AAG could conduct a survey of how geography courses are being taught at HBCUs. In recent years, Bobby explains, geography is attracting more and more minority students through GIS and remote sensing programs. A survey of what is being taught may show a small increase in the number of African Americans at HBCUs interested in pursuing geography because of their interest in these types of courses with practical applications. Bobby thinks by showing the connection between the discipline of geography and the areas in geography emphasizing the development of a skill with more clear pathways towards employment could potentially attract more African Americans into the discipline; however, he notes, an increase in Black students pursuing graduate degrees in geography does not necessarily equate to an increase in research on race through geography.


Teaching Race and Geography

When Bobby started as an assistant professor in 1974 at the University of Alabama Birmingham, the history of segregated schools and the Civil Rights Movement were still fresh in people’s memories. In the mid-1970s, Bobby’s students would have grown up during a time when people were willing to die in the fight against racial discrimination. There was a certain willingness to acknowledge the presence and impact of racism on American society – race was undeniably something “out there” and without question, relevant to studies in the social or human sciences. As time passes, an increased absence in discussions about race facilitates the burying of American racism as an event in history and allows for the dismissal of race and racism as concepts worth learning about.

Presently, students are rarely given the opportunity to engage critically with race through their university education and even fewer students are ever required to take courses on race. The requirement to engage critically with the topic of race often raises a number of objections. Bobby has had white students express their unwillingness to take a course explicitly engaging with race. It has been challenging for Bobby to teach anything pertaining to race. The conservative nature of the University of Alabama becomes blatantly obvious whenever he has tried to offer critical curricular content on issues of race or racism.

Over the years, Bobby has found that the most effective way to expose students to concepts of race and racism in university courses is to incorporate it into existing geography courses. Rather than creating classes explicitly set aside for discussing race and racism, Bobby integrates concepts into his human geography lectures. He recognizes that this kind of strategic teaching has its limitations in terms of the depth but also recognizes that for many of his students they would otherwise never be confronted with thinking about race and racism.
The resistance to engaging with topics on race is not limited to only Bobby’s undergraduate students. Few graduate students in geography have taken an interest in researching issues of race or racism at the University of Alabama. Most of Bobby’s work with graduate students have been through other disciplines. He has mentored graduate students in other fields such as urban studies, sociology, and political science, and has had Masters students go on to PhD programs at places like Florida State and the University of Tennessee. At the University of Alabama, they only offer Master’s programs so Bobby’s interactions with PhD students is limited. Although some of his graduate students have engaged with race in their work, the conservative environment at the University of Alabama is not conducive for generating discussions about racism.

When Bobby began graduate school in 1969, people were talking about race and racism because it was a prevalent and conscious concern for many, especially racialized people. The COMGA fellows and others in similar programs were a part of programs with explicit intentions to increase the presence of Black students in predominantly white colleges and universities. Stemming out of the Civil Rights Movement, such programs were developed after the end of segregation and during a time when discussions on racism in America were commonplace as experiences of racism were acknowledged as being a part of, and, undeniably tied to the Black experience in America.

Today, on the other hand, the presence of racism has become such contentious and poorly understood social phenomenon. Bobby has found engaging in conversations about race and racism to be more of a challenge in the present than it has been in the past. Talking about race and racism has become largely absent from everyday discussions, and sparking an
interest in, and engaging students in course material on race has become increasingly more
difficult over time.

Thoughts on the Future of Geography

Bobby goes on to explain how the continued failure to attract racialized students into
geography graduate programs has led us to this critical moment. The apparent scarcity of
interest among racialized students to graduate programs in geography is an indication of how
drastically the discipline must change and encourage research and conversations on race and
geography. He is pessimistic about the likelihood of improvements in the field in the near
future.

There are no indications that things are going to get better or that there are any
concerted efforts towards bringing about radical change pertaining to a demographic shift
among geographers. Soon, the discipline will see an increase in racialized geographers who
have immigrated to the U.S. but there is nothing to suggest interest and access to graduate
school in geography will improve for American-born racialized people. Bobby predicts an
influx of racialized geographers who are born outside of North America will spur the tipping
point towards talking about race in geography. A critical mass of geographers who are
immigrants and who are racialized will be the ones to draw attention to the racial tensions
within the discipline. Bobby imagines they will be the ones who shift how race is discussed
in geography because right now there are too few geographers of colour to critically engage
on topics pertaining to race.

The reluctance to talk about race in geography is one of the driving factors motivating
Bobby’s work. Even in the American South, there is a lot of hesitation and avoidance around
open discussions on race. But because of the history of slavery and racism in the American South, it is essential to conduct research on the American South to understand race in America:

I wanted to do my research on the South because I don’t believe you can study race in America without beginning with the American South, you know, with slavery, and so forth, like that. And this is why I’ll continue to stay in the south and hope that I can change things through my writing and in that sense.

For now, Bobby plans on persevering with his research on the American South and remains hopeful that his writing will continue to influence how race is understood in America.
Chapter 5

Audrey Kobayashi – In-depth Interview

“…you cannot escape the re-enacting of whiteness. There are ways to resist, and they come from recognizing how the system works. It’s about trying to imagine a different way of living.” - Audrey

Audrey Kobayashi is a Canadian geographer at the forefront of intersectional theories of race and gender within the discipline of geography in North America. Since the mid-1990s, Audrey has devoted much of her career to developing antiracist theory and continuing to push for antiracist practice in geography. She is one of the most prolific geographers of colour writing on racism, antiracism, and whiteness within the discipline of geography.

Audrey’s experiences of racism growing up against the backdrop of whiteness in the Okanagan Valley as well as her grandfather’s poetry about migration play important roles in the development of her antiracist scholarship in geography.

5.1 Childhood, Japanese-Canadian Identity, and Higher Education

Audrey was born in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada in 1951 and grew up on rural farmlands in the Okanagan Valley in the interior of the province. Audrey’s grandparents were born in Japan and her grandfather moved to the village of Okanagan Centre soon after arriving in Canada in 1906. Her grandmother immigrated to Canada in 1913. Audrey’s father was born in British Columbia and her mother was born in Alberta. She identifies as Japanese-Canadian.

Audrey’s father worked at a fruit packing plant prior to working at a co-operative store and her mother worked numerous jobs. Neither of her parents attended university but
early on in her childhood, Audrey’s teachers saw her academic potential. It was always just assumed that Audrey would go to university – she was the first person in her family to attend university and remains the only one in her extended family who has pursued an academic career.

Although Audrey grew up around other people who also identified as Japanese-Canadian, most of the Japanese-Canadians she knew were relatives or cousins and came from similar familial circumstances. Her Grandfather had six children and her Grandfather’s brother also lived on the same street and had seven children. Audrey grew up on her grandfather’s orchard surrounded by a large extended family of numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins. She was one of the 20+ cousins within a ten-year age span, all living along the main road running through the orchards. With so many Kobayashi children in such a concentrated area, Audrey never felt isolated or excluded as a child because of her Japanese heritage.

Being surrounded by family, however, did not insulate her from experiences of racism as a child. While in elementary school, she learned about English heritage and was taught a largely English curriculum (Kobayashi 2017). She went to school with white children and the other Japanese-Canadian children at her school were almost always one of her cousins. She recalls, “some kids would go, ‘chinky, chinky’ and turn their eyes up and that sort of thing.” Similarly, Audrey attended a high school where all the students were white except for her and her best friend who was Indigenous. They became friends in the seventh grade and remained best friends until graduation. She never thought about the significance of being best friends with the only other racialized student at the school—perhaps it was not a matter of coincidence.
Audrey’s Grandfather

Years after arriving in Canada, Audrey’s grandfather became devoted to the Christian faith. In the 1930s, Christianity was extremely influential in his life—enough of an influence for him to re-name his children with English, Christian names. Audrey’s grandparents gave their first four children Japanese names at birth but when Audrey’s father was about 12 years old, he was re-named with the biblical name, Andrew. Audrey’s father’s name was Hiroshi, and, at the age of 12, trying to change his son’s name from Hiroshi to Andrew was destined for failure. People continued to address Audrey’s father as Hiroshi despite the attempt to anglicize his name. Audrey’s grandfathers’ two youngest children were born in the 1930s and were given Christian names at birth.

The Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement was created in response to the internment of over 20,000 Japanese Canadians in the 1940s when the U.S. declared war on Japan after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. The majority of interned Japanese Canadians were born in Canada. During the 1940s, Japanese Canadians who lived within 100 miles from the Pacific coast were sent to Prisoner of War camps, disposed of their personal property, and denied civil rights. The 100-mile measurement was deemed by the Canadian government as the marker for potentially being a Japanese spy—Japanese Canadians who lived within 100 miles of the Pacific coast were seen as national security threats who needed to be detained.

In the early 1940s, the Kobayashi family was one of the few Japanese-Canadian families who were spared from being uprooted and forced into internment by the Canadian government. Because Kelowna was in the interior of British Columbia and far enough from the coast, most of her family and the Japanese-Canadian people who lived in her community did not experience the same degree of inhumane treatment and dispossession as others living
in British Columbia at the time. Though her family could remain on the land, they encountered racism from both the community as well as the Canadian government. Their movement and actions became regulated by the government as they were required to follow new laws made solely for Japanese Canadians.

Prior to immigrating to Canada, Audrey’s grandfather was a haiku poet in Japan, writing in the Meiji era when very few people had the opportunity to attend universities. Universities in Japan were established for the elite and it was rare for people to have attended schools. As a result, poetry was an extremely important aspect of Japanese tradition in the absence of a formal education system. During this era, poets began to emerge from the grassroots and began teaching poetry based on ancient traditions dating as far back as the twelfth century. Audrey’s grandfather excelled at poetry and became a grassroots poetry teacher after immigrating, training students in the art of haiku in Canada and teaching poetry to people in his own community in Kelowna.

In the 1940s when the Canadian governments interned tens of thousands Japanese Canadians and increased surveillance on Japanese Canadians who were not forced into prison camps, Audrey’s grandfather travelled to the camps and taught poetry. Writing poetry and the act of teaching haiku were forms of providing and building community leadership. At first glance, her grandfather’s poems may not have appeared to be overtly political; however, with further reflection, Audrey views her grandfather’s poems as a part of the fight for justice because they stemmed for the discrimination his friends and family were facing. Much of the poetry existing today on experiences and responses to the internment of Japanese Canadians is a result of Audrey’s grandfather’s work. Audrey’s grandfather was an award-winning poet and has been recognized by the Japanese government as an influential teacher of haiku.
Beyond teaching and writing poetry, Audrey’s grandfather’s political involvement was carried out through his everyday actions and his subtle engagement with overt forms of racism towards Japanese Canadians during the time of internment. Audrey explained:

He took a photograph of a sign in Kelowna, British Columbia during the 1940s. And it was a sign with a big apple. And it said: “welcome to Kelowna.” And underneath was scrawled, “Coast japs, keep out. You are not wanted”. And he took a photograph. I don’t have any commentary with the photograph but it indicated that he was concerned. ... He never stated his politics explicitly but you can see that he was...he was working politically. He also played a very significant role in hiring people. He owned a lot of land in the Okanagan. And he ... he was an orchardist. He would go onto the camps and hire people to come and work in the orchard. And that was one of the ways they could get out of the internment camps. So, he did a lot but it was very subtle.

As Audrey’s critical perspective began to mature, her grandfather’s political influence through poetry, teaching, and his everyday actions became more and more evident.

The beginning of Audrey’s antiracist politicization can be traced back to her engagement with her grandfather’s poetry. One of her first academic research projects was on the role of poetry in the lives of immigrants as a Master’s student at UBC. Further developing a keen interest in poetry, Audrey took Japanese language and literature courses. She knew her grandfather was a renowned haiku poet and so she wanted to get a sense of the aesthetics of Japanese poetry to understand how poetry played a role in immigrant life. Sadly,
however, by the time Audrey had taken an interest in her grandfather’s poetry, he had passed away.

Decades after first beginning to engage critically with the experience of Japanese Canadians in Canada as a Master’s student, Audrey returned to her hometown of Kelowna, BC on a research field trip in recent years to interview faculty at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan. Her experience returning to the place where she grew up and to where the Kobayashi family settled for well over a half-century, resulted in the article “Camp Road” (2017). Using a critical race lens to juxtapose her grandfather’s migration story with the anti-Japanese racism in Canada, Audrey recounts how whiteness was inescapable and embedded in all aspect of life in the Okanagan Center at the time. On the one hand, she sheds light on her grandfather’s consciousness of the racism and injustice of the government’s internment policies. On the other hand, Audrey also reflects on how her grandfather sought to overcome racism by performing whiteness through mastery of the English language, owning land, becoming involved with the Christian church, and projecting an air of belonging and confidence.

In ‘Camp Road,’ Audrey draws the troubling relationship between the experiences of the racialized faculty members at UBC, Okanagan while living in the City of Kelowna and her grandfather’s encounters with racism and pervasive whiteness in the century prior. Racialized faculty were constantly reminded of their out-of-placeness when going about their daily activities. Racist remarks, being watched with suspicion, assumptions about their ability to speak English, or being questioned about which orchard they worked on bear a striking similarity to the challenges faced by the Japanese-Canadian community in Kelowna generations ago. The continued centrality of the agricultural sector in the Okanagan Valley
and the assumed relationship between agricultural work, race, and class remain strong in people’s imaginations.

**Graduate School**

Audrey majored in geography during for her undergraduate degree at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and received her Bachelor of Arts in 1976. In 1978, she received a Masters of Arts in geography from UBC where Marwyn Samuels was her thesis supervisor. Marwyn Samuels was supervised by William Garrison for his PhD and was heavily influenced by Don Meineg. Audrey explained the intellectual connection between a handful of notable geographers:

> I think that’s important because Meineg was a towering intellect. He was also very influential for people like Don Mitchell. And all the other people who he’s influenced were quite instrumental bringing about poststructuralist geography. Marwyn did his PhD with William Garrison. Garrison was very, very smart but completely quantitative. And if anything, Marwyn was influenced to move in a different direction, more in a theoretical humanistic direction. So, Garrison encouraged his students to go more theoretical. He encouraged them to ask questions and be intellectual.

Audrey did not seek to become an antiracist geographer, nor had she any intention of studying racism when she began graduate school. Audrey’s youth and childhood began to influence her academic work while she was pursuing her Master’s degree. It was not until graduate school when Audrey began to take an interest in how her own markers of identity such as race, class, and upbringing influenced her research. At first, Audrey wanted to
conduct her Masters research on Central America. Her supervisor at the time, Marwyn Samuels, suggested she develop a research project on Japanese-Canadians and told her to go to the Asian Studies Department to inquire about learning how to speak Japanese. This is all it took to entice Audrey to switch her research focus.

Audrey was in her mid-20s when she began to interact with students in the Asian Studies Department at UBC who were engaged in social activism. Audrey’s critical consciousness grew stronger as she developed friendships with other young Asian Canadians who were also beginning to become social activists. Her identity as Japanese-Canadian and exposure to other politically active Asian Canadian young people at the University of British Columbia sparked her interest in the history of Japanese migration to Canada.

Prior to meeting these students, Audrey had limited exposure to other Asian Canadians beyond her family and the community members she grew up around during her childhood in Kelowna. Growing up in a community surrounded by aunts, uncles, and dozens of cousins, and without a family history of being uprooted and interned, it was not until Audrey moved to Vancouver to attend university when she began to realize the extent of the impact of internment camps on generations of Japanese-Canadian families. The experience of interacting with Japanese Canadians outside of her home community of Kelowna was deeply impactful because she began to meet young Japanese Canadians whose families were interned.

As she learned about Japan and the Japanese language, Audrey also gradually started to realize the importance of addressing the plight of Japanese Canadians in Canadian history. Influenced by her supervisor’s work on the historical geography of China as well as the research of other geography faculty members at UBC such as Cole Harris who studied the
historical geography of Canada and David Ley who was a social geographer investigating questions of ethnicity, Audrey knew she wanted to conduct a historical geography research project about Japanese Canadians.

Notwithstanding Audrey’s current assessment of the lack of strong political statements in her writing at the time, one of the papers she wrote while a Masters student was on the establishment of Camp Road in the Okanagan Valley. During this time, Audrey was also interested in creative forms of expression, and in particular, poetry. Other pieces she wrote appeared among a collection of poetry and short articles in a publication by the Powell Street Review called *Inalienable Rice: A Chinese and Japanese Canadian Anthology*. Her first publications consisted of a poem and a short article on early immigrants from Japan to Canada in *Inalienable Rice*. Audrey’s work appeared alongside other young Asian-Canadian activists in the anthology, including notable Canadian authors and poets such as Joy Kogawa and Roy Miki.

While in her Master’s program, Audrey was also fascinated by the work of Heidegger. As she attempted to apply Heideggerian theory to her project, Marwyn Samuels suggested she shift her theoretical focus from Heidegger to Sartre. Her first engagement with Sartre was in her Masters as she tried to understand the role of landscape in the formation of community. Little did she know, understanding and applying the philosophy of Sartre would remain a lifelong project.

Upon completing her MA in 1978, she began a PhD program in the Department of Geography at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) under the supervision of
Nick Entrikin and Chris Salter\textsuperscript{2}. Audrey eventually chose to do her PhD at UCLA because one of her PhD supervisors, Chris Salter, conducted research on China and did work on landscape and literature. She wanted to conduct research on literature and Asia and Chris’ research interests were the closest to what Audrey was hoping to study. There were several other people she could also work with at UCLA, it was a great school, it was on the west coast, and there was an Asian American Center.

As she went through her studies at UCLA, Audrey connected with other graduate students in Asian American Studies and occasionally discussed issues pertaining to racism. At the time, the geography department at UCLA was void of any critical discussions about race or racism. In a graduate class of 50 students, there was only one other racialized student in the geography program.

Although Audrey did not have many opportunities to engage with critical race concepts through UCLA’s geography program, she had meaningful intellectual engagements with geographers who specialized in other fields. For example, when Audrey was a PhD student she cites her conversations with Reginald Gollege as heavily influential in the development of her theoretical understanding of the relationship between individuals and environments. Reginald was a faculty member at the University of California at Santa Barbara and would travel between the geography departments at Santa Barbara and UCLA. David Lowenthal was another geographer who was somewhat influential in Audrey’s understanding of historical geography. They would often discuss complex theories and ideas and debate such topics as the meaning of the past and the constitution of the past. David and

\footnote{\textsuperscript{2} Nick Entrikin was supervised by Robert Sack at the University of Wisconsin for his PhD and Christopher Salter was supervised by Jim Parsons at the University of California, Berkeley for his PhD. Both Jim Parsons and Carl Sauer were heavily intellectually influential for Chris Salter}
Audrey have known each other for many years and have become good friends through their rich theoretical conversations.

Of the main approaches to geography, Audrey was fascinated by humanism. Audrey was a humanistic geographer in an era of government conservatism and when she arrived at UCLA for her PhD program, she found most geographers there were structuralist Marxists. Race and racism were not topics of discussion during a conservative era amongst structuralist Marxists. Audrey felt she lacked the theoretical understandings to make the connections between Marxist and humanist perspectives in geography and sought to strengthen her theoretical knowledge. She took a course in the Philosophy Department on Sartre and poststructuralism and has since recognized the significance of Sartre in the development of antiracist thought.

After completing her coursework, Audrey conducted fieldwork in Japan and conducted research on the historical geography of migration and its impact on a village in the Shiga Prefecture. When she finished her fieldwork in Japan, she returned to UCLA and completed writing her thesis. Awarded scholarships from the Japanese government and the Canadian government through the Social Science and Humanities Research Council, Audrey was able to focus entirely on finishing her PhD without having teaching or TA responsibilities competing for her time. Immediately after receiving a Doctor of Philosophy from UCLA in 1983, Audrey began as an Assistant Professor at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, Canada in the Department of Geography.
5.2 The Beginning of a Professional Career in Geography

The Japanese-Canadian Redress Movement

When Audrey began teaching at McGill University, she continued her work on the historical geographies of Japanese immigration. She said her work was still not overtly political and is unsure if she was avoiding a more in-depth historical materialist interpretation or if it the grave importance of the matter simply had not occurred to her. Although she was aware of the presence of racism in the division of labour within the Vancouver sawmills, a major employment sector of Japanese immigrants after the uprooting of the 1940s, she was more fixated on creating a comprehensive database of the location of Japanese immigrants than on the political significance of how Japanese immigrant labour was situated within modes of production and larger economic objectives. Nonetheless, Audrey compiled a database of more than 30,000 Japanese immigrants. She continued to expand on her PhD research when in the mid-1980s she received a phone call from the brother of the president of The National Association of Japanese Canadians, Roy Miki.

Roy Miki called Audrey asking for help with the Japanese Redress Movement. Before moving to UCLA for her PhD, Audrey attended meeting on the Japanese-Canadian Redress Movement while a student at UBC in the late 1970s. The discussion surrounding Redress Movement was a common topic of conversation when Audrey was active with the Powell Street Review, a writers’ cooperative. After Audrey left Vancouver to go to school in Los Angeles, the Redress Movement was gaining momentum. The National Association of Japanese Canadians was in the process of negotiating the Redress Settlement and wanted Audrey to work with them to gather evidence and document the impact the uprooting of
Japanese Canadians in the 1940s had on the Japanese-Canadian community. As a result, she focused most of her energy on preparing for the Redress Settlement from 1986 to 1988.

It was not until she started working on the Redress Settlement and met activists in the Japanese-Canadian community when she realized the significance of racism in the historical geography of Canada. As she engaged in conversations with other committee members working on the settlement, and in particular, with Art and Roy Miki, she began to see Japanese Canadians as racialized rather than an ethnicized group. Audrey’s growing awareness of the injustices faced by Japanese Canadians during the time of internment and her subsequent involvement with the National Association of Japanese Canadians during the Redress Settlement heavily influenced the politicization of her work. It was through the experience of working on the Redress Settlement that Audrey began to theorize the concept of race and to think about processes of racialization.

When asked about how her identity has influenced the types of research activities she has chosen to undertake, she acknowledged just how profoundly her identity as a Japanese Canadian and the history of Japanese immigration to Canada has shaped the development of her political commitments as well as her scholarly pursuits. Her childhood and personal ties to the Japanese-Canadian community in the Okanagan eventually led her researching Japanese Canadians early on in her career. Although she has not written much on the specific community she grew up in, her family history, her personal identity, and her personal connection to issues concerning Japanese Canadians were what compelled her to become involved with activists in the Japanese Canadian community. The significance of how her identity impacted her research was not realized until she became heavily involved with Japanese Canadian community activists when preparing for the Redress Settlement. The
connection between her personal identity and the development of her political identity happened gradually and development of her political consciousness and the role of her background on her political commitments and research trajectory were not realized until the early 1990s when she was already several years into her career as a geographer.

**Tenure**

In the years prior to her tenure process, Audrey spent much of her time working with Redress committee members and members of the Japanese Canadian community in preparation for The Redress Settlement in 1988 and 1989. Initially, the tenure review committee at McGill told Audrey they were tending not to give her tenure because she spent too much time doing community work. She learned she may not receive tenure when on sabbatical in London, England. She had gone to London to work on theorizing racism and was working with Peter Jackson, who was the prominent geographer researching race and racism in geography at the time. While in London, Audrey was surprised to learn that most of the British geographers who had been theorizing about racism did not have strong community links – she went to Britain to learn about theories on racism from British geographers, but when she got there, she found it odd that there was limited community engagement between the British geographers and the communities they were researching. She thought it was ironic that she was spending her sabbatical in Britain learning about theories of racism from geographers who wrote about racism but had limited interactions with racialized communities. Adding to this troubling irony, Audrey was called to return to McGill because the tenure committee was considering denying her tenure because her work was deemed to be too community-centred.
Audrey’s tenure file received strong recommendations for tenure at the departmental level and was forwarded by the geography department to the university-level review committee. It was at the university level where her community work and writing was seen as non-academic and for popular audiences. When Audrey was before the tenure committee, the members decided to remove all of the community related work from her CV and then evaluated it on the basis of what was left. She received tenure in 1989 but recognizes it was a close call as the decision could have gone either way.

Audrey explained how the perspectives on different types of research have changed since she went up for tenure. Research with community engagement components or are accessible to the public is now encouraged by the Canadian research funding agencies and is applauded by university administrators. In the late 1980s, community-based work and publications were seen as inferior to traditional forms of research output and were not considered during the tenure process. The dismissal of Audrey’s work pertaining to the Redress Settlement and the Japanese Canadian community by the tenure board marked a shift in her scholarly activities.

The close call with the decision towards her tenure file combined with the completion of the Redress Settlement encouraged her to focus on developing theoretical arguments and publishing in academic journals. Soon after receiving tenure, she transitioned away from her research on the historical geography of Japanese immigration to Canada. With the exception of one article on the emergence of the Powell Street area in Vancouver and the migrants who lived there, she began to focus on theoretical research on race, racism, and gender.
Early Career

In 1989, Audrey worked on an edited book with Susanne McKenzie entitled *Remaking Human Geography* while on sabbatical. In the book, they attempted to engage Marxist and humanist geographers in a conversation to draw the ties between what these two seemingly conflicting theoretical perspectives had in common; however, *Remaking Human Geography* drew little attention when it was first published in 1989 (reprinted in 2014). Audrey explained how, in many ways, the book was prophetic because it was published in the same year the Berlin Wall came down, preceded poststructuralist accounts in geography, and was published during a time when most human geographers were still either Marxist or humanist. With a growing interest in poststructuralism and a declining emphasis on structural Marxism, the suppression of conversations surrounding race began to lift in the 1980s and researchers started to see the significance of race in intellectual communities (but not in geography).

The early 1990s were a productive time for Audrey as her ideas and theories on community scholarship started to come together. Audrey began working with Linda Peake on developing theoretical perspectives on intersectionality in geography. Although there was already some literature on intersectionality in the early 1990s coming from Postcolonial Studies, when Audrey and Peake were working on intersectional theory, they came to realize geography had largely neglected any sort of discussion on both gender and race. In 1994, they published the first article in the first volume, of the first issue in the journal *Gender, Place and Culture*. “Unnatural discourse. ‘Race’ and gender in geography” was the first article published by geographers on the intersection of race and gender. Audrey acknowledges Peake as someone who has been significant in cultivating her antiracist
Audrey considers Peake to be one of the strongest explicitly antiracist scholars in geography. In the same year “Unnatural discourse” was published, Audrey published another article, “Colouring the Field: Gender, “Race,” and the Politics of Fieldwork” in *The Professional Geographer*. Although “Colouring the Field” also centered on the intersections of race and gender, the article was unique because it was Audrey’s personal perspective on the discipline from her position as a geographer, a community activist, a woman, and a person of colour. The position from where she wrote this article and how her personal background played a role in the activist communities she was involved in at the time drew attention to the lack of scholar-activists who are speaking from within their own communities and are engaged in research that is a part of their own struggle.

By the time “Coloring the Field” was published, Audrey was well passed the tenure scare, had co-edited a book, and had published numerous other academic articles, including a prize-winning article on Japanese immigrant women (1995; see Appendix C). She was well established in her career and had no hesitations about critiquing the discipline in “Coloring the Field.” Additionally, Audrey left the position at McGill University to begin as a Full Professor at Queen’s University in the Department of Women’s Studies. Having completed all of her undergraduate and graduate degrees in geography and having spent her first decade as a faculty member in a geography department, Audrey began a new role in the faculty of Women’s Studies at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario in 1994. In 1999, she returned to geography when she received full appointment to the Department of Geography at Queen’s University.
Influential Scholars

As previously mentioned, Audrey’s interest in Sartre began in her Masters as she wrestled with the tensions between Heideggerian and Sartrean approaches during the course of the degree. When Audrey moved to UCLA for her PhD in 1979, there was no-one else in geography reading Sartre. As much as Audrey wanted to have discussions on Sartre and spatiality, the only person she could talk to about the topic was with the philosophy professor with whom she took a course on Sartre. Similarly, this philosophy professor was intrigued because there were no philosophers talking about spatiality at the time. It was not until the mid-1980 that Audrey would encounter another scholar interested in Sartre and spatiality. In the mid-1980s, Brazilian geographer, Milton Santos spent a term as a visiting professor at McGill. Although Milton is most known for his economic critiques of capitalism and development, his knowledge and engagement with Sartre’s work led to fruitful intellectual conversations between Milton and Audrey. Audrey recalls, “Milton and I had great discussions. He was the only geographer who really read and knew Sartre.” By the early nineties, she was still unable to find people talking about Sartre and spatiality, so she moved on to researching other things.

It was not until many years later when Audrey was compelled to revisit Sartre’s contributions to geography. Sitting on the editorial board for the Annals of American Geographers, Audrey reviewed an article analysing housing activism in Dublin from a Sartrean perspective. The article was submitted by Mark Boyle, and in one of the footnotes, he stated Audrey’s article in the book she edited with Suzanne was the only article on Sartre written by a geographer. As the only geographer who has written on Sartre and because she
happened to be on the editorial board at the time, Audrey was able to advise on the necessary revisions.

During the revision process, Mark and Audrey got to know one another and decided they should write together to explore Sartre’s contributions to geography. Reflecting on this time, Audrey now sees why she had so much difficulty placing Sartre’s work – viewing Sartre as a Marxist instead of an existentialist was the key to being able to connect Sartre and spatial theory. When she met Mark Boyle, she was finally able to re-engage with Sartrean spatiality as, finally, there was another geographer working on this theoretical challenge. In collaboration with Mark Boyle, they began to apply Sartre in attempts to theorize complex theoretical and philosophical question in geography. Audrey and Boyle revisited Sartre’s engagement with the development and understanding of spatiality during his time in France during the 1940s to the 1970s. Audrey hopes geographers will begin to read Sartre fundamentally because she believes his theories of spatiality could potentially be very useful when it comes to furthering antiracist thought. Sartre’s contributions to theories of spatiality continues to influence the development of present-day theories such as situationism; further engagement with Sartre’s work could shift understandings of geography.

In addition to Sartre, Audrey has been influenced by the work of several geographers. She stated there was no one individual or one clear direct line of influence shaping her career trajectory in becoming an antiracist geographer and that a countless number of people have played an important role in her intellectual development. The sabbatical she took in London, England to work with Peter Jackson in the late 1980s did not take her into the research direction she had hoped, but the professional relationship proved helpful in how she came to understand race in geography. Additionally, some of the most influential early geographic
works for Audrey include the 1978 book *Humanistic Geography*, co-edited by David Ley and Marwyn Samuels. Samuels’ article in *Humanistic Geography* explored concepts of space and was significant in shaping Audrey’s thinking. David Ley’s work has also played an important role in influencing Audrey’s development of ideas. Audrey recently revisited David Ley’s earlier work from the 1970s on Philadelphia because other than publications by Bobby Wilson, Ley is one of the few geographers citing DuBois prior to the year 2000.

More recently, Audrey has been working on trying to trace the history of race in geography and has found Harold Rose and Don Deskins’ role in geography to be particularly influential in terms of how the concept of race became politicized within the discipline. Audrey first became aware of Harold’s work when she was a graduate student at UCLA after coming across his AAG Presidential Address years earlier in 1978. As a graduate student, she did not recognize the connection between Harold’s work and her own but understood Harold was asking important questions no one else was addressing.

Audrey had not personally known Harold or Deskins for a long period of time and only recently became acquainted with them as she began to seriously engage with Harold and Deskins’ publications and traced their involvement within geography. She views Harold’s and Deskins’ academic politics as key in propelling shifts in how race is understood in geography. Though Audrey senses Harold may not have agreed he was engaged in academic politics, his presence as the first Black geographer to be hired as a tenured faculty member in a predominantly white university in North America is debatably a political act.
5.3 Key Moments in Antiracist Geography

COMGA

Saul Cohen and Don Deskins’ efforts around the formation of COMGA was a pivotal moment for the discipline. Don Deskins began publishing articles on Afro-America while he was completing his PhD at the University of Michigan when Saul Cohen approached him to help establish the COMGA program. The COMGA Fellows were not encouraged to write or publish but rather to focus on teaching. The COMGA program was set up to train young Black geographers in geography graduate programs at predominantly white universities with the hope that if they were to teach at historically Black institutions, they would aid in improving geographic education at the undergraduate level. Although the COMGA program did not create the steady and long-lasting stream of students from historically Black institutions to geography graduate programs as intended, the timing of the program coincided with the formation of a small network of Black geographers.

Don Deskins and Harold Rose met and became friends around the time COMGA was formed, and Bobby Wilson had just begun a graduate program in geography at Clark University during the same time Saul Cohen was a faculty member in the Geography Department. Deskins and Harold were the only Black faculty in geography departments at white institutions in North America at the time and would talk about how they found it difficult to gain legitimacy at these big-name schools.

The pioneer African American geographers include Harold Rose at the University of Wisconsin, Don Deskins at the University of Michigan, and Joe Darden at Michigan State. Bobby’s situation was a bit different because he finished his PhD after Harold, Deskins, and Darden, and he also returned to the American South to take up a faculty position at the
University of Alabama. According to Audrey, Bobby is probably the most prolific African American geographer who once attended a HBCU; perhaps not a coincidence that Bobby’s undergraduate institution, North Carolina Central, is one of the few remaining HBCU in the American South with a long-lasting reputation for having a strong geography program.

**University of Kentucky Workshop in 1998**

Another vital moment in the development of antiracist practices and theory in geography was in 1998 when geographers at the University of Kentucky received a grant from the National Science Foundation to run a workshop on antiracist geography. The meeting in Kentucky was an important and defining moment in geography, more so than people realized. Many of the participants from the workshop continue to be or have become core antiracist scholars in geography. The workshop on antiracist geography in 1998 was pivotal for identifying and bringing together those who were committed to antiracism in geography and for cultivating a small community of antiracist geographers. Although the bringing together of people in Kentucky did not result in the publication of a book, several articles stemming from the workshop have been written.

Audrey attributes the antiracist workshop at the University of Kentucky in 1998 as another instrumental moment encouraging her to continue working on antiracist causes within the discipline of geography. Even though she is not close to everyone who was at the workshop, she has kept in touch with and has remained good friends with many of the people who were in attendance. She has even published with a few of the people who participated in the workshop and she continues to view the people who were at the workshop to be one of her most important networks in antiracist scholarship.
Race, Ethnicity, and Place (REP) conference

The creation of the Race, Ethnicity, and Place (REP) conference through the AAG signified the AAG’s commitment to encouraging geographic inquires pertaining to race. The first REP conference was held at Binghamton University in 2002. REP brings together people from all over the U.S. who are researching issues around race. It plays an important role in bringing people from Northern and Southern states together to talk about race; however, at REP there are distinct divisions between African American spaces and spaces for geographers from other racial or ethnic groups. These are the two largest groups at REP, in addition to groups of white scholars theorizing racialization. Audrey recounts one of the REP conferences held at Howard University:

> It was almost like we were at different conferences. It was the most segregated REP conference. I went into a session on theory but there wasn’t a Black person in the room. At the same time, sessions were going on that were organized through Binghamton. There was hardly a white person in the room.

She explained how the attendees at the varying conference sessions are a demonstration of the reproduction of scholarly interest. Audrey elaborated further:

> There’s the theoretical stuff that’s happening in the big-name schools. And as you know, you can count on one hand the number of Black geographers that have gotten into the big-name schools. There are few Africans originally from Africa sprinkled here and there. But they’re doing different things. There’s still a huge disconnect between historically Black institutions, and this is particularly a U.S. issue, between the historically Black institutions and the “main” geography departments which are still so white. One difference occurs
in the South. Umm, and if you go to the Southwest Division of the AAG, it’s somewhat different. ‘Cause you actually have Southern geographers doing antiracist work.

There are a handful of geographers in the South, like Derek Alderman, Josh Inwood, and Jim Tyner, who are engaged in a different kind of antiracist work. Most of them are white and are at white universities but are engaging with antiracism through an activist approach. They tend to address antiracism within specific contexts. For example, Derek Alderman places an emphasis on place names and community participation in his work. There tends to be little opposition or resentment towards white geographers when they conduct antiracist research centered on activism. The work of white geographers discussing racism is generally well received by the wider [white] discipline of geography.

When asked about the presence of racism in the discipline of geography, Audrey does not believe geographers in their personal lives are any more or less racist than any other group of people. Rather, the omission of antiracist practices and the failure to acknowledge and address issues of racism within the discipline of geography are what allow for the systemic perpetuation of racism. Individual geographers enact antiracism in their personal lives but not make the connections to how racism is manifested in their professional lives. By ignoring the ways racism is perpetuated within the discipline, for example, “every time a decision is made to hire someone who’s not racialized, the whiteness gets perpetuated”, racism is upheld, and the general lack of interest in issues of racism remain.
Antiracist Research and Women’s Studies

Before antiracism was recognized as an important area of study, having discussions about the intersection of gender and race was strongly discouraged. When Audrey first moved to the Women’s Studies Department at Queen’s University, it was nearly impossible to pursue antiracist scholarship. In the mid-1990s, there were several women of colour who were either in or affiliated with the Women’s Studies Department who were trying to engage with antiracist scholarship. Audrey explained how, as the Women’s Studies Department was becoming more and more established, and because issues of gender were now being put on the table, proposals to look at both gender and race were seen as threatening. The introduction of race into Women’s Studies would shift the discourse and there were people who were unwilling to consider intersectional analyses as a part of understanding gender. The high degree of informal censoring in Women’s Studies around antiracist scholarship eventually led to the resignation of several women of colour faculty in the late 1990s.

In 1999, Audrey left the Women’s Studies Department at Queen’s and moved to the Geography Department. As intersectionality and antiracist scholarship gained ground in larger academic circles, eventually the agenda began to shift within Women’s Studies at Queen’s. Presently, it would be unimaginable for someone to discourage intersectional analyses or antiracist scholarship. Years later and after the shift in discourse, the Women’s Studies Department hired new faculty members who critically engage with scholarship on race and/or antiracism. Along with the acceptance of intersectional and antiracist scholarship and the hiring of two scholars engaged in critical theory, the courses now offered through Gender Studies at Queen’s and the student demographic in the Master’s program have changed dramatically.
Antiracist Geography

When discussing the origin of antiracist theory and practice in North America, Audrey highlighted the difference between the development of antiracist theory in the U.S. and Canada. She clarified how the Civil Rights Movement was greatly influential in the development and push for critical race theory in the U.S. but in Canada, the impetus of antiracist theory stems from how liberal multiculturalism was rolled out about 40 years ago. Antiracism in Canada, not specifically in relation to geography but more generally, has always been practiced across different racialized groups. Due to the prevalence of scholarship on immigration in Canada, antiracist theory tends to encompass the struggles and experiences from a wide range of racialized groups. Antiracist theorization stemming from Canada often includes perspectives from many racialized groups and has not been developed from one particular community. Opposed to the tendency in the U.S. with antiracist work arising from specific racialized groups, Canada’s unique history of immigration and the mixing of many racialized groups has resulted in the development of antiracist theories from several broad perspectives.

Although there has been an increased acknowledgement of the importance of understanding race within geography, little has changed in terms of theoretical developments. There may be more geographers who identify as antiracist but in practice and in application, critical engagement with race in geography remains novel. Audrey explains how geographic questions about issues of race, racism, and antiracism became popularized within North American geography:

It’s notionally recognized but substantively, it’s kind of weak. I think more people have moved toward it. There are now more white geographers doing
antiracism than ever before. The impetus has been from the United States, no question. So, in the late eighties nineties a bunch of British geographers became interested in questions of race. They wrote their stuff on race and then they stopped. It was kind of a phase. It was influenced by the impact of poststructuralism and the whole postcolonial movement in Britain. Postcolonialism didn’t impact the U.S. and Canada in the same way. But by the late nineties, a lot more American geographers were much more interested in questions of racism.

Despite an increase in antiracist research in geography, research pertaining to race continues to primarily emphasize location based studies and geographic work on racialized groups within major U.S. cities. Chicago, Philadelphia, and cities in Florida are popular sites for geographic research. Audrey remarked: “Tons of work being done on Chicago but how many geographers of colour are in Chicago?” The locational focus may shift over time but the demographic of geographers conducting the research remains fairly consistent. The theorization of racism in U.S. cities is largely being conducted by white geographers.

On rare occasions, geographers of colour emerge from the communities in which they then go on to study. Audrey pointed out how although much of the antiracist geographic literature coming out of the U.S continues to focus on Black America or whiteness in the U.S.; however, in recent years there has been an increase in work on racialization in Latino/a Studies. Slowly, race is being theorized from the perspectives of other racialized communities within geography. Geographers such as Laura Pulido, for example, have applied critical race theorizations and brought issues of racialization specific to Latino/a communities into geography through her identity as a Chicana person and her personal
connection to the Latino/a community. But Laura Pulido is an exception because her work tends to be closely tied to the communities in which she is a part of. Much of her research is focused on Latino/a communities within Los Angeles, the city where she was born and raised.

Antiracist scholarship in geography pertaining to a specific racialized group in the U.S. is not necessarily connected to the presence of a large number of people from the group. Audrey explained why, despite the long history and rapid growth of Asian communities through immigration in North America has not translated into a steady stream of antiracist geographers who also identify as Asian. She stated most Asian geographers with faculty positions in North American geography departments immigrated to the U.S. or Canada from China. Asian geographers who immigrated to North American are not working on antiracist scholarship, except for Wei Li, according to Audrey, who is an exception.

Part of the reason why there are so few Asian American geographers is because Asian American Studies draws in a lot of people through the possibility of pursuing a wide range of research directions. There are also people like Michael Omi in Asian American Studies Departments who are writing about racism at a larger scale and go beyond looking at one particular group. Audrey explained patterns of population settlement is another reason why scholarship is happening in other departments and not in geography:

until relatively recently, a couple of decades, most of the Asians in the U.S. were in the west ... at Berkeley there was the Ethnic Studies Program that got very political in the seventies. The Ethnic Studies Department was basically Asian American scholars and there was an Asian American studies program at UCLA. Very antiracist, the both of them.
Only within the last few decades Asian people began to settle in areas beyond the west coast of North America. Prior to the dispersal of Asian people away from the west coast, Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies programs at places like Berkeley and UCLA were beacons for anyone wishing to study issues of race and racism. Many of the programs and departments with strong antiracist politics were also on the west coast and drew in students of colour, especially Asian students.

As Ethnic Studies, Asian American Studies, African American Studies, and Chicano Studies programs become rooted within the North American Academy, geography programs seeking to recruit graduate students are competing with disciplines with established antiracist perspectives and objectives. Audrey remarked: “I don’t know anyone who set out to study antiracism and said the best way to do that is to do it as a geographer.” Studying racism through the discipline of geography is unusual and is perhaps the primary reason why there are so few antiracist geographers and even fewer graduate students of colour pursuing antiracist research through geography. It is only very recently that some students have been able to see geography as a potential avenue for conducting antiracist research: “And maybe there’s a whole group of much younger, sort of 21st century scholars, for whom it makes sense.” The antiracist theorizing within geography over the last few decades has made it possible for young, new scholars to approach geography through an antiracist geographic lens. The possibility for conducting antiracist research in geography is not without a range of disciplinary constraints and challenges.

Geographers may see the importance of confronting the whiteness of geography and encouraging antiracist perspectives but to practice antiracism in a discipline and in an environment where whiteness is normalized is challenging. Audrey elaborated:
I would say that a lot of people have a difficulty connecting what they read and what they practice. And people practice whiteness on an everyday basis. … We reinforce a white society. You know, our whole lives are structured by whiteness and that’s why it’s so strong. And, I mean I’m an Antiracist theorist, and I know these things … I mean you cannot escape the re-enacting of whiteness. There are ways to resist, and they come from recognizing how the system works. It’s about trying to imagine a different way of living.

The ways geographers have challenged whiteness within geography has had varying outcomes. For example, attempts to increase the levels of representation of racialized peoples within geography have largely failed. Audrey stated there has been a small shift in the proportion of racialized geographers in North America but changes in how geographers engage with ideas on race have been huge. Antiracist work in geography is being valued in different way than a few years ago. Audrey attributes the praises she has received in geography for her work as an indication of how antiracism is now being valued in the discipline. She thinks with the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., there is now a whole generation of people who are about her age who genuinely want to see changes in how racism is addressed.

Rather than asking about the ways geographers are discouraged from studying issues pertaining to race, Audrey interjected and clarified that we should instead be asking how we are encouraging geographers to look at issues pertaining to race from an antiracist perspective. She elaborated:

If you go back to the so-called quantitative revolution, the influence of the Chicago School, they studied race, they mapped it. … And if you define it in
the narrow sense of mapping and quantifying the demographics. Does that make an antiracist? No. I don’t think it has ever, or for a very, very long time, been discouraged in terms of studying. Mapping something called race has been encouraged. The study of racialization, racism, and antiracism is not necessarily encouraged.

Narrow understandings and the failure to critically engage with the concept of race continue to be persistent barriers for encouraging antiracist thought within geography.

The small number of geographers of colour in North American geography departments is a major factor inhibiting antiracist thought in geography. Audrey elaborated:

I don’t think that racialized people should be … feel obliged to study racism any more than to study rocks or chemical reactions or anything else. They are often well suited in terms of their experience to contribute scholarship on antiracism. Although that doesn’t mean that there aren’t white people who are also able to contribute. But in a different way.

Increasing the participation of geographers of colour is an important factor for encouraging antiracist thought. Scholars with lived experiences of racism play an important role in the development of antiracist theory. By fostering an array of perspectives within geography, the normative whiteness of the discipline has a greater chance at being challenged and addressed. Recruiting and mentoring students of colour in geography graduate programs is necessary for increasing representation of geographers of colour but few geographers actively seek out students of colour. There are many students of colour in survey methods streams within geography graduate programs and fields such as GIS have been able to attract a lot of international students, especially from China. Other human geography streams have had far
fewer students of colour. Of the small number of students of colour in geography graduate programs in human geography, a significant proportion have been international students. Audrey added:

Harold Rose said to me, when I asked him about how many graduate students of colour he had, the only ones he’s had were international students. One of whom became an American. Now that doesn’t mean that he was perpetuating racism; in the context of that time being able to supervise an American PhD student [of colour] was very small. The chances now are much greater. And yet it still doesn’t happen that much.

It is understandable for the first generation of geographers of colour to have few graduate students of colour because of the challenges of desegregating the school system in the U.S. and the subsequent lack of students of colour to supervise. North American born students of colour tend not to pursue graduate programs in geography—Audrey believes strengthening personal relationships with students of colour in the mentorship and supervisory capacity and having a personal commitment to recruiting students of colour are essential for shifting the demographic of geographers. There are low levels of representation of North American-born students of colour in geography graduate programs and few geography faculty make a point of seeking out students of colour. Active recruitment, strong mentorship, and dedicated support of a graduate studies supervisor can make a difference. Half of Audrey’s current PhD students (8) and half of her past PhD students (11) in geography are people of colour. She has also served as a PhD supervisor for students of colour in other disciplines. All eight of Audrey’s current PhD students are conducting their doctoral research on issues pertaining to race and/or racism.
Chapter 6

The Genealogy of Antiracist Geographies through the work and lives of Harold Rose, Bobby Wilson, and Audrey Kobayashi

The life stories of Harold Rose, Bobby Wilson, and Audrey Kobayashi provide a glimpse into the influences, experiences, and barriers encountered when challenging racism within the discipline of geography. Their biographies are testimony to the pervasive racism embedded into everyday life in North America and are illustrative of the relationship between experiences of racism and the push for antiracist research and practice in geography.

In this chapter, the scholarship, experiences, insights, and intellectual influences of Harold, Bobby, and Audrey are woven together to tell the emerging story of antiracist geographic thought. Their intellectual contributions to geographic theory are presented against the backdrop of the dominant approaches and shifts in intellectual engagements within the discipline of geography. By situating Harold, Bobby, and Audrey's antiracist publications with broader discussions and approaches in geography, attention is drawn to their unwavering political commitment to challenging constructs and dominant theories surrounding race in the discipline.

A Foucauldian approach to genealogy is applied by highlighting works that signify moments of resistance to geography's white hegemonic and epistemological traditions. Drawing the connection between antiracist geographies and the lives of antiracist geographers of colour disrupts notions around the production of knowledge as neutral. The production of antiracist geographies is not simply the production of concepts but challenges white racial power and the status quo in the discipline of geography. The failure of acknowledging, the forgetting, and under-engagement with antiracist scholarship by
geographers of colour demonstrates the domination of whiteness in geography and the valorization of white voices and perspectives over the voices and perspectives of geographers of colour. When framed as a reflection of power and knowledge, the recognition (or the lack of recognition) of the contributions of antiracist scholars in geography are political acts.

**Behavioral Geography**

In the early 1960s, geographers were questioning the objectivity, universality, and accuracy of quantitative approaches in geography (Kitchin 2006) and were in the midst of moving away from quantitative perspectives and towards approaches that were thought to better reflect reality (Johnston 1997). Statistical analysis, mathematics, and spatial models alone were found to be inadequate for explaining spatial patterns and spatial behaviors. Behavioral geography thus emerged as an approach for understanding the relationship between humans and environments. Unlike methodologies and theories of the quantitative revolution, behavioral geography emphasized variations in human behavior and the psychology behind human-environment interactions and individual spatial behavior (Johnston 1986, 1997; Peet 1998; Nayak and Jeffery 2011). Human subjectivity and human behavioral processes, such as thinking, perception, memory, and attitudes, were examined to help understand spatial activities and patterns (Gollage 2006). Behavioral geography marked an important turn for the discipline of geography because it centered humans as actors, influencing spatial relationships and geographical environments (Argent 2017).
6.1 Harold, Behavioral Geography, and Critical Race Analysis

The onset of behavioral geography and the renewed focus on humans as decision makers and agents presented a window of opportunity for Harold to call attention to the experiences of Black Americans through a geographic lens. The antiracist research trajectory of Harold’s career was established when he started a tenure track position at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He immediately transitioned from physical geography to human geography and dove into asking difficult and probing questions about racial discrimination in the United States. There is no publication record of Harold engaging in any research related to his graduate level training in the natural sciences after the completion of the PhD. All of his subsequent scholarship was dedicated to explicitly addressing social issues pertaining to Black America (see Appendix A for a Bibliography of Harold’s publications).

Harold challenged geographic understandings of race and racism by delving into research on residential segregation, the Black ghetto, racialized poverty, Black academics and educators, and spatial analyses of Black migration at the early stages of his academic career. While all his publications in geography journals applied approaches from behavioral geography, some of Harold’s earliest work includes publications in the field of education, which are discussed below. Harold’s critical race contributions both within and outside of the discipline of geography were unprecedented. At the dawn of the 21st century, geographers began to recognize Harold’s vital intellectual contributions to the progression of geographic thought through his ground-breaking work in behavioral geography combining spatial analysis and analyses of human behavior through an antiracist lens (Dwyer 1997; Peake and Kobayashi 2002; Peake and Schein 2000; Kobayashi 2003, 2014a, 2014b); however, his publications in education journals have largely been overlooked by geographers.
The articles Harold published in education journals such as “The Market for Negro Educators in Colleges and Universities Outside the South” (1961), “An Appraisal of the Negro Educator's Situation in the Academic Marketplace” (1966a), and “Teacher-Exchange Programs: Academic Co-Operation between Northern and Southern Institutions” (1966b) are examples of his application of behavioral geography in a field outside of geography. These articles also demonstrate the strength of his commitment to using his scholarship to challenge dominant essentialist beliefs about African Americans. In these articles, he combines analyses of human behavior and spatial processes to draw attention to racism in higher education.

The application of antiracist principles and practices are explicit and clear in Harold’s publications that appear in education journals. For example, in “The Market for Negro Educators in Colleges and Universities Outside the South,” Harold (1961) establishes the spatial significance between attitudes towards African Americans and employment prospects in colleges and universities for African American educators in different regions throughout the United States. The article “An Appraisal of the Negro Educator's Situation in the Academic Marketplace” (1966a), serves as another example of how Harold practiced antiracism through research in his assessment of the viability and potential for teacher-exchange programs between educators from Northern and Southern colleges and universities. In “Teacher-Exchange Programs: Academic Co-Operation between Northern and Southern Institutions” (1966b), he states, “… another factor which is seldom mentioned is the discriminatory practices which exist in many of the nation’s institutions of higher education” (19); he continues by arguing that racial discrimination is what prevents major universities in the United States from hiring “more than a token representation of Negroes on its faculty,
and these tend to be rather specialized persons who are fitted in one way or another for such a role” (Caplow and McGee 1958 in Rose 1966b, 19).

Harold’s publications are among the first articles published by an academic geographer on Black educators’ teaching at institutions of higher education in the U.S. They are evidence of his awareness of and commitment to antiracist research and education from the outset of his career. Harold’s publications in the field of education are especially significant because of the political climate during which he was challenging essentialist notions of race. While all three articles are centered on education, all can be applied to geographic analyses. Given his unquestionably antiracist stance, it is unlikely that Harold would have been able to publish such articles in a geography journal. Prior to Harold’s entry into the discipline of geography, there were few, if any, geographic investigations presenting race as a powerful social construct shaping the livelihoods of Black Americans. Rather, geographic analyses of race prior to the 1960s reflected popularly held beliefs of superior and inferior racial groups and used race as an innate biological justification for explaining social, economic, educational, and residential patterns.

Until the mid-1960s, North American geographic literature seldom engaged with African Americans in research (Dwyer 1997). For the first decade of his academic career, Harold was the only African American with a PhD in geography teaching at a predominantly white university in the U.S.3 Although a handful of geographers, such as Bill Bunge (1965, 1971), Don Deskins (1969), Fred Donaldson (1969), John Hart (1960), and Richard Morrill (1965) also engaged in critical research on race, Harold was the only Black American geographer researching issues pertaining to race while also holding a PhD in geography in 1971, Don Deskins was the second African American to receive a PhD in geography and teach at a predominantly white university.
the 1960s. Harold’s research was seen as controversial and his work was often received negatively by geographers. Despite the pushback to his work, Harold remained persistent and continued to research issues of segregation and racism.

Harold’s intellectual contributions to fields of study beyond the discipline of geography warrant recognition—his application of geographic analyses to highlight spatial variations of racist attitudes within colleges and universities in the United States were significant, demonstrating how geographic concepts could aid understanding of grave social problems. While Harold’s critical race contributions within the field of education are significant, his intellectual contributions to the discipline of geography and to the formation of antiracist geographies are irrefutable, especially when viewed against the backdrop of behavioural geography. Harold’s work within behavioral geography played a critical role to the development of antiracist geographies.

In addition to the articles published in the field of education in the 1960s, Harold published three studies in geography journals where he applied approaches in behavioral geography to demonstrate the relationship between social processes, human behavior, and spatial patterns. In Harold’s 1964 article in Economic Geography, “Metropolitan Miami’s Changing Negro Population, 1950–1960”, he draws attention to the absence of research in population geography on Black America at the local level. At the time of publication, John Hart’s 1960 article in the Geographic Review was the only study in the discipline of geography investigating the migration of Black Americans between neighbourhoods. In “Metropolitan Miami”, Harold combines qualitative approaches of population geography with analyses of social processes to present the spatial distribution of Black residents as a phenomenon directly tied to the behaviors of white residents, race relations, and the overall
social climate. Without directly citing racism against Black Americans as the primary force influencing the spatial behavior of Black Americans, Harold lays evidence to support this claim.

With each subsequent publication within the discipline of geography, Harold becomes increasingly explicit and bold in challenging racism against Black Americans. In his 1965 article, “The All-Negro Town: Its Evolution and Function” in the *Geographical Review*, Harold begins by drawing attention to the whiteness of geography and the academy more broadly:

A phenomenon that appears to have eluded urban geographers, urban sociologists, and others concerned with community development is the all-Negro town in the United States. The existence of such towns has seldom come to the attention of persons who are not living near them. (362)

He continues by using a historical framework to demonstrate the direct ties between the abolition movement and the Underground Railroad in relation to the spatial distribution of America’s first all-Black towns. Harold contends the migration and settlement of Black communities was shaped by the “hostility of Northerners,” or, the racism of white people (365)—spatial processes, in his analysis, were shown to be directly related to human behavior.

Harold’s application of behavioral geography established racism as a human behavior and powerful social force influencing spatial relationships. He appeals to geographers to take seriously the importance of race in shaping American cities in his 1969 article in the *Journal of Geography*, “The origin and pattern of development of urban Black social areas.” He provides the case for considering the impact of social interactions between white and Black
residents in shaping the physical characteristics of cities. The refusal of white residents to enter a housing market predominantly occupied by Black residents and the formation of the Black ghetto were two social behaviors contributing to what Harold identified as ‘racial spatial’ patterns. He argues social and economic problems cannot be understood unless “the geographer [is to] translate a social concept into a valid spatial configuration” (327)—of which racialized poverty, social isolation, and social conflict all have spatial patterns. Referencing the Black ghetto, Harold again turns to those in the profession: “when one considers the persistence of this urban form, one wonders why geographers have given it so little attention” (328).

**Saul Cohen and the Formation of COMGA**

Harold advanced spatial theories within behavioral geography in the 1960s by demonstrating the direct relationship between social behavior and the power of racism on spatial processes such as racial segregation and the formation of the Black ghetto. At the same time, efforts to address the whiteness of the discipline of geography were beginning to take shape. Saul Cohen was one of the key leaders in the 1960s who urged geographers to be more conscious and proactive in addressing the problem of racial segregation within the discipline. Stanley Waterman (2002) outlines the life and career of Saul Cohen in *Political Geography*. Waterman discusses Cohen’s role in the formation of COMGA within the AAG. Paraphrased from Waterman (2002):

Gilbert White was the president of the Association of American Geographers from 1961-1962. Gilbert White first met Saul Cohen when they both attended the 1962 AAG Business Meeting in Miami. One of the tasks at the Business
Meeting was to choose locations for future AAG conferences. Cohen made an impression on White when he objected to hosting future AAG meetings in New Orleans and Nashville. Cohen voiced his concern over the racial segregation within American geography and the need to actively recruit Black Americans into the discipline of geography. He went on to explain how planning to host future AAG meetings in segregated cities such as New Orleans and Nashville would be counterproductive to recruitment initiatives seeking to attract Black Americans to the discipline.

A few years after the AAG meeting in Miami (the same meeting where Rose was interviewed for the job at the University of Milwaukee), White contacted Cohen to see if he was interested in becoming the Executive Officer of the AAG. At the time, Cohen was juggling two full-time jobs teaching at Boston University as well as working as a consultant in marketing geography. Cohen figured a break from both teaching and consulting would be a good opportunity to step back and reassess the direction of his career. Cohen agreed to take a year-long leave of absence from Boston University between 1964 and 1965 to take up the position of Executive Officer of the AAG.

In 1964, Cohen travelled around the United States, visiting geography departments while working on a project for improving teaching geography at the university level. While traveling in the American South, Cohen noted the lack of emphasis on geographic education at Black colleges. Amidst civil rights demonstrations, riots, and desegregation protests, it became clear that in his capacity as Executive Officer of the AAG, he had to do something. Cohen
devised the COMGA program with the intention of improving how geography was taught at Black colleges in the South and to set up a formal system for supporting and facilitating the transition of promising undergraduates into geography graduate programs. He first pitched the idea to the AAG Executive Council before seeking funding from the National Science Foundation. Cohen began developing the COMGA program (initially under the name A Geography Training Program for Talented Students in Small Southern Colleges) by organizing a summer school programs to prepare students for graduate school, identifying graduate programs in geography with faculty who supported the initiative, and securing additional funding to financially support the students through their graduate degree.

In 1968, Cohen approached Don Deskins, a Black American PhD student in the Department of Geography at the University of Michigan to become the AAG’s founding director of COMGA (AAG 2006). In 1969, Harold Rose and Don Deskins met for the first time at an AAG meeting to discuss the role of the AAG in facilitating the goals and objectives of COMGA. Shortly thereafter, Harold became the chair of COMGA (McNee 1970).

A strong statement about the purpose and necessity of COMGA was published in the “Association Affairs” section of a 1970 issue of The Professional Geographer. In the statement, Robert McNee (1970) points to the failure of geographers in addressing social spatial issues impacting Black Americans, the use of patronizing language towards Black Americans in geographic texts, the exclusion of Black Americans within the profession of geography, and the discipline’s long-held tradition of racial segregation:
On the whole, the message of the geographic profession has been like that of America in general, that this particular group of Americans did not count for much in the general scheme of things. Sounds harsh, doesn’t it? Yet it is of the deepest significance for our research and teaching that we have, indeed, tended to ignore Afro-America. If you search our professional literature, I think you will see what I mean. There isn’t much analysis (original emphasis) of Afro-America. This is more important than the fact that slurs and patronizing references, inadvertent or otherwise, have sometimes speared in out textbooks. (92)

... it seems reasonable to believe that Afro-Americans who have mastered contemporary research skills can add an extra something that is essential even in the scientific age. This is the intuitive grasp of the reality being probed because it has been experienced, or is being experienced by those with whom the searcher identifies. (93)

McNee argues it is important for African Americans to be involved in the profession of geography not only because there are so few African American geographers, but also because he believed those who have experienced racism and segregation are well suited to research the spatial and geographic patterns of racism and segregation. Encouraging Black Americans to become professional geographers has the potential to bring new perspectives in spatial analyses to the discipline of geography and could only be positive and advantageous.

With the growing acknowledgement of the importance of recruiting Black Americans into the profession of geography in the late 1960s, literature concerning Black America and the involvement of Black Americans in the discipline began to peak. For example, Don
Deskins published an article in *The Professional Geographer* in 1969 on the presence of geographic literature on Black Americans. In 1969, Don Deskins, Ronald Horvath, and Anne Larimore published an article in *The Professional Geographer* on the presence of Black faculty and Black graduate students in geography departments at predominantly white universities. In 1971, Deskins and Linda Speil published an article in *The Professional Geographer* on the presence of Black Americans in the profession of geography. In 1971, Deskins, Cohen, and Spiel published an article in the *Journal of Geography* evaluating the success and future direction of the COMGA program, and in 1975, Deskins and Speil repeated their study from 1971 on the presence of Black Americans in the profession of geography. The COMGA program ended, however, in the late 1970s (Peake and Shepard 2014).

The Black Ghetto and Racial Spatial Patterns

Despite the increased awareness around the exclusion of Black Americans in the profession of geography, Harold Rose remained one of only a handful of Black American geographers researching racial issues in the discipline of geography throughout the 1970s. In the 1970s, Harold had an established record of publications examining the urban spatialities of Black Americans and his work continued to center on the spatial configurations and formations of Black neighbourhoods in several U.S. cities. Harold’s original argument stood: race was a barrier to accessing housing. Or, as Harold had coined it, changes to *racial spatial patterns* needed to be analysed to understand the social and economic problems plaguing most major U.S. cities at the time.
Harold’s work in the 1970s continued to be politically charged with controversial commentaries on the formation of Black ghettos and the impacts of residential segregation on access to desired housing. Of his numerous publication in the 1970s, three publications stand out for his application of behavioral geography concepts to challenge the assumed objectivity of spatial theories. Human behavior—in which Harold shows includes racism—shapes the spatial development of Black neighbourhoods. In “The Development of an Urban Subsystem: The Case of the Negro Ghetto” (1970), Harold argues racism is the force creating the Black ghetto. The collective behavior of white individuals and their refusal to live in the same residential area as Black Americans produces the Black ghetto. Harold contends (1970) the Black ghetto cannot be understood using spatial theories alone, however: “The ghetto is not simply a spatial configuration, but a social and ideological configuration that has spatial expression” (16).

Harold’s first book, The Black ghetto: A spatial behavioral perspective (1971) investigates the role of social behaviors and social systems in the creation of the Black ghetto. The book begins with another nudge directed at geographers:

Countless words have been written about America’s black communities from a wide variety of disciplinarian and philosophic perspectives. The voice and perspective of the geographer is missing from that group comes as no surprise. One of the aims of this small volume is to demonstrate that the perspective of the geographer can lead to an enhanced understanding of the evaluation and development of urban black communities. (Rose 1971, xi)

In The Black Ghetto, Harold argues the reasons for the overall conditions of the ghetto is not a reflection of human inadequacy but rather, a reflection of weaknesses within a social
system. He contends racism within political ideology and the subsequent failure to provide adequate resources to support basic employment, education, and health services fuel unrest. Public education within the ghetto area is subpar because less money per child is provided to low income predominantly Black schools than to low income predominantly white schools. Harold demonstrates how most of the population is unable to access adequate health care services due to a shortage of physicians, cost of services, and obvert acts of racism in hospitals where care is denied to Black patients. Unruly behavior within the ghetto, such as the occurrence of riots, is bred through the prevalence of poorly supported social infrastructure and residents’ feelings of despair in making or changing political decisions impacting their community. Riots are not simply a spatial characteristic of the ghetto but are a reaction to an unjust social system that does not meet the needs of the people.

In 1976, Harold published *Black Suburbanization: access to improved quality of life or maintenance of the status quo?* Through an extensive study on the development of Black suburban communities, Harold questions the definition of the suburb and draws the dissimilarities between Black and other suburbs. Harold debunks popular beliefs about the formation of new all-Black suburbs as indications of social transformation. He argues Black suburban communities have characteristics parallel to characteristics of the Black ghetto and was concerned with the extent in which Black suburbanization represented a reversal of the process of ghettoization. Black suburbs still did not have political power and without political power, residents will have a poor quality of life due to limited access to social services. Without the positive attributes commonly associated with suburbs, Black suburban communities are at an increased risk of being overlooked when it came to the distribution of social resources. If Black suburbanization is an extension of the ghettoization process and
another settlement phase on a continuum, Harold (1976) cautions: “most of these communities are in serious need of assistance if they are ever to be transformed into living environments of opportunity rather than despair” (262). The theme of ‘despair’ at the end of Black Suburbanization remains common in Harold’s subsequent publications.

In 1976, Harold was elected President of the AAG. He was the first, and to date, the only Black President of the AAG. His Presidential Address (1977): “The Geography of Despair”, shook and angered many of the AAG members in attendance. Harold’s speech urged geographers to engage in research relating to the lived realities of people living in high stress environments. He argued it was necessary to study the spatial and environmental factors perpetuating the high incidences of lethal violence in Black urban areas and the disproportionately high rates of Black men becoming victims of homicide. Harold challenged theories about violence in Black neighborhoods and outright rejected popular studies suggesting violence within Black communities was a result of interpersonal and/or cultural deficits. Instead, he argued there were environmental factors leading to high rates of homicides. Those who lived in high stress environments and regularly had their personal security threatened tended to have a lower than average quality of life. Living in high risk environments increased the incidences of victimization and exacerbated the potential of lethal violence. Environments with a high risk of homicide, Harold argued, were (and are) geographies of despair.

Harold did not set out to pursue a research career steeped in controversy. At the end of his 1977 AAG address, Harold explained he did not wish to spend so much time researching environments of despair and would have liked to devote his energies on more positive and joyful topics. He concluded by stating: “It would have been more pleasant to
have reported on a topic that reflects the geography of happiness, but such a report for me at least, would have represented hope, rather than reality” (1978, 464). Pointing out social ills and challenging geographers to act, engage, and use their training in geography for addressing prejudices and inequalities set Harold apart from many of his colleagues.

Around the time of his Presidential Address, Harold’s research shifted slightly from investigating the development and formation of Black ghettos in urban and suburban areas of the U.S. to examining the spatial relationship between race, lethal violence, and homicide rates. The geography of despair, Black homicide, and challenging popular theories on the culture of violence remained the focus of Harold’s research for the rest of his career. ‘Racial spatial patterns’ of violence in areas where the population have low levels of socioeconomic security and high levels of environmental stress—the geography of despair—still cannot be understood without analyses of how racism continues to create such social conditions.

Harold pushed geographers to think about Black America, racism, and social justice when Civil Rights were actively being fought for and overt racism was a normative part of American life. He persevered in researching and publishing on injustices impacting Black communities despite having his work regularly criticized and discouraged. His research on the movement and settlement of Black Americans and the spatial dynamics of Black migration and the specific challenges faced by Black Americans in securing housing in and around urban centers presented geographers with spatial analyses of residential patterns using a critical race lens. Harold’s work reflected the lived experiences of Black Americans and was fueled by the racial injustices embedded throughout American society.
6.2 Bobby and Audrey: Influential Humanistic and Radical Geographers

As Harold was applying concepts within behavioral geography to challenge racist misconceptions about Black America, theoretical approaches within the discipline of geography were shifting. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, along with the surge in articles concerning Black America and Black American geographers and the enrollment of the first cohort of COMGA fellows into geography graduate programs, humanistic geography and radical geography were also emerging. Humanistic geography and radical geography developed around the same time as a response to quantitative and positivist theories dominating within the discipline of geography. Both Bobby Wilson and Audrey Kobayashi were graduate students when humanistic and radical geography were becoming established philosophical approaches in geography. A number of humanistic and radical geographers heavily influenced Bobby and Audrey’s intellectual development as graduate students.

Bobby Wilson began graduate studies in the Department of Geography at Clark University in 1969. During this time, Clark University was becoming a bedrock for challenging positivist traditions and pushing the discipline of geography into new and uncharted directions. The Geography Department at Clark University was buzzing in the mid to late 1960s with influential humanistic, radical, Marxist, and antiracist geographers. From 1965 to 1978, Saul Cohen was Professor and Director of the Graduate School of Geography at Clark University; from 1967 to 1970, he was the Dean of Graduate Studies (Clark University Archive 2005). Both James Blaut and Richard Peet became faculty members in geography in 1967 (Peake and Sheppard 2014) and Anne Buttimer was hired as faculty in the Geography Department in 1970 (Buttimer and Seamon 1980).
When Bobby arrived at Clark University to begin graduate school, Saul Cohen was launching COMGA and trying to establish a cohort of Black American geographers. Anne Buttimer was a leader in the discipline pushing for the convergence of geographic and humanistic thought (1974, 1976, 1993); James Blaut (1969, 1970) and Richard Peet (1977) were advocating for radical change within geography, urging geographers to engage with pressing social issues of the time. Antipode, the radical journal of geography, was formed at Clark University in 1969; Richard Peet, who was integral to Antipode’s inception was “one of the first and most prominent converts to a new radical geography” (Cloke et al. 1991, 33). Bobby completed his PhD under the supervision of Anne Buttimer, with Richard Peet acting as one of his examining committee members.

While Bobby began graduate school at Clark University at a time when humanistic and radical geography (and Marxist geography) was becoming established in the discipline in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Audrey was just beginning her academic career at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in the early 1970s. She completed a Bachelor of Arts in geography in 1976 and remained at UBC to work with Marwyn Samuels for a Master’s degree in geography. By the mid-late 1970s, humanistic and radical geography (and Marxist geography) had become prominent areas of study alongside regional, qualitative, and behavioral geography. The first extensive collection of humanistic epistemologies and methodologies in geography, Humanistic Geography: Prospects and Problems, was published in 1978 and edited by Marwyn Samuels and David Ley (Peet 1998). During the interview, Audrey cited Humanistic Geography as one of the most influential books shaping her thinking around the concept of space early on in her career. David Ley and Cole Harris were geographers at UBC during the time Audrey was a student, and were also influential in
the development of Audrey’s thinking. Marwyn Samuels (1978), David Ley (1974, 1978), and Cole Harris (1978) all engaged with humanistic perspectives in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1978, Audrey began a PhD program in geography at University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) under the supervision of Nick Entrikin and Christopher Salter. Nick Entrikin was another leading humanistic geographer who engaged with theoretical and methodological approaches within humanism (1976; 1985). Both humanistic and radical geographer were important approaches contributing to the development of antiracist geography.

**Humanistic Geography**

Humanistic geography arose in the late 1960s as a reaction to positivist theories dominating the discipline (Peet 1998, 34). While progress was made with the emergence of behavioral geography for considering how humans and human behavior shape spatial phenomenon, challenging the assumed objectivity of positivist and quantitative theories, behavioral geography was still informed by positivist spatial theories and applied spatial models. Such applications of structuralism and geographic laws based on the assumption of universal experiences of place were still seen as dehumanizing by humanistic geographers. Unlike behavioral geography, humanistic geography broke off completely from spatial science, critiquing and refusing to adopt uncritical scientific methods. The reorientation of science and knowledge was necessary to understand humanity (Relph 1970).

Yi-Fu Tuan coined the term “humanistic geography” in 1974 (Cresswell 2013) when humanistic geography as a school of thought and practice was at its peak (Peet 1998). Prior to humanistic geography, considering the complexities and variations of the human
experience was wholly absent from geographic theory. Spatial science and positivism allowed "truths" to be claimed without acknowledging the geographer as the constructor of geographic knowledge and geography. Humanistic geographers argued against this practice. Rather, they contended the study of place using spatial science could not be claimed as objective because places hold multiple meanings (Tuan 1977; Agnew 1987; Creswell 2004) since subjective human experiences contribute to the making of place (Tuan 1974; Relph 1976; Buttmer and Seamon 1980).

As humanistic geography gained traction in the early 1970s, the role of the individual geographer as researcher and interpreter of data, information, human experiences, and producer of geographic knowledge was also brought into question. The geographer too has humanity; they were a part of the research process and had the power and ability to direct the geographic gaze. In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), Tuan argues the scientist is a “simple being” (203) of science who is not without subjective experiences of the world. The scientist must thus analyze spatial relationships with the awareness of the biases in their perspective:

> Danger occurs when the scientist then naively tries to impose his findings on the real world, for he may forget the simplicity of human beings is an assumption, not a discovery or a necessary conclusion of research. (Tuan 1977, 203)

Tuan’s reflexive critique on the role of the geographer in producing and reproducing research points to the disconnect between science and people’s everyday lives and the presence of biases in the construction of geographic theory.
Geographic concepts such as territory, place, space, and landscape are constructed through human interpretation and are influenced by social and cultural factors. While history informs geographic theory, history too is subjective and is shaped by individual and collective human experiences. Tuan (1976) alludes to the social construction of knowledge and the role of human experiences in the creation of history and the development of geographic theory:

Humanistic geography, however, clearly requires knowledge of history and of historical geography…History is not only the passage of events but their conscious reconstruction in group memory for current purposes. History, thus defined, plays an essential role in the human sense of territoriality and place.

(272)

Drawing from "the humanistic insistence on the locatedness of knowledge in human consciousness" (Cresswell 2004, 119), humanistic geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1977), David Ley (1980), and Anne Buttimer (1993) cautioned against assuming objectivity. Scientific knowledge is created by human subjects who have individual sets of beliefs, which often differ from other human subjects who also have their own sets of beliefs (Ley 1980). Therefore, knowledge production is never neutral because humans produce knowledge and being human is to experience the world.

Human experiences and human capacities, such as critical reflection and creativity, must be at the center of geographic inquiries seeking to understand the world. They inform “scientific geography” and geographical concepts such as place, space, and landscape. Humanistic geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1976) argued the world cannot be understood
or theorized without considering human subjectivity, human experiences, feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. Tuan states:

Scientific approaches to the study of man tend to minimize the role of human awareness and knowledge. Humanistic geography, by contrast, specifically tries to understand how geographical activities and phenomenon reveal the quality of human awareness. (267)

Similarly, Ley and Samuels (1978) explain:

The purpose of the humanistic campaign was to put man, in all his reflective capacities, back into the center of things as both a producer and a product of his world and also to augment the human experience by a more intensive, hence self-conscious, reflection upon the meaning of being human. (7)

Humanistic geographers sought to center the human being—human experience, human consciousness, human thought, feeling, emotion, expression, and intentions—in geographic thinking and the quest for what it means to be human on earth (Tuan 1974; Ley 1980; Seamon 1980; Relph 1981).

The development of humanistic geography and the emphasis on human experiences of the world was a pivotal turning point for the trajectory of geographic theory. Along with radical geography, humanistic geography pushed geography to become a science that placed humans and social concerns to the center. Both humanistic and radical geography were instrumental to laying the groundwork for the emergence of the critical approaches such as feminist and antiracist geography that would arise out of geography’s cultural turn.
Radical Geography

While radical geography began to emerge around the same time as humanistic geography and was also concerned with lived world experiences and developing alternatives to positivist approaches, the primary impetus of radical geography was to urge geography to become more socially relevant. In 1967, geographers met at the AAG to discuss the role of geography and geographers in addressing pressing social problems at both the national and international levels (Peet 1977). Radical geography arose from the resistance to war and the recognition of a need for geography to produce work that is socially relevant and addresses urgent social problems. Stemming from political movements in the 1960s, radical geographers saw the importance of adapting geographic concepts and skills for addressing problems faced by oppressed groups (Peet 1977).

The Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, radical protests, political movements, and activism outside of the academy spurred conversations around social and economic problems at the domestic and international levels (Cloke et al. 1991). The initial objective of radical geography was to push geography and geographers to focus on issues of social relevance and to engage with the politically charged movements concerning racism, sexism, discrimination, inequality, poverty, antiwar, and imperialism happening outside the walls of the academy. For example, the formation of inner city neighborhoods and racialized ghettos were urgent social-spatial problems geographers should and could try to change. Common topics within radical geography of the 1970s included development studies (Santos 1974, 1977), global spatial inequalities (Blaut 1973, 1975), poverty (Peet 1975), anarchism (Breitbart 1975), and housing (Harvey and Chatterjee 1974; Stone 1975).
Radical geographers who engaged with political topics recognized the pressing need to develop alternative analytic approaches by combining social and geographic theory (Peet 1998). During the search for geographic approaches for addressing dire material and social inequalities, radical geographers found spatial science and positivist methods inadequate for explaining socio-spatial patterns. By the early 1970s, quantitative and spatial analyses were seen as unsatisfactory to make sense of social processes, pushing radical geographers to confront the limitations of conventional theories and methods in geography (Peet 1998). As Peet (1977) argues:

instead of continuing with yet another empirical investigation of social conditions in the ghettos, radicals should engage in the construction of a new paradigm for social geographic thought through a profound critique of existing analytic constructs. (16)

Radical geography needed to be purposefully different from scientific theories and openly challenge geographers to consider economic and political factors influencing spatial patterns (Cloke et al. 1991). Peet continues (1977):

And from 1972 onwards the emphasis of radical geography changed from an attempt to engage the discipline in socially significant research to an attempt to construct a radical philosophical and theoretical basis for a socially and politically engaged discipline. (17)

Geographers needed to develop perspectives that included moral and ethical considerations when approaching research and recognize the role of social responsibility during the process of knowledge production.
As radical geographers sought to research, teach, and conduct themselves in ‘new’ and politically mindful ways, they soon recognized the geographer and the academy as functions of elitism which allowed a select group of people to produce theories about the world. Radical geographers thus began to turn their attention towards using the academy to redistribute power and filter resources to marginalized/poor/oppressed communities so these communities could “bargain for power over their own affairs” (Peet 1977, 15). Unhappy with the status, prestige, and power associated with the academic identity, early radical geographers viewed the discipline of geography as a tool for maintaining societal inequalities and social hierarchies (Peet 1998, 68). As Peake and Sheppard explain (2014):

Neither women nor people of colour feature in accounts of this period of North American radical academic geography, yet the seeds of their participation were also sown during this time. … Their absence in these reflections speaks strongly to the ways in which the production of knowledge reflected the social demographics and political preoccupations of the overwhelmingly white, male and middle-class North American academy of that time. (308)

While Peake and Sheppard’s preceding statement about accounts by people of colour in North American radical geography being seldom featured holds truth, there were, nonetheless, people of colour present in the discipline. To say there was a complete absence of geographers of colour during the period of radical geography would erase both their presence and their contributions to the discipline. Bobby Wilson’s involvement in organizing a radical geography symposium at Clark University is one example of an important initiative led by a person of colour.
Bobby, *Antipode*, and Radical Geography at Clark U

As a graduate student at Clark University, Bobby was involved in discipline-wide initiatives for increasing the representation of Black Americans within the profession of geography. In the early 1970s, Bobby was among a group of Black geography graduate students at Clark who organized the symposium “Black Perspectives on Geography” (1972). The impetus of the meeting was to discuss “this inconsistency between the *Black Imagination* and the *Geographical Imagination*” (Wilson and Jenkins 1972). A synopsis of the symposium appeared article in a 1972 issue of *Antipode*.

In the article, Wilson and Jenkins (1972) explicitly state: “Geography, a relative new profession for the Black academic, and dominated by a white epistemological framework, is faced with the problem of dealing with a Black community which is becoming aware of its own lived-world experience and values” (42). They ask: “Can Geography, a set of concepts and tools, be of relevance in solving the problems of the Black American community?” (42). Towards the end of the article they question the possibility for geography as a discipline to address problems faced by the Black community both within and outside of academia. To do so, they state: “Black graduate students at Clark are very much concerned with the integrity that geography departments have towards the black community” (1972, 43).

The arguments raised in the 1972 article were a part of a larger conversation taking place in geography among a few other notable American geographers such as Bunge (1965), Deskins (1969), Deskins, Cohen, and Speil (1971), Deskins and Speil (1975), and Donaldson (1971). The concerns Wilson and Jenkins raised in 1972, along with similar criticisms of
geography’s white epistemological framework remain pertinent nearly half a century after initially being posed.

James Blaut – Geographer, Radical, Skeptic

While radical academics were thought of as a 'new' kind of intellectual, often from working class backgrounds and leftist political origins (Peet 1988), they were still working within the confines of Western imperialism (Blaut 1970, 1973). James Blaut was especially skeptical of the possibility geographers could develop critical methodological and theoretical approaches within the western academy because academic disciplines were built to preserve power (1970, 1973). As with other forms of Western science, geographic theory was (and largely remains) conceived through western ideologies, and reflects the long history of white imperialist exploitation of the non-white world. Blaut (1970) explains:

This White, or Western, or European, ethnoscience is the intellectual underpinning of imperialism. … this is the common, general system of scientific and historical ideas in which we White, Western social scientists are working. Its growth has paralleled and supported the growth of imperialism, and it has become for us an almost irresistibly strong current of thought, pulling each new theory and interpretation in the same direction as the old: toward compatibility with the policies and goals of Europe and empire. (69)

Blaut names geography as a white, western, European, and imperial discipline. Akin to other attempts at fostering theoretical and methodological approaches for radical geography (i.e., Bunge 1969), geographers cannot escape from the power they hold as academics and benefactors of imperialism and white, Western science.
For Blaut, the creation of theory is a function of power: critical theory can not be developed within the elitist and imperialist system of Western science. In a similar vein, Peet (1977) elaborates on Blaut’s assertion of the impossibility of a radical and revolutionary discipline when working within the confines of established geographic thought:

the result of work like this was indeed a more socially relevant geography but, it was later concluded, one tied still to a philosophy of science, a set of theories, and the methodology compatible with the existing academic and disciplinary power structures. (cited in Peet 1998, 68)

The solution for overcoming geography’s positivist traditions was to create a new paradigm for engaging with social and political problems. Thus, began the rise of Marxism in geography.

**Marxist Geography**

David Harvey (1972) responded to radical geographers’ call by developing a new paradigm within geography to engage social problems in “Revolutionary and counter revolutionary theory in geography and the problem of ghetto formation.” In the article, Harvey argues the discipline of geography is in dire need of a revolutionary theory for critically examining inequality. He proposes Marxist theory as a theoretical, methodological, and philosophical tool for conducting socially conscious geographic research.

In the late 19th century, Karl Marx observed the industrial revolution led to the rise of modern capitalism and the exchange of money for labor. Marx believed the division of society into classes and the unequal distribution of resources were inherent to the capitalist system and would inevitably lead to workers' resistance and revolution (Cloke et al. 1991).
With the industrial revolution and development of modern capitalism, Marx argued human survival was dependent on accessing life's material requirements using one's capacity to produce (Nayak and Jefferey 2011). Social relations and the class system were formed from individual and group relations to capitalist production: under capitalism, economic profit was the sole objective, the exploitation of labour was necessary, and there was no regard for social consequences (Nayak and Jefferey 2011).

Unlike orthodox Marxist theory, Marxist geography centers spatiality as a key variable within Marxist approaches. Marxist geographers attempt to understand the root causes of social ills by investigating the relationship between spatial patterns of inequality and the material world. A year after Harvey’s (1972) proposal of Marxism as a revolutionary theory for geography, Harvey (1973) publishes *Social Justice and the City*. In *Social Justice and the City*, Harvey applies a Marxist approach to explain land use practices, housing and rental markets, and spatial inequalities created through urban development in Baltimore, Maryland. His application of Marxist theory demonstrates how geographers could conduct socially conscious geographic research, marking the beginning of Marxist geography (Nayak and Jefferey 2011).

Marxist geography throughout the 1970s continued to focus on the relationship between geography and the material world. Common themes within Marxist geography included uneven regional development in the western world (Massey 1973, 1978) and the housing market (Harvey and Chatterjee 1974). As a branch under radical geography, Marxist geography became the dominant approach within radical geography in the 1970s. Radical geography became more narrowly focused and turned towards an emphasis on Marxist approaches for understanding inequality (Peet 1998) and, by the mid-1970s, *Antipode, the*
journal of radical geography, was dominated by Marxist analyses and approaches (Peake and Shepard 2014).

Although Marxist geographers researched racialized poverty and racialized neighborhoods/ghettos in the early 1970s (Bunge 1971; Harvey 1972; Blaut 1974), by the mid-1970s, Marxist geographers lost interest in studying race and racism (Peake and Shepard 2014). As Marxist geographers turned away from research involving race and racism, humanistic geographers were beginning to take an interest in racialized neighborhoods (Peake and Shepard 2014). The turn towards studying racialized neighborhoods among humanistic geographers would result in the formation of “new cultural geography,” which is revisited in the section on poststructuralism below (Peake and Shepard 2014). By the early 1980s, radical geography was no longer primarily Marxist and included anarchist, socialist, and feminist approaches, and, in 1986, radical geography was renamed ‘critical geography’ (Peake and Shepard 2014).

By the late 1980s, geographers were beginning to see potential for the various critical arms of geography to work together. In an effort to bridge the divide between Marxism and humanism, for instance, Audrey Kobayashi and Suzanne Mackenzie published the edited volume Remaking Human Geography in 1989. Remaking Human Geography examines the emergence of humanism and historical materialism in geography in the 1960s and 1970s at a time when new theoretical and methodological approaches were needed in geography to understand the protests, inequalities, and social changes occurring at the local and global scales. Positioning humanist and historical materialist perspectives as mutually beneficial rather than in conflict of one another, Remaking Human Geography was a dialogue between the two lines of thought in geography. In the chapter, “A critique of dialectical landscape,”
Audrey presents Sartre’s principle of ‘dialectical reason’ as a methodology for studying and redefining landscape. By demonstrating the interconnected relationship between humanism and historical materialism, Audrey refutes structuration and the synthetic dualism that frame humanism and historical materialism as contradictory.

**Feminist Geography**

As humanistic, radical, and Marxist geography were emerging and gaining traction within North American geography, the Women’s Liberation Movement and feminist critiques of knowledge production in the academy was also taking place in the 1960s and 1970s. Theories and questions arising from humanistic, radical, and Marxist geography in conjunction with second-wave feminist politics helped to set the groundwork for the emergence of feminist geography. Building on the gains made by the Women’s Liberation Movement, the exclusion of women in the development of radical geographies as well as Socialist and Marxist geographies, prompted geographic investigations into the relationships between gender, power, and spatialities.

Prior to the Women's Liberation Movement and introduction of feminist theory to geography, geographers assumed women did not create their own geographies, spatial relationships, or alter landscapes, and were always reacting and adjusting to the geographies and landscapes created by men (Hayford 1974). Woman were invisible in geography, seen as having no role or agency in geography. They were assumed to have nothing to contribute to geographic thought or understandings of landscapes (Hayford 1974). Early feminist geographers such as Hayford believed “A Geography of Women” was necessary to challenge the assumed universality of women’s spatial relations and behaviors.
As geographic literature highlighting the spatial mobility of women and the presence of women within the social and physical landscapes began to develop, feminist geographers were quick to draw attention to the gendered power relations and the dominance of men in the production of geographic knowledge (Makenzie 1984). Initial feminist critiques within geography included the spatial limitations placed on women due to sexist societal expectations (Burnett 1973; Hayford 1974; Tivers 1978), women's influence on spatial models and behavioral patterns (Burnett 1973; Hayford 1974; Mackenzie 1980, 1984; McDowell 1983; McDowell and Massey 1984), and the exclusion of women in geographic literature and theory (Zelinsky 1973; Hayford 1974; Larimore 1978; Mackenzie and Rose 1982; Monk and Hanson 1982; Mackenzie 1984).

With only 3.4% of geography faculty in the United States and Canada being women in 1973 (Monk 2006), it took another decade for research on the geographies of women and gender to become firmly situated within the discipline. During the 1970s, feminist geographers were heavily influenced by Marxism and socialism (Blunt and Wills 2000; Peake and Shepard 2014), and drew vital connections between themes such as: gender and work, gender and geographical work, gender and class, gender and capitalism, and public and private space. By the early 1980s, the near absence of women among faculty in geography departments and the omission of women from geographic literature could no longer be ignored. As research on gender became more prominent in geography, analyses of other categories of social differentiation developed, leading to more theoretically intensive and subjectively positioned engagements with societal issues and movements.
Poststructuralism and the Cultural Turn

Poststructuralism emerged as an intellectual movement in the mid-twentieth century in opposition to structuralist claims of universal ways of knowing and the construction of essentialist categories. In the late-1980s and 1990s, poststructuralism pushed geographers to question concepts that were previously understood as static and natural, and rethink the production and representation of social constructions through geographic research. Engagements with poststructural theories led to critiques of knowledge production, the West, representation, and gender within geography, sparking of geography’s cultural turn and the development of a “new cultural geography.”

The cultural turn in geography emerged from the cumulative efforts of humanistic, radical, Marxist, and feminist geography, and the recognition of the common ground each of these philosophical approaches shared—race, class, gender, and sexuality were all social and cultural constructs formed through relations of power (Peake and Sheppard 2014). Up until geography’s cultural turn and the influence of poststructural theory, critical research demonstrating an awareness of the relationships between power and knowledge and the ability to create and enforce social constructs were largely absent from geographic literature. Poststructuralist thought offered new analytic tools for conceptualizing and understanding the production of spatialities.

The work of Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault were especially influential in the development of poststructural theories in geography. Derrida’s work on difference and the center/periphery aided to challenge dominant, western hegemonies in geography. Questioning fixed binaries such as subjectivity/objectivity and nature/culture were also crucial to the development of deconstruction as methodology. Foucault’s work on social
construction and genealogy have been central to geographic analyses of power in the production of geographic knowledge. His theoretical and analytical frameworks have been instrumental in geographers’ engagements with topics such as biopower, governmentality, and discourse (Crampton and Elden 2007).

As geographers engaged with poststructuralism, questions surrounding representation, privilege, and the practice of claiming spatial experiences as universal began to enter the consciousnesses of geographers. With a newfound understanding of knowledge as subjective, partial, political, and a reflection of power, analyses of representation within geographic research spurred self-reflexive critiques on the bodies and voices producing geographic research. Assessment of geography revealed the discipline was (and continues to be) made up of predominantly white, male geographers (Kobayashi 1994, 2002; Kobayashi and Peake 1994; Mahtani 2002, 2004; Berg 2011). In recognition of the politics and power tied to knowledge production, geographers applied poststructuralism to question the limitations of spatial theory and geographic knowledge when developed and understood primarily from the perspective of white men.

Antiracist Geography

Although antiracist geography appears on the surface to have emerged with the advent of poststructuralism in human geography in the late 1980s, groundwork leading to the development of antiracist geography as a discursive entity with identifiable practices and a body of intellectual engagement was laid decades prior with the desegregation of universities in the United States. In the late 1960s and at a time of racial conflict and social unrest, a handful of geographers were troubled by the imperial, white European roots of Western geographic theory and the almost exclusively white demographic of North American
geographers (see Bunge 1965; Deskins 1969; Donaldson 1969; Horvath et al. 1969). Peake and Sheppard (2014) explain:

There was another crisis that encapsulated North American geography, albeit one that was not recognized as such. It was that of an ‘absent presence’, of a normalization of whiteness that went unquestioned; geography was a segregated and institutionally racist discipline. (315)

The Civil Rights Movement, the desegregation of universities, and the collaboration between individual academic geographers at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the American South and at predominantly white universities throughout the U.S. were vital for the first cohorts of Black Americans with undergraduate degrees from HBCUs to gain access to the graduate programs in geography housed at predominantly white schools. As discussed earlier, the formation of COMGA in the 1960s was a clear marker of antiracist initiatives undertaken by geographers.

It would take another 20 years after the advent of COMGA, however, for geographers to revisit the “race problem”. Critical examinations of race and racism began to re-emerge in geography as geographers engaged with poststructuralism in the 1980s. Although the term ‘antiracism’ has been commonly used since the 1960s (Bonnett 2000), prior to the mid-1990s, the concept of ‘antiracism’ was seldom referenced within geographic literature.

6.3 A Review of Bobby Wilson and Audrey Kobayashi’s Publications in Antiracist Geography

A continuation and in-depth chronology of the development of antiracist geography can be found in the literature review on pages 13 to 39. The following section extends from the
literature review and focuses on how two key antiracist geographers, Bobby and Audrey, influenced the discipline’s development of antiracist geographies. Bobby’s engagement with antiracism and Marxism is presented first, followed by Audrey’s work on intersectionality, feminism, and antiracism.

6.3.1 Bobby Wilson – Antiracism and Marxism

The early 1990s marks a significant shift in Bobby’s work as he began to delve into theoretical analyses of race as a social construct in relation to capitalist development (see Appendix B for a Bibliography of Bobby’s publications). As poststructural theories emerged and geographers were recognizing the relationship between power and social constructions, Bobby began to harness analytic approaches of poststructuralism and explicitly engaged with Marxist theory from a critical race perspective. Bobby theorizes the connections between racism and capitalism, and demonstrates the ways racial constructs and ideologies have shifted and adapted to different stages of capitalist development, including processes of consumption and production. Bobby’s intellectual contributions to the development of antiracist geographies, and especially to critical race approaches to historical materialism, are highlighted below.

Although Bobby clearly situates the concept of race as a social construction in his work, prior to the 1990s, he does not engage with Marxist theory explicitly in his analyses of racial segregation and zoning practices, class divides within Black communities, or the economic values assigned to African American environments. Marxist geography was well established within the discipline by the 1990s and often tackled similar topics as Bobby—housing, land use practices, and spatial inequality were issues at the forefront of Marxist
geographers’ inquires in the 1970s and 1980s. Despite the thematic overlap, Bobby primarily
draws from African American scholars in other disciplines, as well as behavioral, radical, and
humanistic geographers. He occasionally references David Harvey (1989), for example,
when discussing housing segregation, labour processes, and modes of production.

Bobby’s early work includes: investigations into exclusionary zoning practices and
differential housing opportunities for Black and white households in Birmingham, Alabama
(1977), a social-spatial analysis of church participation among Black migrants who moved
from rural areas the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn, New York (1979), and a
philosophical interpretation linking objective and subjective social spaces (1980). After
Bobby received a planning degree from the American Institute of Planners in 1984, his
research trajectory shifted towards more planning-centered enquiries. Publications include:
an examination of residential and school segregation trends in Birmingham, Alabama (1985),
an investigation of socio-economic factors influencing the segregation of Black and white
communities (1989), and a study of best practices for designing neighbourhoods and
planning communities that meet the needs of, as well as consider the different ways Black
communities engaged with and related to their built environments (1990).

Twenty-years after his first publication in Antipode, Bobby’s (1992) second
publication in the journal, “Structural Imperatives Behind Racial Change in Birmingham,
Alabama” stresses the relationships between phases of industrial and economic development
in the U.S., labour practices, and the use of racialized labour. In this article, Bobby engages
poststructural theory to critique Marxist interpretations of capitalist development and class
politics. Pointing to the absence of race analyses in geographic engagements with
postmodernism and Marxism, Bobby argues Marxist debates fail to acknowledge and
examine the ways in which social constructions of race influence frameworks of historical materialism, understandings of the economy, and people’s relationships to processes of production. Bobby challenges essentialism within structural Marxism by applying critical race and historical materialist approaches in the case of Birmingham, Alabama to demonstrate the necessity of incorporating analyses of shifting constructions of race in conjunction with changing phases of capitalist development. Drawing from W.E.B. DuBois, Bobby argues class relations in Birmingham cannot be understood without recognizing the South’s history of slavery and the enforcement of racialized class divisions through processes of production. In “Structural Imperatives,” Bobby breaks ground within geography by pushing geographers to think beyond Marxist traditions of abstraction and assuming commonalities between peoples and places.

Bobby (1999) diverges from analyses of race in historical-geographical materialist contexts and contributes to a special issue on “Teaching about Race” in the *Journal of Geography*. Here, Bobby discusses strategies for teaching about race and shared his insights from teaching a critical theory course on the history of racial constructs in Birmingham. He demonstrates his use of an antiracist praxis by explaining the importance of presenting course material through a historical lens. Bobby argues histories of racism and slavery must be incorporated into curriculum dealing with economic or social concerns. He touches on several other antiracist strategies and objectives he employs in the classroom such as: using history to critique discrimination in the present, understanding whiteness without personalizing whiteness, and the need for critical pedagogies to allow students to transform themselves as well as the world around them.
In 2000, Bobby published *America’s Johannesburg: Industrialization and Racial Transformation in Birmingham* (2000a) and *Race and Place in Birmingham: The Civil Rights and Neighborhood Movements* (2000b), two books both situated in Birmingham, Alabama. *America’s Johannesburg* is a thorough and comprehensive expansion of his 1992 *Antipode* article, “Structural Imperatives Behind Racial Change in Birmingham, Alabama”. *America’s Johannesburg* is an extensive investigation into the relationship between industrialization, capitalist development, and the maintenance of racialized class divisions despite the abolition of slavery and a transition to wage labour.

In *America’s Johannesburg*, Bobby (2000a) engages with the political economy framework of the regulationist school through a historical-geographical materialist context and a critical race lens. Beginning with an overview of capitalist expansion of England and Spain and the use of white supremacy and racism to justify slavery, Bobby charts how the development of the U.S. economy and the power of the U.S. as a nation state are products of the transatlantic slave trade. Bobby then illustrates how race and the encouragement of racism by the state has been central to U.S. capitalist development from the Antebellum era in the late 18th century to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

Bobby examines how constructions of race shift as capitalist modes of production shift. Bobby (2000a) argues:

> Not only is race central to U.S. capitalist development, but it is also constantly reconstructed by ruling elites in their quest to exploit the working class and maintain hegemony. Society changes because capitalists are constantly changing the technical and social conditions of the labour process to increase production and ensure their domination over the means of production. (29)
U.S capitalist development, then, cannot be understood without an understanding of histories of racism, social conditions, racialized labour processes, and racialized class divides. Through tracing the history of Black labour in Birmingham, Bobby (2000a) demonstrates how both the location and the geographies of Birmingham are deeply tied to racism and racialized labour exploitation:

A critical theory of race requires sensitivity to race in capitalist development; a critical spatial theory of race requires sensitivity to the ways in which capitalist development and restructuring transform the geography of places along racial lines. (34)

*America’s Johannesburg* is an exceptional historical-geographical materialist and critical race account of how shifting racial constructions were used for capitalist development and the industrialization of Birmingham. In addition, *America’s Johannesburg* contributes substantially to geographic thought by not only critiquing the failure of classical Marxism to recognize the centrality of racism in U.S. capitalist development, but also by theorizing race and demonstrating how a history of exploitation of laborers by white elites has maintained a capitalist mode of social regulation and allowed for the continued racial patterns of class relations. Bobby (2000a) demonstrates the ways in which racial constructions are embedded within capitalist development, thereby drawing attention to the whiteness of Marxist theory. He explains:

Although race and ethnicity were often central to class struggles and Karl Marx recognized the importance of slavery in capitalist development, he and the neo Marxists consistently marginalized or untheorized race … neither Marx nor Frederick Engels ever theorized the underdevelopment of blacks in
capitalist development … for racist or other reasons, Marx and Engels never questioned Anglo-Saxon supremacy—the historical right of one race to reduce another race to abject conditions of subjugation. (231)

Ignoring racial constructions in Marxist analyses of capitalist development has grave implications: by erasing and marginalizing histories of shifting constructions of race during different phases of capitalist development, racialized labour becomes a product of capitalism rather than a historic mode of social control.

While *America’s Johannesburg* is a historical account of Black labour and struggle in Birmingham, Birmingham’s history of white dependency on exploited Black labour for the accumulation of wealth continued (and continues) to influence the geography of Birmingham. Bobby’s historical examples of the conditions resulting in white control over Black labour echo contemporary justifications for present-day economic inequalities and exploitative labour practices that disproportionally impact Black and racialized Americans. Bobby concludes *America’s Johannesburg* by referencing George Frederickson and his insistence that race and class must be seen as mutually constituted in analyses of white supremacy. Bobby reiterates Frederickson’s plea:

> We must continue to embrace the importance of class in capitalist development, but we must not deny race its ontological status […] If we critically analyze race-connected practices within the context of capitalist development, we can avoid assigning a priority to race or class; they are relational. Racial relations must contend with class relations. (2000a, 234)

delves into the Civil Rights Movement and the formation of strong Black identity politics in Birmingham as a response to the widespread racism throughout political, social, and economic institutions. *Race and Place in Birmingham* investigated the economic and social conditions leading to the Civil Rights Movement. Bobby argues economic accumulation and the formation of the Black middle class was as a result of Fordism, and, the Keynesian Welfare State was an important factor for accessing economic resources during the movement. The Civil Rights Movement was not a class-based struggle, but rather, a social movement grounded in identity politics. Bobby explains the close ties between economic opportunities, capitalism, and racism within the movement was perhaps one of the most powerful and important relationships that should have been emphasized further. Instead of solely focusing on the postmodern politics of identity and difference, social movements, Bobby argues, must recognize solidarity across difference and emphasize racism and class inequality as products of capitalism.

In “America's Johannesburg and the Struggle for Civil Rights: A Critical Geography,” Bobby (2002a) draws on an eclectic range of theorists to analyze and critique the Civil Rights struggle in Birmingham. To begin the article, he engages with Foucault’s view of history to question the significance of place and the historical events shaping Birmingham’s identity as the symbolic place for Black struggle in America.

Combined with an overview of the political economy of Birmingham from the Antebellum period to industrialization, Bobby argues race rather than class shaped the labour system in Birmingham. While substantial strides were made in terms of the politics of recognition, the Civil Rights Movement largely ignored the class struggle. Despite Birmingham’s long history of dependency on racialized labour, social movements prior to
the Civil Rights Movement, Bobby explains, primarily involved white Americans lobbying around class issues. Black Americans were not often welcomed to participate in the larger labour movement.

Drawing from DuBois, Bobby demonstrates the failure of the Civil Rights Movement in reducing racism and racial inequality. The exploitation of racialized labour continued regardless of the gains made through the Civil Rights Movement because capitalist development depended (and depends) on exploited labour. While the Civil Rights Movement was successful in engaging in the politics of recognition and establishing a collective identity, Bobby argues the Civil Rights Movement largely ignored class politics and the politics of redistribution. Without addressing both race and class in tandem, racialized oppression will continue because of unchanged relations of power within the labour system.

In Bobby’s (2002b) article “Critically understanding race-connected practices: a reading of W.E.B. DuBois and Richard Wright,” he builds on his critiques of Marxist theory. Rather than disposing of Marxist theory because of its failure to consider race, Bobby highlights the value of Marxism for understanding histories of racism. Engaging with the work of W.E.B. DuBois and Richard Wright, he argues social constructions of race and examinations of racism are often absenting in the work of social theorists as well as in the retelling of history. Bobby points to DuBois’ and Wright’s critiques of Marxism to recognize the significance of race and then demonstrate the ways in which DuBois and Wright used Marxist theory as a tool for analysing racism and Black experiences in America.
The Discipline of Geography and Historically Black Colleges and Universities

In 2004, Bobby diverges from his work in historical materialism, and in collaboration with Jesse McKee they contributed the chapter, “Geography in Historically Black Colleges/Universities in the Southeast,” in the edited volume: The role of the South in the making of American geography: Centennial of the AAG. Published through the Southeastern Division of the Association of American Geographers, The role of the South is a collection of manuscripts giving a glimpse into some of the ways the American South has shaped American geography. In the chapter, Bobby and Jesse conduct a survey of geography departments and course offerings at Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the American South.

Bobby and Jesse determin that though there has never been a strong presence of geography departments at HBCUs in the South, historically, most schools offered geography courses. Since the mid-1960s, the number of HBCUs in the American South offering at least one geography course has declined significantly. In 1964, 52 out of 56 HBCUs in the American South offered at least one geography course; however, since 1964, 21 HBCUs have eliminated all geography courses at their respective institution. By 2003, 31 out of the 56 HBCUs in the South offered at least one geography course and nearly half of the HBCUs did not offer even a single geography course at the institution.

The presence of geography departments at HBCUs in the American South was even more dire. Bobby and Jesse report the peak number of geography departments at HBCUs in the South was seven out of 56 schools in 1964. In 2003, they found there were only two remaining geography departments out of the 56 HBCUs surveyed in the South. Both geography departments were in North Carolina, with one of the HBCUs with a geography
department being at North Carolina Central, the school where Bobby completed an undergraduate degree and was introduced to the discipline of geography. Although Bobby and Jesse do not discuss the implications of eliminating geography programs and courses at HBCUs in the South on the discipline of geography and the pathways to becoming a geographer, they did set the groundwork for future research.

Racism and Capitalism

In the article “Race in Commodity Exchange and Consumption: Separate but Equal,” Bobby (2005) presents an extensive analysis of the changing social geographies in the postbellum South as former slaves became wage earners and consumers. Unlike classical Marxist theory which contends increased class status will improve social relations, Bobby demonstrates that the ability to participate in the commodity circuit does not equate to improved race relations. Again, he illustrates insufficiencies within Marxist theory for explaining continued racialized class divisions. White supremacy, he argues, has the power to shape individual and collective consumption behavior:

"The problem was that in the sphere of exchange and consumption, blacks had to be in a subordinate position; white superiority had to be reproduced continuously. (597)"

Presenting DuBois’ (1935) idea of building a “nation within a nation” as a mechanism towards liberation using capitalism and the buying power of Black consumers, Bobby explains the ways in which the separate but equal policy increased racial fears and therefore, could not free people from racism. Racism did not simply disappear with the end of segregation and the ability to purchase goods without racial restrictions. Rather than a tool
for the liberation of Black Americans from white supremacy, participation in the capitalist
economy had not led to decreased racism and greater racial justice. Bobby maintains the
power of racism would persist regardless of one’s access to capital. In the conclusion to
“Race in Commodity Exchange,” he ends by carrying history forward and connecting past
struggles for equality and equal access to consumer markets for both Black and white
consumers to the present-day realities of racism faced by Black consumers. Bobby’s
illumination of the ways in which racism shapes spheres of exchange and consumption was,
and remains, a powerful reminder of the continuing, yet often ignored, centrality of race
within capitalist development.

In “Postbellum race relations in commodity exchange,” Bobby (2010) critiques the idea
of a “free” economy. He argues racism, time-period, and place were significant in shaping
relations of commodity exchange in postbellum America. Commodity exchange and
consumption in the time-place of postbellum America were not governed by the “free”
market but rather by deeply held beliefs in a racialized social structure. The preservation of
racial power relations at the end of slavery through the Jim Crow era were maintained by
controlling spheres of commodity exchange and consumption. Bobby applies a critical race
framework to challenge assumptions of the market and the imperative of capital to expand
commodity exchange. Far from “free” or “neutral,” Bobby demonstrates how the market was
used to construct whiteness as superior and ensure the preservation of racial social divisions.

In the article “Capital’s need to sell and Black economic development,” Bobby
(2012) examines the Black economy in segregated neighbourhoods and inner-city
communities in the U.S. as places of consumption. While geographers often study places of
consumption, Bobby points to the dearth of scholarship on commodity consumption in
segregated neighbourhoods. Referencing historical examples, Bobby examines the ways in which Black inner-city communities have been ignored yet closely regulated for commodity consumption. The post-World War I Great Migration of Black migrants from Southern states to urban areas in the North created segregated Black communities with a large collective consumer power. Bobby argues difficulties in accessing capital investments for building large-scale businesses inhibited the ability for Black entrepreneurs to continue to control the Black economy. Bobby challenges traditional Marxist approaches by illustrating how racial ideologies continued to control the movement of capital through capital expansion, commodity exchange, and consumption within segregated Black economies. Analyses of capitalism, he argues, cannot be understood without recognizing the racial ideologies allowing for the extraction of capital from the Black community and back into the hands of the white economy.

Bobby’s intellectual contributions to developing a critical race perspective of historical materialism in the discipline of geography have allowed for new frameworks for understanding capitalism, the economy, and how racial constructs have shaped processes of production and consumption. Bobby engages with Marxism from a critical race approach and argues structural Marxist debates fail to acknowledge and examine how racist ideologies have changed over time to coincide with shifting stages of capitalist development. In so doing, his geographical works show how ignoring or undertheorizing the connection between racism and capitalism will sustain and reproduce exploitative capitalist relations of production indefinitely.
6.3.2 Audrey Kobayashi – Feminism, Antiracism, and Intersectionality

Drawing from feminist and critical race theory, Audrey approaches research from an intersectional lens (see Appendix C for a Bibliography of Audrey’s publications). She tackles difficult questions around the contradictory and paradoxical relationship between challenging essentialisms versus reinforcing constructs of race and gender, and proposes methodological, theoretical, and political strategies for disrupting oppressive forms of power. Using historical evidence to remind geographers of the colonial, imperialist, and racist foundations of the discipline, Audrey names and theorizes whiteness as the often invisible and unspoken normative framework from where geographic scholarship is produced. Through investigations into the racialized relations of power that maintain and govern the production of geographic knowledge, she stresses the importance of recognizing the discipline of geography as a site of antiracist struggle and a site of activism.

During the 1990s, Audrey was one of a small number of geographers in North America who identified as both a person of colour and as a woman. She was one of even fewer geographers who were women of colour engaging with topics of positionality in geography, advocated and developed social theories within geography founded in feminist and antiracist principals, called on the discipline of geography to take immediate action in addressing the domination of white men within the discipline, and explicitly named the problem of white academic women speaking for women of colour. Her call upon geographers to recognize the hegemonic whiteness of the discipline and work towards addressing the ways in which whiteness controls spatial access for people of colour—and especially women of colour—into the discipline of geography is just one example of her leadership in cultivating antiracist thought and practice within geography.
Collaborating with Linda Peake, Audrey and Peake were of the first geographers in the 1990s to discuss the intersectionality of race and gender within the discipline of geography. Although intersectionality was a widely discussed topic in women’s studies, critical race studies, and critical legal studies, geography was slow to introduce intersectional theory into the discipline. In 1994, Audrey and Peake published the influential article “Unnatural discourse. ‘Race’ and gender in geography” in Gender, Place & Culture. Drawing from literature in feminism, “Unnatural discourse” sought to disrupt naturalized categories of race and gender, and present ways in which biological, social, and academic constructions of race and gender can become destabilized and unnaturalised as acts of opposition to forces of domination.

In 1994, Audrey also published “Coloring the Field: Gender, “Race,” and the Politics of Fieldwork” in the Professional Geographer. “Coloring the Field” (1994) marks a shift in antiracist feminist geographic research. Audrey urges geographers to consider the implications of their own subject position when conducting fieldwork. She explicitly names geography as dominated by white men and critiques the patronizing tendencies of white feminist academics in speaking for and claiming an authoritative voice over women of colour; it is not enough, she argues, to simply believe in the political ends of the social group one wishes to study. Belonging to the communities one researches is important for mitigating some of the concerns regarding the politics of representation. Audrey thus maintains women of colour should be the ones speaking for and speaking with women of colour.

Audrey and Linda Peake collaborate again in 2000 and publish an article in the Annals of the Association of American Geographers on the construction of whiteness within the discipline of geography as a set of unacknowledged cultural practices. In “Racism out of
Place: Thoughts on Whiteness and an Antiracist Geography in the New millennium,” they argue antiracist practice is necessary in geographic analyses due to the spatial implications of social processes. Power and control over place often produce racialized geographies; the discipline of geography is no exception. The practice of geography is dominated by whiteness and has a long history of direct and indirect exertions of racial division and control. Audrey and Peake (2000) explain:

Our disciplinary history is one of near silence on the issues of racialization, silence based on an almost overwhelming inattention to the details of racial practice, a silence, in other words, dominated by whiteness. (399)

While there have been countless studies of place and social relationships within the discipline of geography, the overwhelming power of whiteness within geography allows racism to continue to operate with little opposition. They argue: “Part of the agenda … must be the pressing need to make consideration of racialization as a fundamental aspect of geographical understanding” (399). Audrey and Peake demonstrate how to make racialization more central within geography in their next collaborative publication.

In “Policies and Practices for an Antiracist Geography at the Millennium” in The Professional Geographer, Audrey and Peake (2002) call for drastic measures to be taken within geography to centre the role of racism in geographic research. Rather than adding racism to the research agenda, they present three ways antiracist principals must be institutionally integrated: 1) broaden the scope of traditional geographic scholarship, 2) apply principals of antiracism to institutional practices, such pedagogy, and 3) increasing the participation of geographers of colour. Audrey and Peake emphasize the importance of applying antiracist principles and practices in geography to foster critical and socially-
engaged research. They examine how race and racism have been studied in geography and highlight American geographers, such as Harold Rose, Bill Bunge, and Joe Darden, as key contributors forging the path for establishing race as a social construct. Through an examination of the practices within the discipline of geography, they challenge geography departments to make commitments to improving recruitment strategies for attracting and retaining graduate students of colour, hiring more diverse faculty, and offering courses centered on issues of race and racism.

Tied to the antiracist practice of increasing the participation of geographers of colour, Audrey builds on this necessity in two subsequent publications on the failure of the discipline of geography in attracting and then hiring women of colour in the discipline (2002; 2006). In “A generation later, and still two percent: changing the culture of Canadian geography” (2002), Audrey examines the demographic shift among faculty in Canadian geography departments after the implementation of the Employment Equity Act. The Employment Equity Act is federally legislated and requires institutions receiving government funding to have a workforce that is representative of the labour force. The Employment Equity Act specifically seeks to address the underrepresentation of women, people of colour, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities in the public sector. Despite the sanctioning of the Employment Equity Act, Audrey finds the culture of whiteness—and in particular, white masculinity—in geography are powerful enough to inhibit significant demographic changes in faculty trends in Canadian geography departments. Audrey reports for every two men hired in a Canadian geography department, only one woman is hired. Between 6 and 7 percent of men and 1 and 2 percent of women faculty in Canadian geography departments are persons of colour.
Building from “A generation later, in Why Women of Colour in Geography?” (2006), Audrey draws the connection between the overbearing whiteness, racism, and sexism in various aspects of the discipline such as within geographic literature and hiring practices. Prevalent systemic discrimination within all aspects of the educational and professionalization process of becoming an academic geographer explains why there are so few geographers who are women of colour and why there has been only a marginal increase in the number of women of colour in geography despite a growing awareness and practice of antiracist theory in geography (primarily by white geographers).

An aspect of the increasing prevalence of antiracist theory and practice in geography despite the continued white male dominance in the discipline is problematized in “GPC Ten Years On: is self-reflexivity enough?” (2003). Audrey provides a critique of self-reflexivity and points to the ironies of the use, usefulness, and consequences of self-reflexivity in feminist and antiracist geography. In “GPC Ten Years On”, she calls on geographers to move beyond public self-reflexivity and rather place a greater emphasis on the larger political agenda.

Audrey touches briefly on contradictions of self-reflexivity in “The Construction of Geographical Knowledge – Racialization, Spatialization” (2003), and reemphasizes the importance of placing reflexivity in antiracist geographic practice within the larger history of the construction of geographic knowledge around the concept of race. She presents the racialized body as a site of geographic knowledge and traces the history of constructions of race within the discipline of geography. Audrey identifies the introduction of poststructuralism as the turning point leading to the development of critical race theory in geography.
The chapter “Critical ‘Race’ Approaches to Cultural Geography” (2004) is complementary to “The Construction of Geographical Knowledge” and again stresses the importance of recognizing the contexts within which concepts of race are produced. Audrey presents two approaches for interpreting the concept of race: as a product of Western cultures and as a normative analytic concept for making sense of our lived realities. She then presents the intellectual history of racial constructs in geography and leads readers to the development of an antiracist theoretical perspective in the discipline.

An intersectional historical context is presented in “Anti-Racist Feminism in Geography: An Agenda for Social Action” (2005) where Audrey traces the history of geographic literature concerning both race and gender to the early 1990s. She highlights key works by feminist antiracist geographers and presents the necessity of continuing to push for overcoming racism and sexism within and beyond the discipline.

Following Audrey’s earlier work on whiteness and representation of women of colour in geography, Audrey contributes the chapter, “Now you see them, how you see them: Women of colour in Canadian academia” to the book Racism in the Canadian University: Demanding Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity (2009). Audrey uses her own experiences as a woman of colour in the academy in “Now you see them” and presents evidence demonstrating the pervasiveness of systemic racism and discrimination in Canadian post-secondary institutions.

In “People, Place, and Region: 100 Years of Human Geography in the Annals” (2010), Audrey broadens the scope of historical analysis by recounting key ideas and geographers within human geography over the course of the century. She points to the overtly racist intellectual terrain of race science within geography and the stark absence of
any critical engagement with the concepts of race and gender for most of the one hundred years of the Annals.

In the article, “Neoclassical urban theory and the study of racism in geography” (2014), Audrey draws the connection between popular thought in urban geography during the Nazi regime of the 1930s and the origin of central place theory to the development of critical race theory in geography. She highlights the contributions of Harold Rose and Don Deskins and illustrates how they applied spatial theory within urban geography to combat racism rather than to perpetuate it. She identifies Harold Rose and Don Deskins as two of the first geographers of colour to practice antiracist geography.

Perhaps the most illustrative article on the development of understandings of race within geography, “The Dialectics of Race and the Discipline of Geography” (2014) chronicles the moments within geography and the geographers that shape the current state of intellectual engagement with race in the discipline. “The Dialectics of Race” was Audrey’s Presidential Address at the AAG Annual Meeting in 2013. She exemplifies the failure of the discipline in engaging with critical research on race by remarking in the article’s conclusion: “Harold Rose was the last—and only—AAG president to make race the topic of a past president’s address” (2014, 1112). The 37-year span between Harold’s and Audrey’s positions as presidents of the AAG is indicative of the continued, fraught tension of the dialectics of race in geography.

Audrey’s intellectual contributions to the formation of antiracist geography have indisputably transformed the discipline of geography. The depth, breadth, and volume of antiracist scholarship Audrey has produced over the course of her career demonstrates her dedication to developing, applying, and advocating for antiracist theory and practice in
geography. More than an academic exercise of theorizing essentialist categories and social constructions, Audrey demonstrates a commitment to effecting social change through tangible and applicable antiracist practices within the discipline of geography and the academic institution that are connected to present-day issues concerning the social and material conditions of marginalized groups. For Audrey, antiracist geography is a project extending beyond the discipline of geography and the walls of the academy: antiracist theory, praxis, and pedagogy within geography needs to stem from a commitment to social justice, must be connected to lived realities of racism, and a part of broader social and political movements.

**Chapter Summary**

Despite the apparent emergence of antiracist geography in the 1990s, geographers—and in particular Black American geographers—have been pushing for equitable representation of Black geographers in the profession and more accurate portrayals of Black America since the 1960s. Harold Rose was a key contributor to early critical race literature in the discipline of geography by challenging essentialist ideas about Black America, by devising the concept of racial-spatial patterns, and by theorizing the Black ghetto, residential segregation, racialized poverty, racism in higher education, and the relationship between environmental stress and lethal violence. In addition to the leadership demonstrated through his publications, Harold’s involvement with COMGA and his role as the President of the AAG are indicative of his commitment to creating a more just, critical, and socially-engaged discipline.

The shift from behavioral geography and analyses of spatial patterns and towards humanistic, radical, and Marxist approaches ushered in an era of social consciousness and
drastically different philosophical and analytic methodologies in geography. Although Bobby and Audrey were supervised by influential humanistic geographers during their graduate programs, they each forged unique intellectual paths and became leaders in developing antiracist approaches in geography. Bobby challenges Marxist theories in geography by proposing and developing critical race approaches to historical materialism. Drawing the connection between changing racial ideologies and the different stages of capitalist development, Bobby's scholarship provides new and important frameworks for understanding racism and racial constructions in geographic theory.

Through Audrey's application of an intersectional lens within feminist geography, she advocates for analyses of racial constructs within feminist theory. Audrey names the discipline of geography as a site of antiracist struggle and demonstrates the ways in which the production of geographic knowledge is informed by whiteness. Her extensive intellectual contributions to antiracist geography include publications on the representation of women of colour in geography, antiracist practices and policies, the history of the concept of race within the discipline of geography, antiracist feminism, and the racialized body in the production of geographic knowledge. In addition to changing how race is understood in geography by developing antiracist theoretical approaches, Audrey's involvement with the AAG and her role as the AAG President demonstrates her strong commitment to shaping geography into a socially-engaged and critical discipline. As evidenced through their significant intellectual contributions and involvement in leadership capacities within the discipline, Harold, Bobby, and Audrey are three geographers of colour who have been profoundly influential in the development of antiracist thought in geography.
Chapter 7

Becoming an Antiracist Geographer: Childhoods, Place, and Experiences of Racism in Geography Graduate Programs

Harold, Bobby, and Audrey’s life stories highlight commonalities in their motivations for engaging critically with topics of race through geography, as well as point to the shared experiences as geographers of colour working within a white discipline. Narrating the lives of three senior geographers of colour engaged in antiracism within the profession of geography allows for a broad overview of the events leading to their introduction to the discipline of geography and the challenges they faced at different stages of their graduate training and professional careers. The application of CRT and the emphasis on stories and the experiences of geographers of colour provide evidence of the many ways geography continues to operate as a discipline that valorizes whiteness and upholds white power. The stories and experiences of the seven geographers of colour who wished to remain anonymous further illustrate and emphasize the ways in which lived experiences of racism influence the practice and production of antiracist geographies.

The interviews revealed further insights into the circumstances shaping the production of antiracist geographic research. Despite the small number of interviewees and the uniqueness of each of their biographies, several reoccurring themes emerged. Essed's (1991) theory of everyday racism and the heuristics of comparison are applied as analytic tools for identifying the instances where racism are produced. Using the heuristics of comparison, thematic trends and consistencies between interviewees’ stories are presented as supporting evidence of the relationship between personal experiences and the paths to becoming antiracist geographers.
In this chapter, I begin by focusing on personal experiences growing up as a racialized child in North America, as well as the wider social contexts contributing to some of these experiences. When asked about the influential moments in their lives contributing to them becoming antiracist geographers, many of them cited childhood experiences of racism, family circumstances, major world events, and geographic location as important factors.

The primary focus of this chapter, however, is on the ways racism is embedded in geography graduate programs in North America. Most of the interviewees encountered numerous incidences of racial discrimination and overt racism from geography faculty and geography graduate students. Financial obstacles for attending university, racism experienced while pursuing graduate degrees in geography such as the frequent questioning of the legitimacy of one’s critical race research or the questioning of one’s aptitude to succeed in graduate school, and isolation as the only student of colour in the department (and sometimes the only person of colour among both graduate students and faculty in the department) were some of the common challenges faced by the interviewees when they were pursuing graduate studies in geography.

Teasing out the thematic trends that reappear in multiple interviews with geographers of colour, it becomes clear that one’s lifelong engagement with North American society as a person of colour cannot be held as a subjective and irrelevant factor when it comes to the production of knowledge. Personal experiences of injustice, racism, systemic oppression, and state violence shapes knowledge and sometimes fuels the political underpinnings of research objectives. I argue the family histories, the personal stories, and the life experiences of geographers of colour are invaluable for drawing the relationship between identity and the formation of antiracist geographies.
Childhoods, Place, and Antiracist Geographies

The geographers of colour interviewed for this study shared personal stories, each identifying numerous moments in their childhoods and youth, and within their family histories that shaped and contributed to the formation of their research trajectories and their paths to becoming antiracist geographers. Although it is impossible to pinpoint all the formative moments leading each of the geographers into the profession of geography, several commonalities emerged despite a broad range of individual experiences. Farming, relationships with grandparents, the places they grew up in, and the social and political climate in their home communities as well as on the global scale were some of the common themes arising in the interviews.

Generations of rural, racialized poverty, and hard physical farm labour were shared narratives running through Harold, Bobby, and Audrey’s family stories. Although Harold, Bobby, and Audrey all grew up under different circumstances, in two different countries, and during different decades, all three of these geographers spent their childhoods growing up on a farm. Perhaps a reflection of a time when factory farming, food processing, corporatization of food, and the importing of produce had yet to become normalized in North America, the link between racialized labour and the agricultural sector is a relationship that cannot be overlooked.

The climatic zone of the American South made it an ideal location for growing lucrative labour-intensive cash crops with large global markets. These plantations economies were upheld using slavery and forced labour, creating a division of labour and profound class divisions between white landowners and Black workers. Even with the abolition of slavery in 1865, the deeply racialized division of labour in farming communities in the American south
did not radically shift. Generations of Black farmers continued to cultivate crops in the south under white landowners.

The racial division between agricultural labourers and land owners continues to be reflected in contemporary employment relations as it is not uncommon to have the majority of people in a predominantly Black town in the American South working in agriculture on land still owned by white people. As one interviewee remarked about the place she grew up in:

…[it’s] 80% Black but in terms of landownership it’s very, very small. Not actually a lot of African Americans own land. And the power structures are pretty much controlled by white people for a lack of better words. But the vast majority of the people in the town are Black … Umm … and South Carolina is kinda like that in general. A large African American population but not really any African American population with any political power.

The connection between farming and racialized labour will persist as long as the agricultural industry remains labour intensive, physically demanding, and low wage.

Humble beginnings and working on or being exposed to agricultural labour was not limited to Harold, Bobby, and Audrey’s life stories. Although the American South was an epicenter for agricultural based economies and the exploitation of racialized labour, the abuse of racialized labour for farming practices was also prevalent in other parts of the U.S.

Beyond the American South, one interviewee recounted how her interest in farmworkers in California was sparked by memories of her mother going to work on a farm when she was a child. She went on to research the racialized experiences of farmworkers in her Masters and PhD and continued to spend much of her career researching activism and collective
mobilization strategies of racialized peoples in the agricultural sector and in other labour movements. Her research interests and career as a geographer was heavily shaped by her formative experience of being the child of a farmworker and being surrounded by other racialized people in her community who were also farmworkers. Her family story of farm labour in a U.S. state outside of the American South and her research on contemporary issues pertaining to the exploitation of racialized agricultural labour in California demonstrate the reality of a continued dependency on low-wage racialized agricultural labour in farming ventures across America.

The relationship between race, poverty, and modern-day exploitation of racialized agricultural labour is a long-standing relationship that runs deep throughout U.S. history. Generations of farming and growing cash crops such as tobacco and cotton in the American South was a reoccurring theme in multiple interviews, along with rural poverty and role of their grandparents in emphasizing the importance of becoming well-educated. Like Harold and Bobby, even the more junior scholars who self-identified as Black and/or African American spoke at length about the importance of the relationship they had with their grandparents. Although none of the grandparents of the geographers interviewed attended college or university, many had not finished high school, and some of the grandparents were illiterate and had not finished grade school, grandparents played an influential role in instilling the importance of education.

Apart from the youngest person I interviewed, the geographers who had family connections to farming communities in North America were the first person in their family to attend university. Both parents of the one geographer who is a second-generation university graduate were the first in their families to attend university. Her mother completed a PhD and
her father completed a Master’s degree. Her mother grew up in a small, predominantly Black, rural farming community in the American South to parents who were both farmers. Like many children of farmers in the south, when her mother was young, she would go to school and work on the farm picking cotton for about half of the year.

Other geographers who self-identified as Black and/or but who wished to remain anonymous also had stories of about growing up in the South and had fond memories of the generations of their families living and working on the land. Some geographers actively farmed when they were young and others had stories about the hard farm labour their grandparents endured for them to be able to have been able to access higher education.

So, I grew very close to all of my grandparents and they’re all … the women in my family were all strong …very hard workers right alongside the men. … So I remember my grandmother outside working in the field right alongside my grandfather. And I think that influenced what I thought about agriculture and what I thought about women, and especially what I thought about Black women, in a positive way.

Interviewees fondly recounted their grandparents’ strong leadership in the community and justice-minded politics. Grandparents were central in the development of the critical consciousness of interviewees who grew up in the South and some of the interviewees spoke in awe about the strength of their grandparents in instilling a sense of justice, perseverance, and work ethic despite the prevalence of racism. Regardless of the geographer’s year of birth, fighting for rights and Black liberation were common topics of family conversations among the geographers who grew up in farming communities in the American South.
The Significance of Place

Most of the geographers of colour who were interviewed, except for two, were born in North America and at some point in their lives lived in either the American South or in the state of California. All but one of the geographers interviewed who self-identified as Black or African American had strong ties to the American South. Although there is a 30+ year age span among the geographers who identified as Black or African American, all expect for one interviewee was born in and grew up in the American South and where from families who had lived in the South for generations.

All the geographers interviewed who identified as Black or African American attended a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) for their undergraduate degrees. References to experiences at HBCUs were all positive and were often referred to as supportive and comfortable environments. The transition from an HBCU for an undergraduate degree in the American south to a predominantly white university institution was a difficult adjustment for all the interviewees who changed institutions for graduate school.

Difficulties in adjusting to predominately white university environments for graduate school was also experienced by other geographers of colour interviewed who completed undergraduate degrees at institutions in their home communities where a large proportion of students were also people of colour. Immigration policies in the U.S. and Canada and the high concentration of people of East Asian origins settling on the west coast of North America throughout the 20th century is reflected in the geographic locations of the university institutions that interviewees identifying as Asian American or Asian Canadian attended. For example, all the participants who identified as either Asian American or Asian Canadian
attended a university in California for one of their degrees. All the interview participants who identified as Asian American or Asian Canadian also cited experiences of alienation, isolation, or frustration due to the culture of whiteness within their respective geography departments, as graduate students and/or faculty members.

**Activism and World Events**

Although not necessarily the casual factor for pursuing antiracist work within the discipline of geography, the life stories of most of geographers interviewed include a direct or indirect connection to political movements at either the national or global scale. Bobby’s personal engagement in the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. and Audrey’s commitment to the Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement are examples of direct forms of activism in response to racial injustices perpetuated by nation states. Conflict, violence, and rights were common themes in the oral histories of the geographers interviewed. Although I focused on the interviews with racialized geographers who were born in North America, their perspectives, understanding, and exposure to the world goes beyond the country of their birth. More specifically, there were interviewees with life stories influenced by war. Two of the most prominent early geographers who fought for greater racial equality within the practice of geography, Saul Cohen and Harold Rose, were both veterans of the U.S. Army. Travelling abroad as soldiers in the U.S. Army and witnessing entire cities in ruins and familial stories of migration from war torn countries are examples of circumstances influencing how they thought about the world.

In particular, Harold and Bobby’s life stories aid in providing a sense of the wider social context shaping the introduction of Black Geography in North America. For example,
the deep racial divisions between those who were landowners and those who worked the land is reflected in Harold’s story and mirrors a common history of Black labour in the American South. Bobby’s experience of going to civil rights protests with his grandfather or lobbying outside of the local shop demanding the integration of the lunch counter are reflective of a social movement that spanned over a decade and involved hundreds of thousands of African Americans. Growing up in the American South and being an active participant in the Civil Rights Movement were vital life experiences shaping Bobby’s research interests and career in geography.

Beyond the personal impact the Civil Rights Movement had on Bobby’s professional trajectory, the Civil Rights Movement is a marker of drastic and unprecedented change in the organization of social life in the United States. The segregation among African American and white post-secondary students prior to the Civil Rights Movement was legally and violently enforced in many Southern States. As school desegregation gained traction in the 1950s in public primary and secondary schools, segregated publicly funded universities were fraught with protest and riots against the integration of higher education institutions. The desegregation of publicly funded universities in the U.S would eventually follow suit, but not without violent opposition.

Desegregation in the United States and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement were central events in the formation of antiracist and critical race geographies. McKee and Wilson contend:

- The racial turmoil of the early 1960s generated an increased awareness among some AAG members that geography was highly segregated and needed to change its “Lilly White” character. (2004, 78)
Although equitable rights continue to be recognized and applied inconsistently for African American and other racialized groups, many of the successes of the movement made direct impacts on the types of conversations happening in the discipline of geography.

**Accessing University Education and Navigating Graduate Programs in Geography**

The second section of this chapter highlights the ways racism is embedded in geography graduate programs. Most of the interviewees encountered numerous incidences of racial discrimination and overt racism from geography faculty and geography graduate students. Financial obstacles for attending university, racism experienced while pursuing graduate degrees in geography such as the frequent questioning of the legitimacy of one’s critical race research or the questioning of one’s aptitude to succeed in graduate school, and isolation as the only student of colour in the department (and sometimes the only person of colour among both graduate students and faculty in the department) were some of the common challenges faced by the interviewees when they were pursuing graduate studies in geography. For each of the interviewees, the path to becoming a professional geographer was not without a number of challenges. The experience of going to graduate school and adjusting to the overwhelmingly white environment of geography graduate programs in North American universities proved to be a harrowing task for most of the geographers of colour interviewed.

**Scholarships and Financial Aid**

Scholarships and access to financial aids such as work-study programs played a large role in being able to access post-secondary education for most of the geographers interviewed. Financial obstacles in accessing university education held a greater significance for older interviewees, most of whom financed their education through a combination of academic
scholarships, work study positions, and a series of part-time jobs.

Harold had a job in Tennessee State’s cafeteria as a work-study student throughout the duration of his undergraduate degree and then pursued graduate studies in geography using GI benefits after serving in the U.S. Army. Bobby held a work-study position in the Geography Department as an undergraduate student at North Carolina Central and received a Teachers Teaching Teachers (Triple T) fellowship to start graduate school at Clark University. As a graduate student, Audrey held a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) scholarship and a scholarship from the Japanese government.

Most geographers interviewed mentioned the scholarships and fellowships they held while pursuing graduate degrees in geography. One of the interviewees held an undergraduate scholarship that covered all his expenses at an HBCU. Some chose their graduate programs based on the funding packages or scholarships offered with about half of the interviewees completing undergraduate and Master’s degrees in disciplines other than geography.

**Drawn to Geography: Recruitment and Exposure to the Discipline**

In addition to accessing scholarships and financial aid, being introduced to the discipline of geography during post-secondary studies was a key moment for those interviewed. Most of the geographers of colour interviewed stumbled upon geography, often being drawn into the discipline after taking an elective course in geography. A lack of opportunities to take geography courses in undergraduate programs and the lack of exposure to geography as a discipline as a significant barrier to reaching out to and recruiting potential geographers. For several interviewees, meeting a geographer already in the profession and receiving
encouragement to consider geography as a viable area of study was enough to peak an interest in geography. Half of the geographers interviewed enrolled in geography programs at the undergraduate or graduate levels after having a geographer as an instructor at the post-secondary level who reached out to them and suggested geography as a potential ‘good fit’ for the student. The following vignettes are examples from two interview participants on what led them to becoming geographers.

One of the interviewees ended up pursuing a PhD in geography after taking a graduate-level geography course while fulfilling course work requirements for a Master’s degree in another discipline. The geography course she took during her Master’s program was her first exposure to a geography course at the post-secondary level. Although the HBCU she attended as an undergraduate was consistently ranked as one of the top HBCUs in the U.S., the school did not have a geography department or program and did not offer any geography courses. She stated she might be the first person from the HBCU where she received her undergraduate degree to purse a PhD in geography. Even though the HBCU she attended was well over a century old, she thought it was quite probable and very likely that she was the first person from her alma mater to receive a PhD in geography or to hold a faculty position in a Geography Department.

The professor of the urban geography class she took in her Master’s was one of the examiners on her Master’s committee. It had not occurred to her to apply to a program in geography until the professor encouraged her to apply to the school’s PhD program in geography. She explained:

I took a class in urban geography so that’s what honestly drew me to geography …and I loved his class. I just never thought of about geography as
a degree because we didn’t have geography classes at [undergraduate university]. So, I never thought of it like, to get a graduate degree in geography. So, I think that one class is kind of what drew me to it. ... Well so, I didn’t know much about geography when I came in. I really didn’t know anything about the discipline outside of what I had done in the urban geography class.

She had already been accepted into numerous PhD programs in other disciplines and was planning on pursuing a different academic path. She weighed geography against the other disciplines she was considering and realized she would not be able to do the kind of research she was passionate about if she continued in the discipline she was in:

And so, I couldn’t imagine spending the next four, five years of my life, you know, running regression models on Congress. I just didn’t wanna do it. And so, I switched. I thought geography was a good outlet and a good switch for me … I could study issues of race and class and intersectionality and not have to quantify everything. I was in a very quantitative program. And I didn’t want to ... I was tired of doing research where African Americans were outliers and I couldn’t do anything to explain why because nobody cared. They just wanted me to run some models.

It was important for her to be able to research issues impacting African Americans and to be able to merge methods of analyses and intersectional approaches. When she was presented with geography as a potential ‘good fit’ for her to do a PhD in, she realized she would be able to incorporate many her interests in her research. Through geography she saw the possibilities of what and how she could investigate the things she was passionate about.
When I asked another one of the interviewees about her decision to go to graduate school in geography, she recounted the story about being approached by one of her instructors while in her last year of an undergraduate program in geography. After one of her classes, the instructor approached her very sheepishly and asked if she was of a minority background. The instructor explained there was a graduate fellowship for underrepresented minorities at the school where he did his degree at and suggested for her to apply. She told him how she wanted to go into urban planning and become a city planner but she looked into the fellowship and applied to it nonetheless. She received the fellowship and went to speak with a faculty member in the planning department at her school prior to deciding if she was going to accept the offer. She explained:

He said, well, you know you can do this of course but it's also setting you up for a potentially different career path. Getting a Master's from [institution name] in geography, you may not want to come back and become a city planner. And, I mean, I was like, okay. I didn't take it too seriously. And so, I went off to [institution name] and um, you know, I guess that really was a transformative experience for me and it really did set me into a different path of scholarship, of academia. Umm I, I learned a lot. I think I became very taken. That's when I started my obsession with intellectual questions and to really develop through my master's degree. ... And I found that it was a really great way to merge my interests in race and class and environmental issues. And that's what I ended up doing. But I was just obsessed by that time on. There was no going back.
During her Master’s program in geography, she became increasingly invested in the discipline. She found she could ask difficult questions in the areas of her research interests and found clues and explanations from geographic perspectives. Her exposure to geographic theories and ideas during her Master’s cemented her intrigue with geography and her dedication to becoming a geographer.

Opportunities to take courses in geography at the post-secondary level and even the littlest bit of mentorship or encouragement can make a difference in recruiting students of colour into the discipline. Exposure to courses in geography is sometimes all it takes to spark an interest in students. Not having a geography department or offering undergraduate geography courses at a university institution nearly eliminates geography as a potential program for graduate-level studies. The vast possibilities for areas of study within the discipline of geography is often poorly articulated resulting in quite a bit of confusion around what can be constituted as geographic thought. Cuts to geography programs and the elimination of parts of the curriculum that are often seen as elective or outside of the standard foundational courses—such as the geographies of race and racism—can have a grave impact on student recruitment especially in respects to recruiting students of colour.

Representation and Whiteness

Based on the interviews conducted with geographers of colour at North American universities, not only are there numerous geography graduate programs in North America without any Black graduate students enrolled, there are geography graduate programs that have no students of colour enrolled. Except for one person, all the interviewees were either the only graduate student of colour in the entire geography department or the one student of colour in their respective cohort. All the geography faculty on the examining committees
were white. None of the geographers interviewed had a faculty member of colour present in their respective geography departments while they completed their graduate degrees. The following section is a compilation of interviewees experiences as students of colour in graduate programs in geography at North American universities.

The first Black American in North America to receive a PhD in geography was Harold Rose in 1960. Over a half of a century and a few generations later, after the Civil Rights Movement and the fight for Black Liberation, after the desegregation of schools, and after the passing of the Multiculturalism Act and other legal proceeding proclaiming a commitment to racial equality, still today, there are entire graduate programs in North American universities that do not have a single Black student or person of colour enrolled in the program. Stories of being the only Black American or one of only a few students of colour in a graduate program in geography was anticipated for interviewees who were among the first people of colour to obtain a PhD in geography from a North American university. Geographers who were in PhD programs in geography such as Harold Rose in the 1960s, and Bobby and Audrey in the 1970s were expected to be the only person of colour or one of a few people of colour in a graduate program in geography in North America; however, this trend remained persistent in the stories of interviewees who were in geography graduate programs during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.

Although representation of students of colour at the graduate level had increased slightly over time, African American students are persistently the most underrepresented group regardless of other factors such as the geographical location of the school; a university located in a large racially diverse city does not necessarily equate to higher rates of representation of faculty of colour in the geography department. Even with a consistently
small but incremental rise of African Americans holding PhDs in geography in North America over the last fifty years, there continues to be geography departments in North American universities without any African American or Black geographers and/or geographers of colour holding permanent faculty appointments within them.

The lack of representation at the faculty level is mirrored in the enrollment of graduate students in geography programs. One of the interviewees completed a PhD in geography at the same institution where her mother completed a PhD. She and her mother attended graduate school at the same, large, predominantly white, research intensive university in the American South. The persistent and pervasive whiteness of higher education was captured when she remarked on both her own and her mother’s experience in graduate school:

So, she did her PhD and finished in the early eighties. And she was the only Black person in the program at [name of institution]. And when I did my PhD 20 years later, I was the only Black person. ... And if things haven’t changed you have to wonder if there’s any room for growth or change. It has to be frustrating.

Being the only African American or person of colour in an entire graduate program in North America was quite common in the 1960 and 1970. The interviewee’s mother completed her PhD in the 1980s and she completed her PhD in the 2000s. Even as the proportion of African American and people of colour attending post-secondary institutions has increased substantially in the last few decades, representation of people of colour at the graduate level in geography remains low, especially in regard to African American students.

Along with Harold Rose, Bobby was among one of the first Black Americans to receive a PhD in geography. Bobby began graduate studies in geography in 1969 at Clark
University. Without knowing much about graduate school or expectations of what was expected of graduate students, it took Bobby two years to meet a faculty member willing to take him under their wing and to act as his supervisor. At the time, there were no geographers of colour among the geography faculty at Clark. There were no people of colour on Bobby’s doctoral defense committee. In the years prior to securing a supervisor, Bobby was working on adjusting to his new surroundings. For the first time, he was living outside of the American South, attending a white institution, and living in a white city. The transition into graduate school and into the white worlds of Worcester, Massachusetts and Clark University provoked extreme amounts of anxiety. Learning how to exist and thrive at Clark was a personal challenge Bobby was determined to master.

Bobby’s experience of transitioning from a university institution primarily serving students of colour for an undergraduate degree such as an HBCU or a community college, to a predominantly white university town with an overwhelmingly white faculty and student demographic was expected to be difficult given the year he began graduate school and the social climate pertaining to the integration of educational institutions. The story of moving from an HBCU or community college to a predominantly white university for graduate studies in geography, however, was a repeating account for several of the interviewees. Graduate programs in geography tend to be at large, predominantly white, research-based universities. The transition into graduate school is already challenging for many and the added stress of having to navigate a white environment, often for the first time, was a difficult adjustment for many of the geographers interviewed.

One of the interviewees who completed her undergraduate degree at a university in her home community and then moved to a predominantly white institution to begin a master’s
degree in geography recounted the difficulties she encountered while navigating graduate school. Despite being recruited into the geography program through a fellowship for minority students, few additional departmental and institutional supports for underrepresented students were available to her. In another instance, one of the interviewees attended an HBCU during her undergrad and began a Master’s program at a predominantly white university in the American South. Although she was not in a Master’s program in geography, she took a graduate level geography class while in her Master’s and really enjoyed it. This was the first time she had the opportunity to take a geography course at the university level because the HBCU she attended during her undergraduate degree did not offer any geography courses. Transitioning into a PhD program in geography at the same institution upon finishing her Master’s degree was a little less jarring for her than for others starting graduate programs in geography because she had a sense of what to anticipate.

In a similar vein, and about a decade after Bobby started his graduate studies in geography at Clark, Audrey began a PhD in geography at UCLA. Audrey was on the other side of the country and at a school with an established Asian American Center and a marked presence of Asian students on campus, yet she was one of two geographers of colour in her graduate cohort of around 50 people. When Audrey was a graduate student, there were no people of colour among the geography faculty at UCLA. At the time, there were also no faculty members or fellow graduate students in geography critically engaging with concepts of race and racism. She found support from other graduate students in the Asian American Studies program as there was no one in geography with whom she could discuss race and racism with.
Navigating the whiteness of geography as graduate students was extremely difficult for most of the geographers interviewed. Some found support outside of the geography department and made friends with students of colour in other graduate programs. About half of the interviewees felt isolated or excluded during their graduate studies because they were a person of colour. One of the interviewees described the geography department at the institution where she completed her Master’s degree as overwhelmingly white. The faculty was mostly comprised of white men and the graduate student body had a handful of students from underrepresented groups. There was one other student of colour in her cohort, and two other students of colour in cohorts ahead of her. She was a racialized, first-generation college student and being in a geography graduate program brought about several insecurities about her abilities to complete the program.

Another interviewee recounted she was the only student of colour from an underrepresented group in the geography department for the first three years of her PhD program. Outside of geography, there was only one other student from an underrepresented minority group in another department with whom she had classes with. An additional student from an underrepresented racialized group began in the geography graduate program when she was in her third year and one more student began in geography during her fourth year of the PhD. She also remarked that there were a few students from other racialized groups but were not considered as being from underrepresented groups at this university because they were international students from East Asian countries. All the international students of colour were in GIS or geomorphology streams and none of them were researching social issues or topics concerning race or racism.
Finding a Supervisor and Forming Examining Committees

Navigating the whiteness of a graduate program in geography as a student of colour and being in a department with poor representation of racialized people at the faculty and graduate student levels were identified as some of the most challenging elements of completing the geography degree. Finding thesis supervisors and forming examining committees supportive of one’s research, in addition to identifying other faculty and students of colour on campus with similar research interests or for general support were common narratives as interviewees recounted their experiences completing a graduate degree in geography. Despite the best efforts of many of the degree supervisors, some of the interviewees longed for someone to talk to who understood what it was like to be a student of colour in an environment that delegitimizes and discounts the experiences, research, and intellect of people of colour. The absence of faculty of colour in geography departments with graduate programs made the experience of graduate school particularly isolating and taxing for most of the geographers interviewed.

For many, being the only (or one of a few) student of colour in an entire geography graduate program was a difficult, if not a horrible experience. There was a heavy personal toll trying to exist as a student of colour in a white discipline. Not having anyone around who was also a person of colour caused a fair amount of anxiety around belonging in graduate school and questioning of one’s intellectual abilities. The overbearing whiteness permeating every facet of the graduate experience led several interviewees to contemplate dropping out of the graduate program in geography. From having to stand up for oneself when racist remarks are made during graduate level classes, to constantly having to defend the legitimacy and integrity of one’s research on race, being the only person of colour in graduate program
and having no faculty of colour in the department meant many had to work through feelings of alienation, exclusion, and self-doubt.

Some could get through their graduate programs with minimal support from their respective geography departments and supervisors, while others relied heavily on the guidance and reassurance of their thesis supervisors. With the absence of peers and faculty of colour, several of the geographers interviewed attributed their success of completing their degrees in geography to their thesis supervisors. Although none of the interviewees had a degree supervisor who was also a person of colour, strong supervisorial support in navigating the academic and cultural terrain of graduate studies in geography was identified as one of the most important factors for remaining in a graduate program.

One of the interviewees explained how being a racialized woman from a working-class background presented several unique challenges when she began graduate studies in geography. Aside from her supervisor, she found the environment of the geography department to be very discouraging, unwelcoming, and alienating. Without the support of her supervisor, she is certain she would have left the program. Her supervisor was the one thing that kept her in the program and as she recounted going through her master’s program she described the experience as horrible and inconceivable if not for the support and encouragement from her supervisor. Even though her supervisor had no research expertise in topics surrounding race and racism, she wholeheartedly supported and encouraged her to explore and discover the things she was passionate about. Her Master’s supervisor was also someone who was committed to supporting women and people from other minority backgrounds in higher education. She attributed her success in completing the Master’s program to the support of her advisor—without her, she does not think she would have
completed the Master’s degree, continued to a PhD program, or have stayed in academia. Although some found it frustrating and sometimes difficult when trying to explain the challenges they were facing as people of colour in a white environment, having a supportive and caring supervisor was imperative for remaining in the program.

Even with an excellent primary supervisor, not having peers and faculty mentors who were also people of colour for support was identified as one of the most stressful aspects of graduate school for many of the geographers of colour interviewed. When speaking about their supervisors in graduate school, interviewees often began with statements such as “my MA/PhD supervisor was a white man/woman but he/she was extremely supportive.” One of the interviewees explained that although her thesis supervisor was very supportive, his lack of perspective as a white man made it difficult for her to talk to him about the encounters she was facing because she was woman of colour. Many felt even though their supervisors were unable to advise at the theoretical level in respects to race, or draw from personal experiences or understandings when navigating racism in graduate school, their supervisor’s encouragement, guidance, and support was nonetheless invaluable and a vital aspect enabling them to complete their graduate degrees in geography.

In addition to finding a supportive supervisor, identifying potential examination committee members for a thesis dealing with race and/or racism required a little more strategic planning and personal initiative than what is expected of most graduate students. Having faculty of colour present on the examining committee was a concern that crossed the minds of several of the interviewees and a few people took the initiative to seek out and recruit faculty of colour from other departments. Finding faculty of colour in departments outside of geography to be on PhD examining committees was a strategy used by
interviewees who were in geography departments without any faculty of colour or were without faculty who had a basic understanding of the social construction of race. Regardless of the faculty member of colour’s area of research expertise, having at least one other person of colour in the room while defending a dissertation helped to ease some of the anxiety over whether they would be assessed fairly during the exam.

One of the geographers interviewed remarked on how difficult it was to find a faculty member who was a racial minority to be on his doctoral committee. There were no faculty of colour in the geography department at his school when he attended in the late 1960s and had to go and search for someone willing to serve on his committee on his own. He recruited a Black faculty member from the sociology department to be on his committee. He felt it was crucial to have someone on his committee who could help explain his answers to the white men on his committee and to ensure he would be treated fairly during the defence of his PhD. The faculty member from sociology ended up being very helpful and supportive during the exam. He found it necessary, comforting, and reassuring to have at least one other Black faculty in the room during his PhD defense.

For another interviewee, the absence of faculty of colour in the geography department during the time she was completing her PhD as well as an unusual shortage of geography faculty in general at her school ended up being a major benefit rather than a drawback. She explained her PhD supervisor was a white man who was fully appointed in the Geography Department and all her other PhD committee members were women of colour. The scarcity of geography faculty present in the department during the time she was forming her examining committee resulted in a little more flexibility than usual with who was allowed on her committee. With the absence of geography faculty, there also happened to be three
women of colour from other disciplines who critically researched race who were temporarily affiliated with the geography department. She saw this unusual circumstance as a moment of luck and good fortune. Although none of the three women of colour had degrees in geography, since there were so few geography faculty present in the department when she was finishing her PhD, she could be more selective with who could be on her committee. She felt extremely supported not only in the process of completing her dissertation research but she also felt encouraged to critically engage with race in her research, without hesitation, by each one of her committee members.

Predicting which faculty might be supportive committee members to students doing critical race research was not as straightforward as anticipated. Having PhD committee members who engage with topics of race, however, was not necessarily indicative of a wholly supportive committee. One interview participant explained she had three geography faculty on her doctoral supervisory committee. Although all the geographers on her committee engaged with the topic of race at varying capacities in their work, she still found it was necessary to advocate on her own behalf to ensure the elements she felt were important such as the use of narrative and history were included in her dissertation. The committee encouraged her to engage with race in her work but there was some resistance in terms of using critical race theory and methods. There were moments where the narrative and history sections of her dissertation were in danger of being edited out and she had to justify why they were important to the project. The three geography faculty on her committee were all white.

The experiences of the interviewees when dealing with their thesis committee members varied—most found their committee members to be supportive and encouraging even if they were unfamiliar with literature on race and/or racism. The presence of at least
one faculty member of colour on an examining committee was desired by a number of the 
interviewees because they felt the presence of another person of colour could help curb any 
potential racism or discrimination during the oral defense and assessment of the dissertation. 
Regardless of the decade when the interviewee attended graduate school, all the participants 
had examining committees comprised entirely by white geography faculty. The geography 
faculty serving on the examining committee for interviewee’s graduate degrees in geography 
during the 1960s were all white—the geography faculty serving on the examining 
committees for the interviewee who was the most recent person to complete a graduate 
degree in geography and completed a PhD in the 2000s were also all white.

**Common Challenges: Experiences as Geography Graduate Students of Colour**

Interviewees faced a number of common challenges while completing their graduate degrees 
in geography. Key themes include: difficult transitions into graduate school, accessing 
supports for students of colour, feeling valued and wanted as a member of the geography 
department, and having to combat racism in the classroom while completing graduate-level 
coursework. The section concludes by juxtaposing two perspectives on the graduate student 
experience of students of colour in geography. One of the perspectives is recounted through 
one of the interviewee’s experiences while in a graduate program in geography and 
highlights how racism and whiteness within the discipline of geography can be 
simultaneously subtle, overbearing, and pervasive. A contrasting yet complimentary account 
is told by another interviewee as he reflected on his shortcomings while supervising a 
graduate student of colour in geography.
Racism and overbearing whiteness within university institutions and their respective geography departments played a significant role in shaping the everyday graduate school experiences of the geographers of colour who were interviewed. Navigating within a culture of whiteness as a person of colour presented several personal challenges when trying to integrate into the university environment and when attempting to survive the myriad of everyday racism that come with doing a graduate degree in geography. Although accounts of being called a racial slur as a graduate student were more prevalent in the stories told by geographers who completed degrees in the 1960s and 1970s, a lot of the same subtle but pervasive forms of everyday racism experienced on campus and in the classroom remained consistent over time. Regardless of when the graduate degrees in geography were completed, there were several thematic trends and shared experiences of racism in interviewee’s stories.

Many of the geographers attended a Historically Black Collage or a local community college for their undergraduate degrees and transitioned to a predominantly white institution for graduate school because the majority of graduate programs in geography in North America were and continue to be housed in predominately white university institutions. Moving away from their home communities, often to predominantly white college towns, was especially difficult for those who were first generation university graduates and were also the first in their families to go to graduate school. Once admitted into their respective undergraduate or graduate programs, most encountered significant challenges as people of colour when having to navigate within institutions that were predominately white. Except for one interviewee, all of the participants were either the sole person of colour in the entire geography department or were one of only a few students of colour distributed throughout the different cohorts of graduate students.
The transition into graduate school was cited as especially distressing and anxiety-provoking because the absence of geography faculty and peers of colour made it difficult to find others who understood what they were going through and who could offer guidance. Interestingly, finding and accessing formal supports tailored for students of colour at the institutional or departmental levels was more prevalent in the stories of the eldest generation of geographers of colour. Those who were in graduate programs in geography in the 1960s and 1970s were more likely to identify a formal program or fellowship they benefitted from that was designed to support Black students. With institutional and discipline-wide initiatives set up around the time of integration to support Black American graduate students in predominantly white universities in the U.S., most Black geographers completing graduate degrees in the 1960s and 1970s benefited from a fellowship or program designed specifically to support Black graduate students. Institutional and discipline-wide recognition of the unique challenges Black graduate students would have integrating into a predominantly white university system lead to the creation of programs such as Clark University’s Teachers Teaching Teachers (Triple T) and the AAG’s Commission on Geography and Afro-America (COMGA). Formal efforts to recognize and address how racism and whiteness are manifested in graduate programs in geography and impact the representation of geographers of colour at the faculty and graduate student levels appears to have peaked during the 1960s and 1970s.

The institutional and discipline-wide supports designed to counteract the inevitable racism and pervasive whiteness of geography and university environments offered to students of the 1960s and 1970s and similar formal institutional and discipline-wide mechanisms tailored to supporting geography graduate students of colour have largely
disappeared. Several of the interviewees who completed geography graduate degrees in the 1990s and 2000s sought support within their respective universities and geography departments for dealing with their experiences of racism while in graduate school but were frustrated to find there were no established formal institutional avenues serving the needs of students of colour. Those who were explicitly recruited into graduate programs in geography through initiatives to increase the level of representation of students of colour were especially shocked to learn there were no institutional or departmental supports available for students of colour once they arrived at the university.

Even though the first Black Americans to complete graduate degrees in geography were more likely to have access to formal programs supporting Black graduate students, their experiences of racism, hostility, and exclusion were nonetheless inescapable. For example, when Bobby Wilson was at Clark University for his graduate degrees and had supportive faculty members as well as other Black students as peers, he still had several conflicts with professors. Being among the first Black Americans to attend a graduate program in geography in North America, Bobby’s presence in the department and on campus was not always welcome. He regularly encountered faculty who were vocal about their objections to having Black students at Clark and were unapologetic when professing racist remarks. Open hostility and protestation against having Black students at the university inevitably challenged perceptions of self and feelings of value as a member of the geography department.

For decades following the racial integration of students in the school system, overt racist remarks and the tolerance of racism on campus were, and continue to be, commonplace at predominantly white universities in North America. Among the geographers of colour
interviewed, experiences of racism during graduate school was a strong common thread between stories irrespective of when they attended school. The consistent lack of other people of colour within the geography department—or at the university more broadly—not only made for a very isolating and alienating graduate student experience, but it also meant many of the interviewees felt they were always both hyper visible and invisible as graduate students of colour. One of the interviewee recalled hearing rumors about a ‘slow’ graduate student being spread among the graduate students and professors. The rumors were about the only other graduate student of colour. The interviewee explained that the student being teased was undoubtedly bright but ended up having to leave the PhD program in geography because no matter how consistently he demonstrated excellence in his academic endeavors, he was unable to escape the racist presumptions his colleagues held about him. At times, interviewees felt hyper visible and on guard when moving through the white university environment and were weary of when explicitly racist remarks would be directed at them by both faculty and students they did and did not know. Feelings of invisibility were especially triggered when several of the interviewees realized very few people in the geography department took any interest in their research or made an effort to engage with them or their work.

In an additional instance, another interviewee found it especially difficult to feel valued and wanted as a member of the geography department where he was completing a graduate degree in geography in the 1970s. Even though he completed his graduate degrees at a university in his hometown and did not have to adjust to a new city, he did not feel at home as a graduate student in the geography department. There were no faculty of colour or other students of colour in the geography department. None of the faculty or students in the
geography department were engaged in research on race or racism and he never felt like anyone in the department took any interest in his work. The self-doubt, isolation, and dread that came along with being the only person of colour in the geography department was thankfully interrupted in the last year of his PhD when he was awarded a scholarship to finish writing his dissertation at [name of university].

The change of environment and his exposure to a more supportive and critically engaged geography department was vital for him to be able to imagine a career in geography for himself. He enjoyed doing a residency at the university because there were several prominent geography faculty in the department at the time as well as several engaged graduate students. The PhD writing scholarship exposed him to an intellectual environment where people loved debating and discussing critical issues such as regional segregation, social change and how to bring it about, and protest movements. He realized just how much he enjoyed and felt comfortable in a stimulating intellectual environment and found the opportunity to interact with powerful researchers to be life-changing. Knowing other scholars wanted to work with him added to his confidence as a geographer and ended up being one of his best life decisions because of how it shaped him as a person and as a researcher. He not only felt welcomed into the geography department as a visiting scholar but he also felt he was wanted and valued there. Being at another institution to finish his degree and having a more positive graduate experience in geography gave him insight into the possibility of continuing his career as an academic geographer.

Conflicting experiences during graduate school by the same people but at different institutions were somewhat common among the interviewees. While most of the geographers of colour had several negative and difficult experiences as graduate students, on the rare
occasion the absence of faculty of colour in the geography department and the non-existence of courses dealing with race in geography graduate programs ended up being the factors leading to an overall positive graduate school experience. For one of the interviewees, it was the geography graduate program she was enrolled in that pushed her to become much more critical about concepts surrounding race and ethnicity. Although she began to become politicized during her undergraduate degree and her research interests were geared towards understanding race and ethnicity, the absence of critical race courses in the geography department allowed her to pick and choose graduate courses specializing in topics of race, racism, and ethnicity from across the university.

The courses encouraging critical thinking around race and ethnicity were offered through other graduate programs outside of the geography department and she attributed much of her learning about critical race issues to her peers. It was the late 1990s and not only did her cohort of geography graduate students have a handful of other students of colour critically engaging with race but there were graduate students of colour in other departments taking geography courses and geography students taking classes in other disciplines. They developed a network of peers based on similar interests and the courses they were enrolled in. Once they realized the same people had similar interests, they could find out about other critical race courses on social theory, Fanon, Black Marxism etc. Through graduate courses on critical issues, students from across disciplines had the opportunity to interact and develop a network of graduate students of colour and other students with overlapping interests.

The major drawback of being allowed to complete the majority of graduate coursework outside of the discipline of geography was her sense that her education in the discipline of geography was piecemeal and partial. While she was required to take a few
graduate level courses within the geography department, the bulk of her coursework was completed in other disciplines. Opposed to the courses in her area of interest in other departments, she found her first year of the graduate program in geography to be particularly difficult because she felt like she was learning a new language and often felt completely overwhelmed by the heavy academic texts she was assigned. Without clear links between the practice of geography and the analysis of race and racism, applying geographic concepts pertaining to race brought about a lot of confusion and required a fair amount of uncertainty when connecting seemingly distant theories.

Unlike the long held standard areas of investigation within the discipline such as political or economic geography, none of the interviewees had the opportunity to take graduate level courses in geography specifically focused on and were critical of concepts pertaining to race. Having no faculty of colour and no one engaging with topics of race and racism meant several interviewees were stuck taking courses at the graduate level that were painful to get through. One of the geographers interviewed remarked how he had to take mandatory courses in his graduate program in geography that he had no interest in and a few other interviewees remarked on the challenges of completing the required graduate level coursework in geography when all the classes are taught from a Eurocentric perspective.

In addition to not having the opportunity to take graduate courses in geography that critically and explicitly engage with topics pertaining to race, many of the interviewees cited the classroom—and in particular, graduate level classes in geography—as a place where they frequently had to defend themselves against racist comments. For some of the interviewees, encounters with racism in graduate-level geography classes were not only regularly espoused by graduate students but also by geography faculty. One of the interviewees explained it was
better for her if people in her graduate level classes in geography avoided engaging with topics pertaining to race. The conversations about race that were brought up in class were always either deeply insulting or wholly misrepresentative. As evidenced through reoccurring in-class discussions, most of the geography graduate students did not have a basic understanding of race as a social construct. Frequent incidences of racism caused some to constantly feel an obligation to challenge the whiteness and racism in geography classrooms and hallways because they were the only person of colour in the geography department; however, when racism was confronted and brought to the attention of the perpetrators or the head of the geography department, many felt their voice and experiences of racism were easily dismissed or trivialized.

Although racist remarks were often made in the graduate-level geography classes of one of the interviewees, she was quick to emphasize that she encountered a countless number of incidents of racism while completing her PhD in geography. The severity of the incidences varied—from a fellow graduate student making offensive comment during a class or seminar because they were trying to engage with the topic of race but did not know how, to being personally confronted by someone in the geography department and having racist remarks directed at her. Despite the frequency of the racist remarks, ignorance and the justification that the person simply did not know any better was always the response in her experience. She often felt the incidents were never taken seriously by the geography department and/or the people involved. She found the formal avenues for addressing racism within the geography department to be inadequate and unaccountable, and never felt like her concerns were resolved. Tangible changes and evidence of a commitment to addressing racism within her geography department remained largely absent despite her urging.
Pervasive Racism and Whiteness in Graduate School: One Geographer’s Experiences

Like many of the geographers interviewed, graduate studies in geography began with a rocky start for one of the interviewees. Her experiences as a Masters student encompassed many of the common challenges faced by students of colour while attempting to navigate the racism and whiteness that is prevalent in the discipline of geography. She too found the transition into graduate school difficult, frequently needing to defend herself in graduate level classes against the racist tendencies of geography faculty. Cumulative instances of being treated poorly as the sole woman of colour in her graduate cohort, she never felt valued or welcomed as a member of the geography department. If it was not for the support and encouragement of her Master’s degree supervisor, she would have left academia soon after beginning graduate school.

As with many of the other interviewees who were the sole person of colour in their cohort or one of a few people of colour, she was one of two people of colour in the incoming geography graduate student cohort of about 30 people. She was the only woman of colour. Akin to the experience of several of the people interviewed, she enrolled in a predominantly white institution to pursue a graduate degree in geography after having graduated with an undergraduate degree from an institution with a student demographic primarily comprised of people of colour. Despite the small sample of interviewees, several were recruited into graduate programs in geography because of initiatives to increase representation of people of colour in the discipline and most held scholarships for academic excellence and for demonstrating scholarly potential. She too held a scholarship and was recruited into the geography graduate program for a Masters degree.
Almost half of those interviewed remarked that when they were growing up at least one of their parents or primary caregivers were illiterate and she was among the group of geographers who grew up in a household where the caregivers had poor literacy skills. Like several other interviewees, she was the first in their family to attend university. Similar to other students who are the first in the family to attend college, let alone graduate school, there was no one to brief her about what would be expected of her. All the geographers interviewed completed graduate degrees in geography departments where the faculty were almost exclusively comprised of white men and everyone’s supervisor was white. She moved across the country to a new city and school, and was surrounded by a predominantly white demographic.

For one of the interviewees, the most traumatizing and upsetting experience during her graduate studies took place in the first semester of her first year of the Master’s program. The semester had just started and she was beginning to get to know her advisor and adjust to the foreign environment. She was surrounded by white faculty and white students and had a fair amount of anxiety around standing out as a person of colour. She was painfully aware of the ways she was different from the faculty and her peers. She recounted the incident:

I had a first semester class at [name of institution]. And you've gotta do a proposal of some sort. And I have no idea what I'm doing, right. And part of it is where we had to do a literature review, which I had no idea how to do. And uhh, so when it came down to the literature review, I felt I might have misunderstood it. But I felt the Professor, [name of professor], never really explained, “here's how to do a literature review,” you know. And I think I was very tentative and I paid attention. I was really insecure, so I’d do all those
things. And when it was time to do mine, I said I would go first because I was really nervous and I wanted to get it over with. And so, I went first and I did it all wrong. I did it all wrong. And I stood up there and I presented my literature review and then he preceded to critique me. And to use me as an example as to how not do a literature review. And I was standing up there in tears, crying in front of a class of, I don't know, 30 students. It was a big cohort at [name of institution]. And I was standing there crying in front of them. And um, I was completely humiliated. And, and I was, you know, whatever shred of confidence I might have had was completely undermined. And it was a very devastating thing. And you know, and I really was toying with, you know, I don't belong here, I should just drop out. And of course [name of supervisor] brought me back from the brink there. And she, in the next kind of assignment or part of the class that we had to do these stand-up presentations, she went in there and was part of the audience, you know, to support me and also to put a check on [name of professor]’s behaviors also. And I don't feel that he—I'm sure he wasn't out to get me—I think he was just completely clueless about how, how some students might feel about this. Especially students who are already questioning whether not they belong. And he just made it so terrible. And you know, he was at the height of insensitivity from my point of view.

When disciplines cater to graduate students from middle class, well-educated, predominantly white backgrounds, students who do not fit the demographic profile of the typical geographer are particularly susceptible to being ostracized or shamed for not knowing the rules, protocols, and expectations of the department prior to even having an opportunity to learn the
norms of the discipline. It was not coincidental that she was insecure and nervous, and unsure about what she was supposed to do for the literature review. Everyone was given the same vague instructions—how could she know she was not meeting the professor’s expectations when he did not explicitly state what the assignment entailed?

The professor’s assumptions about what graduate students already know, his failure to consider the different needs of the students, and his absence of awareness or consideration of the impact of his pedagogical approach were not simply a reflection of one geographer’s ignorance and insensitivity in his teaching practice but serve as examples of some of the ways white masculinity are normalized and valorized in geography.

Situating the interviewee’s incident in the graduate class as an example of racism in geography in relation to experiences of racism during graduate school among the geographers interviewed points to a familiar pattern of instances where students of colour were routinely singled out from their white peers in the classroom. Consistencies between interviewees’ experiences of racism in the classroom suggests it was not coincidental the professor was a white man or that she was the sole woman of colour in the class. A white man in a position of power ridiculing a young woman of colour in front of an almost entirely white audience of her peers, then, is not simply a matter of the man being insensitive but a demonstration of power and a reassertion of white masculinity. As the professor used the one woman of colour in the class as an example by emphasizing all the errors in her literature review for the benefit of white students, he simultaneously asserted his power and intelligence as a white man, reified ties between intellect and racial inferiority, and attempted to ensure the preservation of whiteness within geography by aiding in the academic development of the white students in the class at the expense of the one woman of colour.
The lack of an expectation for the professor to recognize his position as a white man and the interviewee’s position as a woman of colour further accentuates the sustained normalcy of white masculinity in the discipline of geography. When disciplines such as geography are primarily comprised of white faculty and specifically faculty who are white men, teaching a student body that is primarily made up of white students, the inherent whiteness governing the protocols and norms of the classroom go unquestioned. Considering positionality and one’s subject position might appear fruitless when everyone is assumed to be from dominant or normative class, race, sexuality, gender backgrounds; but what does it mean when positionality and one’s subject position are ignored when there are people from different race, class, sexuality, gender backgrounds? The unnamed dominant identity of the geographer—the white, middle-class, heterosexual, man—remains normalized as knowledgeable and superior.

The complex layers of the many ways masculinity, whiteness, and white power are upheld in geography are rendered invisible when racist incidents within the classroom—as in the vignette above—are reduced to the fault of one individual’s poor judgement and an anomaly within the discipline. Excusing racist behavior as ignorance does not address, recognize, remedy, or prevent future incidents of racism. The failure to label racism as racism, even in cases when direct racial slurs and racist actions are absent, allows for the subtle and everyday forms of human degradation based on racial constructs to remain normal. When incidents of racism are overlooked as an anomaly and a reflection of a professor’s insensitivity or poor awareness of the ways whiteness and racism are upheld in geography, white superiority is reinforced. Additionally, in hesitating and failing to name and acknowledge racism and whiteness in the discipline of geography, experiences of racism in
geography are simultaneously disregarded, undermined, and encouraged to persist. Rather than excusing the professor’s behavior as an exception to the norm and instead naming his actions as explicitly racist and an example of one of the ways whiteness is implicitly valorized within geography, incidences of racism and whiteness become tangible, identifiable, familiar, and systematic.

Through applying a critical race lens and by recognizing the interviewee’s experience in the classroom as a common and predictable incident, patterns emerge between the interviewee’s stories. What the interviewee endured was not a singular or unique experience, or simply a moment of misfortune. While the interviewee was chastised by the professor in front of her classmates for misunderstanding an assignment, comparable incidents of racism and whiteness within graduate-level geography classes were reoccurring in other interviewee’s narratives. Although the specific details of the interviewee’s story were not replicated in the stories by other geographers, many of the geographers of colour identified the classroom as one of the most volatile places where racism was experienced.

Evidence from the interviews with geographers of colour demonstrate unwanted and unnecessary attention was often drawn towards them in graduate level classes in geography because of their racialized identity. On several occasions, some interviewees were made hyperaware of how they differed from the rest of their classmates. For example, some were singled out when they were the only student of colour in a graduate level classroom and were expected to answer all questions pertaining to race arising in the class, and some were singled out as the only student of colour to answer questions pertaining to race only to have their answers and insights trivialized and discarded. The normalcy at which fellow students and
faculty brought interviewees’ racialized identities to the attention of the entire class
demonstrates the depth of everyday racism present in graduate-level classes in geography.

Recognizing the interviewee’s experience of being ridiculed by the professor during
her first semester in a geography graduate class as an instance of everyday racism and an
example of how whiteness is perpetuated during the professionalization of geographers
allows for the theorization of racism and whiteness within the profession of geography. By
identifying, and in turn theorizing, the occurrence of a white man shaming the academic
abilities of the one woman of colour in a graduate level class as a contemporary application
of scientific racism, the continuing power of white superiority in the geography classroom is
centered and prioritized when analysing the incident. The whiteness of geography becomes
visible and the identities of the geography professor and the graduate student can be situated
within the broader context of the discipline of geography. The identities of the geography
professor and the graduate student are no longer insignificant or erased in the story of
geography or the story of geographers but an integral piece in understanding the discipline’s
unsuccessful attempts at supporting and increasing the presence of geographers of colour.

In addition to the classroom, the interviewee found the overall demeanor of the
people in the geography department to be wholly discouraging towards her and her work.
Aside from her thesis supervisor, she often felt that none of the other faculty members took
an interest in her or saw any value in what she was studying. Her research interests have
always been deeply connected to her racialized identity and her experiences growing up in a
working-class family. She explained how her earliest research endeavors were driven by her
desire to understand her experiences, her cultural and migration history, and her family’s and
community’s background. She understood that she did not come from a privileged
background and was always interested in working class issues from a racialized perspective because of her upbringing. She never felt welcomed or wanted in the geography department because she was the first in her family to attend college, from a working-class background, and a person of colour. She sensed the faculty felt her interest in critically investigating issues of race, racism, and labour through geography lacked merit. Her interactions especially with faculty members in geography made her feel invisible, invalid as a graduate student and as a geographer, and like a burden rather than a member of the department.

Once she tried to engage in a conversation with a geography faculty member who specialized in the same region she was researching. She came up with a research project on the impact of drought on racialized labourers and shared her idea with the faculty member. He immediately dismissed the validity of the project and did not think there was much to study. He expressed his disinterest in the project and provided ridiculous reasons for why there was no good reason to conduct the research. She recounted her reaction to his demeanor:

So, you know, for him it was just like: what is there to study? It's so uninteresting, you know. And that was kind of a very revelatory moment for me. That you know, about how people see my interests. And then it's like, I never got the impression that nobody really tried to talk to me. Any of the white guys, you know. Or make me feel particularly comfortable. Or you know ... I was invisible.

In this moment, she realized what the popular attitude towards her was from others in the geography department. She elaborated on her difficulties trying to get through her Master’s program:
So yeah, and I mean, so in that case it was, it was the utter invisibility and disregard, the lack of interest. And you know, it could be partly me internalizing certain things, as, at that time, as a, as a small brown female. Somebody who doesn't have any background in higher ed., you know. Being a first-generation student, that um, so I had my own set of insecurities going in there, right.

Despite all the negative and discouraging interactions she had with geography faculty and while navigating higher education, her love of geography, geographic inquiry, her understanding of geography as a love for the place that she comes from, along with the encouragement of her Master’s supervisor, she decided to pursue a PhD. Through the discipline of geography, she could make sense of the place where she was from and the class and race struggles of the people who lived there. Her love of concepts within geography and how readily she could apply geographic theories to help her understand the place she loved and the place where she was from outweighed all her horrible and traumatic experiences of doing a Master’s degree in geography.

With hesitancy, she applied to an interdisciplinary PhD program and not a geography program because of the urging from her Master’s supervisor. She pursued a PhD at a different institution and to her relief, it could not have been more of a polar opposite experience from her Master’s program. Her supervisor knew of an interdisciplinary PhD program that had a critical mass of radical geography faculty and students, in addition to several radical students of colour. There were about 15 people in her PhD cohort and about 2/3 of the students were people of colour. She wanted to complete a PhD in geography but her supervisor explained how the interdisciplinary program was where she would find other
scholars and geographers who had similar politics. Even with all the discouragement from the geographers at the institution where she completed her Masters, she continued developing her research expertise around investigations of working class experiences and racialized labour. Decades after identifying her research interests, her interests have remained the same. She laughed when she said the common joke about the program was that it was the best kept secret geography department. She worked with a number of prominent geographers during her PhD and it was a place where she was able to intellectually thrive. She explained how for the first time in her post-secondary career, she felt really comfortable in academia.

Changing institutions and enrolling in another discipline for a PhD were key factors leading to her academic success. Although the program she was enrolled in was mostly made up of faculty and students who were geographers, her PhD was not in geography. The interdisciplinary program allowed for more flexibility in what could be studied and attracted geographers who held more radical politics and wanted to research topics outside of the traditional areas of inquiry within geography. Critical enquiries around topics of race, place, class, and racialized labour were openly encouraged, fostered, and supported.

Geography’s disciplinary traditions of what kinds of research are acceptable, imaginations of who can be deemed a geographer, and foundational questions regarding concepts of place are challenged when people, such as those interviewed, persevere and conduct the often unpopular, critical, radical, and antiracist research through a geographic lens. And because disciplinary traditions defining the practice of geography was and continues to be governed by the cadre of white and predominantly male geographers, simply existing as a person of colour in the discipline of geography challenges long held beliefs about who can become a geographer. In the case of the interviewee during her Master’s
degree, her research interest did not fall neatly into long held categories of geographic study and her body as a racialized person of colour could not fit neatly into the imagination of who can become a geographer. When a discipline is as overwhelmingly white as geography, levels of representation and the mere presence of geographers of colour still holds significance.

Chapter Summary

The preceding examples demonstrate ways whiteness was normalized and racism had taken on a subtle form; even when elusive, racism was still powerful as it quietly discouraged and disadvantaged many of the students of colour as they navigated graduate school. Because whiteness is often invisible to those benefiting from it, instances of racism are routinely dismissed as too subtle or minor especially by those who do not consistently experience racism. Centering the voices, perspectives, and experiences of geographers of colour when they were graduate students draws attention to and challenges the discipline of geography’s unquestioned mechanisms for privileging, prioritizing, and reproducing whiteness through the graduate school process.

As interviewees recounted traumatic incidents occurring during graduate classes in geography, most stories were absent of racial slurs and obvert demonstrations of racism. Instead, the subtle racialized aggressions and normalized, every day, and unspoken etiquette within graduate programs in geography were identified as the forces fueling the maintenance of racism and white superiority within the discipline. The seemingly benign practices of frequently being singled out, picked on, questioned, or called upon in predominantly white graduate level classes by professors and other students were often provided as examples of
how racism and whiteness are preserved within graduate programs. In addition, although whiteness can certainly be problematized, questioned, and challenged without the presence of people of colour, the few students of colour who find themselves in graduate programs in geography often bear the burden of being on the receiving end of racism and/or feel tasked to be the one to identify and asked to remedy the situation. The cumulative impact of the many small or subtle instances of racism on students of colour during graduate studies must be taken into account when developing strategies for addressing whiteness within the discipline of geography.

The recurring difficulties geographers of colour faced during graduate school suggests ignoring systematic racism and whiteness within the discipline has devastating impacts on the success rate of students of colour in geography programs and in turn, the presence of geographers of colour in North American geography departments. Similarities in the interviewee’s personal contexts and overall experience as graduate students of colour—entering an almost entirely white environment of a graduate program in geography, being from a poor family, being a first-generation college graduate, and subsequent feelings of anxiety, isolation, and self-doubt as to whether or not they even belong in graduate school—demonstrate enough consistency to suggest the professionalization process at the graduate level in geography is an example of one of the many mechanisms reproducing the status quo. The continued failure of addressing racism within graduate programs in geography aids the facilitation and maintenance of a discipline with faculty who are almost exclusively all white. When graduate students of colour are thrown into a profession that is overwhelmingly comprised of white people who have little to no awareness of the ways whiteness are manifested within the practice and teaching of geography, it should not be a surprise to find
there has been little to no change in the proportion of geographers of colour holding faculty positions in North American geography departments.
Chapter 8

Racism in Geography: Experiences as Faculty Members

This chapter draws on evidence from the interviews with geographers of colour at North American universities to illustrate the ways in which racism and whiteness are entrenched within the profession of geography. The geographers interviewed identified a multiplicity of areas within the academic profession of geography where the power of whiteness was unmistakable. Traditional/colonial/white ontologies of geographic thought, the discipline’s normative governing protocols built and powered by whiteness, and the dominant racial embodiment of the typical geographer as white were illuminated when confronted by the conflicting objectives of antiracist and critical race theories and practices and the presence of geographers of colour.

The valorization, normalcy, and hegemony of whiteness within geographic thought and practice profoundly shape the experiences of geographers of colour at all levels of engagement with the discipline. Irrespective of age, gender, geographic location, and racialized group identification all the geographers of colour interviewed provided examples of racism directed at them and/or other minority geographers by geographers within their respective institutions.

The application of Essed's (1991) theory of everyday racism and the heuristics of comparison point to reoccurring themes in geographers’ experiences of racism as faculty of colour in north American institutions. Examples of racist incidents while holding an appointment as a new faculty member, to being a senior, well-established tenured faculty member in a geography department were littered throughout the stories of those interviewed. The experiences of faculty of colour are presented through four thematic areas: interactions
with faculty in their respective geography departments, experiences at the disciplinary level at geography conferences, involvement in mentorship capacities, and interactions with students when teaching.

Experiences of Racism in Geography

Experiences of racism and encounters with whiteness while employed as faculty members in North American university institutions were prevalent in most of the interviewee’s stories. Interactions with colleagues and other faculty members in the interviewee’s respective geography departments were the most common source for yielding examples of experiences of racism and whiteness in geography. Interviewees recounted the general climate pertaining to geography faculty of colour, the additional types of labour expected of them because they are faculty of colour, and the overall attitudes towards antiracist research within each of their respective geography departments. Examples of opposition and resistance towards the presence of geography faculty of colour as well as antiracist and critical race research within interviewee’s respective geography departments include: the notable presence of overtly racist remarks about colleagues in the same department during departmental meetings, the devaluation of forms of labour that are often carried out by faculty of colour, the dismissal and devaluation of antiracist scholarship during the tenure process, and the lack of commitment to critical race research as evidenced by the prevalence of geographers of colour cross appointed to other departments.

The experiences of faculty of colour in North American geography departments are indications of the overall racial climate within the discipline of geography and demonstrate the variety of ways racism and whiteness are perpetuated in the profession. The unjust
assessment of the scholarly outputs by faculty members in geography was often used as a tool to inhibit the academic advancement of geographers of colour. Interviewees’ examples of opposition to the presence of faculty of colour within their respective geography departments can be divided into two general contexts: evidence of racial biases when assessing research conducted by geographers of colour; and evidence of racial biases when assessing antiracist or critical race research conducted by geographers of colour. Although interviewees did not detail personal experiences of obvert incidents of racism directed towards them by fellow faculty members in their respective geography departments, a few of the geographers of colour provided examples of occasions where geography faculty made racist remarks about other faculty of colour.

One of the interviewees shared her disappointment with several of the geography faculty members who would openly make racist comments about another colleague. From calling a Black faculty member “slow” to making references to “working on African time,” the geography department where the interviewee was employed had more than one faculty member who was known for making racist remarks about geographers of colour. In the interviewee’s assessment of the situation, she hypothesized the faculty members in the geography department felt entitled and permitted to say whatever they wanted without repercussions because although they were white men they also self-professed to be “progressive.” She also noted the geographers’ racist remarks would vary in severity based on the context of the situation. When faculty got together outside of the department and were in casual settings, the racist comments were crass and when in departmental settings, racism was perpetuated through more subtle and coded language and protocols.
The interviewee recounted an incident during a departmental meeting that was intended for reviewing the progress of the junior faculty members in the geography department. When it came to reviewing the file of a faculty member who emigrated from an African country, the geographers on the review board openly discredited his publications in Journals with origins in Africa. The faculty at the departmental meeting criticized the caliber of the journals where the junior member published and rather than considering the junior scholar’s area of research in relation to the journals, the faculty assumed the journals based in Africa or specializing on Africa were poorly ranked and of inferior quality. She explained her shock when she was sitting at a table with a bunch of her colleagues when a few of the white men who self-proclaimed to have progressive politics began to delegitimise and discount the publication record of the faculty of colour. They said: “you cannot just publish in African journals. Nobody will understand, even if it’s an English journal, it’s not highly ranked, and blah, blah, blah.” Bearing witness to the racism displayed at the departmental meeting early on in her career conditioned her to be extremely cautious and careful in how she conducted herself as she worked towards becoming established as a geographer. The Black faculty members in the preceding examples are no longer affiliated with the geography department.

The interviewee elaborated on the department’s racial climate by explaining there was a departmental review years ago identifying the lack of diversity among both the student body and the faulty as the primary shortcoming of the department. Within the larger university context, she emphasised her university institution was not very progressive and did not have much diversity among the student or faculty demographic in the first place, yet the geography department was flagged as having a problem with a lack of diversity. She shared what the geography faculty determined as the solution for addressing the issue of diversity:
... and the department responded, and put on paper, you won't believe this, ‘we will diversify our student body by getting more international Asian students’. They actually wrote it down. And I was like, what?

Since the departmental review, efforts to recruit faculty of colour into the geography department have been made and a few faculty members of colour have been hired into the department in recent years. The examples the interviewee provided not only demonstrate a strong presence of racism and whiteness within her geography department but more specifically, a persistent and prevailing environment of anti-Blackness. At the time of the interview, she reported there were a couple of Asian and Southeast Asian faculty members in the geography department and still no Black or Latin American faculty.

**Tenure and Publications**

The overall climate towards faculty of colour in geography departments in North American universities varied drastically and experiences of overt racism and encounters with whiteness were highly variable between interviewees. Biases within the tenure process and the ways whiteness skews and devalues critical race scholarship were two contentious issues interviewees identified as major barriers in encouraging the development of antiracist scholarship, antiracist geographers, and geographers of colour within the discipline of geography. Decoding tenure expectations as an early career geographer was especially difficult for geographers of colour who did not have anyone to guide and advise them on the tenure review process. One of the interviewees shared her story of the consequences of not having a senior geographer acting as a mentor during the first few years of the tenure process. Without prompts or questions about publishing in the interview guide, the importance of producing academic texts and publishing in scholarly journals was emphasized
by a number of the geographers interviewed. In addition to the unclear expectations for seeking tenure, most of the interviewees’ examples of opposition and resistance towards their presence as geographers of colour were carried out by fellow geographers and by tenure review committees through the dismissal and devaluation of critical race and antiracist scholarship. Two examples provided by interviewees of ways antiracist scholarship are discredited in geography included systematic devaluing of journals specializing in race and/or critical topics; and the failure within disciplinary practices for recognizing the scholarly contributions of critical race research published in alternative outlets that are accessible to communities impacted by racism.

For one of the senior-ranked geographers interviewed, not having a mentor at the beginning of her career to place an emphasis on publishing in academic journals beyond all other responsibilities as a faculty member proved to be a vital detriment as she approached the tenure review stage. Even though she had a PhD supervisor she could confide in, her early academic career was largely an exercise of trial and error. There was no one to explain to her what the academy was about or anyone to advise her on the tenure process or the importance of putting more effort into publishing in peer reviewed journals over having an excellent teaching record. She put a lot of energy into teaching as well as applying her scholarly expertise to present-day problems by working with the State Department. It took a few years of being employed as a faculty member to learn teaching, consulting with state agencies, and publishing would not be weighted equally in the tenure review process. By the time she realized how important publications were, there was not enough time to strengthen her publication record prior to the tenure review process. When she found out how heavily publications were weighed during the tenure review process, she decided not to apply for
tenure because she was certain she would be denied tenure. Instead she opted to find and start a new academic job where she could have a fresh start with the tenure process and focus on publishing.

Publishing in academic journals was considered by many as the key to success in the academy. As another senior-ranked interviewee explained, publishing is the most important task for early career geographers and is even more important for geographers of colour. In order to be competitive with white men for an academic job, people of colour will always have to work harder and publish more. He emphasized:

So, I mean, the key to this whole thing is for any person of colour to always make sure that you publish more than that white male. You need to always make sure you do that. If that white male is publishing three articles, you publish four. If he’s publishing five, you published six. That’s the key to success. You’ve always got to know what he’s doing. … If you can make sure you publish more at the initial state, you can be always assured you can move up. You cannot just publish as much. And definitely don’t publish less. You have to always publish more. And I tell the young colleagues coming in that this is the key to success. And they say that’s not fair. And I say, no that’s not fair. You just have to do it.

Needing to outperform white geographers to be competitive in the academic job market is one indication of the power and presences of whiteness and racial biases within the discipline of geography. For the interviewee, he viewed publishing as the one tangible way geographers of colour can set themselves apart from white, favourable candidates. An unquestionably strong publication record can sometimes counteract often subtle and commonly implicit
unconscious biases towards selecting white candidates; however, publishing a high volume of academic articles was not the only factor identified by other interviewees as a barrier for geographers of colour during the hiring or tenure process.

Although publishing lots of articles is important for being competitive in the academic job market, the metrics for evaluating and ‘counting’ published articles are highly subjective and influenced by who is on the hiring or tenure committee. When hiring and tenure committees are made up of all white or mostly white faculty, the desire to hire someone who demonstrates academic productivity, will ‘fit’ in to the workplace culture, and conducts research the hiring faculty deems as valuable and scholarly all play a role in evaluating the candidate. Several people commented on the unfair biases and negative remarks made towards them when they published research critically engaging with race or when they sought to publish in lesser known journals.

When people on a hiring or tenure committee measure scholarly activity based on the candidate’s production within the archaic system of ranked peer-reviewed journals, scholarship and scholarly value becomes premised on the ability to reify a standard mode of production. Scholarly interests and subject matter are reproduced and the divisions between different racialized ways of knowing and presenting research about the world are placed onto an imaginary hierarchy. According to one of the interviewees, critical and radical scholarship in geography and the corresponding journals where such research is published remains in a marginal position in the minds of many geographers. She explained:

I told somebody that I wanted to publish in Antipode. They said that that was a third-tier journal. … And I said what? … And so, not really having an
understanding. They’re thinking that my ideal journal should be the Annals when the Annals is just not the audience for the type of work that I want.

Old, reputable, rigorous, “traditional,” high-ranking geography journals established by long deceased white geographers; journals with Anglo North American or British origins, or countries with English as a primary language and have articles primarily authored by white scholars tend to be at the top of the hierarchy of what is deemed as scholarly. Newer, left-leaning, critical, and open-access journals, journals originating outside of Anglo North America, Britain, or countries with English as a primary language and a high GDP, and journals specializing on topics of race are often seen as inferior and in opposition to the old, ‘traditional,’ established, high-ranking, “rigorous” geography journals.

Particularly in the case of critical race research, the heavy emphasis on publishing in high ranking geography journals above all other activities when preparing to enter the academic job market or go up for tenure can be at odds with the practice of antiracism. Antiracist practice, challenging racism, and opposing white hegemony solely through academic channels in North America and the discipline of geography reflects the uncomfortable irony between antiracist practice and an institution built on whiteness, has governing rules informed by whiteness, has a long history of being used to maintain class and race hierarchies, dictates western knowledge as superior, primarily employs white men in the highest paid positions, and acts as a mechanism ensuring the maintenance of the status quo. Working solely within the academy and adhering to the prescribed rules for gaining employment or tenure ignores the ways publishing only in high-ranking journals feeds into, gives power to, and generates further profits within a system that in many respects aids in the maintenance of racism and whiteness.
Common conflicting advice regarding the tenure process includes the encouragement of community based research but then making sure to publish findings in a high-ranking geography journal—to publish in places inaccessible to the communities involved. A young, tenure-track faculty member said she has been writing in alternative publication outlets while knowing they will not be considered in her tenure file. She shared her frustration with the failure of the discipline in recognizing academic work published outside of traditional academic journals. For example, her engagement with racialized communities in struggles against oppressive forces and publishing information in outlets that are accessible to the impacted communities were not considered scholarly. Similarly, she has published articles requiring quick turnaround times addressing current-day and pressing issues such as police violence against Black American youth in alternative media and these publications were also not considered scholarly. For this geographer, the ethical imperative of ensuring scholarship concerning people of colour is accessible to the people of colour in which the scholarship concerns are more important than publishing in a highly-ranked journal. Even though accountability to communities, providing access to information, and working for social justice play no role in the tenure process, the interviewee views these elements as an integral part of the research process.

While the preceding interviewee was committed to publishing in multiple types of publishing outlets in addition to geography journals because of her accountability to the communities involved, several interviewees felt the employment demands and expectations of early career faculty in geography placed a higher value on how much was published rather than what was published. Contrary to the experiences of some of the first geographers of colour in North America such as Harold Rose of being scolded by chairs of the geography
department and fellow colleagues for publishing articles on race, the fear of being
reprimanded for the political content of what one sought to publish was only a concern for a
few interviewees. Interviewees at the early career stage felt the content of what they
published was less significant than how much they published. Publishing potentially
controversial articles was secondary to the considerable distress and anxiety most early and
mid-career geographers have experienced surrounding the volume and frequency of their
scholarly outputs.

Regardless of the challenges of publishing numerous articles from theory based
research, the quantity of articles published was generally acknowledged as being more
important than the quality of the work when it came to being competitive for academic
positions. Similarly, interviewees recognized the prestige of the journals in which the articles
were published plays a role in acquiring an academic job and in the tenure process; however,
publishing numerous journal articles was identified by interviewees as the single most
important thing to focus on especially in the early stages of an academic career. One of the
senior-ranked geographers emphasized professional productivity and evidence of scholarly
activities have consistently revolved around the number of articles one has published in peer
reviewed journals. Other interviewees echoed the same sentiment stating the topic, real-
world applicability, or political significance of published research were often overlooked as
the key markers of scholarly activity in favour of simply counting a scholar’s publications.
Since investigations into critical race topics, critical race theorizing, and journal articles
derived from deductive and theory-heavy research tend to have slow turn-around rates and
are not favourable for producing high quantities of journal publications, some interviewees
also commented on the necessity of putting in additional labour to remain competitive in the
academic job market as an antiracist geographer. Working harder and producing more journal articles than the average geographer was seen by several interviewees as simply a part of being an antiracist geographer of colour.

**Cross Appointments**

Due to the broad potential applicability of critical race and antiracist research, most of the antiracist geographers interviewed were cross appointed to other departments. While cross appointing faculty to multiple departments is standard in North American universities, interviewees pointed out benefits and drawbacks towards developing and promoting antiracist geography when the labour of antiracist geographers is split between geography and other departments.

Everyone interviewed completed at least one graduate degree in a geography department and self-identified as a geographer, however, there were a few who did not hold appointments in a geography department. The three most senior faculty members held full appointments in departments of geography and all other interviewees were either at an institution without a geography department and held an appointment in an interdisciplinary field closely related to human geography or were at an institution with a geography department and were cross appointed with another department in addition to the geography department. Even the senior faculty members who were fully appointed to geography departments had spent a significant portion of their careers cross appointed or fully appointed in other departments or disciplines. Departments where geographers held cross appointments with included: Urban Studies, American Studies, Gender Studies, African American Studies, and Asian American Studies.
There were mixed opinions towards holding appointments outside of geography departments. The backlash and dismissal of one of the interviewee’s work on issues related to race and racism through a location-based or spatial lens as “not really geography” from fellow geographers was a common battle since graduate school for one geographer. She explained the constant proving how one’s work is geographical and defending one’s self as a geographer has just become part of her job. She finds geographers to be the most confrontational in terms of challenging the merit of her critical race and antiracist scholarship and is appreciative of the opportunity to be in another department’s environment. It was through her cross appointment and while navigating other disciplines through conferences that her identity as a geographer felt obvious and reaffirmed.

For a faculty member to say they are grateful for holding a joint appointment with another department and not having to spend all their time in a geography department because fellow geographers are constantly questioning the legitimacy, integrity, and geographic nature of one’s work is telling of attitudes towards antiracist scholarship in geography. The interviewee explained her cross appointment in another department allowed her to be able to conduct research, write about, and pitch cross-listed undergraduate courses discussing topics of race and racism more freely and felt she could be more openly critical of racism and racial constructs in her work. Albeit, she was still very cautious about how much she revealed to other faculty members about elements of her critical race scholarship. Being cross appointed also encouraged her to explore issues of space and identity using the work of geographers as well as theories common in other disciplines.
Despite sharing some of the ways she benefited from being cross appointed, the interviewee mused over some of the challenges, concerns, and benefits of holding a cross appointment as a geographer who critically engages with topics of race in her research:

I don’t necessarily think everyone who does race and geography should be joint appointed. I think that’s not a good thing. But I think there should be people who are fully in geography departments. But on the flip side of things, I’ve actually found, like I was saying, it is somewhat comforting to be joint appointed. It’s better for my scholarship and it’s better for me. It works out well. People who study race should be fully in geography departments and so it shouldn’t just be, we’ll jump to a joint appointment when they see someone who does race, or gender, or sexuality studies.

She elaborated by stating she believes another reason why geographers who investigate critical race issues were commonly cross appointed was because those within geography departments had difficulty accepting and conceptualizing how race theory fits within the discipline. The full appointment of an antiracist geographer to a geography department was an example of one way geography departments can demonstrate a commitment to increasing the level of engagement of geographers doing critical race and antiracist work within geography and encourage the establishment of critical race scholarship in geography as a normative and common area of study.

Departmental dedication and commitment to antiracism, critical race, and antiracist geography involves ensuring critical race and antiracist geographers are consistently present, teaching, and supported in geography departments, ideally as full-time, long-term faculty members. Cross appointments often limit the level of engagement of a faculty member within
any one department and when critical race geographers of colour are cross appointed, their
teaching, supervisory, and other duties are divided between multiple departments. Their
physical presence within the geography department and ability to establish themselves as first
and foremost, a geographer, is diminished when having to juggle their commitment to
another department. Encouraging the chairs of geography departments to offer more
undergraduate and graduate level courses in geography engaging with critical inquiries into
racial constructs, racism, and antiracist theory is an important way the discipline can foster
and nurture the continued development of antiracist geographies. Exposing students to the
possibility of approaching geography through an antiracist lens is a necessary step for
encouraging the growth of future critical race geographers.

Teaching and Recruiting Students of Colour into Geography Programs

Although cross appointments reduced interviewees’ workload allocated to the geography
department, several interviewees remarked on the difficulty of finding and recruiting students
of colour into the geography program at their respective universities. At both the
undergraduate and graduate levels, interviewees observed a hesitancy among students of
colour to even take geography courses. While there were several reoccurring concerns
expressed by those interviewed regarding the current state of the discipline of geography, one
of the primary challenges of nurturing the development of antiracist theories and analyses
within the discipline of geography was identifying and attracting undergraduate and graduate
students interested in social issues pertaining to race into geography classes and programs.
Difficulties in drawing more students of colour into geography programs was partly a
product of the larger disciplinary problem of poorly conveying what geography is and what
geographers do. Several interviewees cited antiquated assumptions of the types of research geographer are engaged in as a primary barrier for encouraging students from diverse backgrounds to consider taking geography courses. One of the geographers of colour who is well established within the discipline has tried a number of different strategies for increasing the enrollment of students of colour in geography courses over the last few decades but has always found it difficult to cultivate an interest in geography especially among undergraduate students of colour. The same experience was true for one of the early career geographers who has been trying to strategize ways to get more students of colour interested in geography. Despite the 40-year span between the start of the two interviewees’ academic careers, the challenges in recruiting students of colour into undergraduate geography classes remained consistent.

The well-established geographer recounted his experiences teaching geography courses centered around race. Prior to his arrival in the geography department in the early 1970s, there were no geography courses engaging with the topic of race. Shortly after arriving in the department, he created an undergraduate class centring on critical discussions on constructs of race and racism in an urban context. The course continues to be offered through the geography department but over the years there have been very few students of colour in geography. When I asked him if his course on race and racism in the city tends to attract more students of colour, he responded by saying sometimes there is a handful of minority students but no more than 10% of the students enrolled – “it’s very, very few minorities. And predominantly white, mostly.” He explained although he first offered the course over three decades ago, the racial demographic of the students who take the class has remained consistent. Even with shifting trends among the racial demographic of
undergraduate students at the university, he has observed the enrolment of students of colour in both the geography program and in the geography course has not changed.

In an effort to shift the demographic of students, he tried to actively recruit more students of colour into the geography graduate program in the late 1990s because he felt there were far too few minority graduate students in the department. He sought out and encouraged promising undergraduate students of colour to apply to the geography graduate program but his efforts were not as successful as he hoped. He found it extremely difficult to convince students of colour to consider pursuing a graduate degree in geography. Very few students of colour ended up applying to the graduate program despite his considerable efforts to create a more racially diverse geography graduate student body. Recruiting students of colour into the geography graduate program continued to be difficult throughout the decades and he sensed he would never have success cultivating a cohort of students of colour in the graduate program. At the time of the interview, he stated the geography department was continuing to have difficulty identifying and attracting potential applicants who were students of colour.

Over the years, he has found that students of colour tend to be much less interested in geography than white students. In his overall assessment of the situation, he observed most of the students of colour who do end up pursuing a graduate degree in geography tend to go into GIS and applied fields. He claimed the proportion of people of colour in geography as a whole was increasing at a marginal rate and the majority of the people of colour in geography were from Asian backgrounds. He explained the proportion of geographers of Asian backgrounds were increasing with time but the number of Black people pursuing graduate degrees in geography in the U.S. was decreasing at a tremendous rate.
He continued to explain: while there has been an increase in the number of geography graduate students and geography faculty from Asian backgrounds in North American universities, very few were engaging with critical race issues. The slight increase in participation of people of colour in the discipline of geography had not translated into more critical race work being done in geography and he hypothesized since many of the students and faculty in geography who were from Asian backgrounds were also born and raised in Asia and mostly China, their understanding of race and racism in America would be different from someone who was born in the United States. A geographer who experiences racism in the U.S. as an American-born person of colour would produce a different understanding and analysis of racism than a geographer of colour who immigrated to the U.S., especially if they immigrated as adults. If more of the geographers who identified as Asian were born in the U.S., he thought there would be a higher likelihood for them to focus on issues of race and racism. He added: there were no geography faculty members from Asian backgrounds asking critical questions about race in their research in his department, nor were there any other geography faculty who engage with race in their work. Over the course of his career, he has been the sole faculty member in the geography department to address questions of race and racism in their work.

Unlike the previous interviewee who had been a geography faculty member for decades, another interviewee shared similar experiences in trying to recruit more students of colour into her undergraduate geography course on race and ethnicity. She explained the course was listed as a geography course but was also cross listed in African American Studies. The student demographic at the university where she was located was predominantly white and she sensed there was simply little interest in the topic of race and ethnicity among
the students enrolled in the geography program. She also remarked she did not think the students were resistant to taking the course but rather, the course was often overlooked because students did not expect to take such a course in geography. She believed students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels entered the geography program because of their interests in more traditional geographic topics and were not anticipating or expecting to have a course on race and ethnicity as a part of their geography degree.

Although she is a faculty member in the geography department and teaches the race and ethnicity course from a geographic perspective, most of her student in the class are from the African American Studies program or were from other departments. On occasion, she had a few geography students enrolled in the class but she found simply finding geography students who were willing to take a geography course on race and ethnicity was much more difficult than finding students in other disciplines. She has tried to spark an interest among geography students to investigate issues of race and racism because she felt there were geography students who just needed to be exposed to the possibility of engaging with race and ethnicity through geography for them to develop an interest. For example, she had a graduate student who entered into the geography program with an interest in another area of study but ended up changing their topic entirely upon learning they could investigate issues of race and ethnicity through a geographic lens.

Despite the difficulty in encouraging undergraduate students of colour to consider geography as a major, she has worked towards making geography courses more attractive for students who were coming from different life experiences. She viewed undergraduate course content as the key for increasing the number of future geographers of colour at both the graduate student and faculty levels and saw the importance of focusing on the early stages of
the undergraduate degree to cultivate an interest in geography among students of colour. By designing courses with content relating to a wide array of perspectives and experiences, and by including lectures on race and ethnicity in introductory human geography courses, she strives to present the discipline of geography as a viable possible major to declare for students of colour. She elaborated:

So even some of my undergrads don’t really even, um, see themselves as geographers so they’re more likely to take a course if I take geography out of the title than if I had it in there. And to me that saying something about who sees themselves included and who’s not included.

For her, it was important for the human geography courses without race and ethnicity in the title to also include course content relating to race and ethnicity, as well as including required reading by geographers of colour. Instead of treating race and ethnicity as a special topic, she felt critical engagements with race should be integrated into the course content of standard geography courses such as social geography, urban geography, development geographies, feminist geography etc. Normalizing race and ethnicity as issues geographers investigate by integrating critical engagements with race into all geography courses and by including the work of geographers of colour in class reading lists were two strategies she believed could aid students of colour to see themselves as geographers too and assist in attracting more students of colour into the discipline.

She cited the lack of engagement with contemporary social issues that impact the lives and experiences of racialized peoples within course content as another key barrier for cultivating an interest in geography among students of colour. Presenting geographic concepts as tools for addressing or understanding current social problems within North
American society was one of the suggestions for cultivating an interest in geography among students of colour. In the same breath, she also offered a criticism to the suggestion she just gave—geographers, in general, are not interested in contemporary social issues and the current problems in U.S. society pertaining to race. With so few geographers of colour holding faculty positions, students are not exposed to this kind of curriculum because it is not even on most geography faculty’s radar as something important to teach.

I feel like a lot of geographers aren’t even doing it because it’s just not affecting their lives. … And so, they’re not thinking about police brutality or about being stopped because they’re Black. They’re not thinking about that. And so, I don’t think it is as pressing at least for other people.

She explained serious present-day problem of racism are largely being ignored within the discipline of geography because racism is too far removed from their own lived experience. For example, many of the geographers who are working from a deeply personal place and making the connections between how race and racism are operating within the discipline and within society at large are people who experience racism in their daily lives. Her sentiments were echoed by several interviewees when they expressed anger and disappointment towards the discipline for failing to engage with present day racial violence in the U.S., the unnecessary death of Black youth, police brutality, increased government surveillance, a lack of sustained commitment towards addressing social inequalities such as poverty, and, in general, the scarcity of critical inquiry.
Labour Expectations

While formal cross appointments dictated what proportion of labour would be allocated to another department, a few interviewees felt the division of labour caused by cross appointments was negligible when compared to other aspects of their employment dividing their time. Formal contracts outlining expectations for teaching, administrative duties, or how much time is spent in geography or another department often fail to recognize or compensate for forms of labour that are often viewed as informal, elective, or volunteer. Several of the geographers interviewed felt excessive pressure from department heads, fellow faculty members, and/or administrative bodies at the university-wide level to take on additional responsibilities pertaining to all race-related issues within their respective departments because they were people of colour. Compounded with the failure of acknowledging the presence of racialized divisions of labour within interviewees’ respective academic departments, a few the geographers who were also women of colour felt both race and gender significantly influenced the types of labour they were expected to carry out.

With so few faculty members of colour within geography departments and in some cases, across university campuses, many of the interviewees were regularly asked to participate in a range of departmental and campus initiatives pertaining to issues related to race and racism. Several interviewees remarked on the differences in labour expectations for faculty of colour and felt the scarcity of other geographers of colour in the department contributed to an even greater workload. Interviewees pointed out examples of the specific forms of labour their white colleagues were rarely expected to undertake yet faculty of colour were frequently asked to carry out. For example, all the geographers interviewed have served as chairs of diversity committees, directors of social justice committees, or have advised on
outreach plans for recruiting underrepresented students into geography. In some cases, interviewees self-selected and became involved in ‘diversity’ or ‘race-related’ committees within their geography department, their cross-appointed department, or at the university-wide level; however, in most cases the geographers of colour interviewed were sought out by department heads or administrators to take part in such initiatives.

Expectations of the types of labour geographers of colour should undertake were accentuated further by other markers of identity. Differential labour costs of academic faculty continue to be deeply racialized and gendered and new faculty members who were women of colour were most susceptible to having the boundaries of their labour pushed and tested. Some of the interviewees found their job descriptions as new faculty members to be unclear and felt there were different expectations of the kinds of labour faculty members should undertake depending on whether they were white, a person of colour, a woman of colour etc.

Several geographers of colour who also identified as women found their early-career years to be especially stressing because they felt pressures to fulfil additional racialized and gendered labour roles such as committee work and student advising. One of the interviewees explained how when she was a new faculty member she was more likely to agree to requests made by administrators and students because it was unclear as to what was a part of her job and what was beyond the scope of her responsibilities:

And of course, it's a problem that's beyond just geography. But because of numbers, it totally. ... When I was at [name of institution] I was the Asian American person and I was the urban person and I was the gender person. And I ended up doing all of this weird stuff because you're not really clear, especially when starting out what even these things are. So, I remember I was
like, I gave some talk at some sorority, and I was like, ‘why did I do that?’ I didn't actually have to do that. But I was like invited to talk about, I think something with race and gender, and I think it seemed like someone had to do it and it was gonna be me.

Even when she knew the request was not an element of her employment, it took years for her to feel secure enough in her position at the university to say ‘no’ to certain requests and to even begin to set boundaries on the types of labour she was willing to do.

As she has become more established in her department and has gained professional status, she has taken it upon herself to point out the myriad of forms of racialized and gendered labour often unacknowledged by the predominantly white men in administrative roles. Stemming from the common response by of administrators stating, ‘they did not realize how many ‘extra’ tasks certain faculty members were being asked to do,’ she has been trying to think of ways to make visible the kinds of labour that are regularly overlooked, especially by white male faculty.

My latest thing, which might be a complete failure, is announcing it. And really trying to call it out and say this is labour, this is labour, this is labor. … But at least then they can't say, ‘well we didn't really know’ –which is totally bullshit. … And who's like having to most likely pick up the slack. It's always on the woman of color’s back. It’s so classic. It's terrible but kinda funny. It's just so typical. It’s so scripted.

Whenever administration or the departmental chair requests specific faculty to carry out seemingly small or trivial tasks, especially when the faculty member is a person of colour and/or a woman, she points out and reminds those present that the task is labour and adds to
the individual’s workload. She has a feeling her attempt at highlighting unacknowledged forms of racialized and gendered labour will be a complete failure because despite these constant reminders, racialized faculty and especially women of colour continue to be disproportionately asked to take on additional roles within the department.

Making time for the informal advising of students of colour is a common challenge for many of the people interviewed. In addition to being asked by department chairs or university administrators to lead or sit on diversity committees, several of the geographers of colour have felt overwhelmed by the number of requests they have received from students to act as undergraduate advisors. The small number of geography faculty of colour, and the even smaller number of geography faculty of colour who engage critically with research on race and racism often make them the ‘go to’ person for students researching anything even remotely related to topics concerning race.

One of the interviewees explained how her past experiences of having excellent mentors and advisors gave her firsthand knowledge of the importance of faculty support especially for students of colour. Knowing the importance of mentorship, she found it difficult to manage her time when advising students of colour. She elaborated:

The whole effective labor vs. affective labour. You're always gonna be caught because of the structure. You are aware that there aren't other people necessarily to advise the students of color who are like, totally in need. That is played so many times where it's assumed that you will self-exploit … because you care about a certain issue.

While some students come to her seeking intellectual guidance for a research project, more often she tends to have had students of colour come to her for help navigating other academic
situations that often require an array of different types of support. She advises undergraduate students both formally and informally, as an honors thesis supervisor or as a beacon of moral support for students of colour who tend to come to her for advice when they encounter problems in other programs students of colour either sought her out on their own accord or were referred to her by other faculty members when they were encountering an issue related to racism and/or sexism.

Although advising students, acting in mentorship capacities, and serving on committees make up a part of the labour expectations for most faculty members, many of the interviewees felt there were additional expectations of them to take on a greater number of responsibilities within their respective departments because of their identities as geographers of colour or women geographers of colour. For one of the geographers interviewed, explicitly naming the requests she was often asked by administrators or departmental chairs to carry out as labour was her way of making the disproportionate weight of labour expected of racialized faculty known. Especially when it came to advising and mentoring students of colour, some of the geographers felt an obligation to assist students of colour even if they were already overextended with their workload.

**Mentorship and Supportive Relationships**

To counteract the whiteness and racism within the discipline of geography, the mentorship of students of colour and early career faculty of colour was presented as a vital tool for combating and navigating whiteness and racism in geography as well as for the retention of people of colour in the discipline. Numerous interviewees acknowledged the benefits of having mentors when they were students and recognized the importance of acting as mentors for students of colour and early career faculty of colour because of their unique position as
faculty of colour. Experiences mentoring students of colour, however, were broad in range and yielded mixed results.

When many of the interviewees were students, most had mentors and supportive relationships with thesis supervisors, racialized faculty on their campus who were in other departments, or found support from geographers they had met at conferences. Each of the geographers interviewed had at least one already well-established geographer who believed in the importance of their research but also in them as individuals. Though the doctoral supervisors of the geographers interviewed were all white, most attributed their positive and supportive graduate student-supervisor relationship as an essential element of their success in completing the PhD. Thesis supervisors were key sources for intellectual and academic support and advice, and for some, they also provided personal and emotional support as they navigated through graduate school.

One of the interviewees explained how she met a faculty member who was also a person of colour who proactively reached out to graduate students of colour, and in particular, to Black and Latino/a students. As a person from an underrepresented group who was aware of the specific challenges graduate students of colour encounter during graduate school, he provided a kind of guidance and support that other white faculty could not offer. He mentored students of colour while knowing he was one of the few faculty members who understood, experienced, and could provide perspective and support from the position of another racialized person in the academy. The faculty member acted as an informal advisor for numerous students and he became an important source of support for the interviewee during her PhD. He provided some intellectual guidance but primarily helped students navigate the unfamiliar and often racist terrain of graduate school. The interviewee
considered this faculty member as a vital person who helped students of colour get through their graduate programs, not just in the department he was in but to students from other departments too.

Contrary to the example in the preceding account, during the interview one of the other geographers came to the realization of the additional attentiveness often required when supervising students of colour in graduate programs in geography. Although he considered himself to be engaged in antiracist geographies in his intellectual work, he failed to recognize the ways racism and whiteness was perpetuated within the discipline of geography on an everyday basis at the departmental and interpersonal levels.

When I asked the interviewees if he has ever supervised any graduate students of colour in geography, he explained he once had one racialized student who researched one of the communities she was tied to and was trying to tease out how racial representation in academic research impacted the community. The tenured faculty member in the geography department at the major North American research university could only recall one racialized student in the geography graduate program during his time at the school. When I asked him why he thought the student left the program, he responded:

She just had ... it was unclear. It was definitely a difficult time for her and neither I nor the director of graduate studies really knows what happened to her. So, but, she was definitely working on race.

He explained how he was the student’s primary supervisor and the student dropped out of the geography graduate program part way through the degree.

It was unclear to him as to why the student left the program but upon reflection during the interview, he realized the student’s racialized and class background undoubtedly
negatively shaped their graduate school experiences and were likely key factors compelling the student to leave. He acknowledged racial identity and class background can impact a student’s ability to succeed in a white environment in stating: “definitely race and class play a role in that. ...You know, it would've been different for a white guy from a middle-class family to work with me”.

He suspected the student was having difficulties in the work environment and went on to explain how the student just stopped showing up to school. To him, there was no warning the student was going to leave or clear indications of any problems. It was only in retrospect when he connected the relationship between the whiteness of the geography graduate program and the combined challenges of existing within a white academic environment as a person of colour from a working class and a first-generation college graduate background and the reasons why the one racialized student in the graduate program may have left.

Additionally, while all the geographers interviewed have acted in mentorship or supervisory capacities for students of colour, a few of the geographers clarified that most students of colour they worked with were not in geography programs but were in the disciplines they were cross appointed with. More than half of those interviewed have never supervised a graduate student of color in the discipline of geography. Several interviewees identified the same longstanding and persistent challenges of recruiting students of colour to take undergraduate courses in geography and the difficulties of attracting students of colour into the discipline of geography as primary barriers for establishing successful mentor-mentee relationships between geography faculty of colour and students of colour in geography programs.4

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4 Five out of the twelve geographers interviewed has supervised at least one person of colour during their PhD in the discipline of geography. There was a total of fifteen PhD students of colour between the five interviewees who have
Supervising and meeting the needs of students of colour often requires a different kind of attentiveness, care, and support and even people of colour who do critical race research may overlook the ways racism and whiteness impact the experiences of students of colour when they are upheld, normalized, and present in every facet of the professionalization of geographers. Navigating and battling against institutional whiteness in white environments is difficult when facing it alone. Without the presence of other racialized graduate students and without a proactive supervisor or other faculty members reaching out and showing understanding and support to racialized students who are facing unique challenges when pursuing graduate degrees in predominantly white programs, retention and graduation rates of students of colour in geography programs will continue to remain low.

**Supporting Early Career Geographers of Colour**

One of the recommendations for retaining and encouraging people of colour to pursue graduate degrees in geography and for the retention of early career faculty of colour was to establish mentorship programs with more senior geography faculty of colour. The push for mentorship and one-on-one support systems relies heavily on the good-will and personal commitment to practicing antiracism of individual faculty members. The support and encouragement by established geographers, and especially established antiracist geographers of colour, can have an enormous impact on geographers who are in graduate school or are in the early stages of their academic careers. With an awareness of the added labour associated with mentorship, one of the interviewees emphasized the importance of having geographers supervised students of colour in geography. Eight have completed a PhD and seven are in progress. Of the fifteen students of colour, six were born in North America and nine were either international students or had immigrated to either the U.S. or Canada. One of the geographers interviewed was (or is) the primary supervisor for nine out of the fifteen PhD students of colour in geography.
of colour who are established in the discipline supporting and encouraging early career geographers of colour and other geographers of colour doing antiracist work.

With conflicting expressions of gratitude and frustration, one of the interviewees explained how grateful she was for the time some established geographers have taken to stop and talk to her at conferences. As appreciative as she was when scholars have reached out to her and provided boosts of encouragement, she was frustrated by the overreliance on individual actions on fostering geographers of colour and the lack of institutional commitments and actions towards promoting and investing in the participation and advancement of geographers of colour.

I, honestly, right now, I think it’s one on one relationships. Yeah. I mean it’s like going to meetings and seeing somebody like Bobby or seeing somebody like Audrey. And you know when they ask how you’re doing, that’s meaningful for me. Those, to me, small things, have kept me in. And in maybe some small ways it’s kept me in the work that I’m doing. But I don’t know in terms of institutionally. … I don’t wanna be pessimistic but I don’t know what has, what has worked. Because the discipline looks so similar to what it looked like so many years ago. So, I’m not sure. Maybe the fact that the work is still being done. But I can’t figure out what it is outside of the personal-individual relationships that, um, older geographers have with younger geographers. Because I feel like, I mean I know it’s time consuming, and it must be emotionally taxing, and it’s not part of the job description. But most of these people take time to sit down at meetings to talk to us about how we’re doing and that goes beyond what a lot of academics do.
While geography conferences can act as important opportunities to connect with other geographers of colour and antiracist geographers, as well as to receive boosts of encouragement and advice from established antiracist geographers of colour, conferences also act as mechanisms for reinforcing and maintaining whiteness within the discipline.

The Whiteness of Geography Conferences

In addition to experiences at the departmental level, indications of the continued power of whiteness within geography were also demonstrated at the disciplinary level. For a few of the geographers interviewed, strong discomfort and uneasiness due to pervading whiteness was especially felt when attending geography conferences. Academic conferences can be stressful to navigate for a variety of reasons but for many people of colour, large geography conferences such as the AAG act as a reminder of the prevalence of whiteness dictating the norms of the discipline. The overwhelming presence of white geographers and the noticeable scarcity of people of colour at the AAG annual meetings were often a source of discomfort and sometimes perpetuated feelings of isolation. Some of the geographers of colour cited geography conferences, and in particular the AAG, as places where encounters with racism were inevitable. As the largest gathering of geographers, attending the AAG and other geography conferences was viewed as a part of being an academic geographer, and encountering racism was viewed as a part of being a geographer of colour at a geography conference.

One of the interviewees detailed her experiences as a Black woman at geography conferences and narrated a few encounters where she was made uncomfortable and out of place. While she remarked on her frequent experience of being at geography conferences and
attending sessions engaging with topics of race, racism, and/or critical race theory where there are no people of colour among those presenting papers or sitting on the panel. Worse yet – she has even found herself at conference sessions where there were no other people of colour in the room, neither presenting nor as a member of the audience. Although she has certainly felt hyper-visible when attending conference sessions, she also experienced discomfort at events outside of organized sessions and especially at informal gatherings of geographers.

While she enjoyed attending the AAG because it allowed her to reconnect with friends and colleagues, she has otherwise found it difficult to find places within the conference that were not uncomfortably dominated by a drinking culture. She explained:

So, I know people who love the AAG. Like the AAG conferences are their favorite thing to do … for them it’s the funnest thing ever, with lots of happy hours and it’s all great. But for a lot of scholars of colour it’s fairly isolating. From her past experiences, she found the social gatherings where conference attendees were consuming large amounts of alcohol to also be the places where there was a prevalence of displays of white masculinity.

On several occasions, fellow geographers have asked her why she was not so keen on attending the AAG. No matter what justification she provided, their reply was always the same: they would say, “what are you talking about?” Even upon explaining the connection between her discomfort at the AAG and happy hour, the excessive consumption of alcohol, the intoxication of large groups of white people, and the history of lynching Black people in the American South, her explanations were frequently resisted and delegitimized by the people who initially expressed concern.
And then them not understanding why I am so uncomfortable … there’s a history. People got drunk before they lynched. I’m not saying that’s what’s happening but there is this history and a memory. And there are just some situations where I just feel unsafe in.

Despite her justification for not wanting to be the only Black person in a large group of drunk white people by drawing on the history of racial violence and the death of Black Americans at the hands of white people, her reasons were dismissed as over the top and exaggerated. A common response was to claim they still could not understand why she was so uncomfortable. She would explain herself and reference events in the past when it was not uncommon for Black Americans to be killed by groups of intoxicated white Americans. For these reasons, she felt unsafe in such situations and would rather avoid conference events that include alcohol. While she did not necessarily think a violent physical attack was going to occur, she was aware of the increased probability of being a target of racial slurs when the people around her become increasingly intoxicated. What she found even more insulting was the use of alcohol as the excuse for displays of racism. Alcohol becomes the alleged cause of racism and individual actions often get discounted and excused when alcohol is involved.

Even during sessions and at times where alcohol was not being consumed, she was still weary of how she was being read and perceived by other conference delegates; she acknowledged being made to feel uncomfortable was just a part of attending geography conferences for people of colour. As a Black woman in a very white discipline, she would often find herself catching the stares of confused conference attendees. She knew she looked different from most geographers and was aware of her hyper visibility as she navigated conference venues. She would catch geographers’ confused faces looking at her with wonder.
Their faces would read: where are you from and why are you attending a geography conference?

Among the gazes upon her body, sometimes one of the curious onlookers could not help but elicit a conversation to find out where she was from and why she was at the geography conference. She recounted an interaction:

A man approached her and asked if she was an undergrad or a PhD student. When she said she was a professor, he did not believe her answer as it simply could not have been fathomable. She explained she was indeed a faculty member and told him what university she was employed at. With a look of confusion, he asked again if she was an undergrad or a PhD student. The third time she responded with the same answer in a slightly more irritated tone. Her answer finally registered with him and then she could tell he realized he asked the same question multiple times because he could not accept her answer the first few times. He might have realized how his response to her answer was demeaning because he became awkward and apologetic for not believing her initial responses.

The frequent stares of white geographers while attending geography conferences were constant reminders of the ways people of colour do not belong in the discipline.

With the handful of journal articles and intermittent discussions surrounding the small number of people of colour in the discipline of geography, the overwhelmingly white demographic of geographers has become an issue of discussion beyond the sole concern of geographers of colour. One of the interviewees explained how white colleagues would often remark about the whiteness of the discipline and acknowledge it as an issue but fail to draw
the connection between their own identity and positionality, and how they themselves have benefited from white privilege.

One thing I always hear people saying is, ‘we don’t know what to do’ or ‘why is the AAG is so white.’ But at some point, you have to implicate yourself in this and think about just maybe some of the things that we’re reproducing that keep it a very white, and you know, unaccepting space.

By framing whiteness within geography only at the scale of the discipline, individual accountability and responsibility in seeking to ameliorate the problem are removed as potential solutions. Removing one’s self from the equation dismisses the role of individual actions and professional practices that have the potential for perpetuating whiteness within the discipline. The myriad of factors favouring the white scholar’s advancement within the discipline are often not mentioned; rather the successes and accolades within the profession are seen as a result of hard work, intelligence, and personal traits. Individual merit outweighs the possibility of having benefited from systemic racism throughout the education and employment processes. Both faculty of colour and white faculty need to ask themselves how whiteness may inform such things as: their student engagement, recruitment, and mentorship practices; what they research and publish; how they teach, what they teach, and how they assess students in their geography classes.

**Concluding Thoughts: Interviewees’ Reflections on the Current State of Geography**

There was a general sense of despair when interviewees were asked about the possibility for geography to become more critical when engaging with topics of race. The current state of engagement with antiracist issues in the discipline of geography was viewed as inadequate by
the majority of those interviewed. Each person expressed varying degrees of frustration with the slow progress and growth of critical race research within geography. Everyone interviewed responded with pessimism or dissatisfaction with how critical race research in geography is being supported, received, and/or engaged with at the current moment; however, one of the interviewees remarked on the increased recognition for antiracist research in geography compared to a few decades ago, geographers doing this kind of work were seldom acknowledged. Overall, interviewees identified several persistent obstacles inhibiting the development of antiracist and critical race research in geography. The failure in recognizing the discipline-shaping contributions of early critical race geographers of colour; the sustained valorization of the work of white geographers and the high esteem placed especially on white British geographers; and the continued questioning of the legitimacy and validity of critical race research being done by geographers of colour were among the key challenges interviewees identified.

Although the importance of cultivating critical scholarship on the experiences and representation of Black American geographers has been around since the 1960s and while subsequent calls for greater efforts in cultivating geographic scholarship on critical race issues have persisted through the decades, foundational changes reflecting a willingness to augment whiteness and eurocentrism within the discipline of geography have yet to emerge. Failing to recognize and include the early work of Harold Rose and Don Deskins as a part of geography’s institutional history are examples of one of the ways the histories of people of colour can become erased from institutional memories. Narrating history from a white-only perspective is not a new phenomenon and mechanism for ensuring the continuation of white power. One of the interviewees explained how she had just learned about the research that
was conducted by Black geographers many decades ago and felt comforted by the activities they were involved in to challenge the whiteness of the discipline. Knowing there were geographers before her who were asking similar questions made her feel like she was continuing a project rather than starting to tackle a huge new project from the beginning.

The institutional history of when critical race studies were first introduced in the discipline of geography are often cited as beginning in the 1980s when white British geographers started to engage with topics of race and racism; however, there was a surge of publications with critical race analyses by Black American geographers beginning in the late 1960s and little attention has been paid to the Black American geographers writing about Black America in the decades prior to the publications by white British geographers on race and geography. In reviewing the progression of critical race studies within geography in America, the cutting-edge contributions by geographers such as Harold Rose and Don Deskins were rarely cited—instead, the more readily cited early critical race research in geography were conducted by white geographers who were investigating issues impacting Black America.

One of the ways whiteness and the white body/mind were demonstrated as superior within geography was through the citation practices within geographic texts. The valorization of research done by white geographers on racialized peoples and the devaluation of research by geographers of colour who research issues pertaining to racialized populations or the communities in which they belong are examples how white normativity continues to be is enforced in geography. As one of the interviewees emphasized:

So, I think in the type of research that I do, I guess sometimes since I’m African American, some researchers and scholars would see me as too close
to what I am studying. So, I sometimes feel like if a white scholar is studying
the same kind of work that I’m doing, their work is seen as more objective.
The assumed “natural” objectivity of scholarship conducted by white geographers about
racialized peoples was reflected in the rewarding, encouraging, and promoting of white
perspectives over the voices of geographers of colour.

Another interviewee observed how white British geographers were often held at the
highest esteem within North American geography. She explained:

I think there's a lot of colonial residue. I'm always amazed … but there are
always so many Brits around. ... Some of it is just academic disciplines having
this residual, especially those that in their formation have had a racial project
that's very colonial, right. So, that sort of the older part of the discipline. But I
think, however, in terms of social science, I think a lot of current social
science reproduces just poor analysis of race, either through ... is that too
gentle? [Laughs] … either through, you know, completely a reification of the
categories, or much more pernicious stuff, like cultural poverty, some of the
stuff on segregation, ethnic enclaves.

She commented on how there is still a strong presence of geographic literature being
published that continues to clearly perpetuate similar racial tropes as in the colonial era.
Despite the establishment of interdisciplinary, more innovative, and more socially conscious
approaches for engaging critically with race in other social science disciplines, she sees
geography as especially stubborn in embracing or even considering different ways of doing
geography.
Furthermore, even with improvements over the years surrounding the increased visibility of critical race research, geographers at the early and middle stages of their careers were much more likely to have their research challenged, questioned, or discounted by other geographers if their work critically engaged with race. As one interviewee exclaimed:

Yeah, I mean I found that a lot of people don’t see what I do as geography. … Like how is your work geography? And you have to prove that your work is geography. … Sometimes people don’t believe I’m a geographer or they don’t believe that the work I’m doing is geography. And then sometimes I feel like I have allies outside of the discipline more than inside the discipline. I know that I’m in geography and when I’m in different disciplines it’s very obvious that I’m a geographer.

While the likelihood of being confronted about the legitimacy of antiracist work as a real and legitimate field of study within geography was correlated with one’s assumed age, gender, professional status, and the social constructs of their racial identity, established geographers also encountered incidents where their presence was met with puzzled eyes. Another interviewee described a reoccurring experience:

The white males look around and they’re accustomed to only having themselves around. And when they see someone of color they’re always wondering, ‘well gee, who is this other professor?’ It’s amazing how they do it. They have this tendency, they think that, when they see people of colour they always wanna know, how did you get here?

Such anecdotes of discounting the work of geographers of colour who do critical race work and of the instances where one’s identity as a geographer are questioned or challenges act as
evidence of the embeddedness of white normativity in contemporary practices and understanding of geography.
I started this thesis project with one question: how did we get to this moment in critically engaging with race in the discipline of geography? I figured a good way to answer the question was to find out more about the geographers of colour who are pushing for change within the discipline by urging geographers to think more critically about constructs of race. I was curious to find out what fuels the fight for greater racial justice in their work. This one question lead to many, many more questions. How has antiracist thought developed within the discipline of geography? Who were the first geographers who started asking geographers and the discipline of geography to look closely at itself and to recognize how the power of whiteness informs geographic research about racialized groups? Who were the first geographers who pointed out geography was an extremely white discipline and excluded the participation of Black people and people of colour? Who were the first geographers who made the case for increasing the representation of Black people and people of colour in geography because they saw a need for changing the types of geographic research being produced? Do geographers’ personal identities and experiences of racism influence the types of research being produced in geography? What is it about the discipline of geography that enables it to remain so white? What are some of the reasons why geography has been so unsuccessful in recruiting and retaining people of colour within the discipline? Why aren’t there more geographers of colour? Why aren’t there more geographers of colour doing critical race and antiracist work?

The question—how did we get to this moment in critically engaging with race in the discipline of geography? —was formed out of optimism and hope that there was indeed a lot
more antiracist and critical race work being done in geography. I imagined I would be
directed to networks of geographers of colour refusing to conform to the boundaries of
geographic tradition and pushing fellow geographers to think about constructs of race more
critically through their work or through other subversive means. I assumed I would learn
about the geographers of colours’ graduate students and a robust cohort of geography
graduate students of colour engaging in antiracist and critical race work. My preliminary list
of antiracist geographers of colour that I sought to interview was not intended as a terminal
list. It was supposed to start the ‘snowball’ technique for identifying interviewees. I thought I
would be directed to talk to other geographers of colour doing antiracist or critical race work
who were not on my initial list of geographers.

Learning the reality of the smallness of the numbers of racialized geographers in
geography department in North American university institutions and the even smaller
numbers of geographers of colour who work in the area of critical race studies and antiracism
was a difficult lesson to learn. We have still not broken the cycle of a lack of representation
of geographers of color. Few geographers of colour researching race and racism means there
are few students of colour being supervised and taught by geographers of colour. The
discontinuation of the intellectual chain carrying forward the stories of the fight against
whiteness within the discipline between generations of geographers of colour is happening
before our eyes as the first Black, antiracist, and critical race geographers of colour of the
1960s and 1970s continue to age, retire, and are passing away, taking important pieces of
unpublished ideas and experiences pertaining to geography’s institutional memory of race
and racism with them as they leave.
The genealogical study of the development of antiracist geographies reveals antiracist geographies are not simply an inevitable response to the whiteness of the discipline but rather, antiracist geographies are a product of conscious, strategic moments in geography where geographers explicitly name whiteness as the unconscious rule governing and placing boundaries on geographic thought—the opportunities for the next generation of critical race geographers to be supervised or mentored by some of the first Black, antiracist, and critical race geographers of colour are dwindling quickly.

While strides have been made towards beginning to encourage theorisations of antiracism as well as more critical engagements with race within geography, the amount of work that must be done is daunting. Many of the supports available to those interviewed to aid in their transition to graduate programs in geography are no longer provided. Recruiting, encouraging, and providing ongoing supports for Black students and other underrepresented students into geography graduate programs through institutional commitments such as the COMGA program of the AAG were short lived and appear to have peaked in impact during the 1960s and 1970s.

The continued challenge of integrating current events and social problems pertaining to racism in undergraduate curriculum in geography, poorly conveying what geography is and what geographers do, the closure of geography departments, especially the impact of the closure of geography departments and lack of geography courses offered at HBCUs all contribute to a consistently small number of geographers of colour doing critical race and antiracist work. The overall poor understanding of the concept of race in the discipline and the failure, broadly, of geographers in recognizing how racism is manifested throughout the discipline through personal actions and inactions, the lack of commitment by department
chairs and university administrators in proactively providing concrete support networks (individual, financial, structural) for students of colour, and disciplinary traditions (i.e. what is taught, how geography is taught, what types of geography undergraduates are exposed to, what types of geographic works are applauded and recognized as innovative and cutting edge) further compound the difficulties in fostering an environment that supports geographers of colour doing critical race and antiracist work. Promoting the discipline of geography by specifically highlighting critical race geographic research that counters the often hegemonic and whiteness-as-neutral dominant voice is one possible way to cultivate an interest in geography among potential future geographers of colour; however, there will always be difficulties in recruiting students of colour into the discipline of geography when there are other more welcoming disciplines for people of colour and for critical race and antiracist work.

The number of antiracist and critical race geographers of colour out there is small and the task at hand—challenging racism through the institution of geography or a geographic lens; actions and research that oppose white hegemony within geographic thought and practice—is up against powerful disciplinary traditions. Failing to recognize the deep colonial ties of the practice and discipline of geography, the continued valuation of Eurocentric ways of knowing, research driven by the desire to know the unknown other, desires of discovering new land and places, and claiming mastery of knowing people and places are among the mechanisms encouraging knowledge appropriation, narratives of white racial superiority, and the continued unquestioning of white power at the disciplinary, nation-state, and global levels. The continued failure within the discipline of geography in recognizing, naming, and addressing the entrenched and normalized whiteness and racism in
the process of creating geographers and geographies allows for the production and
reproduction of white ways of knowing and aid in the maintenance of racialized power
relations and white supremacy.

The whiteness within the discipline of geography is fueled by the larger social
environment that continues to privilege, value, and reward white bodies and Eurocentric
ways of knowing. White supremacy and the conscious and unconscious belief in whiteness as
supreme remains a powerful and omnipresent force that North American society has barely
begun to tackle. Though strides have been made in identifying the ways whiteness and white
privilege operate within geography, the extent of the necessary work that must be done
within the discipline of geography, in the wider academy, other publicly funded institutions,
and in communities and throughout the social fabric of North America are endless.

As demonstrated through the stories of the geographers of colour interviewed, an
acute racist incident signifying a problem is present is unnecessary—racism exists within the
pervasive whiteness of the environment, the institution, the discipline, and the unconscious
and conscious actions and inactions of the people in seminars, classes, hallways, and
lunchrooms. The prevalence of incidents of racism and overbearing whiteness in North
American graduate programs in geography demonstrates they are in need of antiracist
interventions. The depth of racism is so great in geography that it seems unlikely for
geography grad students of colour engaging in antiracist work to come out of graduate
programs unscathed. Daily reminders of the ways you are different from everyone else and
you are not wanted here: your work is seen as nonsensical and trouble-making, your ideas
and comments are much too out-there to be taken seriously in a room full of geographers,
you are asked to serve on committees because of your expertise only to have your work and
suggestions ignored, you are explicitly told you are just a token filling a spot in the department because of the colour of your skin, you are explicitly told every scholarship you’ve ever earned is because of the colour of your skin, you are explicitly told you don’t have to work hard because of the colour of your skin, you are explicitly told—calmly and politely as if it were a casual conversation starter—it’s because of people like you that he'll never get a job in geography because as a straight, white man he has no chance in the job market. Oftentimes, racism and whiteness is experienced by geographers of colour as acute and repetitive incidences, considered tolerable and excusable by those who do not bear the brunt of the injury or carry around the accumulation of racism inflicted upon their bodies. Thick skin and a tough exterior are necessary when working and studying in an environment ruled by whiteness but skin is permeable and exteriors become worn.

But all is not lost. Geography is a social product, formed through the exercise of power. As a social product, the discipline of geography is capable of change. Geography was created by the powerful as a mechanism to ensure continued power. Geography as a discipline and as a location for knowledge production acts as a mechanism for upholding power and for distributing power. When the people tasked to produce knowledge and to reproduce the Master Script are predominantly of a similar social fabric as those before them, it is likely, consciously or unconsciously to find ways to maintain and accumulate power. Challenging power relations through producing alternative forms of knowledge threatens the status quo and those who hold power and any form of opposition to oppression will always be challenged. The cultivation of antiracist geographies as an alternative way of knowing is a form of resistance to the racialized power relations operating within geography. Geographers
of colour and critical race and antiracist geographies will always be required to fight in order to survive, develop, and flourish.

While the extent of the problem of racism in the practice of geography and the production of geographers and geographic knowledge may cause antiracist initiatives to appear hopeless, individual actions matter. As evidenced by geographers such as Don Deskins, Harold Rose, Saul Cohen, Theodore Speigner, Bobby Wilson, and Audrey Kobayashi: the individual has power to shift discourse, change a discipline’s trajectory, and produce and shape the next generation of geographers. Individual geographers are the ones supporting the development of antiracist geographers and the advancement of antiracist geographic theories. Individual geographers—those who are white as well as those who are people of colour—need to ask themselves: in what ways do I perpetuate whiteness in geography? Geographers must always reflect on their position in relation to the people, communities, theories, ideas, and histories that they study and consciously and carefully consider how the geographic knowledge they are producing may replicate racialized power relations.

In a world of increasing social divisions and deepening racialized poverty, in a time when the lines between governments and corporations are becoming increasingly blurred, in a period when white supremacy in North America enables violence against people of colour and permits the killing of innocent Black and brown citizens by the hands of the State, in a moment when the bodies in university institutions are in stark contrast to the bodies in penal institutions, and, with the preceding assessment of race, whiteness, and antiracism within the discipline of geography, it is worth re-stating two quotes from the beginning of this thesis:
America is in crisis. Times of crisis are times for reassessment. It is appropriate that the geography profession assesses its position on the matter of race relations in America to determine if the profession is making any significant contributions to a solution to the racial dilemma facing America today. (Horvath, Deskins, and Larimore 1969, 137)

Before geographers can address themselves to the question: What research contributions can the geographical profession make that will contribute to a solution of the racial dilemma presently facing America, they have to answer the question: What have geographers done in the past to contribute to the resolution of American racial problems? (Deskins 1969, 145)

Forty-nine years later, and, while antiracist geographers have made substantial contributions to how race is understood, challenged, and theorized in geography, racism and whiteness continue to shape the discipline in profound ways. To the geographers, academics, and those in the knowledge-producing business:

The production of knowledge—geographic or otherwise—is a reflection of power.

The production of knowledge—geographic or otherwise—is a political act.

The production of geographers and the production of geographies are reflections of (social and political) power.

The production of geographers and the production of geographies are political acts. Who are you and what are you producing?


Appendix A: Bibliography of Publications by Harold Rose


Problems, and Alternative: Perspectives in Geography. Eds. Rose, H. and H.
do we go from here?” Urban Geography 15: 415-420.
definition and scope.” In Population Geography: A Reader. Eds. Demko, G., H.
Publications.
American urban systems.” In Modern Metropolitan System. Ed. Christian, C. 361-
1-21.
restructuring in Detroit: A neighborhood scale analysis.” Urban Geography 12: 508-
525.
Publications, Urban Affairs Annual Reviews.
Albany: State University of New York Press.
Appendix B: Bibliography of Publications by Bobby Wilson


Appendix C: Bibliography of Publications by Audrey Kobayashi


Appendix D: Research Ethics Approval

September 08, 2016

Ms. Andrea Choi
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Geography and Planning
Queen’s University
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room D201
Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6

GREB TRAQ #: 6007367
Title: "GEGO-141-12 Genealogies, Geographers and the Geographies of Racism"

Dear Ms. Choi:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB) has reviewed and cleared your request for renewal of ethics clearance for the above-named study. This renewal is valid for one year from September 10, 2016. Prior to the next renewal date you will be sent a reminder memo and the link to ROMEO to renew for another year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Completed Form in ROMEO indicating that the project is 'completed' so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period. An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours. To submit an adverse event report, access the application at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form".

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes in study procedures or implementation of new aspects into the study procedures. Your request for protocol changes will be forwarded to the appropriate GREB reviewers and/or the GREB Chair. To submit an amendment form, access the application at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies".

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

John Freeman, Ph.D.
Chair, General Research Ethics Board

c.: Dr. Audrey Kobayashi, Supervisor
       Dr. George Lovell, Chair, Unit REB
       Ms. Joan Knox, Dept. Admin.