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Race, Identity, and Composition: The Experiences of Six African Americans in the Professoriate

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RACE, IDENTITY, AND COMPOSITION: THE EXPERIENCES OF SIX AFRICAN
AMERICANS IN THE PROFESSORiate

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Kimberly Thomas

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May 2013

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While professional narratives outlining academic scholars' daily experiences, and struggles in academe, are common, those that detail their issues in regard to race and its impact on scholarship and aspects of professionalization are not. African Americans as well as other minority scholars must contend with issues related to their visible identities on an everyday basis. The majority of academic professionals in composition and rhetoric continue to be White although the populations of first-year writing classrooms are becoming more ethnically and linguistically diverse. There is still a limited presence in regard to African American, and minority, faculty on U.S. university campuses. African American scholars continue to join, and climb, the ranks in professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), but still remain largely underrepresented. For those reasons, I am interested in studying African Americans' perspectives on constructions of racial identity and professional development; that is, how they enact practices that reflect their cultural backgrounds and influence their scholarship. I also want to examine how their conceptualizations of race and diversity shape their outlook on the professoriate and the work they do within their constituent communities.

Recent research shows the need for examining cultural identity development and its effects on aspects of professional identity construction.

My research questions include:

1. How do the experiences of African Americans in Composition affect their constructions of professional identity?
2. How do African American scholars situate themselves in their roles as scholars, teachers, and researchers in the field of Composition?
3. (In what ways) Does race or ethnic/cultural identity factor into professional identity construction for African American scholars in Composition?
4. How do the experiences of African Americans in the professoriate affect personal and ethnic/racial identity construction?

My qualitative methods for this study include life story interview and narrative inquiry.

By conducting this study, I hope to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which African American scholars negotiate their personal, and racial identities in the professoriate, and whether personal-professional narratives might offer insights on the potential that race has to impact scholarship, including historicizing the field of composition and rhetoric.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PREFACE:ME, MYSELF, AND “OTHER”:A REFLECTIVE AUTOBIOGRAPHY 1	
1	COMPOSING OUR SELVES: RACE, IDENTITY, AND THE PROFESSORiate . 9	
	Definitions of Terms	10
	Identity Theory: Exploring ‘Selfhood’	10
	The ‘Other’: Defining Persons without (Perceived) Power	14
	Race: Defining Cultural Identity	15
	Racial Identity: Examining the Development of Cultural ‘Selfhood’	17
	Nigrescence: Exploring the Development of Black Identity	22
	Developing a Sense of a Cultural Self: The Progression of Black Identity Development	24
	My Role as a Researcher.....	32
	The Purpose of This Study.....	34
	Research Questions.....	35
	Methodology.....	36
	Naturalistic Research: Conducting a Qualitative Inquiry.....	36
	Narrative Inquiry: Storytelling as Method	37
	Data Collection Methods.....	40
	Participants	40
	Data Collection Procedures	42
	Data Record.....	44
	Instrumentation.....	44
	Data Analysis	45
	Ethics and Trustworthiness	45
	Overview of Chapters	46
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	48
	Being an Academic Professional: The ‘Parts and Parcel’ of Becoming a Scholar.....	49
	Professional Identity: Exploring what it means to Be/Come an ‘Expert’.....	50
	Professionalism: Developing a Professional Identity	52
	Professionalization: The Processes Involved in Becoming a Scholar	53
	Race, Access, and Equality: A Brief History of African Americans in Higher Education	60
	Race and Professional Development: Exploring the Experiences of African Americans in Higher Education in the U.S.....	63
	African American Scholars in Composition Studies: Recognizing Alternative Viewpoints in the Professoriate	74
	Alternative Viewpoints: Re (Defining) ‘Scholar’, ‘Work’, and ‘Community’	84
3	THE PARTICIPANTS.....	91
	Pauline Thomas.....	92

Background	92
Early Life Experiences	96
College and Graduate School	102
Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations	105
On Being a “Scholar” in Composition Studies	109
Aaron Richardson	115
Background	115
Early Life Experiences	116
School Experiences	122
College and Graduate School	126
Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations	129
Barbara Simmons	131
Background	131
Early Life Experiences	133
School Experiences	136
College and Graduate School	138
Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations	141
On Being a “Scholar” in Composition	144
Relationship with Others	146
Stephen Harper	149
Background	149
Early Life Experiences	151
School Experiences	154
College and Graduate School	157
Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations	158
Seth Russell	163
Background	163
Early Life Experiences	165
School Experiences	165
College and Graduate School	174
Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations	179
Relationships with Others	183
The Meaning of Being a “Scholar” in Composition	186
Ali Jones	188
Background	188
Early Life Experiences	192
School Experiences	196
College and Graduate School	202
Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations	205
Relationship with Others	210
On Being a “Scholar” in Composition	218
4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	220
Summary of Analyses	221

Race, Identity, and Composition: Negotiating What it Means to Be ‘Who One Is’ in the Professoriate.....	225
Race and Identity: Negotiating Representation as a Minority Scholar in the Professoriate.....	232
Articulating and Practicing Activism: On Being an Educator in Composition and Rhetoric.....	235
Doing Work that ‘Speaks to Others’: On Being a Scholar in Composition and Rhetoric.....	239
Challenges and Obstacles: Overcoming Potential Barriers to Success	244
Productive Scholarship: Living, Learning, and Remaining Vital in the Professoriate.....	248
On Locating the Individual: Finding one’s Place within Spaces in Academe.....	250
The Inter/Intra-Personal: Dealing with Challenges in the Professoriate	253
Making Places as Scholars in Composition: Racial versus Professional Identity	256
Private/Public Selves: Negotiating Personal Identity in Professional Spaces	257
Mentoring and Socialization: Finding Justice through Giving Back.....	259
Developing Selfhood: The Effects of Socialization on Racial and Professional Identity Development.....	262
The Personal versus the Professional: Having Confidence—and Navigating Challenges— in Academe	266
Issues of Race and Racism: On Locating Justice, and Finding Power, in Academe and Beyond	270
The Professional ‘Contact Zone’: Navigating Cross-Cultural Relationships in Academe	274
Issues of Mentoring and Socialization: Negotiating Professional and Racial Identity	281
Implications of the Study	285
The Effects of Childhood Socialization on Racial Identity and Conceptualizations of Race.....	285
The Effects of Race and Cultural Identity on Professional Identity Development	286
Exploring Identity through Narrative Research: A Journey of the Self.....	292
Suggestions for Further Research	300
Recommendations.....	304
REFERENCES	308
APPENDIX A – Interview Questions.....	329

PREFACE: ME, MYSELF, AND “OTHER”: A REFLECTIVE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I am a child of the South—the Southern United States. I was born in Greenville, South Carolina in June 1975. I was born into a family consisting of one boy and one girl. I had two parents until my mom and dad separated when I was five years old. After my parents separated, my mom, brother, sister, settled in suburbia—into a modest three bedroom house in a racially-mixed neighborhood. My mom was a single mother who worked hard and worked a lot to raise three kids. There was a lot of love in my household but not a lot of money. In my environment growing up I didn't feel powerful. I wanted to be more than this environment in which I had been raised. It was through education, that I saw a “way out.” I realized early on that education was the means by which I could escape my background. So, I sought to feel more powerful and more in control by looking towards the future. I saw how those who held positions of power in my community had succeeded; how they had become teachers, doctors, and lawyers, regardless of the places from which they hailed.

During childhood, my feelings were generally those of about of confusion. I was not exactly sure how to perceive of myself in terms of a racial identity or racial self; I just knew that I was “Black,” and that somehow, this was different. Because I was confused, I tried to distance myself (from having a) racial identity. I was afraid to identify with being Black for two reasons: first, because this group identity would somehow erase my individuality—that there would be no “me” left. I did not something to represent me which I felt would constrain aspects of who I was. The second reason was that I was afraid to accept, or adopt, a racial identity was that I felt it would mean that I was stepping into an “inferiority-complex.” The white students seemed to have power, privilege, and prestige—the nice homes, cars, and families—something that I did not see in the black neighborhoods. In hindsight—and, I even knew it back then—I saw blacks

in the same way as the southern whites that I went to school with: blacks were illiterate, loud, uneducated, cognitively-inferior, and poor. I knew that I couldn't be white but saw education and whites' approval of me as the closest I could come to validation and affirmation of self. I accepted the southern whites' racist representation of blacks and their beliefs about being black and became ashamed and resistant in forming a racial identity as an African American

The authority-based gatekeepers' beliefs in my ability to succeed helped me to affirm and legitimize aspects of my personhood. However, there was still a contradiction between my home life and my school life—between who *I* was at home and who *I* wanted to become. This contradiction 'reared its ugly head' when I was forced to change elementary schools after the fourth grade. The racial make-up of my new school was in sharp contrast to the predominately "lily-White" elementary school that I had previously attended. I knew that the mostly-white school was better in terms of what it could offer as compared to the mostly all-black school. The building was nicer. The white neighborhood where the school was located was more upscale; the neighborhood consisted of well-manicured lawns and expensive-looking homes. The desks and tables were of better quality and there was new wall-to-wall carpeting throughout the building. I was in chorus and there were generally more things to do. I also learned French from a native speaker who would come to teach French to my fourth grade class once a week. Also, the white elementary school was situated in middle to upper middleclass neighborhood and the mostly-black elementary school was located in a lower-class or working class neighborhood.

Throughout school—kindergarten through high school—I joined clubs and participated in various kinds of activities in which I felt I could prove my worth. I was concerned about being considered intellectually inferior as an African American, but I felt that my cognitive potential was at least one area where I felt like I could succeed, but the truth was that I had

excelled at intellectual things. From the fourth grade to high school, I did well on academic placement exams, and as a result, was consistently placed in honors or courses. Usually, I was one of only a handful of minorities in many of those advanced level classes. Although I excelled in the mostly-white advanced classes, I never felt like I was in a space where I really fit. After all, many times I was the only, or one of the only, few minority students, which effectively meant that I was one of the “tokens.” Being a “token” meant just that—you were ‘special’ and ‘different’ from the rest of *your* kind, i.e. those individuals that were in your affiliated racial or ethnic (minority) group.

I attended a private, religiously-affiliated small liberal arts college in another state. There was a general feeling of displacement at this mostly-white institution, and small town; and although I was only a five hours drive away from home, it seemed like I lived worlds away from my family. I did not feel like I fit in this predominantly-white, small town space, and wondered why I ever thought I could. I ‘refused’ to look at things as “black” or “white,” but it did not spare me from being consciously aware of race at the time. Just as it was significant that some of the music faculty had ‘rejected’ me, it was equally important that some of the English professors had accepted me. The approval that I received by members of the English department gave the strength and faith in my abilities that allowed me to try something new. However, I could not drop the music major altogether because the scholarships that I received for this area were part of my overall financial aid package. Upon the suggestion of my undergraduate honors English professor, I added on a major in English during my sophomore year. As an undergraduate, I did the best I could. However, it always seemed as though I was severely lacking in adequate emotional and material resources. I struggled with loans while my mom, who was a single parent, struggled with poverty. There were times when I wanted to drop out of college.

However, perseverance and mentorship began to change things for me. My undergraduate English professors, not only encouraged me to become an honors major in English major, but also, promulgated in me a desire to enroll in a doctoral program in hopes of one day becoming a professor, myself. Although I excelled in undergrad, I still struggled with the realities of class and race in regard to the construction of my identity as I entered graduate school.

In graduate school I studied linguistics, formally, and also, sociolinguistics, including Southern White and Black vernaculars, i.e., African American Vernacular English (AAVE), in the United States. I became interested in applied linguistics and first-year writing based upon my experiences working in the university writing center—particularly, in regard to working with matriculated international graduate and undergraduate students—and also, acting as a teaching fellow in the English department. At this large, public Southern university, I was comfortable in my role as a composition instructor. As I had no prior experience teaching writing, I adopted the practices that were a part of the theory of writing, including the thought collectives, upon which the program was based. Thus, I followed the curriculum as outlined by the director of the writing program. At this point, I did not know (how to conceive of) composition theory, and so I did not reflect on my pedagogy, or my own teaching practices, as they related to theory and praxis. At such a prestigious, high-ranking institution, approval from gatekeepers meant power: my authority as an instructor, and as a teacher of writing, had come from the gatekeepers. Thus, I had no problems establishing and maintaining authority in the classroom. In this setting, “race” was not an issue; at least, not in the classroom. Many of the students had parents who had college degrees or beyond. Regardless of some variations in the students’ backgrounds, i.e., racially, culturally, or otherwise, they were motivated to learn and do well at the university. Much of the students’ motivation had to do with the university’s level of prestige: obtaining a

degree from this institution would grant them upward mobility in terms of social status and significantly improve their likelihood of working for certain employers, or being accepted into high-ranking graduate programs.

My insecurities regarding “race,” identity, praxis, and how I identified myself as a teacher, and a teacher of writing, found their ways into the classroom. Upon the completion of my Master of Arts degree in linguistics, I took a job as a visiting instructor of English at a small, regional, liberal arts college in the southern United States. My identity crisis came with my thrust into the *real-world* of teaching freshmen composition. I struggled a great deal with issues concerning identity. “Race” became an issue for me when I realized that I lacked the “power behind the throne.” I was no longer a graduate student who was mentored under the auspices of a particular ideology and distinct set of classroom practices. As a new faculty member in a world outside of graduate school, I was on my own. Although I had the support of my colleagues along with that of the writing program and department, chairs, I was no longer in a situation in which my situatedness granted me a certain amount of authority and respect; in this new space, I had to define my own “borders” in regard to my identity, i.e., power and authority. In a sense, I became ‘lost’. My old teaching methods did not work. I had the theoretical background in rhetorical theory based on a graduate-level course I took, but I lacked the experience to be reflexive about my practice; that is, I lacked the real-world experience that comes with being a teacher of writing and reflecting on what it means to be an educator and a teacher of writing. At this point, I was not consciously thinking about the fact that my experiences outside of the classroom—including my past constructions of identity, i.e. personal, racial, and otherwise—could greatly impact who I was inside the classroom. Over time, I realized that I was unprepared to enter the professoriate.

My interest in this research project has to do with how I want to situate myself in the professoriate of composition studies. Although I am not yet a full professor of composition, I have had the experience of being a teacher of writing, and have had numerous experiences teaching composition courses as a graduate student and full-time faculty member. I have also worked in university writing centers and taught English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (ELF) course. Based upon those experiences, I have had the opportunity to reflect on my role as a teacher and as a teacher of writing. This dissertation research is part of an on-going process to reflect on what it means to be a teacher and a teacher of writing; it also involves a conscious reflexive exchange regarding what it means to *situate* oneself in the professoriate given ones' roles as a teacher, teacher of writing, scholar, and researcher in the field of composition.

The one thing that I realized would become a constant in all my teaching experiences was self; it would be this that I would bring to bear upon differing contexts regarding my personal experiences. I began to realize that this multiplicity of selves—the ones associated with being a human being, being a student, being a teacher of writing, etc.—would one day affect all of those contexts in which I would one day find myself, including those involving the teaching of writing. I slowly began to come to terms with the idea that begin who I was in terms of my lived experiences would become a part of the social reality that developed into my persona as a writing instructor. By reflecting on my myriad of experiences in and outside of the classroom, I have wanted to figure out how best to situate myself in terms of my identity regarding my roles as a teacher, teacher of writing, researcher, and a composition scholar. I have looked for those things that were most consistent concerning my lived experiences. It has been my thinking that acknowledging aspects of my identity and personhood regarding resistance or acceptance of

certain aspects of a “racialized” self would help me in teaching students how to be aware, and perhaps accepting, of who they were in terms of their own lived experiences. I now regard “race” as one of the many filters regarding my identity construction in my development of self, over time.

To me, histories are twofold: how we choose to situate ourselves in the composition professoriate—in our roles as teachers, teachers of writing, scholars, and researchers—is part of a continuing, or on-going, transformation in terms of how we have come to identify ourselves, over time. In this way, identity construction is on-going—it is never static. Thus, as a writing instructor, and educator, I am aware that how I have come to situate myself in the past, particularly, as an African American growing up in the Southern United States, will likely play a crucial part in the continuous transformation of how I will come to situate myself other contexts as well. “Race,” as an aspect of [my] personal identity construction, whether I choose to accept or reject it, is likely to affect my teaching. In this regard, “race,” and my ideological stance towards it, has already affected how I come to situate myself in my role as a teacher and as a teacher of writing. I feel as though I must now take a conscious step towards isolating those components regarding “race” and my individual voice and how their interrelatedness with regard to my lived experiences may affect how I come to situate myself in the future regarding my roles in the professoriate.

My reason for doing this dissertation stems from just this question: “How do I want to situate myself in the field of composition, particularly as a scholar—especially, as a minority scholar—in my role as a teacher and researcher?” In order to find textual answers to this question, I sought the historical viewpoints of African Americans in the professoriate. I have sought personal accounts and reflections from those who have entered the professoriate before

me, particularly regarding how those minority scholars had situated themselves in the professoriate regarding their personal and professional identities, particularly regarding how they have come to conceive of themselves in their roles as teachers, teachers of writing, researchers, and scholars, in the field of composition studies. As part of my on-going research, I still seek to hear personal stories and the individual voices of African Americans concerning their experiences in a field that first denied them full entry or access (Gilyard, 1999).

CHAPTER 1

COMPOSING OUR SELVES: RACE, IDENTITY, AND THE PROFESSORiate

The current professoriate has attempted to remedy the past treatment of minority scholars by accounting for missing histories, viewpoints, and perspectives of prominent African American scholars who have influenced the field of rhetoric and composition. Bringing their life histories and professional experiences to composition studies, prominent minority scholars such as Dr. Victor Villanueva, Dr. Jacqueline Jones Royster, Dr. Shirley Wilson Logan, Dr. Keith Gilyard, and others have offered insights into teaching writing, alternative discourses, rhetoric, and literacy, including how these things have affected students of color in composition or first-year writing classrooms. This research project offers additional personal, and professional, narratives of scholars in color.

In this dissertation, I explore the lived experiences of African Americans in rhetoric and composition, focusing on the ways in which their early life histories, and relative career experiences, have shaped their career choices and subsequent interest in rhetoric and composition. My goal is to look specifically at the ways in which race and racial identity development affects the construction of African Americans scholars' professional identities. I also explore the working lives of African American scholars and examine their day-to-day activities, professional duties, and how they negotiate aspects of being academic professionals, especially concerning racial and scholarly identities.

I begin this dissertation research project by looking at research dealing with (social) identity theory and the ways in which one's development of racial identity factors into the construction of personal identity. I begin the chapter by providing a broad overview of concepts concerning racial identity theory. I discuss *Black Identity Development* (BID) as an illustrative

example of racial identity development theory. Then, I discuss my role as a researcher, detailing the ways in which I am personally vested in this scholarship. Next, I provide a description of the purpose of my study, including what I hope to learn and the insights from my participants I hope to gain, via completion of this research project. I present an explanation of each one of my research questions, including descriptions concerning my foci as related to this study. Next, I provide an overview of my methodological framework. In doing so, I discuss qualitative inquiry. I provide a brief overview of narrative inquiry and discuss the role of narratives and storytelling as the basis for my study. I also discuss the ways in which narrative inquiry is crucial as a method for exploring, and analyzing, the lived experiences of scholars of color in composition and rhetoric. I provide detailed information in regard to my use of narrative and thematic analysis for interpreting my findings. I also outline methods that correspond with the selection of participants, i.e., sampling. I provide a brief description of the background of each participant, including racial or ethnic categorization, age, gender, and current professional status. I also provide an overview of my methods including data collection and instrumentation. I also discuss issues of ethics and trustworthiness as related to my study. Finally, I provide an overview of my chapters.

Definitions of Terms

Identity Theory: Exploring ‘Selfhood’

Burke (2003a) describes identity as “what it means to be who one is” (qtd. in Colbeck, 2008, p. 10). In this vein, identity incorporates all of those aspects which make each individual different from the other. Each person has particular attitudes, beliefs, and even, outward or physical attributes that make this individual unique. In this way, individuals are said to encompass their own distinct personalities. Within this concept of individual identity is the idea of *self-*

knowledge or ways of knowing, and thinking, about oneself. Self-knowledge is, essentially, what we believe to be true about ourselves. Howard (2000) states that “self-schemas include organized knowledge about one’s self, the cognitive response to the question of identity: Who am I? These include the characteristics, preferences, goals, and behavior patterns we associate with ourselves” (Howard, 2000, p. 368). Those mental, or psychological, ways of knowing, thinking, and doing by which we come to define ourselves are developed over a period of time (Howard, 2000). Those developmental processes by which we gain self-awareness can either be conscious or unconscious (Helms, 1990).

Sociologists (Brewer, 2001; Howard, 2000) look at the ways in which one’s identity is defined with the larger social framework. In sociology, the acquisition of personal identity is based on how an individual develops a sense of self relative to his or her role, and relative status position, in society; the developing self-concept involves a growing self awareness with reference to how we see ourselves concerning our roles, and status positions, relative to others (Brewer, 2001). As part of a conscious developmental process, an individual gains an awareness of his or her social role, and the expectations or duties of that position, relative to others, in the group, organization, or system (Brewer, 2001). As the individual develops a sense of self, he or she starts to internalize the rules and expectations of who he or she is relative to his or her role or position. Those norms for behavior are learned through the process of *socialization*, or interactions with others, whereby an individual acquires a more refined view of how to perform his or her role and conduct him or herself, accordingly, and particularly in regard to interpersonal relationships.

Social identity theory focuses on the ways in which individuals come to see, or define, themselves based on the larger social framework, especially in regard to their relative position,

status, or rank in society. Based within the field of social psychology, social identity theory seeks to address the ways in which our personal identities are shaped by the contexts in which we find ourselves; that is, how our group memberships affect individual self-concept (Howard, 2000). As a theory, it “focuses on the extent to which individuals identify themselves in terms of group membership” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986 qtd. Howard, 2000, p. 368). Thus, like other theories of identity, it focuses on the processes involved in the internalization of certain attitudes, values, and behaviors based on an individual’s affiliation with a group. Howard (2000) acknowledged that “social identities provide status and enhance (or not) self-esteem” (p. 369). An individual’s sense of who he or she is changes depending on the social context in which that person finds him or herself. Changes in one’s social context, or situation, particularly in regard to “changes in groups and networks in which people and their identities are embedded and in the societal structures and practices in which those networks are themselves embedded,” including differing situations and environments affects an individual’s self-concept (Howard, 2000, p. 369).

Person-based social identity focuses on the acquisition of self-concept based on an individual’s affiliation with a particular group and the meaning that an individual derives from belonging to that group (Brewer 2001). The acquisition of person-based social identity involves developing a sense of what it means to be who one is based on the types of interpersonal relationships one has with his or her *in-group*. An in-group is comprised of group of persons with whom an individual feels he or she can identify with based on similar characteristics and shared social experiences (Bewer, 2001). In social identity theory, the acquisition of a person-based identity depends on the degree of in-group affiliation, how one interprets those ‘like’ characteristics, and shared experiences, and how an individual integrates those aspects as part of his or her self-concept.

An important aspect of social identity theory is the concept of *group-based identity*.

Group-based identity is where an individual's affiliation with members of a group comes to stand in for one's own self-concept; that is, group membership is integral to defining the self (Brewer, 2001). Individuals do not view themselves independently of the values, beliefs, values, expectations, and other characteristics, that pertain to belonging to the group. Unlike, person-based social identity, group-based identity is not dependent on the kinds of interpersonal relationships that an individual has with members of his or her in-group, but focuses on the ways in which this person identifies himself based on belonging to that particular group. In this way, individuals perceive themselves relative to group membership and they come to be a part of shared representation of the in-group based on common interests and experiences. An aspect of in-group identity is to contrast perspectives pertaining to shared values and experiences with those of the out-group. An *out-group* is made up of a group of individuals that do not share similar experiences, values, beliefs, or norms as associated with the in-group.

For each theory underlying identity, whether personal identity, or person or group-based social identities (such as racial identity), psychologists believe that there is a series of psychological processes by which individuals undergo as they come to define themselves (Cross, 1971; Jackson, 1975; Helms, 1990; and Brewer, 2001). Those aspects include socialization, internalization, subconscious versus conscious processes, interpersonal relationships, and positive or negative experiences with in-group. Socialization includes the ways in which we acquire a sense of who we are through our interactions with others. As children, we learn to emulate the attitudes and behaviors of those persons that are around us. Over time, we may incorporate aspects of that learned behavior into our own views of ourselves. Our positive or negative experiences involved in interacting with others also affects our degree of internalization of the

norm, values, and expectations that we come to associate with belonging to a particular group. Individuals may, consciously, choose to resist or modify certain aspects in defining who they are. Some aspects of our development of the self are subconscious and have more to do with gaining an awareness of self, and less to do with making conscious choices concerning who we are and the kind of people we want to become.

The ‘Other’: Defining Persons without (Perceived) Power

“Other” usually refers to someone who is non-White, e.g., Asian, Hispanic, Arabic, Black, or ‘colored’ in regard to colonial times. The term usually refers to those who have been misplaced and misrepresented and also, marginalized and treated unfairly. Usually, the historical situation of the “other” is one that can be measured in terms of power and his/her relationship to other groups. The “other” is often the one who is colonized, enslaved, and/or misplaced from homelands or original places of birth. For “other” to leave his/her homeland, he/she is attempting to escape war, abuse, poverty, enslavement, or degradation due to colonization or other types of imperialistic rule. Many of those who are “other” leave their homelands or original places of birth in order to get an education and gain the opportunity of having a better life—a better quality of life. The identity of “Other” usually resides within a cultural or ethnic heritage, which is either not valued or recognized in the present situation where he/she finds himself in, or, is recognized only as a unique in his/her places of birth. The term, “Other,” takes on varying dimensions of meaning. Those meanings have much to do with issues identity and sociohistorical situation. In this sense, “Other,” is both a state of mind and an actual physical existence—a lived experience. When Edward Said first used the term in his work, *Orientalism*, he used “other” to refer to how Europeans viewed ‘Orientals’ and their culture in the Far East, and Near East, mainly Muslim Arabs or depictions of Muslim Arabs. Using this context, he

describes the nature of Europeans' description and depiction of "other" as being exotic and different. Said then applies this conceptualization of the "other" to other contexts to consider how those contexts might frame and expand notions of "other." His extension includes how Whites in Western contexts, including the United States, look at minorities, i.e., Blacks, Indigenous or Native American, Latino/-a, and Chicano/-a, and treat them based on their perceived 'lower status.' "Othering" also deals with W.E.B. Du Bois' writings on Blacks 'seeing themselves through the eyes of others' and developing self-concepts along those lines. In this study, I extend the notion of 'Other' to include some Blacks' perception of Whites as well as those from other minority groups, e.g., Latino/-a or Chicano/-a, who they feel do not share, and therefore, do not understand, their experiences.

Race: Defining Cultural Identity

Theoretically, researchers have defined race in terms of biology, as a social construct, as an aspect of personal identity, and as a psychological process (Krogman 1945, Thomas 1971, Toldson & Pasteur 1975, Banks 1984, Casas 1984, Gay 1985, Helms 1990, Smedley 1998, Demo & Hughes 1990, Andreasen 2000, Du Bois, 2003). Based on its initial conceptualization, race was thought of as biological concept which entailed how individuals could be identified based on their physical features. This conceptualization of *race* included beliefs about the genetic predisposition of groups of individuals, due to differences in skin color, and what those differences imply about the attitudes, intelligence, and behavior of persons who appear to belong to a particular cultural or ethnic group. The assumption was that certain physical features represent specific genetic origins and possibly, ethnic or cultural traits (Andreasen 2000). In 1945, Krogman defined race as "a sub-group of people possessing a definite combination of physical characteristics, of genetic origin, the combination of which to varying degrees

distinguishes the subgroup from other subgroups of mankind” (p. 45 as cited in Helms 1990).

Based on the biological definition, a person who possessed the physical features of being African American was assumed to be genetically African or Negroid (Andreasen 2000).

The problematic aspect of this definition was that this biological concept of race did not take into account any “behavioral, psychological, or social implications” (Casas 1984 as cited in Helms 1990). For example, in the realm of the social sciences, race is also perceived both in terms of in-group beliefs about the norms, values, and expectations of those who belong to, and identity with, certain cultural groups as well as the stereotypes which can comprise false, and often negative, assumptions made about in-group members by the out-group who do not share similar experiences, beliefs, or values; it also includes the ways in which the in-group feels they are (mis)represented by the out-group. Thus, the biological definition did not consider the psychological or social implications of being identified as a member of a particular racial group, e.g., Black or White. In the realm of the socio-political, this biological conceptualization of race was utilized, historically, to separate groups based on the strengths or weaknesses which were supposedly inherent in their biological make-up. Thus, belonging to a certain ethnic or racial group implied ideas about one’s intellect or cognitive ability, and even, physical prowess; that is, belonging to one racial group or another—being White or “Caucasian”, or Black or “Negroid”—had implications for how likely one was to succeed in terms of one’s intellectual ability and likelihood of upward mobilization in society. Based on this ‘science,’ there were implications in terms of education and even job placement opportunities. Overtime, those beliefs about racial genetics were proven to be unfounded, scientifically because psychologists and social scientists discovered that there were external factors which greatly affected, and influenced, human development. However, those individuals who still feel that some individuals were superior, or

inferior, due to race or ethnic identity, still believed that there was some predisposition towards ability based on genetics.

Opponents of the biological conception of race include social constructivists who do not believe that race is a biological, or even, ontological reality. Such theorists believe that the notion of ‘race’ is entirely socially-constructed. Constructivists hold that race is a “social fiction” that does not exist apart from people who use it to point out “human differences” (Appiah 1972, Goldberg 1993 as cited in Andreasen 2000). Although these theorists do not consider race in any objective sense, i.e., as a biological reality, constructivists do acknowledge the social implications of belonging to a *perceived* racial subgroup. Constructivists think the persistence in the belief that race is a biological reality stems from a society “that treats racial inequity as legitimate and inevitable” (Andreasen 2000, p. S655); and, in fact, it is true that for many African Americans and other minorities, race is an ontological, i.e., socio-political, reality that they must address as part of their everyday lives. In this way, race is a definable reality—particularly, as a part of their visible identities—that for minorities often equals unfair treatment based on biased social practices, e.g., in terms of education, hiring, and job promotion.

Racial Identity: Examining the Development of Cultural ‘Selfhood’

Psychologists describe the development of identity as a cognitive process by which we come to develop a sense of who we are as individuals (Brewer, 2001). This internalization of who we are—given what we believe to be true about ourselves based on shared social norms—is the foundation of constructed identity. This conceptualization of identity focuses on the cognitive, or mental, development of the individual and the ways in which he or she comes to think about, or view, him or herself, over time. During this process, we come to adopt certain attitudes, behaviors, and ways of thinking that are unique to us. The acquisition of *personal identity*, or how

we see come to ourselves, is based on an analysis of the thought processes that govern the development of individual behavior and attitude; especially, in regard to how one comes to internalize certain attitudes and beliefs (Thomas, 1971; Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990; and Brewer, 2001). Psychologists believe that an individual largely develops a sense of who he or she is based on *socialization*; that is, an individual acquires a sense of self, or who he or she is, based on his or her interactions with members of a group (Thomas, 1971; Cross, 1971; and Brewer, 2001). As a person interacts with various group members, he or she may start to emulate certain aspects of the attitudes or behaviors that they have come to associate with belonging to the group. This aspect of modeling, or emulation, is largely an unconscious process (Cross, 1971, 1991; and Helms, 1990). As the individual develops, he or she starts to incorporate aspects of those characteristics and integrate them as part of his or her own personality. Those aspects become part of the way that an individual identifies, or defines, him or herself.

In this way, psychologists look at racial identity as a socially-instructed conceptualization that individuals learn to internalize over time. Helms (1990) states that racial identity “refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s *perception* that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group” (p. 3). It is important to note that although race is a visible identity that is ascribed to people based on physical characteristics, that, conceptually, it may not necessarily be *real* for those individuals. In regard to racial identity, a person may, or may not, conceive of him or herself in terms of belonging to a particular racial category or subgroup, e.g., Black or White. This personal categorization, as related to group affiliation, is based on the degree to which an individual identifies with members of a racial group and ascribes aspects of racial-group membership with feelings, and beliefs, about oneself (Helms 1990). Conceptually, *race* is not the same as *racial identity*. Racial identity, as a part of racial identity

theory “refers to a Black or White person’s identifying or not identifying with the racial group to which he or she is generally assumed to share a *racial* heritage” (Helms 1990, p. 5). Thus, a black person’s conceptualization of him or herself may or may not include aspects of group-based or collective racial categorization; additionally, this person may not ascribe to him or herself specific characteristics that are associated with belonging to a certain racial group. In this dissertation, I define racial identity in terms of in-group affiliation; that is, the ways in which an individual shares common characteristics with others based on perceived (cultural) group affiliation. This in-group affiliation is explored in terms of African Americans’ experiences in the professoriate and their shared realities as minorities in the larger context of society. I also look at racial identity development, particular in regard to how individuals’ internalization of beliefs about race influences how they see themselves. In addition, I explore the ways in which this internalization affects professionalization, or becoming an academic scholar, and how that manifests itself in terms of African American scholars’ positions on scholarship and teaching. In this dissertation, Black Identity Development (BID) refers to what psychologists consider as the development of racial, or cultural, identities of African Americans, over time, in the United States. BID begins in childhood. “Black” and “White”, as descriptors, refer to those individuals belonging to specific racial groups, especially to which they readily (self) identify.

Racial identity is viewed by psychologists (Brewer, 2001) as an example of a person-based social identity whereby individuals gain an awareness of the concept of *race* and the perceived differences in the treatment of different individuals based on skin color. Individuals develop an awareness of racial identity via the process of socialization which includes aspects of internalization and the meaning an individual associates with belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group (Brewer, 2001). *Identification* refers to the degree to which an individual’s sense

of self, or self-concept, is derived from his or her membership in a group. In the case of racial identity, it means the ways in which an individual goes through the process, psychologically, of coming to identify him or herself with the traits and characteristics of belonging to a particular racial or ethnic group such as Asian-American, Latino/Latina, Chicano/Chicano, Native American, Indigenous, and Black or African American (Brewer, 2001). When viewed as a cognitive process, racial identity means having an awareness of a race, including the knowledge of the historical (mis)treatment of individuals due to perceived (social) differences; further, it means incorporating aspects of this consciousness into the development of personal identity or selfhood. This identification with a racial group, concerning the development of a conscious awareness concerning one's racial self, starts when the individual first recognizes that he or she is different from those around him or her; and further, an awareness that this difference is due to skin color.

Racial Identity Development concerns an individual's development of a racial identity, or a sense of self based on an ethnic, racial-group affiliation, over time, and the effects that this racial-group affiliation has on differing stages of cognitive development (Helms, 1990). Social psychologists (Cross, 1971; Thomas, 1971; and Helms, 1990) believe that racial identity development is the result of a "complex mix of environmental forces such as economic factors, individual attributes such as general cognitive development, and personal experiences which includes the extent to which racism was a recognized element of the environment in which one grow up" (Helms, 1990, p. 6-7). As part of their research, those theorists have attempted to outline the psychological processes underlying racial identity development. According to stage theories, an individual's current attitude or behavior in regard to having a racial self-concept is based on his or her current level of identity development. The stages of racial identity

development (Helms, 1990; Cross, 1971, 1991; and Jackson, 2001) coincide with personal identity development and the degree to which an individual ascribes personal characteristics based on his or her affiliation with a particular racial group. Helms (1990) states that “one comes to understand a person’s present behavioral dispositions by analyzing his or her identity at the present time, though the present identity may or may not have long-term implications for the person’s future characteristics” (p. 6).

Cross (1991) studied racial identity as part of a developmental process in the acquisition of a person-based social identity. Stage theorists, such as Cross, believe that individuals go through various cycles, or processes, in their development from adolescence to adulthood. Each stage is marked by a particular change in attitude or internalized social adjustment that is illustrated through behavior or a way that an individual ‘carries’ him or herself, particularly in regard to how he or she relates to other individuals and conducts personal relationships. Some of the stages are simply based on one’s age or level of adult identity development. According to developmental models, individuals pass through several basic stages on their way to becoming adults (Cross 1971, 1991; Helms, 1990, 1994; and Jackson, 1976, 2001). Each stage is marked by changes in outward appearance, social adjustment including learning to get along with others, and mental, emotional, and psychological development. Stage theorists believe that overall development depends on the successful completion of each phase.

An important aspect of racial identity development also entails the degree to which an individual ascribes positive or negative characteristics to the racial or ethnic group with which they choose to identify. At each stage of psychological development, individuals may choose to accept, resist, or reject certain attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs associated with group affiliation which they find to be unacceptable or incompatible with how they define themselves. For

example, an individual may choose to accept, resist, or reject perceived stereotypes concerning his or her racial group. This attitude can be based on whether, or not, the individual perceives of himself as belonging to this particular group. Individuals can choose to accept their in-group affiliations based on the degree to which they feel that they identify with this particular group or organization (Brewer, 2001). This acceptance is largely based on internalized attitudes concerning how the individual perceives the group, and subsequently, how this individual feels he or she might be perceived based on group membership. An individual may choose to reject in-group affiliation based on personal preferences; and some cases, in subordination to other social identities such as being a woman, wife, or mother (Brewer, 2001). An individual may also choose to reject in-group affiliation based on what he or she perceives are negative stereotypes associated with belonging to—or being a member of—a particular group. This resistance, while internalized, manifests itself in terms of the individual refusing to publically associate with members of his or her racial group (Cross, 1971). For example, an African American teenager may choose not to socialize with other African Americans based on his or her perceived negative stereotypes involved in being associated, or identifying with, this particular racial group.

Nigrescence: Exploring the Development of Black Identity

Black Identity Development (BID) is a (racial identity) model used to describe Blacks' development of racial identities in a Western context (Helms, 1990 and Jackson, 2001). Black Identity Development (BID) or *Nigrescence* was initially developed by psychologist, Cross (1971) as a way to describe the changes he saw in Blacks, particularly in regard to how they saw, and felt about, themselves as they became aware of their racial identities over time. He believes that individuals may skip certain stages, or even relapse, as they move through the process of developing their racial identities. He identified five stages in the development of Nigrescence

including *Pre-Encounter, Encounter, Immersion, Emersion, and Internalization*. Cross's (1971) initial model of BID was further developed, and expanded on, by Black identity theorists, and social psychologists, Bailey and Helms.

Helms (1990, 1994) uses a similar model of BID as that of her predecessor, Cross (1971). In her seminal work, "Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research, and Practice", Helms (1990) discusses six main stages of racial identity development for African Americans: (1) *Pre-Encounter*, (2) *Encounter*, (3) *Immersion*, (4) *Emersion*, (5) *Internalization*, and (6) *Commitment* (24). Based on Helm's (1990) stage theory model of Black Identity Development, an African American male or female develops attitudes about herself based on negative or positive perceptions of a particular racial group, the extent to which he or she feels connected to a particular racial group, and the degree to which she personally identifies with perceived characteristics of that racial group (Helms, 1990). Unlike Jackson (2001), Helms (1994) does not label an individual's choice of racial group affiliation as 'active' or 'passive' in the development of racial identity.

Jackson (1975, 2001) confirmed Cross' findings concerning the process that African Americans go through in the development of their racial identities (p. 12). However, unlike Cross, he did not believe that an individual could skip a step or relapse in regard to their Black identity development. Jackson (2001) stated that he did think it was "possible for a person to get stuck in a BID stage" (p. 12). In his assessment, he (2001) identified five stages of BID: (1) *Naïve*, (2) *Acceptance*, (3) *Resistance*, (4) *Redefinition*, or (5) *Internalization* (15-16). In Jackson's (1975) model, he identifies what he considers to be active, or conscious, and passive, or unconscious, aspects of the processes of Black identity development. For example, an individual in an active phase of BID consciously chooses to affiliate with a particular racial group; this includes the

desire to accept or reject particular characteristics that he or she has come to ascribe to a particular racial group.

Developing a sense of a cultural self: The progression of black identity development.

Social psychologists (Brewer, 2001; Cross, 1971, 1991; Helms, 1990, 1994; Jackson, 1976, 2001; and Thomas, 1971) believe that racial identity development begins in childhood. The initial stages of racial identity development have to do with the degree to which a person identifies him or herself as being Black or having a sense of a racial self, and the importance of this social identity for defining oneself. Overall, those developmental stages also involve whether an individual perceives of the characteristics of being Black as either being positive or negative.

In his development model, Jackson (1976, 2001) identified the first stage of Nigrescence as being *naïve*. Individuals in this stage have no awareness of social identity, and therefore, do not distinguish their own roles in regard to the larger social context. At first, a young African American child has no perception of him, or herself in regard to being Black or what it means to have a racial identity. While the child recognizes physical differences; this child has little, if any, self-awareness in regard to being Black. In this sense, this child is unaware of race, or the perceived differences between groups of individuals based solely on skin color. This child, who is preadolescent, does not view him or herself as being different from her peers in terms of being Black versus 'White'. Thus, there is no association of feeling inferior, or having feelings of shame or low-self-worth based on being Black. Also, at this point the child is largely influenced by the views of his or her parents, and their attitudes, in regard to how he or she is socialized into the Black community (Jackson, 2001).

Cross (1971) and Helms (1990, 1994), describe the first stage of Black Identity Development (BID) as *pre-encounter*. During the pre-encounter stage, an individual acquires an

awareness concerning stereotypes, or beliefs held by others, concerning his or her own racial or ethnic group. Cross (1971) identified two types of individuals at this stage. The first type of person feels that race is unimportant, and therefore, has no basis in regard to how individuals interact with him or her. Although there is an awareness of race, there is no conscious, or internal, acknowledgement of perceived social stigmas, or stereotypes, based on belonging to a particular cultural or ethnic group. The second type of person feels as though having a racial identity is inconvenient due to the fact that it limits, or complicates, aspects of his or her personal identity, including the way people perceive him or her. Therefore, it is easier to ignore having a racial self. This person may have negative attitudes about the in-group, and subsequently, may not want to be defined in terms of race or having a racial identity. Both of those kinds of persons have not learned to counter, or question aspects of what it means to be Black.

During pre-encounter stage, a young Black child learns that “the White American is the gatekeeper, and the Black American is the visitor” (Thomas, 1971, p. 68). She quickly learns that she must work hard to fit in with White society and disprove those stereotypes, which she believes to be true, about Blacks. This person may or may not regard these characteristics as “stereotypes” or false beliefs concerning members of his or her racial group. Oftentimes, although such stereotypes are negative, the individual during this stage may choose to accept them. Individuals may not recognize that many of these stereotypes stem from outside of his or her racial group and are beliefs held by the majority culture, or White majority, in U.S. culture. The resulting behavior could be an outright rejection of his or her own cultural group whereby an individual refuses to associate with members of his or racial group. Helms (1992) states that this individual learns to disassociate or “separate himself or herself from the devalued reference group in order to minimize the psychological discomfort” of being Black in a culture that views

Blackness as inferior to Whiteness (p. 20). Resisting in-group affiliation could also mean that an individual actively chooses to seek approval from Whites. The individual could try to act differently from perceived negative stereotypes concerning his or her racial group. The rejection of in-group affiliation may be an outward manifestation of this attitude. Other aspects of this rejection may be found in noticeable behavioral or attitudinal shifts. For example, attempting to be the best learner in school or not talking “so loud” or sounding *Black* but using proper English. Basically, an individual at this stage has either not encountered, or chosen to accept, a racial identity that is based on his or own self definition. He or she is still largely defining him or herself based on the acceptance or rejection of the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of others—about his or racial group.

In regard to the pre-encounter stage of BID, a recurrent theme concerning Nigrescence deals with a *flash-bulb moment*, or the first time when individuals became aware of race, or of the consequences of what it meant to have a racial identity in society; and also, what it meant to be identified as being Black, and consciously identify with belonging to a particular racial group. To cope with the trauma of being different, a young African American child might abandon Blacks as her primary reference group in order to develop a stronger sense of personal identity, or one’s feelings about oneself, including self-esteem, which allows him or her to accept Whites and to feel as though she belongs to that racial group, i.e., Whiteness (Helms, 1992). Whether a child accepts or rejects the majority White world view, he or she grows up fighting feelings of inadequacy brought on by feelings of inferiority to Whites and White culture. This fight that he or she has within him or herself may become directed outwards or inwards, against Whites, or Blacks. This stage of Black Identity Development is often marked by anger, pain, and frustration (Helms, 1990).

The next step in the development of racial, or Black, self-awareness, is for an individual to realize that there is an alternate perspective from which to engage beliefs about him or herself. At this point, he or she may realize that the “commonly” held beliefs about his or her racial group are, in fact, largely stereotypes. According to Helms (1990), the *encounter* stage for a person of color involves an oscillation between accepting dominant White worldviews and accepting a new identity. He or she realizes that those widely-held beliefs about his or her racial group may not, in fact, be true. During this stage, an individual comes face-to-face with aspects of seeing the world from an entirely new perspective; one that is no longer based on the dominant culture. This individual realizes that he or she must define what for him or herself what it means to be *Black*. This person may experience depression, anxiety, and a kind of “mental roadblock” in regard to attempting to adequately represent his or her beliefs. Of course, the ultimate struggle for this person may be attempting to accept a racial identity or identification at all. This person may decide that they do not want to have a racial identity or define themselves in terms of being *Black*, or *White*, for that matter.

Jackson (2001) characterizes the encounter stage as one of *acceptance*. During this stage, the young child rejects or accepts “the prevailing White/majority description and perceived worth of Black people, Black culture, or experience” (p. 15). According to Jackson, a person in this stage person may reject all that is Black and seek approval from Whites. He or she accepts the dominant worldview, without question, which may include the denigration of Blacks. In accepting such racist stereotypes, he or she may begin to hate him or herself.

After a period of confusion, rejection, or resistance in regard to defining oneself in terms being Black, a person finally accepts that he or she belongs to a racial group, and is identified as such in society. In the *immersion* phase, the person of color completely identifies with Black

culture and anything that he or she feels is authentic in terms of representing Black culture. At this point, an individual actively seeks to define what being Black means for him or her. Sometimes, this identification with Black culture is at the cost of personal identity (Helms, 1990). The focus is on “all things Black” in such a way that diminishes other kinds of perspectives, including those of the majority culture. This individual may immerse himself or herself in Black history, listen almost exclusively to “Black music”, stemming from Black artists which may include styles such as rap, hip hop, and Rhythm and Blues; they also focus on other cultural phenomenon that they associate with being Black. In this way, an individual seeks a positive self image in regard to his or her affiliation with being a member of a particular cultural group. The negative aspect of the immersion phase is that it may involve a flattened representation of African Americans or ‘Others’, or minority groups, in terms of their lived experiences. This worldview can be one in which the individual homogenizes Black experience in order to be able to identify with the group. A person may also choose to primarily socialize with members of his or her own racial group, or he or she may choose to develop close ties, or close personal friendships with other Blacks. In this way, this person starts to define aspects of race, including what it means to be Black, including, and belonging to the ‘Black race’, for him or herself.

Jackson (2001) describes the immersion stage as one of *resistance*. A person in this stage realizes that racism is real and not just an invention by Blacks, and other people of color. This person begins to question the so-called truths that are inherent in a racist paradigm including “the values, moral codes, and codes of personal and professional development [that have been] handed down by the majority White culture” (Jackson, 2001, 21-22). There may be some growing hostility towards Whites, Blacks or other minorities, who adhere to the dominant worldview or prevailing ideology, or that “White is right.” During the transition from *resistance*

to *redefinition*, a Black person realizes that she or he does not really know who he or she is racially, or what it means to belong to a racial group. All along, this person has been defining him, or herself, based on a racist mindset, or dominant paradigm, and now she or she must begin to question these assumptions and beliefs that he or she has previously had about him or herself. The need to develop a positive self-image, particularly in regard to having a racial identity, and a positive outlook in terms of being Black, is crucial to building self-esteem. Part of developing a positive self-image sometimes includes self-denial, at least in terms of denying the negative characteristics of being associated with a particular racial group. For some African Americans, there is a need to 'prove oneself', particularly in regard to one's racial identity. Such individuals want to make it clear that they do not possess any of the negative traits usually attributed to their ascribed racial group.

During *emersion* (Helms, 1990), an African American may choose to associate more frequently with Blacks in order to learn more about Black culture; this includes learning more about one's family history as well as discovering more about African American history, in general. This individual now begins to internalize what it means to be Black, in a positive sense, and what it means belong to a distinct cultural group. The rage and self-destructive behavior that was apparent in the immersion phase is now replaced with a positive outlook as the individual seeks to attribute positive aspects of being Black as part of his or her personal identity (Helms, 1990). A negative aspect of emersion is that there may be hostility towards Whites or the majority-culture and what one sees as racial oppression by the dominant group. For some African Americans, linkages to one's cultural identity or community as well as having a sense of race and racial identity is tied a particular sociohistorical context or location such as growing up in an inner-city, all-Black neighborhood in the northeastern United States in the 1960s. For those

individuals, it is not a matter of having hostility towards Whites, it is simply acknowledging a very real context in which they had to live and adapt.

Jackson (2001) describes the emersion phase as one of *redefinition*. During this stage of development, an individual focuses on interacting with Blacks and wants to define him or herself independently of Whites and their perceptions concerning positively or negatively-ascribed characteristics associated with Blacks or pertaining to Black culture. At this stage, Blacks do not feel that they need to interact with Whites in order to seek approval, or validate themselves for who they are, especially in regard to personal identity. Such individuals may segregate themselves, racially. Some Blacks or Whites may see such behaviors, involving self-segregation, as negative. However, many African Americans in this stage are attempting to reinvest themselves in their culture and to see it from a different perspective.

A person in the *internalization* stage chooses the degree to which he or she identifies, or defines, him or herself in terms of being Black or belonging to a particular racial group. He or she also consciously chooses the degree to which he or she will integrate this aspect of self into other areas of personhood, including the development of a professional identity. This negotiation of aspects of having a racial identity is unique and personal to each individual. I believe that aspects of internalization concerning having—and in regard to negotiating aspects of having—a racial identity, continue to play out well into adulthood.

During the internalization phase a person of color may develop a positive personal identity in reference to having a Black identity. Although this person sees herself as a unique individual and views her herself in reference to Black identity, she also transcends aspects of racial identity. This individual acknowledges the uniqueness of being Black, including aspects Black cultural ties to his or ethnic group including language, food, and aspects of interpersonal relationships, but

also seeks commonality across-the-board in terms of “common peoplehood” and lived experiences that all people share, particularly concerning certain contexts such as school, work, and family (Helms, 1990).

For Jackson (2001), the *internalization* phase, involves an individual’s development of a new set of values, along with a new self-concept, and the attempt to incorporate this new paradigm into all areas of his or her life. This stage is one of culmination in which individuals apply what they have learned from all stages of Black identity development and incorporate it into their development of self or personhood. African Americans at this stage now longer needs to defend themselves or their racial identities in terms of being Black, or what it means to beBlack. Some Blacks may develop a multicultural perspective by which they adapt views from many different cultures which are compatible and congruent with their new, enlightened perspective.

Helms (1990) identified *commitment* as a sixth stage in racial identity development. At this point, an individual decides to make a personal commitment to fighting oppression, which includes fighting all forms of discrimination. In this context, a person of color takes on the role of a social, political activist in order to eliminate racism and other forms of oppression of marginalized groups (Helms, 1990). A person of color at this stage is not solely activist in terms of race or gender according to his or her own cultural group or community, but seeks to stop all forms of oppression in larger contexts, including those of society. This individual makes a public stand on such issues and works with organizations to actively fight oppression. This individual looks to eliminate or reduce aspects of discrimination on other levels as it affects different groups of individuals. Individuals who are committed to change become increasingly aware of how ideologies involving race are enacted, and perpetuated, in society. For many scholars of color, making a commitment to fighting oppression and racial discrimination occurs as part of their

professional identity development. I believe that various levels, and stages, of both commitment and internalization, occur throughout adulthood, and particularly, during the on-going stages involving the development of a professional identity development.

My Role as a Researcher

As I have come to consider Black professionals and other minorities who are successful—I still see them struggling to straddle this invisible line of conformity—in which at every instance they are either Black, living the “Black Experience,” or they are no longer defined by race at all. Some Black professionals are recognized by name only, but are those African Americans still perceived as “Other” by some of their colleagues in the professorate? There are those who integrate both sets of these identities—both in identifying as being Black, and in having made a name for themselves. And then, there are others like myself, who find themselves graduated to some degree, and anxiously hovering in the middle. I think, “Why must we choose?” Why must we always straddle the race line in terms of identity? When do we get a chance to compose ourselves and (realize) our own unique set of experiences—whether or not we (choose to) frame them within the conceptualization of being Black?

My feelings about cultural representation, and homogenization, are tied distinctly to my feelings about race. I hate feeling like I do not fit as a Black woman—within the African American or Southern White racist mindset—because I do not think like or act like one—whatever that means, or because I have failed to represent the lived experiences of a Black American woman. Intra-culturally, some Blacks have sought to represent themselves by homogenizing “Black Experience.” Those persons have sought to exclude some African Americans who do not seem to recognize our “like” shared experiences. But are our shared experiences truly alike? And is race a good representation of this? I have never thought that

race or sharing cultural or ethnic identity meant shared experiences(s). Perhaps it is because I now believe that as a black female, I belong to quite a large number of cultures, which are uniquely represented by my experiences, and by how I choose to identify myself. All I know is that the sum of my parts is not the stereotypical notions of Being, as represented in Being black, Being female, and Being Southern (and Being American for that matter).

My role as researcher is this—now that I have been able to validate and affirm my own personal experiences, I feel that it is time for me to help others provide a voice in terms of their own personal experiences, especially those who might not regard their own experiences as being particularly unique. What I mean by *validation* is being able to accept the truth of my experiences as I have lived them, particularly based on how they resonant with others’ experiences; particularly those of other African Americans in higher education, including graduate school who are becoming professionals, and especially the ones who gaining status, and reputation, by becoming academic scholars. Unfortunately, the themes, e.g., of self-loathing, and self-deprecation, that have played out in my life, well, these are ‘common themes’. Being able to affirm my own experiences based on how they have resonated with others’ experiences has made me feel validated and not like a victim. I believe that hearing others’ stories can help those up-and-coming, or emerging, scholars in the negotiation of their personal and professional identities—particularly, within spaces in academe. I feel that these narratives of ‘shared’ stories and lived experience should be included in historicizing the field of rhetoric and composition.

I am studying race, not because I am Black, but because I am a thinker: I am conscious in considering all of my lived experiences. I know that I am the sum of my parts—female, Southerner (US), black, American, philosopher, teacher, writer, researcher—and I am *more* than the sum of my parts. I embody the essences of these roles, but maybe not all at once. Some of my

subjectivities—modes of being—overlap, and some do not, at given points. But irrespective, it should be my conscious decision, and mine alone, how I represent myself; and, it is always my decision in regard to how I embody those roles, and realize them, in the presentation of myself—my Being. Thinkers think about themselves in relation to the world. Positioning myself as a thinker and researcher means realizing aspects of my identity, particularly regarding how I have chosen to situate myself throughout my life. However one chooses to look at it: “race” is a big part of this.

The Purpose of This Study

As an African American woman and emerging scholar, I am interested in the views of minority scholars regarding their lived experiences, and their working lives in academe, and how such experiences have influenced the constructions of their personal and professional identities. As such, my dissertation research project explores the lived experiences of African Americans in the field of composition studies and examines how those experiences have shaped the construction of their personal, professional, and racial identities. The intention of this study is to gain insight from six African Americans in the field of composition studies who identify themselves as writing specialists or professionals; are dedicated to the teaching of writing, and have lived through the experience of becoming professionals in the field. The goal of this dissertation is to examine how career and relative life experiences have influenced African Americans’ interests in rhetoric and composition and their subsequent development as professionals in the field. Those teachers, scholars, and researchers were interviewed with the expectation that they, and the researcher, would learn from their stories outlining their personal histories and relative career experiences.

Research Questions

I ask each participant the following questions in relation to my research study:

1. How do the experiences of African Americans in Composition affect their constructions of professional identity? Specifically, I explore the lived experiences of African Americans in the professoriate, both in terms of the realities of being minorities in higher education, and the realities of being minority scholars and professionals in the context of academia and the professoriate. I discuss the working lives of African Americans as academic professionals and explore the ways in which they contextualize their realities as minority scholars in rhetoric and composition.
2. How do African American scholars situate themselves in their roles as scholars, teachers, and researchers in the field of Composition? That is, how do African American scholars, i.e., academic professionals, conceptualize their roles as scholars in rhetoric and composition? I hope to examine the ways in which they enact their beliefs, e.g., about teaching, being a scholar, or contributing service in regard to practice, e.g., research interests and focus, their responsibilities and duties as teachers and scholars, and their roles as mentors to emerging scholars.
3. (In what ways) does race or ethnic/cultural identity factor into professional identity construction for African American scholars in Composition? I utilize aspects scholars' life histories to explore their relative lived experiences and how aspects of their "being-in-the world" (i.e., how they perceived the world and themselves in it) influenced African Americans' perceptions of themselves and their views on academia, intellectual development, and the concept of a professional life or professional existence.

4. How do the experiences of African Americans in the professoriate affect personal and ethnic/racial identity construction? I examine the effects of professional identity development and early life history on aspects of racial identity development. I hope to discover how minority scholars negotiate aspects of personal and professional identities within spaces in academe.

Methodology

Naturalistic Research: Conducting a Qualitative Inquiry

This is a naturalistic inquiry. The goal of a naturalistic study is to investigate a particular phenomenon or real-world situation in order to get a sense of it as a whole. The epistemological perspective in naturalistic research deals with contexts that are both real and imagined. This type of investigation focuses on the quality of an event and how it unfolds in the real world. The researcher attempts to capture the essence of the phenomenon; what makes the experience unique to those who undergo it. The phenomena I focus on as part of this study are the lived experiences of African American scholars, i.e., those who are ‘professors’, under some appropriate title, and who are published in the professoriate, i.e., the field of rhetoric and composition. This perspective also acknowledges that individuals’ views of the world are based on values and beliefs, and aspects of the contexts in which individuals themselves. The reality that is constructed as part of the experience is intertwined with the context, social and otherwise, as it belongs to the individual. As part of data analysis, I am looking for the themes underlying those experiences. In terms of synthesis, and research outcomes, I would like to provide a description of “what life is like” for each, individual participant.

Narrative Inquiry: Storytelling as Method

Storytelling is an ethnographic approach to qualitative research that involves the telling or recounting of others' stories (Behar-Horenstein and Morgan 1995). Story, as inquiry, attempts to account for those things which may not be observed but nonetheless play a role in the events that occur in particular contexts. Story as knowledge tries to relate theoretically those "predefined observables" that occur in particular contexts (Horenstein-Morgan 1995, p. 144). In this dissertation, I utilize story research as a way to uncover minority teacher-scholars' "learning-how-to" in regard to being teachers, scholars, and researchers, and their practical knowledge concerning doing teaching, research, and scholarship. The ways of knowing that I am looking at as a part of this study elucidate being (ontology) and knowing (epistemology).

Narratives are, in essence, the stories we tell and the process by which we utilize stories to make meaning and contribute to a greater understanding and awareness about ourselves or another group of people. An outsider—someone who lives and exist outside of that realm of experience—can interpret our experiences by filtering them through their own stories about themselves. Based on how we tell our stories, others can retell our stories and reconstruct, in a sense, our realities. A researcher doing narrative research can reconstruct the reality of the participants through the narrative or retelling of the story. They do this so that others may 'relive' those experiences, and live them vicariously through the researcher (Behar-Horenstein and Morgan 1995).

Story research can be used to emphasize in-situ or 'learning-how-to' epistemologies and practices as seeks to make clearer a teacher-scholar's way of knowing, which includes their discoveries about teaching and scholarship and what it means to be a teacher or scholar (Behar-Horenstein-Morgan 1995, p. 144). The usual way we make meaning in regard to theoretical

knowledge is to account for the interactions between particular individuals (i.e., teachers and students) and to observe those behaviors in a specified context; we do this to see “knowledge transformed into action” (Horenstein-Morgan 1995, p. 144).

My methods and methodological framework for this dissertation project employs aspects of narrative inquiry as a basis for telling participants’ stories. Narrative research is a method utilized in educational research as an approach that allows researchers to analyze teaching practices and teachers’ reflections on thinking and teaching (Behar-Horenstein and Morgan 1995). Narrative as a form of inquiry belongs to both the interpretive and critical branches of the qualitative/naturalistic paradigm, meaning it can deal with both hermeneutic as well as dialectal approaches to meaning making; interpretive and activist-based agendas can be utilized when interpreting participants’ stories (Behar-Horenstein and Morgan 1995). The storyteller or primary participant, and the participant-observer, work together to reconstruct the narrative that relates the participants’ lived experiences. The participant tells the story and the researcher negotiates the meaning and the interpretation of the events of the story with participant and constructs the narrative. So, in a way, the story is intersubjective along the lines of interpretation; it is told ‘together’ (Behar-Horenstein and Morgan 1995).

In this study, I use narrative inquiry to reconstruct participants’ realities. In a narrative study, the basis for the use of the participants’ stories or narrative scripts by the researcher is to capture the essence or truth of the (re)constructed reality and the inherent meaning structures of the experience—what makes the experience what it is; why it is something significant to the life of the researched. The researcher’s goal is to isolate the meaning structures in the narratives in order to evoke a sense of the life world of the participant/researched, particularly to capture the essence of the experiences for those who live outside of it—who have no sense of “being-in-the-

world” in that way. The epistemological basis for this project stems from the narratives provided by the researcher and coresearchers or participants. Those narratives provide the framework for the retelling of others’ stories and as a means for constructing the reality of each participant. The narratives include the personal narratives of both the researcher and the coresearchers and the respondents’ constructed realities as provide by the researcher’s retelling of others’ stories.

In utilizing narrative inquiry, I am interested in telling *individual* stories—not in homogenizing the nature of lived experience—but sometimes in the fragmented, and sometimes, disjointed nature of recalling memories and particular incidents. Pagnucci (2004) states, “Multiple stories can also save us from being forced to toss aside outlying data that does not fit the current theoretical perspective; a storied view can adjust to encompass the new, unusual, data set” (p. 53). In this dissertation, I attempt to reconstruct the realities of participant – how they see the world and themselves it – to more accurately tell their stories. The goal is to narrate others’ stories and provide insight in regard to the frames through/by which participants structure their experiences. I account for the time, place, specific situation, and cultural context (i.e., the things that shape each story) in order to write narrative scripts in an attempt to reconstruct participants’ stories. I also use the frame for narrative construction (i.e., time, place, specific situation, and cultural context) as a lens for interpreting events in the lives of participants; particularly, as each even relates to the overall story (Behar-Horenstein and Morgan 1995). I use *verstehen* (i.e., understanding) when negotiating meaning with the participants in order to construct their realities and relay their experiences. In addition, I attempt to provide some verisimilitude in regard to the negotiated story that is created between herself and the participant. It is essential that all those things are made transparent to the reader (Behar-Horenstein and Morgan 1995).

Respondents' interpretations of experience are based on their constructions of reality. The respondents' constructions of reality are based on the contexts that shape experiences and underlie reality construction (Bamberger and Mabry, 2006). Thus, contextuality includes "physical, social, economic, organizational, political, legal, ethical, psychological, emotional, and intellectual contexts" (Bamberger and Mabry, 2006: 272). This dissertation project considers context on a micro and macro level and considers how sociocultural and personal norms underlying experiences shapes respondents' interpretations of those experiences. The sociocultural norms include historical embeddedness as it relates to participants' lived experience and their personal ideologies as related to their situatedness and positionality within specific contexts.

The nature of constructed realities is that they are self-created, reflexive, and demonstrate *Verstehen*, i.e., understanding. In order to truly understand participants' experience, readers must be able to understand the nature of the experiences as participants undergo it. Readers should get a sense of the context, real or imagined, that participants undergo—the perspectives from which they tell their stories. The goal of this study is to describe the experience as it occurs for each participant and how their situatedness of self within certain professional contexts lends itself to personal development as an outgrowth of those experiences and the choices that they make as part of their day-to-day existence.

Data Collection Methods

Participants. For this design, I used purposeful sampling in order to select and study the experiences of six African-American Composition scholars who are members of professional organizations and who are engaged in scholarship (teaching, research, and scholarship) within the field of Rhetoric and Composition, or Composition Studies. Those participants needed to be

able to articulate their feelings regarding those experiences. The participants for this study include four African American males, and two African American females. The following are descriptions of each participant:

1. Seth Russell, an African American male in his mid-thirties, is an up-and-coming scholar who is currently in the process of completing his first solo book project, and has also published several book chapters and articles in the field. In his current position as an assistant professor in rhetoric and composition, he does research in the areas of race, technology, and identity.
2. Pauline Thomas, an African American female in her late forties, is a well-known scholar in the field who has published several books and articles. She is currently an associate professor in rhetoric and composition who does research which focuses on the areas of women's studies, literacy, and cultural rhetorics.
3. Aaron Richardson, an African American male in his early fifties, is a distinguished scholar and fellow who is well-known and respected in the field. He is a full professor in rhetoric and composition who works on several committees within the national organization, the *Conference on College Composition and Communication* (CCCC). His research focuses on rhetoric, philosophy, and theology.
4. Barbara Simmons, an African American female in her late thirties, is a well-respected scholar in the field who has written several books, and also, headed several committees within the national organization, CCCC. She is an associate professor within the field of rhetoric and composition who currently contributes to scholarship in the areas of feminist theory, hip-hop culture, and cultural rhetorics.

5. Stephen Harper, an African American male in his early thirties, is an up-and-coming scholar who has published several book chapters and articles in the field. He is currently an associate professor in rhetoric and composition who focuses on English education, and language and literacy. He has won numerous awards and participates regularly in community-based outreach programs for African American youth.
6. Ali Jones, an African American male in his mid-forties, is a widely-respected scholar who is well-published in the field and has spent several years working on language issues as part of the national CCCC caucus which focuses on respecting the linguistic backgrounds of students from diverse backgrounds. In his current position as an associate professor in rhetoric and composition, he continues to do research on computers and technology, including the language issues of African Americans and how these students' literacy development is effected by the use of technology in first-year writing classrooms.

Data Collection Procedures

I selected participants based on their research interests as demonstrated by their scholarship in the field. I chose to contact African American scholars in composition and rhetoric who had published articles, books chapters, or books on race, their personal histories dealing with race, or about their professional experiences in composition and rhetoric. Initially, I sent out personal invitations to prospective participants by email. The email included an informative cover letter detailing the study. Scholars who responded positively to the initial email were asked to sign and submit a letter of informed consent which detailed the risks associated with the study. I provided copies of informed consent forms along with all interview questions as email attachments. After I received each participant's signed informed consent form, I asked him or her

to complete answers to background questions over email. Participants were given the option of completing those initial questions via the face-to-face interview.

I set up face-to-face interview schedules with each participant. I asked participants where they wanted to meet and what dates and times they would be available for a face-to-face interview. Each participant was aware of the time duration, approximately 90 minutes, which was needed in order to conduct the interview. After scheduling the time and place, I traveled to each participant's host institution to conduct the interview. Most interviews were conducted in participants' offices on-campus. Because of scheduling conflicts, some interviews were conducted via telephone using a telephone recording device. I set up interview schedules with participants to conduct the telephone interviews. I informed each participant that he or she needed to be in an environment that was void of background noise.

I conducted semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with participants. The interviews will be tape recorded. I tape record the interviews using a digital tape recorder with time-delay playback for doing word-for-word transcriptions (Creswell, 1998, p.121). My data collection methods involved individual and focus group interviews that used a dialogic or conversational approach to interviewing. The initial individual interviews were longer and with shorter follow-up interviews were conducted by asking questions over email. There was some self-disclosure on the part of the researcher, but this was limited to allow for more input from participants. I realized that some self-disclosure was necessary in order to establish trustworthiness (Creswell, 1998, pp. 83-84). I informed participants that I would negotiate meaning with them, particularly in regard to their stories, interview transcripts, and narrative scripts (Creswell, 1998, p. 84).

In addition to interviews, I kept a researcher's reflexive journal. I wrote personal notes regarding my experiences as I went through the research process. The personal notes involved

my on-going learning in my search for understanding as related to selfhood and identity. I kept a separate part of the journal for methodological notes in discussed my interactions with participants and decisions made during the research process. As part of my methodological notes, I utilized aspects of Morse et al.'s (2002) methodological framework for establishing rigor in a qualitative study. My methodological notes involved my decision-making processes that focused on my on-going stance as a researcher, including investigator responsiveness, methodological coherence, theoretical sampling and sampling adequacy, maintaining an active analytic stance, and issues involving saturation (Morse et al., 2002).

Data Record

The document record for the individual interviews consists of the protocol for the interview questions, raw data from the recording, and the narrative transcript that was created via the transcribed interview. The document record for the reflexive journal included personal and methodological notes involving the nature of design and the on-going, and emergent, decisions made in regard to the methodology. The data record for the focus group consisted of the protocol with the interview questions, raw data, which is transcribed from the recording, and the narrative transcript. The reflexive journal consisted of handwritten and electronic notes taken during the course of the research-from data collection through analysis, and synthesis of the findings.

Instrumentation

At the beginning of the study, I acknowledged that as the researcher that was the primary instrument that would be conducting interviews with participants, and also, collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing the data.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data involves thematic analysis. I am also using participants' reflections on those experiences to guide the (co)construction of meaning as related to my dissertation research. In a 'regular' thematic analysis, the researcher develops individual descriptions, extracts meaning statements, organizes statements into themes, and provides a holistic narrative description (Moustakas, 1990: 40). In this study, I do a narrative-based analysis that allows me to develop individual descriptions, extract key statements, organize statements into themes related to specific individual experiences, and form a basic narrative or story for each participant. This exercise resulted in a longer, more complex, multi-dimensional narrative in regard to my actual discussion. I used a creative synthesis, i.e., heuristic inquiry, to incorporate some non-traditional forms of representation in the way of linguistic variety including use of participants' authentic language, i.e., African American Vernacular English, in regard to my results.

Creswell (1998) outlines the specific steps in the data analysis as follows:

1. The researcher reads all descriptions in their entirety.
2. The author then extracts significant statements from each description.
3. These statements are formulated into meanings, and these meanings are clustered into themes.
4. The researcher integrates these themes into a narrative description. (p. 32)

Ethics and Trustworthiness

Ethics and trustworthiness is very important in conducting narrative research. Narrative research involves the researcher being in the field for an extended period of time listening to participants' stories and negotiating the retelling and the construction of narratives as related to those stories. Participants have to be able to trust that the researcher has their interests in mind

when he or she interprets their lived experiences, reconstructs their realities (i.e., what is real for them), extracts meaning from their stories, and negotiates the (re)construction of those stories and realities in the form of a narrative.

In regard to ethics, I do the following in this dissertation: (1) provide thorough information about the proposed project so that the participant can make a knowledgeable and informed decision; (2) note the degree of risk or harm, emotionally, physically, or mentally, and take steps to minimize those risks to participants; (3) provide an informed consent form so that participants are aware and well-versed in their rights in regard to the study; and (4) take precautionary steps so that I am careful not to deceive participants about the real motives behind the project or my main reasons for conducting the study (Creswell, 1990).

As an African American, I am sensitive the issue of race, and how discussions of race, particularly regarding early life histories, may be difficult for some participants. I provide some self-disclosure about my own past, along with issues of race, in order to make participants feel more comfortable about telling their own stories. I also let participants know that they are not required to go in-depth with information that is too painful. Participants were informed about sensitive nature of some of the questions; they had the choice to opt out of personal questions as related to family or personal histories. Participants' narratives are provided in the following chapter; however, first, I provide an overview of the chapters.

Overview of Chapters

In chapter 2, I discuss the conceptual framework that I use to explore topics related to professional identity development. I provide an overview in regard to becoming a professional, particularly in an academic context and the ways in which individuals continue to gain insight into, professionalism, i.e., what it means to be a professional, over time. I examine issues related

to racism in hiring and the devaluation of scholarship. I also look at problems related to tenure and promotion and other issues concerning advancement for minorities and women in academe. Finally, I discuss the views of African American scholars in composition in regard to scholarship, mentoring, and the underrepresentation of minority viewpoints in the field.

Chapter 3 includes the life histories and career narratives of my research participants. Each narrative begins with background information about each participant detailing status, i.e., assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor, research interests, and how they feel race influences professional identity development.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the results of my analysis, including a description of relevant themes. I discuss how this dissertation study informs the field of composition studies by examining the ways in this study helps to historicize composition, i.e., account for the history of the field, and add to the body of knowledge that is composition. I discuss aspects of the working lives of minorities and women in the field and how this study can be utilized as a frame for examining professional development and the preparation of minorities for graduate school and life in the academy. Finally, I discuss how this study answers the calls of prominent scholars in rhetoric and composition, such as Royster (1995) and Lunsford (1990), who state that those in composition must do the work that is necessary to create a multiethnic/cultural professoriate.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this dissertation research project is to provide an analysis of the experiences of African American faculty in higher education in the United States. Specifically, my research focuses on the lived experiences of African Americans in the field of Composition Studies. I am particularly interested in how those scholars of color represent themselves in the professoriate in regard to how they define—and, negotiate aspects of who they are, in regard to—their roles as educators, scholars, mentors, and teachers in the field. As part of this analysis, I explore the ways in which six African American scholars in Composition Studies perceive of *race*, *identity*, *racial identity*, and *professional identity* as philosophical or theoretical, and epistemological concepts. I discuss their specific areas of interest or specializations, research methodologies, statuses, and locations in regard to their current teaching institutions. The basis for this discussion is to draw possible parallels—and also, locate potential differences— between the experiences of African American scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition, and minority faculty in higher education in the United States, in general. In doing so, I seek to draw attention to aspects of professionalization, or becoming a professional, and professionalism, or what it means to be a professional. As part of this analysis, I look at how race and cultural identity development factor into professional identity construction. I also examine how racial identity affects minority scholars' experiences as emerging scholars and professionals. For the purposes of my study, *racial identity construction* is defined as an on- going, or developmental, process that begins in childhood and continues on as part of adult identity development (Thomas, 1971; Cross, 1971; and Helms, 1990).

In this chapter, I look at literature dealing with professionalization and theories of

professional identity and the way that are negotiated in terms aspect's one one's personal identity. I begin the chapter by providing a broad overview of concepts and professional identity development. I discuss *professional identity theory*. As part of my discussion concerning professional identity theory, I provide an analysis of what it means to be, and develop an identity as, an *academic professional*. I also provide a historical overview of the status, relative career experiences, and professional development of African American higher education faculty in the United States over the past fifty years. In relaying their experiences, I hope to provide a framework for analyzing the unique situations that African American scholars in the field of Composition Studies face in regard to their own development as academic professionals.

Being an Academic Professional: The 'Parts and Parcel' of Becoming a Scholar

A professional is an individual who possesses the skills, knowledge, and training or expertise in a particular area that allows him or her to be recognized as an expert in a particular field, discipline, or subject; the goal is to get hired, and paid, based on these qualifications (Quinton, 2012). An *academic professional* is one who is focused on research in a particular area and who is interested in becoming more knowledgeable about this subject as it pertains to his or her field, and about subjects or topics related to his or her chosen area of study. The academic professional's ultimate goal is to obtain a position as a professor in a college or university whereby he or she can teach courses and conduct research in subjects related to his or her area of expertise. Scholars must earn their reputations in order to obtain top positions at universities. In order to gain status, and reputations, as experts in the field, scholars submit manuscripts, either theoretical or research-based, to editors of journals, or books; those manuscripts undergo peer review by other experts or scholars in the field. In developing their research projects for publication, scholars use recognized modes of analysis, and appropriate theoretical frameworks,

to guide interpretation as related to their research projects. For his or her work to be deemed ‘scholarly’, an academic professional must publish in recognizable or prestigious publications which promote rigor, including aspects of reliability, validity, and trustworthiness as part of their research methodology. Scholars also establish their reputations as experts through networking and socialization with others as members of national and international discipline-related organizations. Oftentimes, working on departmental or

university-wide, and on national committees through professional conference participation, helps a scholar to gain status. Academic professionals are rewarded for their scholarship, contributions to the field, and service which includes mentoring, serving on committees, and acting as program administrators; awards are granted through promotions that increase scholars’ rank and salary. For example, an assistant professor can be promoted one level up, to an associate professor. Oftentimes, advancement for an academic professional can mean increasingly greater, degrees of responsibility, including more administrative work, and the new duties ascribed to this particular title such as being a curriculum director, program director, or chair of an academic department. Generally, an increase in rank or status means more mentoring duties, including advising undergraduates and graduate students; directing Masters’ and doctoral students’ theses and dissertations; and formally, or informally, mentoring newly-hired junior faculty (Rice, 1986).

Professional Identity: Exploring what it means to Be/Come an ‘Expert’

Professional identity, like racial identity, is thought of as a developmental process in which people entering a chosen profession develop identities pertaining to roles associated with being a member of that profession (Brott & Kajs, 2001). In much the same way as racial identity, individuals are socialized into the profession and must acquire a sense of what it means to be a

professional. They learn something about what it means to work or perform duties, and become a professional, based on their interactions with others. Generally, an individual's development in regard to becoming a professional occurs on two levels. First, it takes place on structural level, such as formal educational and entrance requirements for entry into the profession. During this stage, the individual must complete specific educational requirements, have some experience as a practitioner such as being a teacher, and achieve some recognition in the field as an emerging expert. Professional development via conference attendance in addition to authoring several publications generally helps an individual to gain status and reputation as a professional in his or her chosen field. Secondly, professional identity construction occurs on an attitudinal level, such as the individual's sense of "a calling" to the field. Internally, the individual must be able to conceive of him or herself as a professional; that is, acknowledge, subjectively (personally) what it means to be a professional and act in accordance with that role (Brott & Kajs, 2008, p. 1-2).

One's identity as a professional involves a link between the "psychology of the individual (personal), the representation of the self (Who am I?), and the structure, and process, involved in becoming a member of the social groups" (Brewer, 2001). During the process of being, and becoming, a professional, an individual consciously or unconsciously negotiates aspects of who he or she is based on the duties and responsibilities that are inherent to his or her role, for example, as a teacher, scholar, or researcher. In a post-modern sense, the development of a professional identity, or coming to see oneself as a professional or member of the professoriate, entails the notion of multiple subjectivities or the extent to which individuals must adapt aspects of who they based on contexts and situations in which they find themselves. The daily lives of academic professionals involve the continuous negotiation of aspects of both the personal and professional self which includes adhering to the roles of being a researcher, scholar, and teacher,

and the myriad number of duties, responsibilities that are associated with different professional contexts and situations such as attending committee meetings; having conferences with students; and mentoring and advising sessions. Colbeck (2008) discusses the internal conflict associated with integrated identities and struggle to negotiate aspects of the personal, or subjective, with external or role-based social identities.

Professionalism: Developing a Professional Identity

Professional identity fits within Brewer's (2001) paradigm in regard to social identities and social identity construction. Psychologist, Marilyn Brewer (2001), identified four components of social identity that appear across interdisciplinary literatures. Those four components include: person-based social identities, relational social identities, group-based social identities, and collective identities (Brewer, 2001). Person-based, relational, and group-based social identities deal with the individual-group association concerning self-concept and group identity. Collective identity is the shared norms and values of a particular group, and includes the group's representation to the public.

Professional identity development involves aspects of personal identity or "what it means to be who one is" (Colbeck, 2008, p. 10) and the expectations for behavior and norms associated with a group-based and role-based identities. Gaining a professional identity means establishing one's role, or relative status, in society; and as part of social identity theory, involves how much a person identifies with the values and beliefs that are associated with the professoriate with which they want, or have come, to identify. In this way, an individual may choose to ascribe certain characteristics to him, or herself, based on the performance of certain roles within a profession. Role-based identity is an aspect of identity construction that entails the "acceptance or rejection of social role expectations based on an internal comparison of roles to who they are" (Colbeck,

2008, p. 10). Relational social identity or role identity involves a person's sense of who he or she is based on his or her relationship to others, particularly in regard to (occupying) a social role. Relational social identities or role identities are based on how an individual defines "self in relation to others" (Brewer, 2001, p. 118). It also involves an individual's self-concept (sense of who he or she is) and the degree to which self-concept influences the ways in which a person occupies the position and performs duties associated with that role. Relational identities would include professional role relationships (teacher-student, mentor/advisor-student/advisee, and colleague-colleague).

As a person-based social identity, professional identity involves that aspect of self that is defined by group membership; that is, the characteristic aspects of an individual's sense of self which is derived from being a member of the professoriate. As a group-based social identity, professional identity can come to be integral in defining the self. A person's sense of who he or she is can be based on what it means to a member of a particular profession; in this way, group identity 'stands-in' for personal identity or selfhood. In this case, an individual might suffer a sense of "depersonalization" in the obtainment of professional identity (Brewer, 2001). As a collective social identity, professional identity can stand as a representative, or public, identity for a group of individuals based on their shared experiences. In this instance, individuals belonging to the group negotiate what their values are and how they want to be represented to the public. A collective professional identity is often used as a bargaining tool during conflict mediation or contract negotiation.

Professionalization: The Processes Involved in Becoming a Scholar

An individual's development as an academic scholar generally involves four key stages: (1) undergoing graduate or preprofessional training (2) transitioning into the professoriate, and

obtaining post-doctoral work experience, (3) gaining tenure (more permanent status) via promotion, and (4) becoming a full professor (Colbeck, 2008). Once an individual decides that he or she wants to become an expert in his or her chosen field, then they enroll in a graduate or professional program. As part of his or her preprofessional training, an individual takes the necessary courses and completes the required examinations in order to obtain a terminal degree in the field. Individuals may undertake apprenticeships which include teaching or working with professionals in the field as part of their training. The next stage in professional development involves transitioning from being a graduate student to becoming a full-fledged member of the professoriate. The graduate's next step, after obtaining a doctorate, is to get a full-time job as a representative member of his or her field. At this stage, individuals seek to get employed in positions that are only granted to those who have specialized degrees or training. Usually, as post-docs, individuals are hired as lecturers, visiting lecturers, or assistant professors. A person will attempt to hold a post-graduate post as an assistant professor for several years; those who secured tenure-track positions as newly-hired assistant professors, guaranteeing them 'life-time employment', attempt to secure permanent status. Once individuals secure employment they often seek to establish themselves, professionally. Those individuals work on networking and establishing a publication record which showcases their research interests and scholarship.

In developing a sense of professionalism, or what it means to be a professional, neophytes must gain a sense of the field including its history, values or ethnics, core policies, practice methods, and assessment or evaluation procedures (Quinton, 2012); that is, they must undergo structural, or organized, training as a part of professionalization. Pre-professional training is the first stage in the process of becoming a professional whereby one begins to see oneself as a professional or member of the professoriate. For academic scholars, this apprenticeship period

begins with entrance into a graduate school program. The structural component involved in this learning process involves graduate or professional courses, leading to certification, and the completion of specific exams which are completed as a part of coursework, or as part of the certification process. Students take courses that introduce them to topics of interest, methods of interpretation and analysis, and modes for doing research in their respective fields.

Internally, or attitudinally, acquiring a sense of what it means to be a professional occurs through the process of socialization “by which a person develops a sense of a professional self with its characteristic values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills...which govern his or her behavior in professional and extraprofessional situations” (Austin and McDaniels, 2006, p. 400). At this stage, graduate students begin the process of socialization whereby they “observe the behaviors, attitudes, and norms for social interaction prevalent among practitioners of their profession” (Colbeck, 2008, p. 9). Socialization entails learning about who one is based on environment or context, and also, through personal interactions with others, including the kinds of interpersonal relationships that occur with individuals in those contexts. Students internalize certain aspects involving being professionals, and performing certain duties or roles, based on courses, interpersonal relationships and other kinds of interactions that occur in their graduate schools or professional programs.

Educational psychologists, Austin and McDaniels (2006), identified four key stages in the process of socialization for graduate, or professional, students: (1) the anticipatory stage, (2) the formal stage, (3) the informal stage, and (4) the personal stage (p. 400). The anticipatory stage occurs at the beginning of professional development whereby an individual enters a graduate program, eagerly looking forward to becoming a professional, but having no idea what this actually entails. This individual may have had some training, but generally has no real (prior)

experience. The formal stage involves the structural component of professional development and involves coursework, exams, and an apprenticeship or training module to prepare individuals for working in the field. The end goal of this stage is to receive certification as a professional (e.g., Ph.D., MBA, and Juris Doctorate). The informal stage involves networking whereby an individual develops close, personal relationships with classmates, colleagues, professors, and others in the field. They may also develop informal relationships with professors –at their home institution, or with other professors in the field – in order to learn more about teaching, scholarship, and research. The goal of those informal relationships is to seek emotional and mental support, and also, to gain knowledge about teaching, research, and scholarship based on learning about other’s experiences.

Graduate students, particularly at the doctoral level, look for mentoring which includes help with scholarship and publication, or general emotional support that includes being advised on certain topics such as the selection of appropriate courses, ideas concerning professional development, or information on job searches from practitioners and scholars in their field. For graduate students, the selection of a mentor is a crucial first step in the process of socialization during preprofessional training. Mentors serve as guides and advisors to help students avoid the “pitfalls of graduate school such as failed research agendas and unfocused dissertations” (Brott & Kajs, 2001, p. 2). The strength of those interpersonal connections can aid emerging scholars, or professionals, by encouraging and supporting them as they complete structural components, and also, as they attempt to internalize aspects of what it means to be a professional with their personal self-concept or how they see themselves. In developing identities as professional scholars, doctoral students “interpret their observations in light of their own prior experiences, their goals for the future, and their current sense of who they are and will try own possible selves

to see how well they fit” (Colbeck, 2008, p. 9). Even with the completion of their final exams or writing projects, including dissertations, doctoral students continue to adjust, internally, to what it means to be professionals and scholars in their chosen fields.

During the personal stage of socialization, a graduate student chooses the degree to which he or she identifies, or defines, him or herself, in terms of belonging to the profession. This individual also consciously chooses the degree to which he or she will integrate this aspect of self into other areas of personhood. A person in this stage asks, “How does being X affect who I am and how I see myself?” The internalization of what it means to be a member of one’s field is crucial to the successful development of a professional identity.

After obtaining a doctoral degree, or other terminal academic, or professional, degree, a graduate undergoes the process of transitioning from a graduate student into full-time work as an academic professional. The transition into the professoriate, whereby the former doctoral student has completed all of his or her pre-professional training, lands his or her first post-academe job, and becomes a junior professor, usually as an assistant professor, is a phase that may last several years. During this stage, individuals are still transitioning into professional life and what it means to be a scholar, teacher, or researcher. At this stage, new faculty may seek mentorship from senior academic scholars in their fields. The process of socialization is still on-going: emerging, or newly-minted, scholars may still seek advice about professional development, scholarship and research, and aspects of their job roles or positions, especially concerning what is expected of them.

As a newly-minted post-doc, which usually means a post-grad with a Ph.D. in hand along with a completed dissertation, the graduate looks for full-time employment as a faculty member at a college or university. The transitioning process continues as the novice scholar becomes a

junior faculty member, as a temporary full-time instructor or lecturer, or tenure or non-tenured assistant professor, and gains experience beyond obtaining his or her advanced degree. This position can be non-tenured or tenure-track. Appointment to a position as an assistant professor can be non-tenured or tenure-track; lecturers and instructorships, while full-time, are usually temporary. Most graduates look for tenure-track jobs which would guarantee them lifetime employment as faculty members until retirement. However, landing a tenure-track job is the first step in the tenure and promotion process. A junior faculty member who is less than five years into his or full time position, must still undergo review by other higher-status faculty members and scholars who ultimately determine if his or her scholarship, or publication record, service, and potential for contributing to the field deems him or her 'worthy' of actually being granted tenure.

Academic professionals usually begin the transition into the professoriate by landing jobs as assistant professors. The goal immediate goal for many post-docs is to gain tenure: the obtainment of a position in academe that guarantees an academic professional a job at that particular college, or university, until he or she retires, or seeks another job. If they have received a tenure-track appointment, then most assistant professors try to obtain tenure during the first 3-5 years of employment. The requirement for most institutions of higher education is that tenure-track appointments attempt to gain tenure after their third-year review. Sometimes the process of tenure takes a longer period of time. The rewards of tenure are advancement in terms of status—usually, from assistant to associate professor—and an increase in pay. Tenure and promotion are dependent on three main variables: research, teaching, and service. Usually, those seeking advancement are required to show excellence in teaching and demonstrate a commitment to service, which includes advising and mentoring students; serving on departmental and university-wide committees; and doing other administrative work such as becoming program directors or

coordinators. Those individuals must also show productivity in terms of scholarly publication, which includes authoring or editing their own books or collections, and also, articles in journals as well as chapters in books. New faculty may struggle with juggling professional duties and activities, along with administrative responsibilities, and teaching. However, if a junior professor is to have any chance for advancement, he or she must acquire the time management skills needed to do research and produce scholarship.

Upon being granted tenure, the established academic professional or scholar, works on developing his or her own specialized research interest(s) in the field. This individual is interested in finding his or her 'voice', and being recognized as having a particular style or way of writing in terms of scholarship or publication, and seeks to address key issues related to discipline-specific politics. A tenured professor usually seeks to mentor either junior faculty, especially those who are nontenured, or undergraduates. Non-tenured faculty may continue to work as academic advisors to undergraduates. Mid-career scholars are often involved in networking on a national, and even, international level, and are usually very involved as part of such associations. A tenured professor may be an assistant or associate professor depending on the requirements of tenure and promotion as offered by the department, program or institution.

According to Colbeck (2008), a senior scholar is usually one who is tenured and has produced a body of work that reflects his or her research interests or agenda. He or she usually holds the post of full or endowed professor. At this stage, scholars adjust to demands on their time due to administrative responsibilities, including advising graduate students, serving as dissertation advisors on doctoral committees, and acting as program coordinators or directors. Senior scholars also face the challenge of dealing with departmental politics, which includes the hiring of new faculty members, and votes on the promotion and advancement of colleagues. In

terms of socialization, the goal is to build informal networks with members in the field at-large in order to do research on a more national and international scale. At this level, scholars sometimes refine or change their research agendas and make the determination as to whether they want to remain in academe.

Race, Access, and Equality: A Brief History of African Americans in Higher Education

While African Americans did manage to garner Ph.D.s during the first-half of the twentieth century, many still faced a lack of opportunity; some were too poor to attend school, while others lacked access to a quality education due to a lack of funds. Unequal access to a quality education equaled schools, or buildings, that were falling apart with classrooms that did not have enough materials, or quality instructors, especially those who would be willing to stay and work in these communities. Before *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and President John F. Kennedy's (1961) Executive Order 01925 calling for affirmative action in hiring practices, blacks attended all-black schools, including institutions of higher education, and worked in racially-segregated facilities (Anderson et al., 1993). After those statutes were passed, it became illegal for schools to be racially-segregated. Consequently, such measures set a precedent in regard to employers and college administrators being open to a more diverse applicant pool. Students who had attended all-black kindergarten, junior, and high-schools—in their own, mostly all-black, neighborhoods—were now, mandatorily, bused to all-white schools in all-white neighborhoods. Blacks faced many challenges in regard to status and preparedness in those new educational contexts. Some students felt marginalized due to differences in skin color. Other minority students felt isolated. For the first time in their lives, some blacks realized that they were different, and that this difference was due to skin color. Due to *stereotype threat*, many teachers

and administrators felt that African American students were intellectually inferior; and that this inferiority was due to genetic differences because they were ‘Negroids.’ Blacks who were not seen as being inferior, were labeled as *tokens* who were said to represent the ‘best and brightest’ of their racial group. Both models served as negative frames of reference for young adolescents who sought positive self-concept in regard to their racial identities.

Blacks who attended institutions of higher education also faced several challenges. Before the passing of affirmative action statutes in the 1950s, most blacks attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Harvey, Harvey, and King, 2004). This trend occurred during the 1940s-50s. The attractiveness of HBCUs was the profundity of black faculty which allowed for more mentoring of minority students. Also, the concept of ‘being black’ was seen as something positive in regard to personhood. The motto for those institutions was for students to be proud of their racial heritages—not ashamed—and to work to be the best citizens that they could be. The only potential drawback for such institutions was the notion of the ‘talented tenth’ whereby only the ‘best and brightest’ of the black community were allowed to enroll. Such intra-cultural discrimination, although it produced leaders, also divided the community between the ‘haves and have-nots’. Even so, the opportunities afforded to blacks who attended HBCUs were significant due to the fact that students received a quality education, even as they were not permitted to attend any other type of institution. The teachers at HBCUs were some of the most educated scholars in the country, and this socialization into a professionalized, all-black environment, was beneficial to the students’ scholarship as well as their personal and professional identity development (Harvey, Harvey, and King, 2004).

During the 1960s-1970s, more blacks began attending Predominantly-White Institutions (PWIs); it was, now, the post-segregation era, and so it was legal for them to attend these schools

(Harvey, Harvey, and King, 2004). The PWIs offered African American students the opportunity to gain an education from nationally, and internationally, recognized schools of higher education. Also, many of these universities offered scholarships and grants for intellectually-gifted African Americans. However, for many, attending these universities had its drawbacks. Those mostly-white campuses did not offer the same kinds of mentoring opportunities that were available at the HBCUs. Most PWIs had very a low representation of minority faculty. In addition, African American students faced isolation as the only one—or one of a few minority students—in their classes. Also, students had to deal with issues related to racism and stereotyping. Many African American students faced *stereotype threat*: “[That] is, membership in a group whose intellectual skills are generally held suspect because of negative stereotyping” (Steele, 1992, 1997 qtd. in Taylor and Antony, 2000, p. 185). White professors doubted whether minority students were adequately prepared, or intellectually capable, of doing well in their undergraduate coursework. Minority students who excelled also faced potentially being labeled as ‘tokens’. Tokenism occurred when students of color were often marginalized for being academically-gifted and emulating the speech patterns and writing styles of the majority-white culture (Turner, González, and Wood, 2002).

Also, during this same period, from 1960s-1970s, a larger percentage of blacks started attended community colleges (Harvey, Harvey, and King, 2004). Many African Americans saw community colleges as a pathway to gaining better employment opportunities. Those institutions tended to have cheaper attendance costs and were located closer to students’ homes and neighborhoods; thus, most students saved money by living with family or parents while attending school. Many African Americans also chose to attend community colleges because they tended to be more racially-diverse than four-year, public institutions. One potential drawback in regard to

the increased enrollment of blacks at community colleges was the creation of an applicant pool that was generally less qualified. Generally, it was the case that community colleges offered associate or two-year, technical or vocational, degrees, and awarded certifications related to accounting or business. Some community colleges did offer graduates the chance to transfer to four-year colleges or universities; however, at this time, elite national universities were not accepting transfer students. Subsequently, those with two-year degrees, or who had received four-year degrees from less elite institutions, often failed to gain admission to graduate and professional programs (Harvey, Harvey, and King, 2004).

Enrollment at predominately-white institutions for African American students continued to increase during the 1980s and 1990s; and by 2001-2002, 85% of all enrolled African American students were attending PWIs (Harvey, Harvey, and King, 2004). However, although the majority of African American students continue to attend PWIs, most receive their baccalaureate degrees, from historically-black colleges or universities or community colleges (Harvey, Harvey, and King, 2004). So, retention, and matriculation, of minority students is still a crucial issue. Obviously, if students are not able to maintain enrollment at top undergraduate institutions, then they will not be able to gain admission to graduate schools.

Race and Professional Development: Exploring the Experiences of African Americans in Higher Education in the U.S.

African Americans who enter graduate school face a number of challenges which are often associated with a lack of proper mentoring. Minority students must deal with serious structural and psychological adjustments in their attainment of graduate degrees. During this process, those graduate students must acquire the ability to negotiate their personal self-concepts, racial identities, and professional development as scholars. Issues involving their failure to

become properly socialized into academic life, and not being able to receive proper support from colleagues due to exclusion from informal networks, may keep many from being successful in their post-graduate endeavors (Colbeck, 2008). For minority scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition, setting up an informal network of mentors and friends who supported them, and their work, helped them to meet their professional goals.

African American graduate students continue to face issues dealing with racism. For minorities in graduate school, alienation and isolation have a negative impact on networking and interpersonal relationships. Some minority students face marginalization in which they, or their views, are side-lined. Sometimes, minorities are singled-out as one of a few minority students in the classroom, program or department. The effects of being singled-out can have positive or negative experiences on the student. It should be noted that the degree of 'positive' effects has more to do with the student being able to adapt to the racist environment, and confirm his or her personal viewpoints and ideologies with the majority-white population. The overall effect of marginalization means that there is little opportunity left for networking with peers. If minority students are in non-supportive environments, then they may have classmates who choose to alienate them based upon the belief that minority students are 'militant' if they choose to study something that deals with race, or other aspects of diversity. This 'militancy' is the belief that the scholar of color's commitment to research on race, and other diversity issues, means that he or she is fighting for one cause, only—the 'black cause'; and that this individual is engaged in a solely political act and not one that is intellectually grounded. Also, minority students may choose to isolate themselves because they feel that there is no one who understands them, and so, they do not want to risk rejection which may lead to future marginalization. Other aspects of socialization that are affected by marginalization—based on race— includes the lack of access to a potential

role model who might serve as a possible mentor or advisor for the student of color. Not having a potential role model, especially one who is a minority, effects self-esteem in regard to what the minority student believes to be true about his or her intellectual ability and what it takes to be successful in academe. This student may fail to learn about what it means to be a scholar in the field, and the duties, practices, and discourses associated with belonging to the professoriate. A minority professor can also help those students understand the notion of 'alternative' discourses and ways to manage stress in handling interpersonal relationships, particularly in regard to the negotiation one's personal identity in professional spaces in academe.

Minorities in graduate school must also deal with the pressures of academic expectations, possible devaluation of scholarship, and a lack of 'scholarly respect' (Colbeck, 2008). Cole (1993) believes that racist stereotypes still affect those African Americans who desire to become scholars and researchers. Some in the academy believe that minorities should stick to topics they know best; namely, African American studies, cultural studies, and race. Such academics do not conceive of African American scholars doing research on subjects that are outside of expected areas; namely, race, ethnic/racial relations, and cultural studies (Anderson et al., 2001). Other non-minority faculty may question whether black students can attain a certain level of scholarship in the pursuit of the academic knowledge (i.e., disciplinary cannon). That is, can black graduate students internalize "the established modes and matrices of white higher education" (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 32)? Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, Marguerite, and Bonous- Hammarth (2000) discuss the concept of "elite racism" whereby those in power determine methods of inquiry, analysis, and interpretation, and the appropriate subject matter for research agendas. The culture and ideology underlying American institutions of higher learning affects scholars and the types of research that takes place in the academy. Black scholars are expected to internalize the culture and ideology of

the American academy. Many American colleges and universities have been historically-white.

Anderson et al. (1993) state that by in-large American institutions have been:

[White] in identity and culture, in logic and learning, in their conceptions of scholarly knowledge and demeanor. And until quite recently, few of these 3,000 schools had hardly any students or professors who were other than white. (p. 31)

When an African American obtains a doctorate, it is not just a question of whether he or she is qualified to join the professoriate, but whether he or she has “produced the kind of research and writing deemed appropriate by those who would decide tenure and promotion” (Anderson et al., 1993, p. 32). The potential for racism here is huge. The status quo is generally based on the needs of what needs to be reproduced and precipitated in regard to methods of inquiry (theories underlying methodology), analysis (how data analysis is done), interpretation (how data is interpreted), and topics that need to be covered or addressed, and by what appropriate constituency, has been largely determined by white scholars, and an academic context in which education, and else in academe, shaped by a historically-white context and a hegemonic-based ideology that has dominated the professoriate. Because of the nature of this context, Black scholars who fail to adopt and adapt to appropriate models of academic inquiry either in mode, methodology, analysis, topic, interpretation or representation, are in danger of being perceived as being inadequate, or are misinterpreted or misrepresented in terms of their scholarship and professional identities. Does the African American scholar assimilate to white Western mode of research and knowledge in order to succeed? If he or she does not, is it assumed that it is because he or she lacks the intellectual capacity to acquire the academic knowledge (i.e., canon and modes of analysis) that is required for the academy? Does the hiring committee or committee for professional advancement see it— not as a lack of assimilation—but as a choice by the minority

scholar?

Minority graduate students may also face an underrepresentation of black faculty. Historically, the number of minority faculty at institutions of higher education has remained low. Turner, González, and Wood, González, & Wood (2008) looked at the status and relative career experiences of faculty of color in higher education in the United States over the past twenty years. Specifically, they looked at Indian, Asian, Asian American, Black or African American, Native American, Indigenous, Hispanic, Latino/Latina, Chicano/Chicana and women of color. By 1958, there were about 200 blacks who were teaching on a regular, full-time basis at mostly-white institutions (Menges and Exum, 1983). In the 1970s, 4.3% of blacks were in full-time faculty positions (Anderson et al., 1993). This number remained the same during the 1980s. By 2005, 5.5% of all full-time faculty in the U.S. were Black (Harvey, Harvey, and King, 2004; and Turner, González, and Wood, 2008). This lack of representation of minorities affects the campus climate and the degree to which scholars of color are perceived, positively, in academics in general. This type of context can create atmosphere that is generally less supportive for minority students. The lack of a mentor or appropriate role model can affect aspects of socialization for minority graduate students; this situation can impact whether some minority students continue on in graduate school (Colbeck 2008). Also, because institutions have a limited number of potential minority applicants from which to choose, it makes it less likely that a minority applicant will be chosen (Anderson et al. 2001). Anderson et al. (2001) state that “in regard to status, black faculty remains largely underrepresented in the position or rank of professor” (p.113). Blacks enter graduate school in much lower numbers than whites; and some African Americans fail to finish graduate school. Recruitment and selection committees at historically-white institutions state that their primary reason for not hiring black faculty is due to the small pool of qualified black

applicants from which to choose. Of course, potential applicants face issues when dealing with selection and recruitment committees. Many academic search committees look down on research projects and agendas that deal with race and ethnicity. Other black students decide not to pursue doctorates based on their prior experiences in college and K-12; namely, racism and with trying to prove themselves in terms of intellectual ability. There are also the black graduates who are recruited by those in the private sector, where the jobs seem more lucrative (Anderson et al., 2008).

A key issue in hiring minority faculty is the ability to recruit, and retain, scholars of color. The lower representation of minority faculty at institutions of higher education is often due to specific kinds of hiring practices. There are sexist and racist tendencies at work in the hiring and promotion of Black female faculty. In the 1940s, there were two black tenured faculty teaching in U.S. institutions of higher education (Anderson et al., 2008). In 1975-1976, 36% of Black faculty was tenured versus 58% of White faculty (Menges and Exum, 1983). By 2000, 4% of tenured associate, and full professors, were Black, while 87% of White faculty were in full-time, tenured positions (Allen et al., 2000). For the promotion of faculty, tenure committees look at service, teaching, and scholarship. It is often the case that scholarship, or potential for growth as a professional in one's field, is viewed as one of the most important aspects. Minority faculty are expected to work on diversity committees and work in other departments such as African American Studies, as Women's Studies, as part of joint-appointments which takes time away from research, particularly the kind of quality research that leads to publication (Menges and Exum, 1983). They are also expected to mentor and advise minority students. While minority scholars are expected to do a great deal of service through these prescribed duties, such activities may not lead to promotion; they may not be valued in a way that can be measured which would lead to an

increase in rank or salary. Most often, it is the case that female minority faculty are hired based on teaching experience which is not usually counted towards tenure as part of the promotion process. Black women are also less likely to earn tenure (Allen et al., 2000; and Turner, González, and Wood, 2008). White men are the most tenured, followed by black males, and then, white women (Menges and Exum, 1983; Allen et al., 2000; and Turner, González, and Wood, 2008).

The failure to hire minority faculty affects the retention of scholars of color. This lack of recruitment of minority scholars also affects the recruitment, and retention, of black, or minority, students. Racist practices in hiring, even as institutions call for greater 'diversity', affects the number of potential recruits. Oftentimes, scholarship by blacks is perceived as something that is less valuable by selection and recruitment and hiring committees. Based on the larger cultural, social, and historical framework that affects education and learning in the United States, it is most always the case that the minority scholar must assimilate to the modes of thinking and research of the majority white ideology or the underlying assumptions and beliefs of the white- majority. Scholarship that does not match this standard or norm is deemed less than scholarly. When a black scholar is hired, he or she generally expected to do studies or conduct research agendas that focus on issues related to race and cultural studies; even as, such work is not held up as true scholarship by those in the academy (Gregory, 2001; and Anderson et al., 1993).

Hiring committees tend to be highly critical of minority scholars' approaches to doing research. They may not value the scholar's choice of topic, including the discourse used to broach the subject. In addition, they may question the kinds of methodologies that are used to conduct research. While, it is often the case that minorities are encouraged, and expected, to tackle issues dealing with race, or cultural or ethnic identity, they might be looked 'down on' for doing so.

Oftentimes, there is a kind of prevailing attitude that blacks, or other scholars of color, should work on research, or areas of specialization, in which they are ‘experts’. However, although scholars of color are considered to be noted ‘experts’, and tend to do research on those issues, such work is met with condescending attitudes. Their work is often sidelined, and put off as ‘alternate’ scholarship. Their work is not taken seriously as mainstream scholarship—as something which has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the field. Consequently, administrators, including deans and department heads, may feel that this emerging scholar’s work is not ‘publishable’, meaning the research is not worthy of publication. Unfortunately, being seen as a ‘scholar’ is an essential component of professional development; it is the defining factor for those academic professionals who want to gain tenure via tenure-track appointments as assistant professors. However, if minority scholars choose to do research in areas outside of race, or cultural or ethnic identity, their work maybe closely scrutinized because they are not considered to be ‘experts’ in those subjects.

Black faculty who focus on issues related to race and minority populations; use different discursive practices in terms of exposition of research findings; use alternative modes of research; select different forms of analysis; and draw their own conclusions—based on their own, unique interpretations – face scrutiny on an unprecedented scale (Gregory, 2001). These scholars’ interpretation of findings may not be trusted, and the focus, or subjects, of their research may not be deemed “worthy.” Such work is often seen as “less than scholarly” by those who value traditional models. An additional problem has to do with matters of validity regarding interpretation. Black scholars that write on issues dealing with race and cultural/ethnic relations may be questioned about their methods of analysis and “whether they have set their findings and interpretations in the established formats” (Anderson et al., 1993, p. 33). Vázquez (1992)

discusses the importance of “intellectual and political discourse” for scholars of color:

The kind of writing which focuses on us as players in these various arenas of intellectual and political discourse, as participant-observers, must be encouraged. The reality, however, is that ethnic/racial minority scholars—Puerto Rican, African-American, Asian American, and Native American—are simply not supported or rewarded for writing and talking about their own subjective experiences in or out of academia. Those in control of the editorial mainstream don’t see it as “marketable” material. Presenting this perspective in print would also undermine the convenient and persistent stereotypes of about who we are and what we want in the academy. (p. 1041)

An additional issue concerning tenure and promotion has to do with the quality of work in terms of productive scholarship for minorities in the field. Some minority scholars struggle with developing confidence in producing the kinds of scholarship they feel would be acceptable to colleagues and members of the field-at-large. Some scholars of color struggle with the concept of a professional identity beyond graduate study; it may still loom large and not be fully realized for several years after a college graduate obtains his/her first post-baccalaureate job and lands in a professional position of sorts. The inability to consciously situate themselves as scholars and professionals, whereby they are able to construct a professional identity, plagues some scholars of color even as they enter the professoriate. Royster (qtd. Bizzaro, 2002, p. 499), a well-respected scholar in the field of rhetoric and composition, states the following:

I did not come into the profession with purpose or conscious intent of “entering” a profession as we talk about...[it] today. I was raised in a family where graduate education was expected, and then you found a job—which is what I did. I didn’t know what to act like I was actually making a career for myself or entering a world in which I would

continue to develop expertise or gain status. So, I entered the professoriate as a good student and a good daughter who was doing what she was “ordained” to do.

In regard to tenure and promotion, one of the most difficult aspects of professional development for minority scholars in composition and rhetoric is learning to balance aspects of teaching and administrative duties with scholarship and research. As a result, the status of most minority faculty has remained lower than those of their White counterparts. Whites are more often in positions as associate or full-professors. Black women tend to be in adjunct, or part-time positions, with temporary contracts, and are less likely to become associate or full professors. In the 1970s, White males made up 50% of faculty ranked as *associate or full professors*, followed by 31% for Black males, 19% of White females, and 3% of Black female faculty (Menges and Exum, 1983). By 2000, White males made up 47% of full professors, with Black males at 28%, followed by White females at 20% and Black women at 11% (Allen et al., 2000). There has also been a developing trend in academia in which minority faculty leave academia for work in industry, and or the private sector, after failing to obtain tenure. By the time those scholars decide to leave academia, they have cycled through various jobs and stages of temporary employment; and having never gained tenure, ultimately decided to leave academia. In general, it takes a longer period of time for most minority faculty to obtain their Ph.D.s; and beyond this, minority faculty have difficulty in their attempts to obtain tenure (Anderson et al., 1993).

Being promoted to a higher position as an academic depends on three factors: having an excellent teaching record; being committed to service including spending time advising and mentoring students, serving on committees, departmental and university-wide, and doing administrative work as either a program director or coordinator; doing research; and producing scholarship that results in publication. Some African American scholars feel that they must

choose between doing teaching or service, and scholarship. They struggle to make the time for pursuing the type of research and scholarship which would help them to get tenure or would promote them to a position as a senior scholar such as an associate or full professor, or professor emeritus or named professor. The effects of a lower rank mean that it is difficult to get promoted. Thus, due to lower status, it is the case that minority faculty tend to earn lower salaries than their white colleagues (Allen et al., 2000). White males generally earn more due to the fact that they are promoted more often. White males earn the most, followed by black men. Black females earn the least (Allen et al., 2000).

Balancing administrative or teaching responsibilities with scholarship is a serious challenge for most academic professionals. Some African American faculty members feel as though they are so involved with teaching and service that there is hardly time left for the pursuit of scholarly activities which might help them with advancement. Women and minority faculty tend to teach at the lower ranks, and only undergraduate courses. They are less likely to be engaged in teaching graduate courses. Minority faculties tend to teach more classes than those of their white peers. In general, minority spend more time doing service, teaching classes, and teaching more lower-ranked courses than their white counterparts. Those kinds of activities generally take time away from doing research. Oftentimes, it is the case that minority scholars are asked to perform additional administrative duties such as serving on departmental or university-wide minority or diversity committees. Other issues involving the hiring – or promotion – of black faculty has to do with the perception of young black faculty in regard to issues of scholarship. Minority scholars may be marginalized due their foci on non-mainstream topics or research agendas. This situation limits a minority scholar's opportunities for networking. Senior white faculty members may not know how to mentor, or help, minority faculty with their 'non-

mainstream' research agendas and, therefore, may feel ill-equipped to handle research on 'alternative' discourses. Also, due to location, and proximity to others, it is difficult for some minority scholars to network with other minority scholars. It is also the case that established scholars of color who have been accepted into the field as 'mainstream', may be too so inundated with service and research, themselves (due to lower numbers), that they may not be able to mentor others who are entering the professoriate and are new to the department or program.

African American Scholars in Composition Studies: Recognizing Alternative Viewpoints in the Professoriate

In composition studies, African American and minority scholars discuss the underrepresentation of minority viewpoints and the devaluation of minority scholarship in the professoriate. Because of larger cultural, historical, and social contexts, the perspectives of African American scholars and researchers have been left out, sidelined, or marginalized with respect to their chosen academic fields. Initially, their perspectives were not included as part of the standard academic cannon (i.e., historic account). In composition studies, scholars of color have been 'restoring' composition, in a sense, by accounting for African Americans who have made significant contributions to the field of rhetoric and composition. African American scholars in composition such as Royster, Williams, and Gilyard have worked hard to restore the lost voices of Blacks who have contributed significantly to the field.

Eminent scholars in Composition and Rhetoric, Royster and Williams (1999), cite three prominent African American scholars in the areas of culture and literary theory, literacy, and educational and professional development who are not included in the "officialized" narratives of composition studies. Gilyard (1999) discusses "African American Contributions to Composition Studies" in his seminal work as a way to account for important scholars of color whose

contributions to rhetoric and composition may not have been included in primary narratives. Recently, rhetoric and literary scholars such as Ronnick (2000) and Mailloux (2006) have cited William S. Scarborough's contributions to scholarship in regard to African American dialectology, classical languages, literacy, and professional development as the first African American of the Modern Language Association.

The devaluation of scholarship and research by minorities has been it difficult to recover lost contributions by scholars of color. Royster and Williams (1999) discuss the complexity of recovering African American contributions to composition studies. Royster states that African Americans' existence as politically "suppressed" peoples in the United States has meant that "the work of these professionals has not been historically celebrated in the arenas of the dominant culture" (575). Representative articles and texts written by scholars of color rarely become part of the larger, "officialized" narratives of scholarly disciplines, such as composition. These texts are often sidelined as references that are 'in addition to' writings done by mainstream authors in the field; they are distinct and apart from the main body of literature as they deal with 'Other' subjects. Such narrative accounts are usually perceived in the larger composition community as subjective studies done by insider, participant-researchers—not 'participant-observers'—who are interested in learning more about their respective subjects, usually members of their own (cultural or linguistic) communities.

Vázquez's (1992) discussion of the intellectual work of minority scholars within legal studies can be applied to composition, where often the work of African American scholars is not considered in any objective sense; separate and apart from the researchers who created it, the teacher-scholars who are also a part of a larger community, the composition professoriate. Royster (2000) discusses her own situatedness in terms of being a minority scholar who studies

African American women in an interdisciplinary context:

In forging ahead in uncharted territory, I have also had to confront directly, in the rendering of text, my own status as a researcher who identifies unapologetically with subjects of my inquiries. In terms of my own invented ethos, within contexts that would position me otherwise, because of the “marginality” of what I do, I have had to create proactive spaces rather than reactive spaces from which to speak and interpret. The task of creating new space, rather than occupying existing space, has encouraged in me the shaping of a scholarly ethos that holds both sound scholarly practices and ethical behavior in balance with harmony and that consistently projects this balancing in research and writing. (252).

African American scholars in composition such as Royster calls for others to continue work that focuses on issues of race and other marginal subjects. She asks members of the professoriate to challenge the status quo when it comes to standard methods of interpretation and analysis. Members of the professoriate look to historical accounts from scholars and researchers such as Berlin, North, and Connors to inform our work, “enrich our views,” and guide us in “establishing national parameters for the field” (Royster and Williams 1999, p. 563). Royster and Williams (1999) state that those historical narratives that shape composition studies and contribute “to knowledge and understanding” (564) via the following:

[They] discuss [1] the emergence of rhetoric and composition as an academic field, [2] discuss the ways in which knowledge has been and continues to be made, applied, disseminated, and interpreted in the field, and [3] address some of the trends and issues pertinent to the historical and ideological trajectories of the field. (564)

Those historical narratives are assumed to be objective and unbiased because they

represent scholarly assumptions about epistemology (theories of writing, being a writer).

Composition theorists utilize the knowledge gained from such narratives (Berlin, North) to make meaning and contribute to scholarship and the construction of knowledge in the field. However, scholars such as Royster and Williams (1999) argue that as with all canonical literature, such narratives come from a basis of interpretation and have assumptions of ideology underlying those interpretations.

Royster and Williams (1999) state that historical accounts written by prominent scholars such as Berlin and North have been granted status as “officialized” narratives in composition. This means that their interpretations, in terms of what counts as legitimate knowledge and should be included as part of the official, historical record, have gained primacy in the profession:

The privilege of primacy—that is, the status of being the official viewpoint sets in motion a struggle between these “prime” narratives and other narratives views (that for whatever reasons the official narratives exclude) for agency and authenticity and, most of all, for the right of interpretive authority. (580)

‘Primacy’ means that we look at the historical accounts from certain composition scholars and accept their views on epistemology, and the ideologies underlying those interpretations, as primary, without ever questioning them. In doing so, we count those narratives as “official” or primary to the field. Prominent scholars such as Berlin and North do not have to make clear “the extent to which their narratives represent the dominant perspective” (Royster and Williams, 2002, p.565). As such, their interpretations are free to be counted “as universal and thereby transparent” (Royster and Williams, 2002, p. 565). We cite them as part as the “official” historical record and we use them to make our own claims about work, research, and scholarship. Royster and Williams (1999) state that if we do not account for the inherent ideology and

assumptions underlying historical interpretation, then we are narrowing the contexts and range of experiences from which we make meaning and construct knowledge in the field of composition and rhetoric. The result is scholars in composition are not allowing alternative frameworks to be considered in regard to how meaning is made, including the different ways of inferring and perceiving information.

Another effect of *officialized* narratives is the misrepresentation of nonmainstream viewpoints. When nonmainstream viewpoints are included in historical accounts in the field, they are often misinterpreted or misconstrued. The reason for this that scholars who represent dominant viewpoints attempt to insert the stories of Others' experiences without allowing those scholars to speak about those experiences, themselves. The effect of 'primacy' in composition studies is that "official" narratives in the field have failed to provide, adequate, if any, representations of African Americans. Royster and Williams (1999) acknowledge that thorough accounts regarding the representation of viewpoints of African American scholars regarding how they see themselves, how they want others to see them, including minority scholars' perceptions on writing, race, students of color, language, literacy, identity, and the construction of knowledge regarding, any, or all, of these topics, is often missing, overshadowed, or misrepresented. In "History in the Spaces Left," Royster and Williams (1999) state their goals in terms of historicizing composition studies:

Our intent has been to counter mythologies about African American presence in composition studies in two ways: 1) by acknowledging that in officialized narratives, the viewpoints of African Americans are typically invisible, or misrepresented, or dealt with prescriptively, referentially, or by other techniques that in effect circumscribe their participation and achievements and 2) by identifying more instructive ways of looking at

African American experiences that support a different view of presence. (p. 579)

In his dissertation, Carter (2001) discusses the (mis)representation of African Americans in composition and rhetoric and attempts to offer a new paradigm/methodology in order to account for adequacy minority scholars' lived experiences.

In addition to the problematic of (mis)representation, the scholar of color's interpretive offering as a way to account for phenomenon, to construct knowledge and contribute to meaning making in the field, is seen as *the* interpretation of that phenomenon by members of his/her cultural group: one minority scholar's interpretation is likely to become representative of the voices and viewpoints of other minority scholars. When a scholar of color does produce a more mainstream text, one that deals with "Whiteness" or something outside his/her cultural group, it is still the case that it must be 'approved' by prominent, more mainstream members of the professoriate. In "Traces of a Stream," Royster (2000) discusses what it is like to have to prove her authority as a minority researcher in the field of composition studies:

As I have discussed in the essay, "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own" (1995), despite my constructions of a proactive scholarly self, many who have responded to presentations of my research have resisted viewing my work this way. They have consistently demanded, subtly and not so subtly, that I prove my worth of my subject matter using measures that seem to me to suggest the reader's or listener's own needs to contain, limit, and control both definitions of authenticity and the rights to interpretive authority. (252).

In both cases, particularly in regard to voice, the danger is homogenization in terms of the representation of African Americans. This flattened representation of African Americans does not allow for scholars of color to act as 'proactive' agents, scholars whose work can be

transformative and allow for the emergence of new, creative paradigms to flourish within composition studies (Royster). Without these new paradigms, voices will be stifled, silenced; they will remain unheard, ignored, forgotten.

Identifying herself as a minority scholar in the field, Bizzaro (2002) states that scholars and historians should refuse traditional forms of categorizing “experience or philosophy” because often “they tend to serve those in power” (492-493). Okawa agrees when she states that the ideological premise undermining such discourses is “an assumption of sameness as norm, a presumption of shared values and perspectives” (2002, p. 508). This presumptive stance is one in which the dominant culture sees itself as ‘One’, whereby the constructed realities of participants becomes a single, shared reality with people who have had similar experiences. In this vein, dialectally, Other experiences are also homogenized, whereby a scholar of color not only represents his/her own cultural group, but also, Others experiences. In academia, hegemony that “privileges particular discourses” and “requires assimilation, linguistic and rhetorical, if not racial and cultural”, mirrors the same power struggle that occurs in the larger societal context (Okawa, 2002, p. 508). Vázquez (1992) states that

The university model that is alluded to is not in danger of being replicated in society at large, but simply society at large, writ small. The university reflects, mirrors, and reproduces the social context, and not the other way around. It most certainly contributes to racial conflict and cultural “illiteracy” about our nation’s ethnic/racial minorities, but it is not the “model,” as D’Souza suggests, that will be “replicated in society at large. (1039)

Hegemony, as an enacted philosophy, ignores ideologies underlying interpretation (Royster, 1996). People accept the interpreted reality as the ‘true’ reality, when, in fact, it is only an interpretation, one that may not, ‘in any way, shape, or form’, represent the actual, lived

experiences of those who have undergone the phenomenon.

Bizzaro (2002) thinks that she and other scholars in composition should counter hegemony, which often shapes discourse, through the analysis of “personal sites of practice (i.e., entrance-to-the-profession narratives) [in order] to fully understand the larger historical significance of what we do” (p. 492). Like Royster and Williams (1999), Bizzaro believes that “this change in or modification of categories of experience allows [for] a much richer analysis of the profession as a whole” (pp. 492-493). Scholars of color in composition believe that modifying the sites of practice from which we explore experience will allow for richer tapestry in the analysis of the field as a whole. This paradigm considers personal sites of practice as interpretive, and takes a look at the ways in which ideology is shaped by larger cultural contexts, experiences, and ‘ways of knowing’ (Royster, 1996). Bizzaro (2002) states that minority scholars, like herself, use their “own personal narratives to reinvigorate and renew our composition community,” so that the inclusion of ‘Other’ voices is part of the ‘retelling’ of the history of composition studies” (p. 496).

Although there are many types of narratives in composition studies, very few deal with “personal sites of practice” (Bizzaro, 2002, p. 492). As a ‘paradigmatic model,’ personal sites of practice account for the role of subjectivity in the construction of knowledge, the “theory-in-action”, which accounts for the interrelationship between what people think, what they do, and how they see and relate to the world (Behar-Horenstein & Morgan, 1995). In composition studies, mainstream scholars are not oft to recount their personal experiences such as their professional histories or their unique sets of social relationships within professional spaces in academe. We do not have many professional history narratives in composition, although we do have a number of narratives that deal with the history of composition as a discipline (Connors, North, Horner,

Berlin, Crowley).

In “Composing Ourselves,” Lunsford (1990) argues that subjective knowledge is crucial to the establishment of composition as a discipline and suggests that scholars and practitioners in the field of composition “concentrate on composing ourselves in at least two ways: *historically* and *subjectively*” (72). She states that if we want to establish, and insist on our importance as a field, separate, and apart from, literature studies, then we need to account for our professional history. Lunsford argues that this subjective knowledge is crucial and fundamental, if not foundational, to our knowledge base, especially in establishing ourselves as more than just a ‘body-of-practice.’ Regarding perspective, Lunsford further challenges composition scholars to “compose ourselves subjectively” (73). She asks that in composing our stories that scholars resist binaries in “combining the private and the public, the personal and the professional, [and] the social and the political” (77).

Prominent minority scholars such as Royster have discussed their experiences in academe and their need to act as the ‘primary subject’ in the construction of knowledge (“When the First Voice”, 1996). Such scholars see their roles as researchers as activist and political in nature, even in terms of the discourse. Those scholars value their subjectivity and want to add to the discourse in the field; they want to contribute to meaning making and the construction of knowledge in the field as it pertains to the racial, ethnic, or cultural groups to which they belong. However, oftentimes, scholars of color are not involved in the construction of knowledge and are not able to provide insights related to meaning making, accountability, and the interpretation of data as related to their cultural groups (Royster, p. 31). Royster states that “not allowing scholars of color to act as ‘primary instruments’ in the construction of knowledge, particularly about their own cultural group, lends itself to ‘cross-cultural misconduct’ and ‘dehumanization’, where there is not

even a dialectical approach to inquiry, and meaning making and knowledge production is controlled by a few privileged, White members of the professoriate” (Royster, p. 33).

In ‘Making Places as Teacher-Scholars’ Bizzaro (2002) details her interviews with seven prominent theorists in composition studies and accounts for their lived experiences regarding how they became professionals in the field. Initially, Bizzaro’s objective was to explore the relationship between those scholars’ experiences, having being trained in literature, and their subsequent professional lives in composition (p. 488). While doing her study, Bizzaro starts to consider her own situatedness in relation to those of her interviewees; she begins to consider how the lives of the prominent privileged’, White scholars or interviewees actually compare to her own—that of being Native American, a junior faculty member, and an emerging scholar. In her emergent study, Bizzaro compares ‘privileged’ narratives dealing with professional development to related stories from prominent senior and junior minority faculty members. In the end, Bizzaro argues for the inclusion of ‘Other’ voices in historicizing the field of Composition Studies.

In ‘Diving for Pearls’, Okawa (2002) discusses the mentoring of emerging minority scholars by faculty of color. For her study, Okawa conducted interviews with Geneva Smitherman and Victor Villanueva along with ten of their mentees or protégées (p. 510). She asked the mentees to discuss their relationships and experiences with their mentors. In all, she collected seven narratives from the emerging minority scholars detailing their mentor/mentee relationships with Smitherman or Villanueva. Based upon her use of narrative inquiry for the study, Okawa states that, “through such a narrative study, [teacher-scholars in composition] may better understand the complexities and costs of building a multiethnic/multiracial professoriate in our discipline” (p. 511).

Alternative Viewpoints: (Re)Defining ‘Scholar’, ‘Work’, and ‘Community’

In response to the need for alternative paradigms, scholars of color use alternate forms of representation for contributing to knowledge that informs the field of composition. Scholars of color such as Bizzaro (2002) and Okawa use ethnographic studies to explore issues concerning mentoring and entrance-to-the-profession, or transitioning into the professoriate. Such narrative explorations are important because from them we learn how minorities’ lived experiences in and beyond academe have contributed to their growth as scholars and researchers in the professoriate. What we can discover from such histories is the degree to which experiences of scholars of color in composition mirror the experiences of other minority scholars in other fields in academe in regard to what it is like for minority scholars in the ‘ivory tower.’

Professional narratives, including entrance-to-profession or transition narratives, are significant in historicizing composition studies because they inform us about scholars’ experiences in the field, and how they have come to situate themselves in their roles as teachers, scholars, researchers; these narratives make subjectivity apparent, and ideology, transparent, in regard to meaning making in the professoriate. Professional narratives, along with (early) life histories, can provide the alternative framework that we seek in composition studies in regard to achieving a diversity of viewpoints.

In personal and professional narratives in composition and rhetoric, scholars of color such as Bizzaro, Smitherman, Royster, and Villaneuva, explicitly state their ethnic or racial affiliations. Minority scholars in composition do not feel the need to mask their racial or ethnic identities or their personal experiences. Scholars of color—hailing from different geographical places and locations—want this subjective aspect of who they are to be accepted. However, they resist the notion that studying their own communities makes them somewhat biased and overly subjective

(Royster; and Royster and Williams). Scholars of color state that all scholarship is essentially interpretation, always stemming from a personal ideological framework (Royster; and Royster and Williams). Schmidt (2000) states that ideology is a more appropriate framework from which to interpret the working life of the salaried professional, especially instead of looking at it in terms of skill or production, and particularly when using it as a model in regard to determining what one views as quality ‘work’ on a daily basis:

Ideology is thought that justifies action, including routine day-to-day activity. It is your ideology that determines your gut reaction to something done, say, by the president (you feel is right or wrong), by protesters (you feel it is justified or unjustified), by your boss (you feel it is fair or unfair), by a coworker (you feel it is reasonable or unreasonable), and so on. More importantly, you ideology justifies your own actions to yourself. Economics may bring you back to your employer day after day, but it is ideology that makes that activity feel like a reasonable or unreasonable way to spend your life. (p. 15)

Minority scholars want their work to be taken seriously and many understand that they will not have their work taken seriously unless those in the dominant culture in academe/professional spaces can appreciate they contributions to scholarship can be “objective,” that their culture/ethnic identities are not equal to the knowledge that they construct, although they are informing that knowledge (Royster; Royster and Williams; and Vázquez). Scholars of color want those in the dominant culture which represents dominant viewpoints to account for subjectivity and multiple subjectivities, and the roles that both play in all scholarship, including those of the dominant culture (Royster; and Royster and Williams).

Scholars in composition talk about mentors and others in graduate school that instilled in them the idea that they could succeed and somehow give back to their communities. Smitherman

talks about her mentor, Dr. Robert Schafer, “a White male professor...at Wayne State University and stated that that if it weren’t for him, she ‘probably would not have gone on to become an English teacher’” (qtd. Okawa, 2002, p. 511). In Okawa’s (2002) study, Villanueva discussed “the mentoring that he...received as part of his socialization into the [composition] professoriate” (p. 512).

For many scholars of color, the road to thinking in terms of professional identity seems first to be the realization that it is possible to complete the doctorate degree, even if you are “Other”, come from a poverty stricken background, and you are the first person in your family to finish college, and possibly, the first in your family to obtain a post-baccalaureate degree. In her study on the mentoring of minority scholars, Okawa (2002) discusses how composition scholars such as Richardson “grew up poor in inner City Cleveland...[failed at] her first attempt at Cleveland State...but returned about six years later to complete her bachelor’s degree, this time more than highly motivated” (p. 514). Usually, life experiences remind minority scholars that they are “expected to fail, particularly in academic areas” (Bizzaro, 2002, p. 489). Scholars of color have to overcome the beliefs about themselves concerning the notion that their low economic, working class backgrounds, and racial or ethnic identities, will somehow prevent them from becoming ‘true’ professionals, particularly in the world of academia:

When I started college, I thought the job of being an academic, scholar, intellectual, and university professor was off limits to me partly because of my ethnic origins and partly because of the searing poverty of my upbringing. (Bizzaro,2002, p. 489).

Gilyard states that minorities must not succumb to the “self-fulfilling prophecy” in which they condemn themselves to being the-products of low expectations, impoverished communities, and hopelessness (Bizzaro, 2002). Gilyard believes that minorities need “to maintain their own

sense of identity” in order to be successful in academe and beyond (qtd. Bizzaro, 2002, p. 490).

An additional aspect of professional identity development for a minority scholar is realizing his/her worth as a scholar—that his or her voice means something, that he or she can actually contribute something meaningful to the professoriate, that it will be heard, and subsequently, valued, by members of your professional community. In this case, ‘voice’ represents the holistic marginalization of viewpoints of minorities as well as the individual scholar’s contribution to meaning making in the field. Royster (1996) states:

Like Du Bois, I’ve dedicated myself to raising this veil, to overriding these systems of insulation by raising another voice in the interest of clarity and accuracy. What I have found too often, however, is that, unlike those who have been entitled to talk about me and mine, when I talk about my own, I face what I call the power and function of deep disbelief, and what Du Bois described as, ‘the sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity’ (Du Bois, 1994, p. 5). (qtd. p. 34)

An additional aspect of professional identity for scholars of color is the notion of “remaining true” to their cultural communities and having this sufficiently, adequately, correctly, and positively represented in the professoriate. Vázquez (1992) talks about how his vested interest in his cultural/ethnic community mirrors those of his colleagues:

When I think about my Puerto Rican colleagues in higher education, I see individuals who entered the university believing that their work would not only contribute to a transformation of the curriculum, to a body of knowledge—to the literature—but they also believed that their work would ultimately have an impact on the Puerto Rican/Latino community. (p. 1043)

Acknowledging racial or ethnic identity, particularly in regard to professional identity, is essential for empowering minorities to become proactive, activist scholars in academe. Often their professional identities go hand-in-hand with cultural and personal identities; they concede that all (i.e., multiple identities) are equally important for realization of the whole individual—the complete scholar; and thus, none are taken for granted.

For many, the ‘complete’ scholar is the one who acknowledges the role of work, scholar, and community, and the interrelationship of racial, or ethnic, identity in shaping the individual in professional contexts. Minority scholars view the role of the scholar as one in which he or she contributes to meaning making and knowledge via producing literature such as professional narratives in the field. This knowledge stems from the scholars’ transparency concerning their own situatedness in their roles as teachers, administrators, researchers and the sites of practice including classrooms, conferences, and caucus meetings, from which they construct meaning. For some scholars, the work that they do in terms of practice, as representatives in the field, is distinct from scholarship. Work involves the day-to-day practices inherent in their positions as teachers, researchers, and administrators; it includes teaching, committee work, administrative duties, mentoring, etc. The role of community in shaping minorities as professionals in academe is also a part becoming a complete scholar. Minority scholars view community through two frames: the professoriate and their racial, ethnic, or cultural communities.

The notion of *community* is a complex one. There is the professional community, or the Composition professoriate, in which the teacher-scholar enacts practices in specific professional contexts that contributes to his or her growth as a scholar, and then, there is the racial or ethnic community to which the scholar belongs. Being an active participant in one’s racial or ethnic community for the scholar of color not only contributes to his or her growth as a scholar and

teacher, and but also effects personal growth, especially concerning personal identity development. For minority scholars in the professoriate, “keepin’ it real” means acknowledging their own racial or ethnic identities, particularly in professional spaces. Scholars of color remain ‘true’ to their racial, ethnic or cultural, communities by giving back. They do work in the professoriate that contributes to knowledge of their racial or ethnic communities, and they try to correct, or provide a frame or lens, for the clarification of ideas that misrepresent or misconstrue perspectives about their respective communities.

Another way that scholars of color give back to their communities is through their mentoring of other scholars of color. Prominent minority scholars such as Villanueva and Smitherman see mentoring as essential to providing new minority scholars with the tools that need to successfully navigate the profession. By mentoring other minority scholars, scholars of color also “give back” through commitments of time. Minority scholars give time to mentees, students, colleagues, and others of color. They also commit themselves to work on committees, caucuses, and projects that represent the interests and values of their ethnic or racial communities. “Giving back” also means making personal commitments to their respective racial or ethnic communities, particularly in the neighborhoods or spaces where they grew up or attended university or graduate school. Those kinds of civic involvement include working with local community leaders and others involved with outreach and service to particular communities. The ‘sites of practice’ for civic outreach activities include churches, schools, libraries, shelters, and universities. For the composition scholar, it would seem to be the case that racial or ethnic identity is (inter)related to all aspects of the development of the ‘complete scholar’. The experiences of scholars of color in composition are consistent with threads found in narrative studies of minorities in professional contexts beyond academe. In comparing both types of

professional contexts, it is clear that racial or ethnic identity plays a crucial role in professional identity construction.

In exploring personal experience, and personhood, it is essential to find a way to account for experience in a way that truly captures the voices of scholars concerning how they interpret the contexts in which they find themselves. In the next chapter, I present my participants' narratives as a way to capture their lived experiences and explore how their professional positions as mentors, teachers-of-writing, scholars, and educators has impacted how they situate themselves in the field of rhetoric and composition and also, the ways in which this situatedness has affected aspects of their scholarship.

CHAPTER 3

THE PARTICIPANTS

In this chapter, I present participants' narratives. In doing so, I attempt to keep the retelling of their personal stories as close to the original data, or interview transcripts, as possible. As part of their narratives, participants discuss their research backgrounds, including preprofessional training as well as early childhood histories, schooling, and early adult life experiences. They also describe their current work, including teaching and professional activities, and how their career aspirations have developed, and changed, over time. In discussing their current work, participants examine their present roles as teachers, educators, scholars, and scholars of writing. Pseudonyms are used in place of participants' real names. Also, in order to protect participants' identities, their institutional affiliations have been generalized as to exclude specific information. So, only information in regard to the general type of university or college i.e., public or private, Northwestern or Eastern, State or liberal arts, that they have attended or where they currently work is included in each narrative.

Pauline Thomas

Background

Pauline Thomas, who is in her late forties, is currently an associate professor of English, American Composition, and literacy at a large, public Midwestern State University where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in American, and English Composition, and literacy. Her primary areas of research interest include the teaching of writing and literacy studies. Her literacy research deals primarily with non-school based literacy whereby she focuses on the language practices of African Americans in non-academic discourse communities. In this way, she considers her present work to be community-based literacy outreach that is, essentially, non-

academic in nature. She does not work in adult literacy programs because she feels that they are too “schoolish.” Prior to her current full-time teaching appointment, she worked in writing program administration in addition to heading the university’s writing center for a number of years. Currently, she is in her second year of teaching full-time in the department.

Pauline’s first experience teaching writing started the summer before she officially began her doctoral program. She was still in her Master’s program, at the time, but was finishing up, and in desperate need of a summer job. She applied for a few jobs and ended up getting two positions that involved teaching high school students as part of summer programs. For one summer program, she worked at a small college and taught a group of high school students who were approximately 15 years of age. This first group of students belonged to a summer enrichment program for high school students. In another summer program, she taught students who had just graduated from high school. These students were planning to attend the same college where she was in the process of completing her Master’s degree. She taught this second group of students a writing course based on Shakespeare. This particular group of students was part of a summer program which aimed towards students achieving academic success in college. Both groups of high school students consisted, primarily, of African Americans. Although the students were not considered ‘special needs,’ they were not high performing students. Pauline gained additional preprofessional experience in the teaching of writing when she worked as a research assistant for a literature professor during her Master’s work, and also, when she taught first-year writing as a teaching assistant whilst working to complete her doctorate.

Pauline became interested in the study of English because growing up she had a fondness for literature and liked to read. As time progressed, she also discovered that she had a love of language and a growing interest in how people used it to express their ideas. She states:

Well, I think it's probably a typical story. I liked to read, I really liked literature, but I also like language and I discovered that I like language and I like thinking about how people use it which led me to realize that I really wanted to do something. Probably it's a little more practical than literary study, maybe, but I liked it. I wasn't one of those students who like, 'I like to read, I like to analyze it' to death' so that it kills my joy,' but I did like thinking about how people use language and I like talking to people about how that works in terms of things like writing and being...At first, I thought I was going to be a linguist but I realized I really wanted something a lot more applied than that and that's what led me to composition and to literacy.

This realization concerning her love for language and literature prompted her to seriously consider doing work in the area of rhetoric and composition. Eventually, she would garner both her Master's, and doctorate, degrees in English with an emphasis in rhetoric and composition. Pauline chose not to focus on literary studies because she felt that, as a field, it was not practical enough. She enjoyed discovering those things about a piece of literature, or text, such as the ways in which words, and language, were used to convey meaning. Her greatest joy was in thinking about how people used language, every day, and how they constructed meaning based on their use of it. She liked to talk to people about their use of language, and how it worked to shape, not only meaning, but also, meaning in writing and being, including what it meant to be a writer, and how aspects of the self, including voice, were developed through writing. At first, she was so fascinated in regard to how language functioned, or with aspects of language in-use, that she seriously considered becoming a linguist. However, eventually, she realized that she was more interested in language 'in-situ,' meaning linguistic use in regard to everyday practices; and so, she decided to focus on composition and literacy.

In regard to scholarship, there have been several people who have influenced Pauline's views on the teaching of writing as well as other areas within composition studies. For Pauline, there has always been a variety of scholars to consider because she especially likes composition research that deals with language use. As an emerging scholar, she feels that she was always well aware of those persons in the field who were influencing her growing interest in specializations such as the role of literacy within the African American community. Like many others, she was influenced a great deal by the people who had taught her. She also learned much from the scholars that she had read while studying in graduate school. Pauline has been very interested in composition scholars who deal with language issues, including language use; and also, how language studies affects the work being done by scholars in the field of composition studies. She also reads the works of various linguists as well as research related to literacy and literacy studies. For her, there is no one scholar with regard to a particular style, or content, who stands out. Based on her experiences in her graduate studies, and postgraduate research, Pauline continually attempts to analyze the work of scholars who she thinks are very good and she tries to take away what she can from their scholarship. She also thinks about the people whom she does not consider to be very good and how she might work to change that in terms of her own practices. Also, because of her interest in literacy within the context of communities, she feels that she leans a little bit closer to social constructionism, rather than towards the theoretical underpinnings of writing or the writing process; particularly, in regard to postulating certain theories of writing. For these reasons, it is very hard for Pauline to pick one scholar. Also, she feels that she is very strongly influenced by her colleagues, and specifically, those ones whom she thinks are good writing teachers.

In regard to African Americans' contributions to composition scholarship, Pauline still

feels that there is a lack of recognition of the contributions of Black composition instructors from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Pauline is especially concerned about this lack of recognition because of her own background as an undergraduate who attended an HBCU. She would like to see a lot more of this type of scholarship done in composition studies because she feels that there is still not enough. Pauline notes that there are many Black scholars who focus on this area of scholarship, particularly concerning African American rhetoric and literacy, or African American literature. So, essentially, there is a presence in the field in regard to this kind of scholarship. However, she contends that if African American scholars in composition failed to do this kind of work that this area of research would not exist. And while she does acknowledge that there are a few people in the field who are doing it, she feels that if Black scholars were not doing it, then the work would not get done. She states:

Well, at present I think here's one of the issues: I think there [is] still a lack of recognition of contributions of black [teachers], historically comp teachers and scholarships from the black colleges and that's my background as an undergraduate. I think there is a lack of recognition in that. In fact, I still [would] like to see a lot more of this. There is not enough. But if you are talking about contributions, the kind of work that many of us do is focused on African American rhetoric and literacy, literature means that there at least is a presence, that that scholarship is there because [if] weren't doing it...there are a few people that were doing it but I think if we weren't doing it, it wouldn't get done.

She notes that when she attends conferences which include the presence of students, scholars, and teachers from HBCUs, that it makes a huge impact on others, especially those who choose to attend. Pauline feels that it is very important for people to know that the (academic)

world does consist, solely, of predominantly White colleges and universities.

Concerning “Blackness,” Pauline states that although she cannot speak for other people, or even on behalf of other African Americans, that, for her, race is an important part of one’s professional identity and professional identity development. She could not imagine, personally, or does not know how to think of herself as an African American who *happens* to be a professor. And while Pauline does acknowledge race as a congruent aspect of her identity, especially in terms of negotiating her personal, and public or professional, selves that she does not feel “Other-ed” in any way. She never feels like does not ‘fit in’ within the mainstream of composition scholars. She also feels that the context of the professoriate is one that changes how an individual views him or herself.

Early Life Experiences

Pauline was born and raised in a rural, mostly all-Black community in the Southern United States. The rural part of the state where she grew up was a bit of a mix, but more working class and lower income. When she was a little older, her family moved to another Southern state to a suburb outside of a major city. This move occurred before she started school. This suburb was still in an all-Black neighborhood, although it was the first house that they actually rented in this particular neighborhood which was very working class. This area of town is the same one in which her parents currently reside. They have lived there since Pauline was about eleven years old. So, in her lifetime, Pauline and her family had an interesting situation in which they moved across ‘class-lines’; and part of this was due to her father’s job which required them to travel, and relocate, if necessary.

Pauline’s family background consisted of those persons who (still) worked and lived, in the Southern United States, as sharecroppers and hired hands on cotton plantations during the

1930s and 1950s. So, her parents did that kind of work, along with their families. She thinks that her father, and her mother, always had a sense of what it was like to be a Black person in an industry, or area, where Blacks did not have a lot power. But, she says, even though her parents were not business people, there were some who were some in those areas. There were Black owned business and they were small. But, Pauline says, people often about this, as well. She thinks that it is always harder today to point out Black-owned businesses, but, during that time, because Blacks did not have basic services, and they could not get services from Whites, they had to rely solely on their own businesses.

As a child, Pauline remembers her parents discussing what it was like to grow up in the rural South. They would talk about how hard they used to work, including how they had to pick cotton and do certain kinds of work for this one particular person who had hired them. Pauline does not remember, specifically, who the person was that her parents worked for, nor the exact kinds of things that they were asked to do. What she does recall, in general, is that the work was very particular; it was very different. The work, itself, was gendered because the women would go out and pick cotton and then they had to come back and do housework. Pauline's mom told her that her grandmother and aunts had to do that same kind of work. Pauline's mother had to come back in and help their mother cook, and clean, and sew things for their brothers because there were ten children in the household. Her mother was one of the youngest in her family. Her father, on the other hand, was one of the oldest siblings in his family. His family consisted of eight children. He was the second from the oldest, and had an older sister. He had two sisters, and there were six men, in all. Her parents talked about the fact the kinds of work that they did was largely based on race or the color of one's skin, including picking cotton "for the White man" and having live on land that was, oftentimes, owned by a White person. Many Blacks who

had done this kind of work, continued to do so until the industry died-out. After that, families moved and got their own spaces.

Pauline remembers her mom having several jobs. Her mother went through a few jobs, and also went to school for a while in order to take courses. At different stages, her mom worked as a housekeeper, a maid, and as a kind of waitress in a country club. Her mom also worked as a secretary. After Pauline's mom completed her education, having obtained a sociology degree in Secretary of Science, she eventually landed a job working in a bank. At the bank, she worked in operations. She started off as a teller, but continued to advance until she became branch manager which is a job that she held for a long period of time. In many ways, Pauline really got to see her mother go through professional development. Her mother was very involved in her work, and talked about it at home, especially in regard to how she was dealing with certain issues on the job. For the most part, her mother liked the job at the bank, but there was always politics. Pauline believes that her mother's job at the bank got 'trying' near the end when it became clear that she was being passed over for higher-level positions. She had been there a long time and was now training people who had college degrees and made more money than her. She did not have a four year degree. Even so, Pauline thinks that her mom being passed over for a promotion might have seemed unfair to her because she had worked in that position for over thirty years. So, when her mother was presented with the opportunity to take early retirement, she did. However, this was after thirty-three years of being there

Pauline does not think that the issues her mother faced at the bank stemmed, necessarily, from racial discrimination. During this period of time, it would have not been strange to see a White female, with only an associate's degree, make a good wage and still be able to move up in terms of position or status. In addition, her mother was also training Black employees. So the

problem was not so much racial discrimination as it was age discrimination. Her mom was training young Black and White employees who were much younger than herself. However, Pauline also feels that her mother probably felt that the thing which really made the difference was her lack of a four-year degree. She thinks that her mother wanted to get her four-year degree, but that it just never happened. Her mother was raised in a family where no one went to college. No one had four year degrees and she was from a very large family. Her mom's family had been raised in mostly rural areas, and getting an education, particularly in terms of obtaining a college degree, was not something they did; that was simply not how things were done. Women, in particular, were not encouraged to further their studies beyond high school. In fact, Pauline was the only one of her sisters who went further than high school. It was a very different mind-set concerning education than she would later encounter as a scholar and as a graduate, or undergraduate, student.

Pauline's father did mostly manual labor. Most of the time he worked for a trucking company at the loading docks. He held this job for several years. Eventually, he bought a dump truck and contracted himself out to companies in order to do work for them. By the time Pauline had a memory of her father's work, most nights, he was working at that one job at the trucking company. Once he got the dump truck, there were also those long hours he spent doing that doing that particular kind of work. Sometimes her father would bring his work home. It was interesting for Pauline because her parents had somewhat different kinds of jobs; one was blue collar, and the other, White collar. Her father rarely brought his work home, but her mother would often bring her work home; especially, after she became a manager and had to read, write, and work on various reports. The only time Pauline remembers her father actually bringing work home was when he had to tally his receipts. His work as a contracted dump truck driver required

him to turn in a lot of receipts. So, sometimes he would bring his receipts home, and then he would gather those up and go through them one-by-one. He needed to make sure that they were all correct so that he could turn them in and get compensated. Pauline's mother helped her father put all those receipts together. She took care of all their family's finances, and currently, still does. There were other women in the neighborhood, like her mother, who took care of the family's finances. She noticed that women in their community tended to do more of that. Because Pauline's mother had so much experience working in a bank, she handled most all of their family's finances.

Pauline says that besides her family, it was the historical, and cultural, context in which she was growing up that made her keenly aware of race and racial differences. She was a child of the 1960s. During that time, the context of the country was one in which (knowing about, and openly acknowledging) race was a very conscious thing. There was race consciousness in terms of being aware of one's racial identity, there was the notion of *being* in regard to what it meant to be Black in America, and then, there was the Civil Rights Movement which was based on a national public outcry concerning what people saw as the violation of certain individuals' rights based on the color of their skin or some other difference. She was very young, then, but she was (also) aware. Like so many others, she was aware of this growing movement in which people from all different racial, or ethnic, backgrounds had an awareness of 'other' people, of their being, and their desire for integration. This was a national consciousness. Based on laws upholding desegregation, and as a part of the move towards integration, Pauline moved from an all-Black school, with Black teachers, to an integrated school with White students. From this point on, she attended all integrated schools until she went away to college and attended a Historically Black College or University (HBCU).

Pauline feels that she has always been consciously aware of her racial self, particularly in regard to knowing that there was something different *her* being Black, and about ‘being Black,’ itself. She always knew that she was Black and that there was something unique and different about it. She cannot recall a flash-point, or precise moment, during her childhood when she became acutely aware of being different due to race or the color of her skin. Pauline’s family was always very of race and racism. She states:

[My parents] were pretty race conscious. So, they had a TV; my grandmother had a TV and they used to talk about Martin Luther King. So, I can remember when I was a child and he was killed. I remember it very clearly. I remember the thing...I don’t know where I was. I didn’t know what it was; it was someone’s house who was babysitting me and just how upset they were about it; but because there was a TV. [My family] used to have pictures of Martin Luther King my family in the house, so I always knew that.

Although there was a distinct consciousness about race, Pauline does not recall her mother giving her specific advice about being a Black woman or minority in society. What she does remember is her mother giving her a lot more lessons about the importance of getting an education and showing respect for herself. Her mother told Pauline that boys should not be the first things in her life, and that she could deal with that ‘stuff,’ later. Her mother also told her that, even with marriage, she should get her education first, and then, establish herself; everything else could come later. Pauline does not recall specifically what led to those kinds of discussions. But she remembered those kinds of conversations growing up because for a while she was the only Black kid in some of her elementary, middle, and high school classes. And she remembers dealing with that—being the only Black, or minority student, in some of her classes. Up until the fourth grade, Pauline attended an all-Black elementary school in her mostly all-

Black neighborhood. When she was in the fourth grade, her family moved, but she continued to go to that school. The school became integrated in the fifth grade. At that point, they bused in a few White children. Thus, she continued to go to her old school, but it became integrated at that point. She does not remember there being any protests from parents during this time. Later on, Pauline attended an integrated high school that was predominantly White. She remembers being the only Black girl in several of her classes. She took honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and in those classes, she was usually the only Black student. There came a time when Pauline decided that she did not want to be enrolled in those classes—the ones without any other Black, or minority, students. So, at that point, she decided to take regular and above-average courses, and not register for AP or college-prep classes. Anyway, she finds it interesting that she cannot recall any specific conversations.

College and Graduate School

Based on her experiences growing up in all-Black neighborhoods, and attending segregated schools, Pauline chose to attend a historically Black college or university (HBCU). However, initially, she considered going to a different school. She had gone to visit one of the mostly all-White universities near where she lived. During her visit, she had a good time and felt very comfortable there. However, after she visited the campus of the HBCU, she knew that she wanted to go there, instead. Pauline says that she was extremely shy and became aware of something while touring the HBCU: she needed to be in a place that catered to Black women. She says that, even then, she was very race conscious. Although she had done well at integrated schools, including her high school, she admits that she was still very aware of race. While Pauline's educational experiences had, in fact, been somewhat integrated, and diverse, her socialization at home had remained mostly all-Black. She went to integrated schools, but also,

attended all-Black churches and lived in mostly all-Black neighborhoods. *Ebony* and *Jet*, two nationally-syndicated magazines about famous Blacks that catered to African Americans, had always been available in her house. Even so, Pauline says that her father never let her forget that they had already paid the deposit at the other school, the one that she chose not to attend. This school had gone out of its way to recruit Black students, even hosting a recruitment weekend. Many Black high school students from all over the state attended this event. However, when she visited the HBCU and compared it to the other school which only had 125 Black students out of 4,000, she, ultimately, made her decision. The HBCU offered her a partial-scholarship, and although it was not a full-ride, it was a decent academic scholarship. She thought, “You know what? I need this; I really need this” and she says that she has never regretted the decision a day in her life. Not once did she think about changing her mind and not going. She says it is interesting because she only applied to three colleges, in all, and two of them were HBCUs. So, she never regretted going to this one. She says it is the best decision that she has ever made, and it changed her life.

The HBCU that Pauline attended provided her with several role models who helped her to forge an identity for herself. They taught her what it meant to be a Black woman, and also, a successful professional. This particular HBCU had an abundance of mentors and role models that students could choose from; in fact, this was a student’s way of life there. All of the professors were Black, and there were also several African American female professors. In addition, there were several Black scholars who would come to speak at the school. For Pauline, the significance of her experiences, at the HBCU, was not simply based on her being a graduate from this institution, but about becoming the individual she wanted to be. She also felt that making a contribution to the (African American) community was very important. She discovered, early on,

that there was no designated way to give back in terms of making a contribution to one's community. For Pauline, there was something amazing about this context at the university, being a way of life for her; being able to walk through the doors and tell people that she was being taught by all of these amazing scholars and professors who just happened to be African American. This was not the first time that Pauline had been taught by Black teachers, or by those minority scholars who taught English courses. In fact, in high school, she had a female African American English teacher whom she thought was tremendous. But, she felt that there was something unique about being in an environment that catered, and nurtured, the individual; especially, one that cared for Black students which she found to be simply amazing.

Nearer to the end of her undergraduate program, Pauline knew that she wanted to go to graduate school. At her undergraduate institution, she had a professor who had attended the same Master's program that she was interested in attending. Initially, she thought of applying to programs in linguistics, but changed her mind and decided go with rhetoric and composition as her major. She cannot remember how many schools or graduate programs she actually applied to, but she specifically remembers two schools—the place where she eventually went to get her Master's, and the place where she ended up getting her doctorate. Although her Master's program did not provide her with a fellowship, because none were available, they did offer her an assistantship, as both teaching and research assistants, along with tuition remission as part of her overall financial aid package.

Even before she had completely finished her Master's degree, Pauline had thought about taking some time off before beginning a Ph.D. program. However, right after she graduated with her Master's degree, she got a call from the graduate school where she had previously applied. They told her that if she was still interested that they could offer her the same scholarship and

fellowship. She had turned down this institution's offer for enrollment into their joint Master's/Ph.D. program before accepting her offer at her current graduate institution. Nonetheless, Pauline contacted the recruiter at the other institution and told him about her intention to take some time off after she had completed her one-year Master's program. The recruiter asked her to consider coming, anyway, and informed her that all she needed to do was send them one letter of recommendation and have her transcripts from her Master's program sent straight to their graduate school. And so, Pauline did just that—sent one recommendation letter along with her Master's degree transcripts—and it worked. So, instead of taking time off after her Master's, she went straight into a Ph.D. program; again, majoring in rhetoric and composition. Pauline states that the only reason she did not apply to the Ph.D. program at her same institution was because she felt that the program's focus was not something that interested her.

Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations

Pauline feels that she carries a hectic schedule as working professional in the field of Composition and Rhetoric. She usually has a sixty hour workweek and tends to do all of her reading at home; she feels that she needs the quiet. Pauline also believes she is a slow reader. She also grades all of her papers at home, or away from her office, so that she is not easily distracted. And, often, during breaks between classes, she will go somewhere other than the office to write because she gets this done faster due to the fact that she is less distracted. It is the case that the majority of the time when she is at the university she meets with students in her office.

In her office, and especially during break times, she checks her email and handles other kinds of professional correspondence including requests from students for letters of

recommendation. Currently, she has Ph.D. students who are going on the job market, and also, a former undergraduate student who has decided that she wants to go to graduate school and whom Pauline feels would be a great asset to the profession. So, she does handle a variety of things but manages to have some time for herself. She always takes off Friday nights unless she has papers to grade. She knows that it is also important to take a ‘mental break.’ So, if she still has papers to grade, she might grade two or three of them so that when she starts working Saturday morning, there are fewer to do. On most Saturdays, she grades almost all day and then grades on Sunday mornings after she has returned home from church.

Pauline got her first experiences handling writing program administration as a graduate student. After working as a research assistant for a Shakespearean professor as part of her Master’s program, she became a teaching assistant in her doctorate program and taught freshmen composition. As part of her assistantship, she had got the opportunity to work with a professor who had done an edited book series. After working as research, and teaching, assistants, she became the Writing Program Administrator (WPA) for freshmen composition at her doctorate institution. The doctoral program had a rotation of graduate or Ph.D. students who got to be WPAs. She had done that rotation and then got into composition. After she arrived, they got a new director of composition who announced that she was not interested in having a rotation of doctorate students that year. That particular year, the director of composition decided to directly appoint a doctoral student to the WPA position. Thus, Pauline became the newly-appointed WPA of first-year composition. Pauline kept this appointment for a year and a half. This appointment came at a critical time for her. This was a major shift for her. She was really shy, and at the time, she thought, “How am I going to do this?”

Another experience that changed Pauline’s perspectives was going on the job market and

landing her first face-to-face interview. For the first time, she realized that people actually wanted to talk to her. She received her first professional phone call while she was still a doctoral student. Pauline remembers sitting at the secretary's desk in the first-year writing program office. The program secretary had just gone out to do something, and Pauline was manning the desk until she returned. Pauline was making a note of something when the phone rang. When she answered it, the person on the phone asked her who she was, and told her that he or she was looking for the writing program administrator which, in fact, Pauline was at the time. This individual was someone whose work Pauline had read and so she became flabbergasted when this person, then proceeded to ask her if she was going to apply for their job. For Pauline, it was kind of a critical moment because she was stepping into the field as a professional, for the first-time, and then, going on the job market. She thought, "People want me?" Pauline was fortunate to be well-received, especially when she went on her interviews; some of which were more fun than others. Generally, she got a good reception, across the board, concerning the work in regard to the kind of scholarship she was doing. Also, the panel that she did at the College Composition and Communication conference, with her dissertation direction and two other people from her school was a good thing for them, all; they were looking wide-eyed at the audience, thinking, "that's so-and-so."

Pauline says that there have always been challenges. Sometimes, she states, the biggest challenge, for her, has been dealing with students who do not think that she should be (standing) where she is. Also, she often does not feel that she gets the respect that she deserves, as a scholar. So, one of the biggest challenges she has faced, in terms of not receiving support, is having people question her authority. She is aware that there are those in the field do not want to see a Black woman walk through the door; and, she knows that these individuals might have very

different conversations with her than the ones they would have with their White colleagues, or other White male scholars. She states:

You have to deal with people's perceptions about black folk and our ability to get stuff written and published and all that. You have to deal with their...not only sometimes you deal with our own issues about whether we can do it, but you have to deal with people who think we can't do it. And deal with people questioning. I mean there are things...you know I was interested because I read stuff and go 'Okay that got published' and then you're questioning something a black person did that was better than that. You know you have to deal with those kinds of things.

Another challenge Pauline faces is teaching. For Pauline, it is difficult to balance her duties as an instructor with research, scholarship, and other administrative duties. She states that there are not enough hours in the day to do everything. Also, she states that she just lacks confidence in her writing, and feels that if she was more confident in her writing, that she would get more done, and write more; meaning, her research would get done faster. And she feels that she probably would have been promoted because she would have already completed her next book. So, being a confident writer is a big challenge, although trying to strike a balance in terms of everything else she is required to do in terms of being a writer, teacher, scholar, and researcher is also challenging. She states:

For me, it's always a struggle. I always think of it as a struggle; some of its just confidence. I have never been a confident writer. I don't think I'm a person who writes with grace. I do it when I need to do it and I get it done. But I felt like I was doing too much report writing when I was an administrator; all I was doing was writing reports and the scholarly writing was just gone, and I wanted to get back to that.

Pauline has had various people, including colleagues in her department, and across the university, who have supported her and acted as mentors. She states that they are also very good friends. Their support has helped her to achieve a measure of success in the field. She states that she has, sort of, always had excellent mentoring, and that her dissertation directors were also very supportive. Even as a graduate student, she received a lot of guidance from mentors while in her doctoral program. Even now, Pauline works with people at the university, and in the field, who read her work and let her talk, or ‘hash-out,’ her ideas. She formed a writers’ group with people as soon as came to her current university. Some of these people are on campus, now; some are in her department, and others are associate professors in a specialized program. She also has friends outside of the department who read her work. But she says that she also has people who are simply “friends.” Actually, she talks a lot to Black women in her area, and they do things together. She also has very good relationships with her doctoral students who are working in different places. She also has had very good family support.

On Being a “Scholar” in Composition Studies

In terms of her professional identity, Pauline does not feel that being an educator, teacher, scholar, researcher, or teacher of writing are separate identities, or roles, for her. She feels that each role informs the other. Depending on her location, she has to call upon her experiences to guide her teaching methods and her approaches to practice, especially in regard to how she interacts with her students. For Pauline, this notion of having separate, or disparate, a professional identity is an interesting one, however, she does not think this way, herself. But she acknowledges those who do. She states:

Yes, for some people they are stuck with, [“I’m a scholar”], but when I teach, [and do] my [work as a] columnist, my role is a scholar so I’m never torn away when I’m

working on my research. My role as a teacher is very much integrated into what I do, how I approach what I do and why I do what I do, and so, for instance, I do work that I do because I think it speaks to what we do in the classroom.

So, when people say, “What do you do?” Pauline replies, “Well, I’m a professor.” And when they say, “What does that mean?” she states, “I teach and do research.” For her, that is just all a part of it; the integration of teaching and scholarship is part of being an educator, particularly at the graduate and postgraduate level. Now, she believes that depending on a person’s location, where he or she is at, and where his or her home institution is, including a scholar’s role as a faculty member, that there is a particular emphasis on certain things. But she always likes it when she works with teachers and trains them because then she gets those educators to consider the basis upon which they are building their professional selves. She asks them, “What is the scholarly foundation from which you are making the decisions about what you do in the classroom?”

Pauline believes that this concept is central to that of being a composition scholar: this idea that we, as composition scholars, do what we do in terms of research or scholarship, in the field of composition studies because we feel that it speaks to what we do in the classroom, i.e., the teaching of writing. She is hoping that what she does in the classroom sheds light on what is involved in teaching writing in terms of what this ‘act of writing’ can accomplish. So, when people compliment her, she is hoping that it is because she is doing the work, ‘right,’ and is bringing what she has learned, or acquired, about writing via her scholarship to her classroom teaching, and also, doing so in very valuable ways. For this reason, she does not see her professional roles as being separate.

Ultimately, Pauline believes that being a “Comp scholar,” or scholar in composition

studies, occurs on multiple levels. In terms of being a ‘scholar of composition,’ she feels that such an individual is a person, who, for her, appreciates and recognizes, the role that writing plays in people’s lives, particularly in terms of what it can do for them professionally and personally. In regard to being a ‘scholar,’ in general, she feels that this kind of individual is able to ask the questions that relate to why people write what they write, and how they write what they write. Pauline asks, “How can we teach people to write in particular ways, and use writing to achieve certain kinds of goals, without looking at writing histories, and the spaces where writing occurs, particularly in different settings or contexts? And that’s the value of it; in considering how it *does* work.” Pauline believes that it is important not to assume that all writing leads to the same place. She talks about the fact that it is this constant questioning in regard to being in a mode of inquiry which allows a scholar to make connections. For example, a scholar in composition might make connections between the kind of writing that people do in a particular community, and the ways in which they use language and literacy. She states that this tells ‘us’ as researchers, and teachers of writing, about what we need to be doing in our classrooms; this is what it is all about for her.

However, Pauline feels that, theoretically, in the field of composition what it means to be a ‘scholar’ is always evolving. And so, she feels that in this way, she has had to make the decision about the ‘place’ of the composition scholar (in terms of where the field is situated) every time she teaches her *Introduction to Composition and Theory* course. She tells her students, “Okay, here’s where we are: We’re reading these things, and we’re examining it from this perspective, but we could ask a different set of questions with these texts, or ask the same questions with a different set of texts.”

In terms of situating herself as scholar, Pauline states that it helps to be part of a cultural

community because then an individual has specific individuals, or ‘folks,’ with which to share the good and the bad. She feels that, sometimes, as an academic professional, a person needs to be able to talk to someone from his or her own cultural or ethnic group about what is going on, and say, “Girl, look at this! What do I [do about this]? Do you know what this person said to me in a meeting?!” So, she feels that sometimes a scholar, particularly of color, needs that person, or a group of people, with which to commiserate, or share laughs with, and who supports him or her. She says that it is also essential to have people who will support an individual’s scholarship. Those friends and colleagues who will say, “You know what? I read your draft, and girl, that is good. You really need to send it ‘here,’ ‘here,’ and ‘here.’” Or someone who will say to her, “You can do better than this. That section on ‘X’ is not happening.” And so, she feels, a scholar needs that community. But, she says, a person also needs to be able to just go to conferences and have a sit down, and have that group people that he or she is be able to laugh, and just talk to, when ‘stuff’ happens; with those who look like you and who may have experienced some of the same things that you have—not always, ‘experienced,’ but may have.

So, Pauline does not feel “othered” or like an ‘Other’—the phenomenological self that feels that its existence resides outside of the realm of normalized or mainstream experience; and further, that those ways of being are not always appreciated or accepted, particularly, by the mainstream. However, as a scholar of color, she is aware of the importance of ‘place,’ and of being conscious, particularly in regard to how she sees herself, and in terms of how situates herself in the field. She states:

I think we have to be conscious of and I’m very... This part I’m pretty good at; I don’t let anybody take away my voice. I’m not going to be, you know... I’m not going to let anybody take away my voice. I’m not going to let somebody turn me into somebody else,

to the kind of scholar I don't want to be. So, I...And it's not that I have the same voice in every piece, but I, you know, I am pretty good at just saying 'Okay, yeah, you're right: I need to do more developing this idea. I need to talk a little bit more about this topic in this article.' But I'm not letting people change my perspective and change my voice.

Pauline believes that the context of the professoriate changes how an individual views him or herself, and especially for a minority scholar who now gets relegated to an elevated position in society and must negotiate aspects of (having) power. However, she believes that professional (identity) development should not come at the expense of changing one's perspective because as she states, "... [This] point-of-view's developed from where I come from to who I am now, my negotiation of the scholarship."

Currently she is teaching a graduate seminar course on race and literacy and this will be the first time that she is teaching this course. She finds it interesting that she is considering the concept of race, at present, in terms of her own professional identity. For the graduate seminar course on race and literacy, she is providing her students with a couple of essays on the construct of race and breaks within the discourse, or whether people ultimately accept or reject the construct of race that is brought forth by the mainstream. She thinks the more current, or relevant, thing, now, is to talk about race as a construct and how one deals with talking about it as a construct, particularly when people are talking about racial identity, and how an individual identifies him or herself, and how people label others according to racial identities. She states that there is still has a material consequence. She thinks that there is inherently a conflict between how one perceives oneself in terms of a racial identity and how, in turn, others perceive that individual. So, she believes that it is a conflict 'thing' and thinks that sometimes it is hard for people to get a grasp on. She does think that the construct of race and the concept of racial

identity it is evolving. However, even in thinking about the evolution of the concept, she wonders, again, whether it means that people are discussing the African American community as if it is monolithic.

Pauline feels that one of the issues related to African American scholarship in composition is the lack of recognition of the contributions of composition instructors from historically-Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). She would like to see more scholarship concerning how African American composition instructors at HBCUs have contributed, and continue to contribute, to scholarship in composition. She notes that there are people in the field who are willing to do this kind of scholarship. She supposes that there are those who work on African American issues, including African American rhetorics and African American literacy; and, she knows that their research deals with those who have different accents (who speak non-standard English). Those kinds of researchers are willing to look at different relationships. Pauline is consciously aware of the fact those who focus on this kind of scholarship are engaged in a different way of thinking; it is a different perspective, and they have different viewpoints. She thinks that you have to have that viewpoint i.e., one that considers ‘difference.’ She believes that there is really no such thing as ‘rhetorical theory’ if you are not taking a more comprehensive view. For example, it is not just ‘classical’ rhetoric, even if it is classical rhetoric, if some of the history is left out, or ignored. Where is the African presence? And the Asian presence? She believes that as composition scholars, we have to think about the relative strengths of those perspectives, such as the ones which stem from African American scholars who are in the field rhetoric and composition and literacy studies. She believes that there are, in fact, a multiplicity of perspectives and those scholars often make the mistake of thinking that there is, for example, one African American experience.

Aaron Richardson

Background

Aaron Richardson, who is in his early fifties, is currently a full professor of English at a medium private Western liberal arts college where he teaches rhetoric and literature as well as advanced rhetoric and composition courses. He does research in the areas of speech, rhetoric, writing, religion, English, and Greek. Both his Master's and Ph.D. are in the areas of English with an emphasis in rhetoric and writing.

Aaron became interested in the study of rhetoric because he had always been interested in delivery systems and the communicative aspect of these methods. He likes to consider the ways in which people get their ideas across and how delivery, in turn, affects receipt of the message. As an undergraduate, Aaron originally majored in theology. This major was an easy choice for him because he had spent time as a preacher in his local church. During his time preparing sermons, it became clear to him that teaching was, indeed, a variant of preaching. Based on his early experiences in the church, his interest in history, and his knowledge of cultural rhetoric, he sought to learn more about the classical components of speech such as 'talk back' and the dialogic nature of the call and response dynamic.

Aaron's views on rhetoric have been greatly influenced by composition and rhetoric scholars such as Victor Villanueva and Keith Gilyard. He is particularly interested in how both Villanueva and Gilyard discuss the ways in which their personal histories, and backgrounds, have affected their perspectives on the study of rhetoric, especially in regard to how writing reflects, and effects, a student writer's sense of self in relation to language, and how that relates to power and aspects of individual self-esteem.

Overall, Aaron feels that the notion of the 'rhetorical scholar of color' is an important

one. For him, race is a crucial aspect of how a scholar identifies him or herself—not so much in terms of representation but—because it gives a firm place from which to establish an individual’s sense of his or herself, historically as well as culturally. He feels that as a rhetorician, it is important to know the origins of one’s linguistic self: how language, including the words that are spoken, and the dialect that is used, give birth to a kind of idea of the self as shaped by discourse. For Aaron, this is the definition of “cultural rhetoric.”

Early Life Experiences

A great deal of Aaron’s childhood experiences consisted of him trying his best to stay out of trouble. His advice from his mother about being a man and a minority was, “don’t lose your temper.” Aaron says that his mom, just like him—and he guesses that he gets it from her—was his penchant for the dramatic. His mom always told him that he had a bad temper, and ultimately, he believes she was right. He used to throw objects when he was five or six years of age. No matter how many times he was punished, and he was punished a lot, he would still throw objects and things whenever he got very upset about something. So, one day his mother explained to Aaron how his life could end up if he did not get a hold of himself, and learn to control his temper. She explained, “And as you sit there in your jail cell, you know, awaiting the capital punishment that befalls you—that *will* befall you—you’ll be wondering, ‘why didn’t I think before I lost my temper?’” Aaron could not believe that his mom was telling them because at the time he was only five years old. However, for a long time after that conversation, he held onto this image which was stuck in his mind.

Aaron’s father also gave him advice about being a man and a member of a minority group. At the time, Aaron felt like it was a very narrow definition. As they got older, Aaron stated that his father allowed him and his siblings to question, and challenge, certain assumptions

about things. However, such questions were not permitted before 17 or 18 years of age, and up to this point, he, and his siblings, had to be careful what about what they asked their father. But his father's definition of masculinity was pretty much, "You work, and you sacrifice." His father told him that sometimes an individual had to work when he did not feel like it. Aaron's father also stated there was no kind of work that was beneath an individual, no matter how much education he or she had. His father had a Master's degree, and he had some friends with Bachelors' degrees who would have been ashamed to do some of the laboring stuff—the kind of moonlighting gigs—that his father did on the side. His father's response to those friends was, "No, this is what men do." His father told him a story about working for a manufacturing plant back in the 1950s. Initially, when his father applied for job, he told the plant managers that he had his Bachelors,' but did not yet have his Master' degree. However, they had so many people—hundreds of applicants—that when his father returned, and reapplied for the same position, they did not recognize him. This time he wrote down that he had a high school diploma. That was not a lie. But he did not put down that he had a Bachelor's degree, and they did not remember, so he got the job. Aaron's father said that it was probably one of the first, and only, lies that that he had ever told to get a job; and it was a real lie. And so, Aaron's father always told him not to be afraid to anything to support his family, no matter what that entails. He told Aaron that it was his responsibility to support his family even if he and his wife split up; that it was always his responsibility to provide for his offspring, and support them.

Aaron's father also taught him about sex education and the act of being a responsible man. Although there were many discussions in his household, Aaron says he learned a lot about being a man based on his father's experiences. His father had gone to a prestigious university on the West coast in the 1950s as part of the G.I. Bill, a grant program funded by U.S. government

to help World War II veterans attend college or acquire vocational training. As such, Aaron was always aware that his father had a degree—and a desire to mold him into a particular kind of young man—but that he talked less about his educational background, and led more by example. One of the things that his father instilled in Aaron early on was a love of reading. Through reading, his father sought goal to understand what Blacks had to do in order to survive, and what they had done, to succeed. His father was an avid reader and instructed his children to read. Aaron's father encouraged his children to read for fun, and not necessarily, just for school. At his house growing up there was a collection of "International Collection of Negro Life." His family used to have a set of those books and it's about a ten volume set. He remembers his father buying those when he was eight years old; overtime, they were lost along with some other books. About seven or eight years ago, Aaron was able to get a whole set of the same kind of books from the 1960s. For him, it was like a reclamation project in a way, and he hopes to write about this experience one day. Aaron feels that this was a poignant example of that instance when there is an intersection of literacy with one's own personal experiences, particularly in regard to racial identity, and (re)acquiring one's sense of agency. This idea of reclaiming one's agency by acquiring knowledge of one's cultural past is something that he learned from his father—long before he knew what he would be doing now.

Although, Aaron remembers the first time that he became aware of his racial identity, he acknowledges that he just sort of always knew that somehow he was different; that is, that being a member of a minority group made him unique in some way. However, there was a specific incident that occurred when he was just in kindergarten. Aaron, jokingly, refers this experience as a time in his life when he had "jungle fever" (the urban euphemism for Black men wanting to be with White women). His mother had picked him up from kindergarten and drove them home.

Within the first five minutes of being home, he was crying. He remembers his mom asking him why he was crying. He tried to explain to her how it was an absolute travesty that he did not have a blonde-haired White female teacher. Aaron had come to believe that having a White female role model, other than his mother, was definitely the one who was ‘in charge.’ At this point, he was, in fact, categorizing individuals as superior or inferior based on their racial identification.

Aaron also remembers the first time he heard one of his friends, who was White, use a racial slur. A good friend of his, who was White, got into a fight with a Black guy. The Black guy had been making fun of his White friend who was starting to grow more and more upset. His White friend, weary of being picked on, turned and said, “Nigger.” Aaron stated that this incident was not the first time that he had heard that word, nor was it the first time that he had heard a White person say it, but, it was, as he explained, the first time he had heard a White person say it in ‘real life.’ At this moment, race became really pronounced for him. He became very self-conscious concerning his ‘Blackness’. He started to compare his skin color, and his degree of ‘Blackness’ in regard to his demeanor, and attitude, to those of his lighter-brown counterparts.

Aaron learned to conceive of ‘race’ early on largely because he felt that his father had this kind of egalitarian, and idealistic, view of what racial inclusion was actually supposed to be, and what it was not. So, Aaron’s father would say how their house was *his* universe and that they were not allowed to use the ‘N-word,’ or ‘nigger,’ or say ‘cracker’—the racial slur for Whites—or anything like that in his house. Aaron said that he and his siblings were also not allowed to make any racially-disparaging remarks about Blacks, or other minorities. He recalls one time that his brother got punished because he had looked outside the car window, after eyeing a Latina girl, shouted, “Oh, look at that ‘wetback.’” Aaron’s father gave his brother a serious reprimand

which went along the lines of, “Not in my house!”

The special values that Aaron learned about being Black had a lot to do with his father’s love of books and his interest in teaching his children about Black history. The notion of Black identity, in Aaron’s household, was tied to learning about Black history. His father tried to encourage him and his siblings, to read a lot. In fact, this is where Aaron got his love of Black history. His father would say things like, “Oh you need to read about George Washington Carver.” Aaron laughs because oftentimes his current rhetoric and writing students assume that he’s a sort of historian because of his extensive knowledge of Black history. They are like, “Wow.” But for his father, this was a way-of-life: knowing Black history and culture of African Americans in the United States. He wanted Aaron to read about Blacks of accomplishment, including specific texts, like the one described above. There was a consciousness that his father instilled in him and all his siblings concerning what he called the development of an “insatiable hunger” for finding out a lot things from discovering the information found in those kinds of books. So, every chance Aaron got, he started reading a lot of religion and theology because he thought he was going to be a preacher. And every dime he got, he spent on books that had to do with African American consciousness, whether it was history, literature, or poetry. Such things were really pronounced for him.

In terms of being a Black person, particularly concerning being a minority, Aaron says he is very much a pragmatist in terms of how one interacts with hegemony, or the majority-White culture, especially, when they are being oppressive. He finds it difficult to deal with notions involving race and racism, particularly when trying to address such issues with his students. Such concepts are serious because they deal with issues of power and enacting abuses and injustices based on that power. However, such instances speak to the larger role that hegemony plays in

society, not just ‘-isms’ i.e., sexism, racism, or homophobia; it involves more than just one group or individual, and affects persons on a much deeper level. He states:

And I guess for me, what I struggle with, even when I talk to some of my students about some of the literature and stuff we read, when you talk about abuse, sexism, racism, and any –ism there is, you never want to minimize it, obviously, and I don’t even minimize it with my undergraduates. But you want to make sure that they see it within the context of the human condition and don’t fall into the trap of racial pathology, right? Because where I teach, it’s really easy for the kids to kind of all into this trap of viewing this stuff through the lens of racial pathology, and I want to be careful about that because they listen [to]...a lot of people in society, particularly the right wing talk-radio types [who] say, ‘I’m not supposed to be here,’ and ‘I’m not supposed to have a...,’ and I put it in quotes, “functional family,” cause I don’t think anyone has a functional family...I’m not supposed to have a marriage that’s been going on for more than 20 years...I’m not supposed to y’know have [healthy children], 1 in college, 1 getting ready for college...I’m not supposed to be a full professor at a university, right?

Aaron finds that what it is necessary, and also fundamental, to understanding issues of power in society, is for instructors to speak to the human condition when addressing concepts of justice and injustice. In speaking on such topics, he states, “They got to be real careful about pathology,” and instead, look at things “more in terms of human condition and hegemonic influence and things like that.” He notes that when educators teach about inequalities and injustices of a particular minority group e.g., African Americans or Latinos/Latina, that they cannot “just speak in terms of, ‘well, those black people,’ without acknowledging the contexts that acknowledge ‘those black people,’ as individuals; and unfortunately, a lot of what has been

happening for years, and still happens, is the former.

School Experiences

When he was younger, Aaron says he always felt like he was the misfit because of the ways that the ways that kids picked on him for various reasons. They picked on his physical characteristics, or what they considered to be, idiosyncrasies. The kids in school told Aaron that he had ‘a big forehead and ears that were way down on his neck.’ It was the late 1960s and Aaron was around five years old. It was the heyday of the television program, *The Munsters*, a show about a family of monsters and misfits. So, Aaron felt that the kids in school used the physical deformities of the characters on that show as a basis to make fun of him and other kids at school. However, even with all the taunting cruelty of childhood peers, Aaron does not feel that he was not treated differently due to his racial or ethnic background.

Aaron attended three different elementary schools; the racial composition of the first two elementary schools being mostly Black with a few Latinos. The racial composition of the third elementary school was about 60/40; it was sixty percent Black, and maybe a little less than forty percent White. Aaron describes the location of the first two elementary schools as being in the “hood,” but stated that the third elementary school “was just in the hood, but not really in the hood. It was becoming hood.” Aaron said that “White flight” was on the horizon. He felt that one day this school would be mostly, if not all, Black.

He saw very few Whites until he was bussed to school, and out of his local neighborhood, as a part of desegregation in 1974. The racial composition of his high school included more Latinos, although it was still primarily Black. This is the only time that he remembers seeing Whites. Aaron states that he had his first incident of possible interracial conflict when he “almost” dated a Latino girl at his school. At this point, the interracial dating incident was not as

divisive, or dangerous, as it would become later in some communities, but he could tell that there were definitely some Latino guys who were looking to hurt him. This was the cultural dynamic during the late 1970s and early 1980s when he attended high school.

Aaron's supports in high school included the ministers in his church. The church impacted Aaron in terms of the kind of mentoring he would need to succeed as a young adult. There were significant people, there, who impacted his life as a child, both in terms of the kinds of work he would, or the things that he eventually chose to study in school. These experiences impacted his desire, or need, to be in English studies, his decision to apply for certain scholarships, and the work he wanted to do in terms of being a teacher. And he thinks Sunday school was one of those things that provided him with the curiosity to sort of dig deep into something like literature. Aaron remembers that they used to have little Sunday school publications at his church, although he forgets the exact titles of some of these particular texts. Aaron and his classmates would look at the publications with their teacher, "Aunt Mae." She gave them Sunday school books and asked them to prepare their Sunday school lessons every week. In the presence of an adult, or church elder, Aaron and his classmates were asked questions concerning their opinions about what they had read. Sometimes they were asked to read certain quotes and talk about how they had interpreted the meaning of what was being said.

The notion of interpreting literature, and subsequently, developing reading comprehension skills all took place within that church environment. For Aaron, those literacy experiences served as a pretext for he would later do in grad school. His Sunday school assignments were similar to things that he would be asked to do as part of his graduate coursework. Actually, Aaron feels that, although both experiences were related, he actually spent far more time listening in graduate school, then speaking. There was not as much discussion in

grad school as there had been in Sunday school. In Sunday school, he says, they were allowed to speak and talk and give their opinions. And there was a bit of competition for who could give the best responses and get praises from the Sunday school teacher. He remembers that being a part of his ‘literacy training.’ This is the term he is using now. At that time, he did not think of it in that way, but now often reflects on the notion that something was going on there. Those literacy experiences sort of hooked him into wanting to learn more about the reading process—learning how to interpret what it was that he was reading—and it was all taking place in that Sunday school class.

Aaron also received support from a history professor that he had in high school. He was facing some severe obstacles at home which led to him cutting classes; he was ditching school all the time. His history instructor took notice of Aaron’s behavior and actually came over to his house. It was not dark when his professor arrived, but he stayed and talked to Aaron and his mom until it had gotten late and very dark. Aaron remembers being impressed because his neighborhood was not exactly a safe place to be—at any time of day. His professor saw talent in Aaron’s public speaking abilities and he really encouraged him to stick it out. At sixteen years of age, Aaron was really impressed with this guy, not only because he was White, and trying to help, and *sincerely* trying to help; but, because he seemed to lack any ulterior, or other motives, other than just encouraging him. The instructor was the first person who ever told Aaron that they were an atheist. This incident really struck Aaron, it really kind of got to him: someone actually cared and was trying to enter into his discourse community—his belief system, his language, his culture—and that this person was not a part of that community, either by identity markers, or just by belief system or epistemology.

In high school, Aaron participated in speech, including original oratory. He really liked

speech, largely because of the confidence he had gained from preaching at his church. Aaron participated in Lions Club International, and different kinds of speech contests. He never went national, but he did go the regional level. For Aaron, speech was fun for him because no matter what speech he was giving, he delivered it with passion. He notes that most of time he would compete with a predominantly White group who would not deliver with the same level of intensity. In one contest, he remembers coming in second place—instead of third—because of the level of passion in which he had delivered his speech. On one occasion, he was told the night before what topic he would be given to speak on the next day. He recalls that it was related to a business subject, like free trade, or something related to this topic. Aaron only had one day to prepare, and really did not prepare, although he felt he should have. However, in those days, he felt like he had the confidence to “deliver the goods.” He assumed a measure of confidence in his speaking ability in those days.

While in high school, Aaron thought about going to college, and about his future, but he did not have any specific career plans. However, he had always assumed that he would go to college even though he had no sense of how, or in what way, to prepare himself for doing just that. He states:

Yes, I always assumed I would go to college even though in no sense was I really preparing myself like I should've. But, I notice that a lot kids, a lot of my students now talk about preparing for college. They were completely focused, no matter what was going on in their personal lives: ‘Okay, you gotta fill out this form, and you gotta fill out this financial aid, and you gotta do this, this, this.’ And there was nothing structured about my approach to going to college. Well, because my dad had gone, I knew I was going to be going to somebody's college.

His high school history teacher, a 'devout' atheist, told him, "look I'm not with this theology stuffy, but you owe it to yourself, even if it's what you end up studying, to go study." People like this influenced Aaron. Also, Aaron acknowledges that it was assumed by many that he would go to college because somehow people felt like he was smarter than his Grade Point Average would seem to indicate.

As an undergraduate, based on his background and experiences, he initially thought that he would study speech and communication, but he ended up studying theology. He states:

...I thought I would be studying speech communication, which I ended up studying... theology...cause I thought I was going to end up being a preacher and a corporate speech writer. That's what I originally trained for as an undergraduate. Yeah, so...yeah, I thought about it a as an undergraduate, but not in high school. I guess once I got in[to] college I knew I would have to go beyond [a] Bachelor's. Yeah, but I don't think I started thinking about my Master's until I was actually in the first year of senior college, cause [like] I said, I went to community college first. The way my grades were, I had to.

The important people as well as other circumstances that influenced his decisions to attend graduate school included his teachers, and especially his speech instructors who said he should go to college and major in speech. He really appreciated the approach of those teachers. They mirror the attitudes in regard to his current practice concerning how he approaches his students. Aaron feels that those are better teachers: the ones that see the potential in their students, and who support and encourage them in the pursuit of it.

College and Graduate School

In order to pull up his high school grades, Aaron attended a community college immediately after graduation. The first university Aaron attended was predominantly African

American and Latino/-a, with a “smattering” of Asians. When he later transferred schools, Aaron ended up in an area of the country that was majority-White, and there, based on his experiences, his perceptions of himself began to change which altered how he saw things. Aaron chose to attend a religiously-affiliated college where he could still get a solid liberal arts education.

It is at the predominantly White school in the Midwest where he begins to define himself in terms of the ‘Black enough’ paradigm. For example, Aaron was consciously aware of being one of the few Blacks on campus who was not a basketball player. In this way, he feels that he shares the common experiences that some Blacks have when they try to define, for themselves, whether they are truly ‘Black enough.’ Some of his classmates commented on his voice or intonation, telling him that he sounded ‘White.’ Aaron recalls that he thought he just sounded like his mother, but a couple of octaves deeper. Ultimately, he believes that what a person sounds like, in terms of his or her tone of voice, along with the notion of sounding like an intelligent, or sophisticated, Black man or woman—or actually being one—are all socially- constructed. He states that how we define race and aspects of it are all constructed from within our own realm of being, our experiences, our limitations and our dialogue—the conversations we have with others, and within ourselves—and all those kinds of things.

Aaron believes that, all in all, it was a good experience for him. Attending a liberal arts college in this part of the country was the first time that he had gotten a chance to experience living in the Midwest. Prior to coming to the university to study, he had adopted some stereotypes about Whites, particularly those from the Midwest, which were limited due to his own personal experiences about “White anecdotal” as he called it. Such stereotypes turned out not to be true. But some things, such as his thinking in terms of Whites, and those who hailed

from the Midwest, as being more open-minded, did not turn out to be true. He felt that they were every bit as myopic as they claimed Southerners were, but did not own up to it. That was a revelation for him.

Aaron eventually majored in speech and minored in both Greek and religion. The undergraduate major, Bachelors in Speech, had three minors: English, Religion, and Greek. He was also interested in delivery systems, communicative delivery systems. However, where he was at the time, one could not get a teaching credential in speech. He knew he was going to get married a year after he got out of college. So he thought, “You know what? I’m going to have to get a job.” So after completing his undergraduate degree, he ended up getting a teaching credential in English, and getting a job teaching. He did this kind of work did at the middle school level and then at the high school level for several years. But around the time he started to teach at the high school level, he decided he would start work on a Masters’ degree. Aaron did not go straight into Ph.D. work, but first finished his teaching credential before deciding he would go get a Master’s. He states:

[I] always sort of liked literature, so I started literature and so on; did that at the middle school level and the high school level for several years. But around the time I was starting to teaching at the high school level, [and] I decided that I would start working on a Master’s degree. And then they had this program at [the nearby] State University which was a Master’s degree in English with a certificate in Rhetoric and Writing. So, I said, ‘you know.’ Now, I look back at it and it wasn’t rhetoric like you and I would talk about it, but, you know, you had a few courses that talked about writing and talked about writing in ways that were loosely connected with the classical tradition, with temporary cultural traditions, very loosely. Matter of fact, those connections weren’t forged for me

there.

Aaron says that it someone at his church who actually encouraged him to start working on a Ph.D. Aaron felt like the guy just kept nagging him about it. So, finally, Aaron said, “You know, I’m going to apply.” He did not realize that this guy used to be a professor at the school where he would eventually, get a grad degree, and work as an instructor, himself. The man at his church actually wrote to the graduate school on his behalf mainly because Aaron was worried about his undergraduate grades. Fortunately, Aaron had done exceptionally well in his Master’s program. Aaron chose his Ph.D. institution for a couple of reasons. First, it was close to home and he did not want to leave home because his older son was about one year’s old. For this reason, they did not really want to move. At the time, he did not know he was going to be able to teach at his current institution while he was working on his Ph.D.; that was a deal he worked out later. Aaron’s second reason for wanting to stay in the area was based on his desire to remain in close proximity to top rhetorical scholars who were located there. There was one particular scholar with whom he often had philosophical disagreements. Aaron often disagreed with this scholar because he felt that he was one of those new rhetoricians who continually tried to skew cultural rhetoric. So, he and this scholar had their arguments about that. But where he was located, geographically, even before he realized it, was actually the place to go for rhetoric. And so, that is where went to pursue his doctorate degree. He decided to attend his doctoral institution for the practicality of it, both in terms of his personal life, and in regard to his professional aspirations.

Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations

Aaron’s typical workweek consists of teaching three days a week—on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays; so, then, he has Mondays and Fridays to do research. He tends to

do a little work on Saturday mornings, but tries to leave some personal time for health-related activities, or just time to relax. He comes to work very early in the morning and stays very late. For example, he may have a 4:00 pm class, but he will stay until 6 or 7 p.m. After his last class, he tries to do some grading or lesson prep. He usually does this on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. That is, by Friday, he wants to be finished with his teaching and administrative responsibilities so that he can totally focus on reading, writing, and research. On Sunday, he usually attends church in the mornings, although lately, he has been attending the night service. Aaron's areas of interests include the Harlem Renaissance, twentieth-century African American literature, and also, Civil Rights discourses. Those are the research topics that have become the foci of his books, articles, and other publications. The nature of his work is primarily teaching, especially teaching those courses that he likes; however, at the moment, he is not teaching at the graduate level.

Aaron says that one of his real regrets in regard to teaching is that he has never had the opportunity to work with Ph.D. students. His current institution does not offer a Master's in English. The Master's students' he has worked with are the ones who have taken his literature course, an interdisciplinary Master's literature course for school teachers. It is an interdisciplinary Master of Arts in American studies program in which they take courses in literature, philosophy, and history. He also desires to teach poetics and graduate courses in classical rhetoric. In order to pursue other teaching and research interests, he has recently spent time acting as a visiting professor at another top university. At this school, he taught a Ph.D. seminar course in Civil Rights poetics and rhetorics. He has really enjoyed this experience and said that talking with Ph.D. students brought about a richer discussion of key issues.

What Aaron most appreciates about his work is his connection with one of his key

mentors, a dear friend in the field of rhetoric and composition. Aaron admits that, at first, he did not conceive of himself as being anything like those scholars whom he idolized, and who, would later, become his friends and mentors. He felt like they had completely different backgrounds. However, he says that the more he got to know his mentor, and the more he read of his work, he felt like, “He’s just a brother from around the way.” Now, as a prominent scholar himself, although Aaron and his good friends and mentors may spend copious amounts of time “joking with each other,” they spend time reading one another’s scholarship. When he is doing a draft of something, he makes sure to send a copy off to them. They tell him right away, “Okay, this part’s good,” but he does not have the same differential attitude or posture that he used to have; for example, he is not afraid to say, “You don’t know what you’re talking about on this section. Did you read it, ‘dawg’?” He no longer feels that other scholars are right, and he was wrong, based on who they are. So he feels that it is good when ‘we,’ i.e., as professionals in the field, including scholars, mentors, and mentees, talk because we connect in different ways.

Barbara Simmons

Background

Barbara Simmons, who is in her late thirties, is currently an associate professor of English and Rhetoric at a large, private Northeastern University where she teaches courses in feminist rhetoric and writing. She has garnered an M.A. degree in English with concentrations in creative writing and composition studies, and currently holds a doctorate in English with a concentration in rhetoric and composition. Her current research includes African American rhetoric, African American literacy, and critical and feminist pedagogies.

Barbara’s current research focuses on literacy and the ways in which culture shapes language and its use. Her growing interest in language and literacy, particularly in regard to

enacting pedagogies that promote change via conflict mediation thru writing, was essential to her development as a scholar in graduate school. However, her developing interest in focusing on those areas as primary research began to take shape during her doctoral course work and training. For example, reading Susan Jarrett's essay on conflict in the writing classroom, as a M.A. student, was an experience that really changed Barbara's life. In addition, scholars such as Jacqueline Jones Royster, Cheryl Johnson, Geneva Smitherman, and Shirley Wilson-Logan influenced her views in terms of how she has come to consider what it means to be a teacher and scholar in the field. For Barbara, those female scholars of color are role models for how to do 'this work' as Black women.

Barbara's first experience teaching writing was as a teaching assistant during grad school; however, beginning an English instructor, or professor, was not her primary goal. She has always wanted to be a writer—at least from the time she was about twelve years old. From that time forward, she wanted to be the author of the 'great American novel.' She majored in writing as an undergrad and also took several advanced composition, and persuasive, writing courses. Eventually, she would gain a bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in writing. However, although her decision to major in English as an undergrad was, essentially, a 'no-brainer, Barbara came to the field of composition and rhetoric largely by accident. She really did not know a great deal about the field, and had not, yet, conceived of composition studies as a discipline. She was primarily a creative writer and the only reason that she ended up focusing on composition was because her department required a dual focus for her Master's work. She had to pick another area of concentration in addition to creative writing, so, she chose composition studies. Barbara was fairly certain that she did not want to be a literature, or linguistics, major, and composition studies was all that was left.

In regard to her multiple professional identities in the field, including that of being an educator, teacher of writing, and researcher, Barbara feels that being a scholar is the most important one. However, she also feels that one's cultural or ethnic identity is an important part of one's professional identity, particularly in terms of how an individual defines himself as a scholar. Barbara thinks that African Americans have contributed to scholarship in the field of composition studies by providing leadership. She thinks that in many ways, African Americans have been situated in the field in various leadership roles, and that they have been producing scholarship for a long time. Barbara believes that their influence, as primary scholars, has only been growing over the years.

Early Life Experiences

Barbara grew up in the Northeastern United States. She lived in the inner city, and grew up in a small inner city neighborhood, or the 'projects,' which mainly consisted of Black, and Latino, families. Her neighborhood was primarily Latino and Black, with a mix of everything. Her neighborhood was a representation of the town, itself, albeit on a smaller scale. She thinks the town's neighborhoods are still kind of racially segregated because there are neighborhoods that are mostly Latino, and neighborhoods that are mostly Black, and then there are few spots that are still Italian. But the city, itself, is heavily Black and Latino.

Barbara did not have specific role models that she admired or chose to emulate as child. But, in her neighborhood, there were definitely people who were there for her. She was a part of the local Girl Scout troop. She had been a brownie from childhood, and was a junior scout during her early teen years, but stopped short of becoming a cadet. She did not like the new junior scout troop leader. To Barbara, the new cadet leader was a "mean Black lady." At the time, she did not appreciate the role that those older "mean Black women" had in making life better for young

minority kids in the neighborhood. The Black women who volunteered in her neighborhood were trying to help Barbara and her peers ‘keep in line’. They wanted to make sure that the neighborhood kids learned to respect themselves as well as their elders, and to look out for one another. The previous junior scout leader had been this nice little old White lady that used to come into their neighborhood and just let Barbara and her friends run around and do whatever they wanted. She and her peers knew that the older White lady was never going to be mean to them. The scout meetings with the new female junior scout troop leader was at a different church, and while Barbara and the other junior scouts, tried to attend the junior troop meetings with the new troop leader, many of them quit. They ended up quitting girl scouts and gave up their dream of becoming cadets. She was one of them. Barbara finally realized, at some later point, that she had probably the guidance of that “mean old Black lady” in her neighborhood.

Barbara’s foray into adulthood did not include any specific conversations about being a Black woman. There were no conversations in which someone told her: “This is what your life is going to be like as a Black woman.” However, as a young girl, she was taught the proper ways to conduct herself. Prior to puberty, she received books on sex education. She read the texts that described female and male anatomy and how babies were made. She was told the kind of stuff that adults always cautioned young girls about; especially about being careful and, “Keeping your legs closed.” Girls, her age, were taught those sorts of lessons so that they did not end up getting pregnant.

Barbara also did not have any specific conversations being Black. Her parents did not talk with Barbara about race, especially in terms of giving her, or her siblings, specific advice about issues related to being a minority in a majority-White society. However, she does recall hearing comments made about race in regard to being African American. As a youth, Barbara

often heard negative comments being made about African Americans by other Blacks. Those comments were not centered on constructive conversations in regard to how to properly handle situations or conduct oneself in a respectful and positive manner. They focused on the fact that Blacks seemed to be the one minority group in the United States that seemed to struggle the most—not because of the injustices of society that was hurled upon them—but due to their own inabilities to stick together, work as a group, and get things done. She states:

You know, you heard the constant sayings that we always say, the kind of self deprecating stuff like... ‘[You] can’t depend on black folks for nothing.’ You know, that kind of the negative little things that nobody would ever expand on but they would say it, and they would talk about race in terms of like, I said it was black and Latino. So they would talk about how Latinos would, you know—the[y] [would] kind of raise the stakes. They would say about Latinos about being able to stick together and how ‘they could come here and do this and then the next thing. You know, ‘They own the store and why black folks can’t do that?’ So I mean those kinds of things of course you hear all the time I think growing up.

Barbara feels that most Blacks had limited contact, and also, lacked opportunities to interact with Whites or any groups that were non-Latino or Black. Where she was growing up, folks did not interact with White people. Most of the African Americans’ interactions with Whites came by way of education. In her inner-city neighborhood, there were certain ways in which minorities come into contact with a few White teachers. But those teachers were the only ones that were different from the norm, or Black teachers. So, a young African American in her neighborhood was probably more likely to come into contact with White teachers than with anything else—any other person from a ‘different’ racial or ethnic group—in the school system.

It was one summer when her mom had to work at a summer camp that Barbara became aware of her racial identity. Barbara's mom had gotten this special scholarship for Barbara and her siblings to go to this other township for summer camp. This camp consisted of mostly White kids who attended this particular day school during the summer. It was during her time spent that Barbara really began to notice that there were people that lived different lives. Those White kids, in this other neighborhood, in this other township, had things that she and her family did not have—and never had; like the school bus that would come to and pick up Barbara and her siblings from their inner-city neighborhood, and take them back to this township. This new neighborhood, and the kids that lived in it, seemed like it 'worlds away' from the ways in which Barbara and her friends, and family, lived their lives; their lives seemed worlds apart. Barbara remembers thinking—just in terms of culture, too—"Wow, this is different."

School Experiences

In the school system, in Barbara's township, there were a lot of White teachers as well as a lot of Black teachers, so she had a mixed experience dealing with White and Black teachers. Barbara attended an elementary school that was close to her inner-city neighborhood, and she ran into Whites the most at this school. She mainly had White female teachers, although there were some White male teachers. Barbara states that the one thing she did not have was Black male teachers. There were lots of Black female teachers, but hardly any Black male teachers.

Barbara does not recall being treated any differently because of her race. There was one teacher that she 'just could not stand.' She only realized later that this woman really did care about Barbara and her classmates. However, at the time, she felt that this particular teacher was just a 'hard,' mean, Black woman. Barbara would always arrive late to school, which meant that she and her friend would arrive late to class. This Black female teacher would always make an

example of them. The teacher said things like, “Which one of *you*’s waiting for the other one? Who made who late?” Barbara had to stand in the front of the class for a long time explaining her behavior to the teacher.

Barbara attended two different high schools. She spent the first two years of high school at a county technical college, and those were good. The technical school was made up of all kinds of people from all over the county. The school was predominantly Black and Latino but there was also a lot of Whites from nearby townships; so, there was actually a good mix of students. Course-wise, the curriculum was set up so that students switched their classes’ midday. She had her core classes in the mornings and attended her technical, or application-based, practicum courses in the afternoons. Students spent the majority of the day in technical classes—for two or three periods—and then they spent time in their academic courses.

A bus would come to pick up Barbara, and take her, and her classmates, to the technical school. She hated waiting for the bus, and hated feeling like she was trapped at this school, on the other side of town, all day. Students were not allowed to return home until the bus came to back to pick them up and take them all home at the end of day. Barbara did not realize, at the time, that she probably could have just walked home because the technical school, in fact, was not that far away from her neighborhood. Anyway, this realization did not keep her from missing classes. She would get picked up by the bus, and then leave to go home right after first period.

Barbara changed high schools her junior year. For Barbara, her junior year was a blur. She did not attend high school that much at all that year. It took her a while to make the adjustment to changing schools, and as a result, her grade point average took a dip during her junior year. Barbara had an attitude problem and started acting act which did not turn out to be a

good combination. She got back on track during her senior year. Ultimately, Barbara would not have been able to graduate high school without the above average grades that she received during her first two years at the technical school, and also, during her senior year at the new school.

Barbara's teenage years were particularly difficult for her. She did not participate in any special activities or after school programs in high school. In high school, Barbara says that she just had a desire to 'act out' and be rebellious. At the time, she just felt like she wanted to be living her own life—whatever that meant—and that everything that mattered. She wanted to experience what was going on 'out there,' in the rest of the world. Her infatuation with boys started around this time as well. She states that even though young girls and adolescents always have those kinds of crushes and stuff when they are in the ninth and tenth grades, it was not until, she got older, that as a senior in high school, she was ready to act them. So, she states that all those things were going on, all kinds of impulses. For her, it was just a desire to be 'out' living her own life and feeling like she was doing *something*.

College and Graduate School

The summer before her senior year in high school, Barbara's whole life 'flashed before her eyes.' She knew she had one of two choices: she could do well, and ultimately succeed, or mess up again and fail. For Barbara, failing was not an option. Barbara began to pull things together during her senior year. When she had completed her senior year, she knew she had the grades that she needed, and that she wanted to go to college. In choosing a college, Barbara knew that she was going to need a university that was willing to look past her junior year where things had briefly gone array for her." She was aware that she needed to look for a school that would look past her indiscretions. So, for Barbara, it was not like, "Hmmm. I need to be picky." It was more like: "Boy you messed up and you'd better poke somebody."

Barbara had chosen several colleges that she wanted to attend. However, ultimately, she was rejected by many of them based on the grades that had appeared on her transcript from her junior year of school year. Barbara states that she did not have “dreams of Harvard,” but there was a State school where she really wanted to go. Unfortunately, she was not accepted as a full-time student at this school, but she did get accepted on a half-time basis. Barbara was also fortunate to get accepted into many other colleges. Although she did not get accepted into the particular college as a full-time student, she knew she had been lucky.

It was not until she visited the campus of the college she eventually decided to attend that she knew it was the ‘one.’ She says that her decision to attend her college is not an easy thing to explain, but she states that in some ways that it became very clear to her. Barbara says that she did not know how she knew, but she was sure that she wanted to go once that visited the university. She states that when she walked onto that campus, that she just knew; she just felt like this was the place that she was supposed to be. Actually, Barbara got nervous because the school kept calling, and she had not made her final decision concerning which university to attend. Then, she and her folks went to visit the campus and she just fell in love with the university and knew.

Applying to her chosen university turned out to be a frustrating process. She kept bothering her mom about forms—there were all kinds of forms that needed to be filled out, including financial aid forms. She hated bothering her mother but she needed this information so that her application would be complete. Barbara states that her mom was not going to be the type of that was going to be all involved with the process. Her little sisters did not understand the immediacy of her request from their mom in regard having the forms filled out. She remembers them telling her, “Well, wait for her.” She had to tell them, “You can’t wait for mommy. You’ve

got to do it. Mommy is tired; she works hard you know.” So, she made sure that she got the forms done, and turned in and completed on time.

Barbara chose to attend a college in the upper Northeastern United States not too far from where she had lived as a child. One thing that did concern her was having role models. There were some Black professors at the university she attended, but says that even that number was small. She remembers having to read somewhere that there was actually one—a Black female professor—in African American Studies. She states that at some point, the English department also had a visiting linguist, and then they hired a Black woman, and so she felt like she was in ‘heaven’. Barbara remembers this fact so clearly because her senior year was the first time that she ever had Black women professors. This moment was an epiphany for her. Barbara states that for her it was like, “What you mean to tell me [is that] *I* can be a Black woman professor.”

She thinks that seeing Black female professors and having classes with them, her senior year of college, was really good. Those role models helped her to think back to those who had encouraged her. In fact, it had been her creative writing professor—a White male—who had suggested that she really think about going to graduate school because there was probably more money for minorities. She was not really sure about he was trying to say, but she knew that he was trying to be helpful, and that his heart was in the right place. However, Barbara believes that if she had not had have those classes with those Black female professors—right at that exact time during her undergraduate life—that she may not have pursued graduate school in the same way.

It was during her preprofessional training when Barbara was taking composition classes, that she thought about applying to go to graduate school. She had done a lot of reading in her classes, but none of the texts had really made any sense to her. But there was one article by a feminist composition scholar which really stood out to Barbara. The context of the article was

about conflicts in writing. Even though this article actually made a lot of sense to her, Barbara still was unsure as to whether or not she really wanted to be a composition scholar. However, after reading the article, she thought “Okay, maybe there is a place for me in this composition stuff.” It was at this point that Barbara decided to apply for graduate school. Barbara states that when she applied to graduate programs in rhetoric and composition, she did so because there were not many English doctoral programs which had an emphasis in creative writing. She states:

It was all by accident really. I mean the goal was always like “I want to be a writer” but there was just like “Okay I need a day job.” And like I said I really didn’t have a concept of what it meant to be a professor or a scholar or to be in academia. I knew that a lot of teachers get the summer off and that will be a great job for a writer because you get the summer off. ‘But I don’t really like little kids and high school kids I don’t have the patience; I will hurt somebody. So I’ll just teach college.’ I mean that was my kind of attitude going in and what do I need to do to teach college, you know. I had to go and get advanced degrees, okay I could do that. It wasn’t until I entered the Master’s program and kind of realized what grad school was, and even then, I don’t think it was until I [had] really gotten to the doctoral program that it really kind of, I realized that okay this...you can’t just teach college. You’re becoming a whole another person. I mean you’re becoming an academic.

Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations

Barbara says that her typical work week consists of marking or grading papers, having departmental meetings with faculty, along with meetings with graduate students, and writing letters. Barbara’s typical work week is fairly hectic even though she tries hard to set aside time for her own scholarship, including opportunities for conducting the kind of research which leads

to publication. Barbara tries to tell herself that she is setting aside at least one or two days a week where she is just writing or working on her own stuff, but finds that this is hard to do; it never ends up happening. The biggest culprits are administrative and service-based responsibilities. Barbara says that going to work ‘for some meeting’ breaks up her whole day. Once her day is broken up, and disrupted by meetings, she does not get anything done. Because of the nature of her appointment, there is kind of what she calls “double everything.” She spends more time than she would like to going to meetings, but realizes that being in two departments means two of everything. That is, there are always two departmental meetings; this, along with being on various committees in both departments. She also has double the responsibility in terms of her mentoring duties.

The work that she has to do during the week just depends on what is going on at the time. She states that during this past year, that in both departments they had a lot of people going up for tenure, and they also had a couple of people who were going up for promotion. So, often, she states, there is this kind of ‘busy work’ which must be done alongside other meetings, departmental duties, teaching, and mentoring. Barbara notes that for academics there is no break. She does not think one can ‘turn it off’ in the way that some do, like people who live with a ‘9 to 5’ job. In academia, one does not ever leave the office. There is always work that has to be done. She does think that some scholars in the field have found ways to do it—create a 9 to 5 academic position—but she believes that this is really difficult to do, and that email now makes it even harder. Barbara says that email creates ‘more’ work for her because when she receives emails from colleagues, department heads, or administrators, she feels she has to answer them immediately. So, she can never turn it off—the work must be done.

Barbara feels that she has never gotten to be involved in—or have anything to do with—

writing center work or writing program administration, including that of being a ‘WPA’ or writing program administrator. The current situation at her institution whereby the writing program, and English department, exists as separate entities interferes with her being able to work directly with faculty in the writing program or the writing center. Barbara often feels that the faculty must choose sides: either they do work as scholars in composition, as part of the writing program, or as rhetoricians, in the English department. Initially, when she applied, and accepted, her joint appointment, Barbara had assumed that she would be called a ‘rhetoric and composition scholar’ because of background in feminism, cultural rhetorics, cultural studies, and writing. However, her current research focuses primarily on that of cultural rhetoric. Prior to her current appointment, Barbara recalls hearing people talk about the whole ‘rhet/comp divide,’ or the split between rhetoric and composition studies. However, it was not until she began her work as a graduate student—at her current institution—that she got to witness it first-hand. This paradigmatic transition was difficult one. As a graduate student in the English department, Barbara had felt that they were all composition and rhetoric scholars.

For Barbara, her appointment to her first post-academe job was a critical turning point in her career. As a newly-hired faculty member at a large research, tier one institution, she actually joined a small program. Her initial appointment was not in the writing program, nor in the English department, but in some other specialized program. The department was much smaller than the others and had fewer resources. However, Barbara felt that the faculty, and administration, did a really do a good job of protecting junior faculty. For example, they made sure that Barbara had the resources she needed in order to do her work so that she could get tenure.

After gaining tenure, she became an associate professor and gained all of the

responsibilities that came along with having a joint appointment. At first, Barbara believed, like others, that gaining tenure, and becoming an associate professor, was a good thing. However, she quickly discovered that receiving a promotion meant more work and greater responsibility. Barbara's transition from working as junior faculty in a small program, to being an associate professor with tenure—which included working in two departments—proved to be a big challenge for her. She says that, instantly, it became a lot harder to say, “No, I can't do it because I've got to write; so, I can't continue to...” For someone in her position, it is much harder to say, ‘No.’

Overall, Barbara feels that she was fortunate. Her colleagues at her first post-doctoral institution were supportive and really good about letting her know about opportunities for advancement. Junior faculty had access to several resources at the university including internal fellowships and grants that they could apply for in order to do research. Also, many of the senior faculty acted as mentors. These faculty members were good about letting their junior colleagues, know about deadlines for applying for certain grants and fellowships. Some of those faculty members encouraged Barbara to apply for internal funding. Senior faculty also helped Barbara by reading her proposals. Those were just some of the kinds of things that she discovered her colleagues were willing to do for her. She was grateful for their help.

On Being a “Scholar” in Composition

Barbara's work largely involves being a Comp scholar, but she does also does research in other areas. A lot of her work deals with Black feminist issues along with cultural rhetorics. However, even though a great deal of what she does—in terms of scholarship—is not really related to composition, she does not separate being ‘scholar,’ from being a ‘scholar in composition’; and this is due to the fact that composition is, essentially, part of her scholarship.

Barbara states:

I don't really separate it from being a scholar in Comp because, I mean, that's a part of my scholarship because I have this joint-appointment, and I started out in Women's Studies with the first job; [so it] is part of it, but not all my scholarly identity. So, a lot of my work is just, you know...Black feminist issues and hip hop, and hip hop feminism, and is not really related to composition.

When Barbara thinks about which part of her professional identity ended up being at the forefront, she knows that it is not being a teacher. While she enjoys her students, and being in the classroom, that was not her reason for joining the field. She was more concerned with having a position that would promote her writing. She states:

You know, the teaching aspect of it is great, and you know, the classroom is cool, but when I first decided to come into the field I was coming in thinking it was like going to be the job so that I could write. So, I don't think I ever had any kind of special affinity for like, 'Oh, I wanna teach.' You know?

Barbara feels that it would be difficult for an emerging minority scholar to select one of these identities—'educator,' 'teacher,' 'teacher of writing,' 'scholar,' or 'researcher' because for many African Americans, and minorities, they find it difficult to see themselves as scholars. She says that it is difficult for a minority to see him or herself as a "scholar" because the term seems so highfalutin. But Barbara decided she would claim that term, the title of 'scholar.' She also feels that it is particularly difficult for minority scholars in terms of representation. She states:

Yeah you can't kind of hide in a 'sea of whiteness' because you know, so it's... It's a little bit different and then because of the way C[s] is set up I think. If you're a scholar of

color and you're really involved because of the way they like to try and assure diversity by making sure they always have people of color represented. If you're the one that's always, you know, out there, you kind of going to always have to be out there because they're going to always be calling on you.

Barbara thinks it is important to do active scholarship in terms of research, writing, and publishing. To Barbara, the writing and publishing part is crucial because, as she puts it, being a scholar does not mean "being in your mind and living life inside your head all the time." She thinks that the nature of being a scholar is what you share with the world, or as she states, "at least the five people in your field who are going to read it."

Relationship with Others

Barbara is not sure when she made the decision, for herself, early on concerning how she would build relationships with others in the field. She states that there are ways in which individuals learn to adjust. She states that over time, a scholar gets a sense of who is for him or her and who is not. She has actively tried to cultivate those relationships and not the rest. When she enters the departmental meeting, she acknowledges that she will not develop personal relationships, or close friendships, with all faculty, or administrators, but that this is okay. On a personal level, Barbara says that she is very particular about who she lets in to her space, her inner space.

Barbara feels that informal networking is harder for graduate students because they are dependent on professors for leadership. So, essentially, they are leaning on the higher-ups for guidance and not thinking about their own situatedness in terms of being a scholar in the field. Barbara says the same can be said for new professors, or junior faculty, who are transitioning into the professoriate and enter departments as non-tenured faculty or assistant professors. For

Barbara, the process of socialization has become much easier now that she is a tenured associate professor.

Barbara believes that as scholars of color survive, and stay around, that it will get better for emerging minority scholars in composition and rhetoric. However, she acknowledges that graduate school is particularly difficult for minority students because if a student needs mentorship, but does not get it, it becomes a huge problem. Also, in terms of mentorship, if there are no professors of color around, the minority graduate student will have to depend on White scholars or professors for support.

She states that it is very important for scholars of color to develop close relationships with other minority scholars in the field. She states that it is the people an individual meets in graduate school who will hopefully turn into that informal network of peers who support him or her. She says that developing and cultivating those relationships is essential for the survival and continual professional growth of the minority scholar. Such relationships are crucial because colleagues' support for one another, including fighting for 'other' in terms of promotion and tenure results in building one's scholarly reputation.

Barbara thinks that having a joint-appointment has created a situation, for her, in which she has to interact more with White colleagues. This situation occurs regularly due to the nature of her work which includes working with feminist scholars in another department. Because this department is not rhetoric and composition, she has to work a little bit differently with people. In composition and rhetoric, the cannon or literature, provides a centralized place of discourse from which to discuss theories of writing or aspects of the writing process. The issues upon which she and her White, female colleagues have to agree have less to do with theories. Most feminists agree on the fundamentals of feminist theory whereas they focus on work or practice that is

personal, subjective, and focuses on activist research which often involves consciousness-raising through dialogic interaction which may, or may not, lead to internalized personal changes based on reflexivity.

She states that feminism, itself, creates a unique different context for her working relationships as well. Often feminists disagree on the interpretation of how such conversations should be enacted, particular in terms of practice; that is, what is *right* in terms of activism that is feminist in nature? In the past, Black and White feminist scholars have disagreed about the nature of subjectivity in feminist research. For example, Black feminists created *Afrofeminism* as a frame to discuss the unique situations they face concerning being minorities in the professoriate and how that plays out in terms of power relationships; they feel being a woman of color is a reality that is unique, and not expressed adequately in feminist research (Boswell, 2003). In terms of negotiation, for Barbara and her colleagues, the crucial aspect is trying to reach a consensus concerning underlying ideologies and interpretation in order to make crucial decisions about curriculum i.e., Women's Studies, and ones that guide practice i.e., teaching and methods. So, in this way, she has to interact with people, and do so in an effective manner. What is 'cool' for her is that in dealing with feminism, and with feminist concepts, Barbara is able to discuss, and even joke about, issues related to race, including stereotypes. She feels that, in this way, she has been able to bridge both a cross-cultural, and professional, divide with women in her field of study.

Stephen Harper

Background

Stephen Harper, who is in his early thirties, is an associate professor of English at a large, private Northeastern University where he teaches courses in hip hop, and the teaching of English, as well as ones that deal with English in a multi-dialectal society. As part of his current appointment, he also directs the Master of Education program. His primary areas of research in rhetoric and composition include critical and cultural literacy, including composition, and how it intersects with African American Vernacular English (AAVE), or Ebonics. Stephen's also does research in new media or digital technologies, especially that which deals with interactive technologies, such as the Internet, websites, computer games, and multimedia, and either DVD, CD-ROMS, or computer-based learning systems.

Stephen's educational background is in English, philosophy, and psychology. He has undergraduate and graduate degrees in English, philosophy, and psychology as well as a doctoral degree in curriculum development. As an undergraduate, Stephen studied English and philosophy, but he did not originally intend to pursue a graduate degree in rhetoric and composition or writing studies. His first experience teaching writing was as a middle school teacher. He also taught writing at the high school level and at the college level as an adjunct instructor.

Stephen originally became interested in educational policy, or the degree to which policies, including discourses of programs, disciplines or fields, and institutions, and their interpretations are enacted, particularly, concerning how they affect institutions, based on his passion for literature and writing, and also, teaching and learning. His research advances social theory along with the social foundations that give rise to it. For Stephen, education is about

teaching *and* learning, so he focuses on both the singularity of importance concerning both areas, while also acknowledging the significance of their interrelationship.

Stephen's interest in English, psychology, literacy, and curriculum development, led him to pursue research in English Education. He now focuses on how students, particularly minority students, are taught English in public institutions. He is particularly interested in how future teachers are trained to be English educators in kindergarten to secondary education (K-12) in these contexts. Stephen's research background as led to his current work as the program director of a Master of Arts in English Education program at a major university in the Northeastern United States.

Stephen has been interested in minority scholars in composition including Geneva Smitherman and Keith Gilyard, who focus on aspects of language and race, and also Paulo Freire who looks at issues related to literacy, education, and power. Those types of critical theorists, and language specialists, have influenced Stephen's views on the teaching of writing and others areas of scholarship in the field.

Stephen actually feels that the most important part of his professional identity is that of being a researcher because he is curious about things and believes in the continuing quest for knowledge. He feels that his research interests develop in relation to questions that emanate from the field. Stephen became interested in doing research in the areas of writing, language, and new media studies in rhetoric and composition, primarily, because he is an ethnographer by training. As an ethnographer, he looks for patterns based on observing participants in contexts or settings that are natural to them, particularly, the degree to which normal, consistent, or day-to-day activities occur regularly in these environments. As an ethnographic researcher, he attempts to account for those patterns that he finds, and describe participants, as accurately as possible.

Stephen enjoys his work because it lets him do things in areas in which he is very interested; these are fields in which he has studied and knows something about. However, Stephen is aware of the fact that research is very much about the “law of diminishing returns”; that is, the more an individual thinks he or she knows certain things, the more he or she discovers how much he or she still has to learn about them. He notes that it is difficult to disentangle oneself from the personal, particularly in professional environments where being Black, or a member of a minority group, is an identity that is visible, and thus, has to be negotiated by the individual and those around him or her on a daily basis. Therefore, for Stephen, being Black is a political act. He feels that race or ethnic identity is an important part of one’s professional identity, and he states, “Race helps shape who you are. It can never be disentangled from our professional selves.” He feels that African Americans have contributed to scholarship in composition and rhetoric chiefly in terms of the language and linguistic style that they use, including their use of Ebonics, and in regard to other ways of presenting and representing ‘alternative discourses’ which have not been normalized in the field either in terms of linguistic use or in the presentation of formal research.

Early Life Experiences

Stephen’s current research foci are somewhat influenced by his lived experiences, particularly his early-life history. Stephen grew up in a mostly-Black environment, on the east side of a major mid-Western city. His grandmother’s house, where he was partly-raised, was on the east side of town. His neighborhood was all Black because the town was all Black because the city, itself, was all Black. Eventually, Stephen went to a high-school on the west side which means his experiences spread across the entire city. Stephen recalls that the city where he grew up was, at the time, one of the most segregated regions in the United States.

Stephen's mother worked when he was a child, although it was not considered 'legal' work. For his mother, the importance of work was survival. So, she taught Stephen the values concerning what it meant to be a Black man and minority. She told Stephen where he was 'at' in society concerning the culture, city, and the neighborhood. She taught him where was from and what he had to do to survive. Stephen does not recall his father talking to him, or giving him any specific advice, about being a man, being Black, or being a Black man.

Coming up, Stephen lived with his older sister and, for a time, with his grandmother. In all, he was raised with about six siblings. His grandmother was very significant to Stephen growing up because she helped raise him. She gave him, what he calls, 'living advice,' or instructions for how to live one's life. Her advice was based on the way she had lived her own life. Her advice came through to Stephen as 'the rhetoric of example': she got up every morning, worked hard all day, and went to bed after everybody else, and she felt that if others wanted to live a good life, that they should do the same things.

As a child, Stephen became aware of his racial self or 'Nigresence' in terms of developing a Black consciousness, thru conversations he had with his grandfather. He feels that his grandfather taught him a lot about his cultural history. Mostly, Stephen learned about Black history by listening to his grandfather tell stories about his personal experiences. For example, his grandfather discussed his days playing in the Negro baseball league and how he thought it was the greatest baseball league in the United States. Stephen's grandfather instilled in him the idea that as a part of *that* history—Black history—that he should be proud of himself. He told Stephen that he was a role model that other young people could admire and look up to.

Stephen's grandfather's stories would get him excited about learning things. Stephen wanted to know more. So, he started picking up books. In his neighborhood, they had a place

called the Inner City Center. There, he learned about the Black Panther movement of the 1960s and its message of Black empowerment. The center had a lunch program for kids that Stephen would go to as well. At the Center, he learned to recite sayings by Marcus Garvey, and learned about famous activists such as Ella Baker. Stephen said that it was during this time, that he learned about the spiritual essence of Blackness, and about caring for “ourselves” as a culture, as a Black people. He also started picking up poetry books and reading the likes of Langston Hughes, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Nikki Giovanni.

Stephen’s parents did not overtly address issues of race. The 1970s instituted an era of a post-segregated America, at least in regard to the integration of schools and public facilities. For Stephen and his parents, issues related to race had a lot more to do with those persons who could make the decisions that got things done. In his household, those who held positions of power were not called the “dominant” or “majority” group. His mother called them “White.” His mother did not focus solely race, but on the political exponents that involved how an individual was treated based on his or her race or cultural/ethnic background. She discussed the political aspects of race, and the consequences of being Black, and also went beyond this initial analysis to explore issues related to racism. Stephen’s grandparents felt the effects of racism and unfair treatment more deeply because they existed in a situation where racism was more frequent, and more entrenched. So, growing up with two grandparents, he had an awareness of it probably more than other kids. But his mother did not ‘pronounce’ it; it was only later that he began to define racism for himself.

Stephen learned to define racism in terms of who had the power to enact devastating effects on a group of people based on the color of their skin. However, he also saw Blacks as being racist against other Blacks. He notes that some people called this *internalized racism*, but

he just called it *racism*. Stephen believes that when another person hates him because of the color of his skin, and that person happens to share the same skin color, that he or she is still being racist. Or, Stephen says, when individuals, Black or White, feel like ‘we,’ i.e., Blacks, are inferior, or that he is inferior, because he is Black, that this is also racism.

School Experiences

Stephen attended a mostly all-Black public elementary school, and as a child, he felt fairly smart. Even though he grew up poor, he never felt inferior, and he always knew that he was an intelligent child. Overall, Stephen feels that he understood the role or value of education in his life. He says that he also ‘got’ school a little more than other kids, for other reasons. For Stephen, it was simple: he wanted to be in school because he got fed. He got a meal when he went to school. So, for him, it was a safe place where things were appropriate and clean. He liked the humanity in it. The home life in which he grew up was dangerous. There were prostitutes, naked folks, and people fighting everywhere; and this happened almost every night. At home, he did not get to eat all the time. He liked the food that they served in his elementary school. He liked the orange juice that came in the little cartons, and the chocolate milk.

At Stephen’s school, they had tracking programs to keep abreast of the progress of gifted minority students; the ones that they thought had the greatest chances of doing well. But the one thing, he notes, is that in a mostly Black city, and a mostly Black neighborhood, what you do not see: racial segregation in regard to who were the ‘good’ kids and who were the ‘bad’ ones. In his city, and at his high school, when students were tracked, the smartest kids in the school were Black, and the kids that did not do so well were also Black. So, it was not this racial categorization that many people experienced in post-segregated where White kids were ‘up here’ and doing well, and Black kids were ‘down here,’ doing poorly, and getting suspended. In his

school, all the kids who got suspended were Black because the whole school was Black; and all the kids who got acclamations were back, too, because the whole school was Black. So he did not experience any kind of tracking or categorization based on race.

Stephen's classes, on the other hand, may have been an issue, but that was mainly because he says, he probably came from the 'bottom of the pit'. However, Stephen made the most of it. Stephen feels that he seemed to excel in spite of his situation, not because of any kind of meritocracy, or hard work, but maybe, he says, due to a lot of luck. Ultimately, he feels that he was able to excel in spite of the situation, a pretty interesting situation.

Stephen states that they were a lot of obstacles—the obstacles of development of adolescence. He states “you would start liking girls.” He says there was the law of street life; a person needs money, and he does not have any, then he has to hustle. Stephen says:

You are in a situation where other people are experiencing the same life struggles. And so at some point there isn't the kind of human organization that's going to usher the best that' in us, cultivate the best that's in us.

He felt that he certainly experienced that—the lack of organization. And to him that was a barrier. He noted that a lot of times he felt like his teachers and his schools did not operate as efficiently as they could have; and in some ways, he acknowledged that they did what would they had to do, what they could do—the bare minimum. For Stephen, his early schooling, including elementary and junior high, school was a lot different. He feels that during his early schooling, his teachers seemed a little bit more caring, although there were still some organizational and community issues. Many African Americans, in the local communities, were still not involved in the schools and the school network.

Stephen attended a predominantly Black high school. He remembers there being one

White female in his school. His school had around 5,000 people, which was rather large number of people. However, his graduating class consisted of about 480 people, which was small considering the size of the high school. Because of all the things that were going on around him, Stephen felt like he had to find ways to organize his time. Sports helped Stephen to organize his life. In high school, Stephen played every sport: he played football in the fall, swam in the winter, and played tennis, baseball, and ran track in the spring. Sports helped him to stay in high school. It gave him somewhere to go. He needed somewhere to go because he did not have anywhere to go. Stephen did not want to be on the streets because he had seen all kinds of bad things happen on the streets. So, sports gave him something to do. Stephen also feels that he's a very competitive person, so sports allowed him to push himself and get the most out of himself that he could.

After he got out of high school, Stephen asked himself where he wanted to go. He wanted to do something after high school because he did not want to end up on the streets, like those old men he saw walking around downtown with brown paper bags. Stephen knew that he wanted to go to college, but he did not think he could afford it. He did not know anything about going to college or how to pay for it. He just knew that it was very expensive. Stephen knew that he was not getting scholarships, so he needed some options. Feeling like he had no options, and little choice, he went to enlist in the Marines. At the enlistment office, they have him a test to take. Stephen took the test and scored 100% on it. Next, they gave Stephen cards with special characteristics and principles printed on them such as "honesty" and "integrity." After they gave Stephen the set of cards, they instructed him to arrange those concepts in order from most, to least, important. Stephen decided to create a circle because he could not rank them. To him, they all seemed pretty important. After he took the test, the lady at the recruitment office said, "We

can't take you.” To Stephen, it was like she was saying: ‘I’m not going to take you.’ The recruitment officer told him, “You’re too smart for this. I want you to go to college.” She informed Stephen that he could go to his high school guidance counselor in order this individual about going to college. Stephen told her that he had some serious financial issues, however, the recruitment officer informed him that colleges had financial aid (the first time he had heard about this), and that such institutions could waive the application fee. For Stephen, whatever application the high school counselor had was going to be *the* application. So, he went to the guidance office at his high school, filled out the one college application they had left, and got into college.

College and Graduate School

Stephen was the first person in his family to go to college. He attended a large undergraduate institution in the upper Midwest. He chose to major in English because he loved writing. He simply loved to write. Support from mentors, such as Dr. Geneva Smitherman, kept Stephen from dropping out of his undergraduate institution during his first year. He read Malcolm X, and some of Smitherman’s work, including *Soul ‘N Style* (1976), while he was still in high school. In fact, one of the biggest turning points in Stephen’s career was meeting Geneva Smitherman.

For Stephen, the context in which he attended school was very different from his hometown; it was too different. He felt out-of-place in his new environment. He was confused, and did not have a sense of who he was, even though his hometown, and his undergraduate institution, was in the same state. Over time, Stephen discovered that he could take lessons that he had acquired from his time spent at the State University which could make him a *whole* person in ways that his hometown never could. But at the time, he just wanted to be back in his

community and speak ‘his’ language: the ‘neighborhood’ talk or form of Black English he knew well, and be around people who were a lot more familiar to him. Stephen did not want to deal with the silence of racism, the silent kind of racism. Stephen states that you have this very loud racism that screams at you. For example, the kind of hatred a Black male deals with when he walks through a shopping mall. This is a hatred that is visible. And then he says, there is the silent kind which is what he felt on the campus of his undergraduate institution.

Stephen considers prominent African American scholar, Geneva Smitherman, to be his academic mother. She kept him from quitting college during his first year: she latched onto him and would not let go. Later on, he had decided that he was not going to get a Ph.D., but Smitherman pushed him. She encouraged Stephen to go to graduate school, and told him, “You have got to get a Ph.D. You’re brilliant.” Smitherman told him that he should do it, and so he did it. She has been, and continues to be, a major support, and mentor, in his life. Stephen also met a prominent African American female literature professor who helped and encouraged him along the way. He says that those two African American female scholars enriched his college life in ways that he cannot begin to describe. He states, “There’s no language for it.”

Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations

Stephen has been involved in writing, and the teaching of writing, for a while, and those experiences have afforded him a great deal of exposure in regard to writing program coordinators and directors. Mostly, he learned about writing programs through his relationships with faculty at his undergraduate and graduate institutions. The program that he directs at his current institution is, in large part, modeled after what he learned by observing other writing programs, and the directions that they take.

Stephen’s overall sense is that there is a movement inside of composition studies that is

progressive. He feels that the theories in composition are embedded in some of the same social ideas that drive him to teach and conduct research on literacy in the lives of urban youth looking generatively at the influence of Black culture and pop culture. Stephen acknowledges that, inevitably, there is some tension concerning social justice and theory in theory, and perhaps, there will always be. He believes, however, that progress in this area will be lost unless those individuals, like him, begin to articulate theories of practice concerning what they are actually doing. He explains that it is one thing to think about writing and come up with theories of writing. It is another thing to practice it, and structure, it.

Stephen's appointment is a tenure-track position. He feels that his current status affords him some leeway in regard to having a larger vision concerning the use of his platform to make the world a bit more equitable. In this way, Stephen is able to make his contribution. Stephen's main goal is for his work to be transformative. The biggest challenge he is facing is the one that he is facing now, and the one that he thinks he will continue to face for the rest of his career—trying to present work that can somehow make the world a little better, particularly for the people who come behind 'us' or those who lead. He states that this trying to lead a legacy of justice is a hard job. Stephen uses pain theory to define this kind of thing typifying justice and social injustice. Pain theory is the idea that no one will be able to get through life without experiencing some kind of pain or loss. Sometimes, this pain is caused by individuals, but some of it is caused by living in a world that is simply unjust. Stephen feels that, in a sense, this is the quintessential definition of *injustice*: the inner struggle that we wage, knowing that, in the end, somebody's going to win and somebody's going to lose. And, out of that, people on various sides are going to get hurt. This is the type of injustice that is equivalent to human pain and suffering which is dealt out due to the consequences of interest. So, for Stephen, if that is social injustice, then

social justice is the steps that we can take to heal the pain and the wounds that each one of us experiences. So, in this way, we can begin to break down the wounds of people in certain categories based on groups. Stephen believes that it is important to pin point what those wounds are so that we can engage specific practices and enact pedagogies which articulate and address those issues. He also feels that we can look at pain a bit more holistically, and in general, begin to think about how we can envision, and create, a society that inflicts less pain. This kind of work is tenuous, but it is worthwhile; and he knows that this is work that he has to continue to do.

Stephen uses terms like ‘organic intellectual’ and ‘public intellectual’ to describe his current work as a composition scholar. He feels that his role is that of a public, organic, intellectual who can encourage others’ hope and promote change through a process of continual activity. He defines organic intellectuals as ones who talk about the grass roots work, or local community work, that needs to be done and how individuals need to participant in grass roots work. In terms of intellectuals, Stephen talks about public intellectuals, meaning that ‘we’—the celebrity, the intellectual—make a commitment in the sense of making our work accessible beyond the limited view of the academy. To him, the concept of ‘public discourse’ is of particular importance. So, as a Black scholar, he sees himself as joining in a commitment; a commitment that is necessary. For Stephen, all work is a kind of propaganda; it is political.

Stephen’s experiences with his colleagues have been very interesting because a certain psychology takes over concerning Black scholars and intellectuals in the professoriate. He states that there is an issue with Black scholars and professionals. There is a certain pressure and some of his Black colleagues feel this pressure. They have the belief that they are being judged by their colleagues, who are predominantly White. Although they do not have to, they feel as though they need to ‘sell’ themselves and smile with a ‘big ole’ grin.’ Stephen simply refuses to smile in

front of his colleagues. He talks about the pressure which affects some Blacks in the academy:

...[T]hat is, Black professors are some of the most f*cked up people you will meet. And I say that in all kindness, and I say it as an activist. And it's because we have 'chips on our shoulders'. Most of us don't believe that we deserve to be here in the first place. There are the other ones who see you as a threat to their job security. There are others whose insecurities are so entrenched that they feel like to align themselves with other African Americans—it's not only a threat to job security, it makes a certain pronouncement about them as radical, right?

Stephen explains that this is how skewed their imaginations are—these Black intellectuals. They actually believe that if they befriend other minority faculty, that their White colleagues in the program, department, and institution, are going to look at them in some diminished way. For Stephen, such thinking is the true embodiment of W.E.B. du Bois's idea of 'double consciousness' in which one always sees him or herself thru the eyes of others, particularly the dominant, majority-White group. Stephen would like to tell those Black scholars who think this way to shut their eyes and simply pay attention to what their needs and interests are so that they will be able to see the world wholly in a different way.

Stephen feels that it is essential and important to maintain and develop close relationships with other minority scholars. Stephen says that it is very important to one's career because these are the people who are going to read and cite the work of emerging minority scholars. He says that neophyte minority scholars should not care as much about the field's larger majority because many of those intellectuals will simply be 'flipping a coin' in terms of choosing to read the work of minority scholars. They may not be simply as interested in that material or those ideas. He feels that people of color will, generally, have similar areas of concern. Minority scholars in the

field of composition studies already see this: minority scholars are reading the work of other minority scholars and they will continue to do so. When an emerging minority scholar reads the work of other minority scholars, he or she is creating a conversation within his or her 'own' cultural, or ethnic, scholarly community that will be viable, and able to sustain him or her.

Stephen acknowledges that it is just as important to grow that community; it cannot just remain 'us,' the minority, Black, or Latino/-a communities. Minorities have to put their own ideas, interests and concerns out there—those things that we feel should be studied about us. Minority scholars have to demand other people pay attention to the things that concern them. Blacks, for example do not own 'us' and 'our' ideas. Stephen states that such scholars have to demand that other people take their concerns, seriously, and begin have a conversation about them, particularly in order to make those things as much a part of majority scholars' research agendas as those of other areas of interest. Such concerns must be taken into account as legitimate areas of inquiry, not as token or novelty concepts which are often espoused as specialized topics or alternative discourses.

Stephen says that he does not try to break any barriers. It depends on the person. It also depends on the situation. Stephen feels that his colleagues are very supportive: they leave him alone. He says that he cannot ask for anything more than that. He has been able to teach African American literature as well as composition courses in the expository writing program. And he has had some incredible White colleagues. One White colleague, who is his faculty mentor, knew his work better than the Black scholars at his institution. This mentor could understand his work in ways that that his Black colleagues could not. Stephen often turns to this mentor if he has an emotional or task-related situation that he needs handle in regard to the program he is directing in the department. Stephen states that he is not going to turn to a close-minded

colleague on either side: one who listens to only Blacks or Whites. Nor is he going to privilege any kind of narrow casting which might limit his own professional growth and stop him from contributing to the larger cause of human equity, and justice, in any way. Stephen is willing to take on anything, or anyone, who is going to help him to enlarge that scope, and also help him with his project.

Seth Russell

Background

Seth Russell, who is in his mid-thirties, is currently an assistant professor of English and Rhetoric at a large, private Northeastern University where he teaches first-year writing, and practicum courses including composition theory, research methods and methodology, as well as political courses that deal with discursive rhetoric and the politics of language. In addition to his work at the university, he has attempted to take some academic pursuits off-campus, by doing some community work, and also, some community teaching. Thus, he considers his work in composition, and the teaching of writing, to be a major part of his “public world,” as well.

Seth’s current research in English includes rhetoric and composition, African American rhetoric, technology theory, and technical communication. He became interested in doing research in African American rhetoric and technology based on his experiences watching so many young African Americans, especially male, fail in their attempts to do well, and pass, their undergraduate writing courses. In fact, growing up, he had watched many of those young men drop out of high school, altogether, even before they reached graduation. His current focus deals with the literacy practices of young African Americans and the ways in which their use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Ebonics, or urban-based AAVE, can be used as a tool for literacy learning and training via their writing in the composition classroom.

Seth's initial interest in the study of English was based on his experiences taking courses in literature, and Advanced Placement (AP) English, in high school. Originally, he was motivated to study rhetoric and composition because he wanted to teach high school English; and, although he did not have a way to conceptualize it at the time, Seth was aware that something was happening with language, and minority students, in the classroom. Seth's continued interest in African literacy led him to pursue an English major in college. However, when he began college, he had an altogether different interest: engineering. He changed his major to English during his sophomore year after becoming bored with his science and engineering courses. Eventually, Seth gained both graduate and undergraduate degrees in English. Seth got his first chance to teach writing while working on his doctorate. As a graduate teaching assistant, he taught courses in first-year writing, African American literature, and technical writing.

For Seth, race, and cultural or ethnic identity, is an essential part of his professional identity. He feels that it is important to understand, ecologically, one where comes from. Seth thinks such contexts, including people, and attitudes, shapes the kind of person that an individual becomes. He feels that, as individuals, we spend time defining and redefining who we are based on specific interactions while negotiating concepts; especially, the ones that we encounter growing up. Seth believes that we negate or affirm certain realities, consciously, or unconsciously, and then them into our own ideological frameworks. We do this by reconciling our own realities with the experiences of others. He believes that understanding those experiences allows us to clarify and expound on our notions of "difference."

Overall, Seth feels that African Americans have made significant contributions to scholarship in rhetoric and composition, particularly in the area of African American rhetoric. He believes that the current professoriate has an amazing collection of rising scholars who are

focused on language issues and extending the work of prominent scholars such as Geneva Smitherman, Keith Gilyard, and Jacqueline Jones Royster. Also, he thinks over the last several years, African American rhetoric has been emerging as a sub-discipline and is attracting scholars; he believes it is an area in composition that is gaining momentum and can have some power. The third area of significance, for Seth, is that of literacy scholarship. He calls this area, *African American literacies*, and feels that prominent scholars such as Beverley Moss and Elaine Richardson continue to make headway by doing powerful work in literacy research. Seth's hope is that, in the future, more African American scholars will choose to work in the area of digital literacy. Currently, he feels that David Kirkland is one such scholar. Some of Kirkland's current research focuses on issues that deal with minorities and technology, even though much of it deals with education.

Seth also feels that the most important part of his professional identity in regard to being a teacher, teacher of writing, educator, or scholar, is that of being a mentor. He feels that being a mentor is the most important aspect of his professional identity because in this role his practice is transparent: it allows emerging scholars to see what goes on in terms of the process and what it is actually like to be a scholar. Seth believes that, as mentors, it is important to be willing to talk through the things that they are thinking in terms of their own careers, including the things they plan for and the things they have to do.

Early Life Experiences

Seth's neighborhood was not mixed much racially, but it was somewhat more diverse in terms of social, or class, stratification. The extent to which the neighborhood was mixed class-wise was degrees of poor or those living in poverty. Seth says that he, and his family, and other families in the neighborhood, kind of romanticized the situation: everyone thought of themselves

as middle class no matter how poor, working class, or whatever, they all were. This kind of thinking was widely prevalent during this time. But he recalls that where he lived, it was definitely 95+% Black, and was very much a place with varying degrees of poverty, with a portion of working class families.

At this particular time, the school district in which he lived was going through a lot of turmoil due to the ‘so-called’ desegregation of the 1970s; so-called, because much of the time it meant that Black students were bused to White schools in mostly White neighborhoods, and not, vice versa. In his home, mainly because of the historical context, there were many discussions concerning injustice and racial discrimination. In fact, it was a frequent topic of conversation among parents mainly because Seth, himself, ended up having to be bused to a racially-integrated school. Seth does not remember having had a lot of explicit conversations with his parents about race, specifically, nor his own role as a Black person in society, or what it meant to be part of a dominant-minority group. But, there were a lot of conversations about things that were actually happening in the local neighborhood, and in the community, and those things were discussed on the local and national news. Questions about race and justice, and injustice, were dealt with openly in those ways.

Growing up, Seth’s father gave him specific messages about being a responsible Black man, although he does not recall his father giving him a lot of specific advice concerning race. So, for example, his father’s first talk with him about sex and relationships was something like, “Look, you bring something into this world; you’re taking care of it. No ‘ifs,’ ‘ands,’ or ‘buts.’ You’re going to be there.” Seth states that even with other topics, the message, was be similar—be responsible. When he thinks back on it, those messages came pretty early and fairly often. Basically, they were, ‘You’ve got to handle your business out here. You’re got to focus on what

you're supposed to do.' Seth's mother was more direct in giving him advice about what it meant to a minority and a Black man. There were those times when she specifically addressed issues related to race and being Black. There are two sets of memories that come to mind for him. One memory has to do with political events as they were reported in the news. His hometown was going through some interesting moments when it came to some Black politicians in the area; so, sometimes these events would spark stories. Other times, such discussions involving race had to do with what his parents did for other kids around the neighborhood; he says that every now, and then, that would lead to some kind of reflections, or admonishments, or whatever.

Seth's awareness of his racial identity came at an early age. He recalls a couple of racist incidents that occurred in the shopping plaza near where he lived as child. But he can recall a specific incident that occurred when he was just four years old. His parents were teaching him how to read, and so, his mother would often take him to the local neighborhood library to pick out books. There was this one occasion in which someone was very disrespectful to his mother. Seth already had a library card, but he was checking out books for the first time. For whatever reason, some kid's parent, from a White family, said something very derogatory to his mother. Seth does not remember the exact conversation, but remembers standing right there, and recalls something being said to his mother about the "little ignorant nigger boy." It was strange because those White folks were not even from their neighborhood. So, after this incident, Seth felt to the need to ask himself questions like "What is a 'nigger'?" So, it was at this moment when Seth was about four, almost five, years old that he realized for the first time that he, indeed, was different.

For Seth, many of the values that he was taught concerning what it meant to be Black or to have a racial identity were implied. More often than not, those lessons were based on the sociocultural context in which he lived, and how he and his family chose to live their lives on a

day-to-day basis. In terms of him being a minority in society, Seth states:

There weren't a lot of explicit conversations about my role, necessarily, but there were a lot conversations about things that were happening in the neighborhood, in the community, in the news locally and nationally. And so, questions of race and justice were dealt with openly in those ways. Our school district was going through a whole lot with 'so-called' desegregation in the '70s. That was a frequent topic of conversation cause I ended up being bused; that kind of think. The only way in which the notion of I having some role to play would come up because I was one of the kids in the neighborhood who was kind of seen as being smart, 'taking care of business' or whatever. Every now and then, there would be some idea that I was supposed to be some [kind of] an example or supposed to somehow reach out to other kids or something like that, but that was about it.

He thinks that much of that knowledge was implicit in certain ways due to the fact that his family, particularly his parents, always carried with them the notion of community consciousness. He was always aware that things were not just about him—or about oneself. His parents taught him that things were not just about them, his family. A lot of this message came through based on the things that his parents would do. For example, it did not matter how little money his family had, including how poor his family was at the time, or how little education they all had, or what things he might have had to deal with; it was always clear to him, growing up, that he was part of a larger community. For Seth, there were those amazing moments when, for example, his mother would teach neighborhood kids to read. For a long time, kids in the neighborhood would come to his parent's house and work on their homework; they knew they could come, hang out, and do whatever. Some of those kids called it, 'table-school.' Seth's

mother had barely gotten past the ninth-grade, herself, but tutoring those kids was something she cared about and enjoyed doing. Seth's father also retained an active presence in the neighborhood by coordinating and organizing a community-based theater group. The local troupe had a pretty interesting run for a couple of years.

The notion concerning the importance of taking care of members of one's community came thru in the way his parents treated others. So, even it was not explicit, it just the fact that his parents would, for example, always make it a point to make space for the neighborhood kids to join them if they went camping or went to the park. At times, as a kid, Seth would think: "Yo, we are trying to figure how we goin' eat. Why do this?" It was at those times, that some of those implicit lessons became more explicit. He remembers his father looking directly at him and saying: "Look, no matter how much it might seem like it is with us from day to day, you always have room. You always have money; you always got something to be able to give. Y'know, to do something for somebody." Watching his parents engage in helping others in the community was powerful for Seth because he was well aware of the different ways in which his parents struggled, including the challenges they faced, but even so, they always had that consciousness. For Seth, being able to look back on those moments, as an adult, and see that consciousness has had a profound impact on him in terms of the person that he is trying to become.

In addition to his parents, there were several other people who were significant to Seth's life during his childhood. In his neighborhood, he had a couple of his good friends whose parents were kind to him and very supportive. He also had several childhood buddies, some of whom were like his extended family. There were also the cafeteria workers at his elementary school who were a little more distant; they did not live 'right there' in his neighborhood, but they still had an active presence. Being part of a close-knit community also meant that news about

him and his buddies was always coming home: his parents were always aware of what he and his friends were doing. There were also the people who owned businesses in his neighborhood.

There was a small shopping plaza in the neighborhood that was actually named after the late, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the famed leader the Civil Rights Movement. Seth frequented some of the shops there and knew some of the shopkeepers. His first job had been working as a sweeper in the record store. Sometimes, some of his dad's friends would come over or visit the shops. They would spend time drinking together, playing cards, or singing some old blues songs. Seth states that a lot of significant conversations would happen in those moments. There are many folks that he could name, but those were just some of them.

School Experiences

Seth did not start out attending an integrated school as an elementary school student. The first elementary school Seth attended was located in his mostly all-Black neighborhood. This school went up to the sixth grade. In the fifth, and sixth, grades he was bused over to the West side of town. This rebusing was part of what Seth describes as the 'so-called' desegregation of public institutions which was taking place all over the country at the time, including in the Midwest where he was growing up. His school experiences brought him face-to-face with the effects of desegregation. More often than not, the policies of desegregation meant that African American students were bused from their neighborhoods which were mostly-Black to areas of town in which the schools and communities were mostly all-White. During this period, many younger African American students were forced to switch schools. The kinds of demographics that were present in the schools that Seth attended began to change. Looking back, Seth thinks that there were about maybe 25-30% Black students in the new elementary school who had been bused from the other side of town. There was a smaller population of Latino students, and the

number of Asian American students was not very significant at the time. The number of Asian American students who attended schools in the area started to increase during his junior high school, and continued to increase later on.

Although demographics in the school system were changing, some of the racist attitudes remained the same. Seth remembers facing discrimination in his new elementary school. There were those moments when Seth was bused over to the new school on the Westside where there were the ‘other’ kids—the White kids. Interestingly enough, both of his teachers—in the fifth and sixth grades—were Black women. In fact, the only teachers Seth had all the way up through school, up to that point, were Black. To him, they were very clear about who they were. When he thinks back on how they handled things from day-to-day, and how they carried themselves, he remembers that they were both very clear about their politics. Both women were very clear about their belief in Black students, even though none of that, necessarily, had to be announced. So, in that sense, he was not necessarily treated any differently. Seth acknowledges that there is probably more to unpack there. But he states there were moments where the White kids were rude, the kind of playground stuff that often happens. There were a few incidents, a couple of scrapes here and there, even if he, himself, was not directly involved in the incidents.

There continued to be some significant supports and a few obstacles for Seth as he entered high school. Seth ended up attending two different high schools. The first high school he attended comprised the tenth to twelfth grades. In the tenth grade, he was bused back to the West side to attend a technical school. The school was 30-40% Black and there were very few Black teachers. And although the school was not mostly-Black, it still had the reputation of not being one of the better schools in the district. There were a lot of things happening over there

Seth did his worst that year after being bused over to the technical school. He felt what he

describes as an antipathy towards the Black students by the teachers and some of the administrators. For him, it felt as though the Black students were a kind of intrusion in the school and the neighborhood where the tech school was located. He was convinced from the first day that his calculus teacher did not like Black students. Seth felt like he could not stand ‘us,’ African Americans. Seth felt that this particular instructor’s attitude was palpable based on the way he dealt with things in his class. He says that not every teacher, or administrator, was as vocal in his or her feelings as his calculus teacher, but the antipathy just hung in the air—it was not necessarily directly reflected in the personal attitudes or behaviors of teachers. For Seth, there was something that he could not quite put his finger on, but he never felt comfortable at the technical high school. During his time there, he cut classes for the first time. He was not actively engaged in his studies.

In the eleventh and twelfth grades, he was brought back to a school which was almost in his own neighborhood. There were significant supports for Seth at the new high school he attended. The student population was 60-70% Black, but had a significant number of White students. There were younger teachers at this high school. Somehow, their attitudes seemed different from those at the technical school. Seth feels that the Black students who were on the honors track at this particular institution were taken far more seriously than any of the minority students at the technical high school. At this school, he stayed on the honors, and Advanced Placement, track. Seth states that even his White teachers seemed to believe in the ability of minority students. Seth felt that those teachers were more progressive in their views and more liberal in their politics. He also states that the ways in which the classes were taught was different. So, there were a lot of things happening there. Seth states that he did far better at the new school for a lot of reasons. But, he states, those were the basic differences.

Seth had interests beyond the classroom. He participated in several extracurricular activities while he was in high school. He states that he was a 'nerd' in that sense because he would actively participate, and do well, in afterschool scholastic activities even when he was not performing well in his actual classes. Seth participated in, what he calls, some of the traditional 'nerd stuff.' He was on the chess team. He was also on the academic challenge team. In addition to after school activities, Seth also worked. He took the bus out probably about 10-12 miles from his neighborhood to the 'little' places where he worked after school. Seth says that his main reason for working odd jobs was to make a little money.

Seth started thinking about going to college while he was still in high school; this, even though he did not know what he wanted to do, or what or who, he wanted to be. For Seth, college was just a given, and this was something that was communicated to him from his family. He states:

Um...in high school, in a sense that's what we're talking about, the messages back then were very narrow. They were very much, 'you go out, you succeed, you somehow become a productive member of society, you get a job, pay some bills, have some family or whatever.' It took until later. It took until undergrad for some of [the] things that I'd been thinking about and cared about sort of become crystallized and to find messages around me consistent with that, too. Y'know, because the whole wanting to be a chemical engineer thing was a certain sense of professionalism: 'Oh, that's [a] status career. I'm going to make a lot of money.' Y'know, it took me a whole to kind of get closer to what was in my own soul versus what I thought I was supposed to do. And y'know, that developed in undergrad.

This period of time was a long time before tracking. This was before schools selected the

Black kids whom they considered to be the ‘brightest’ ones; those whom they thought had the most potential, and therefore, were most likely to succeed—the ones who could do well enough in their high school courses to graduate high school and get into college. For a while, upon finishing high school, he thought that he was going to be an engineer. He says that he was fixated upon this idea for a while—the way a kid fixes on something even when he or she does not fully understand what is involved in it yet. Also, because math and science were his strong suits, it just seemed natural to him that he should become an engineer. It was something Seth could most likely see himself doing and becoming. Of course, all that changed fairly quickly when he got to college. Seth is happy that his plans changed, but initially, that is what he thought he was going to do.

College and Graduate School

Seth attended a large state university in the Midwest. He had applied to other schools but the Midwestern State University that he eventually chose to attend, what he felt, was his only realistic option. The primary reason that Seth chose to attend his undergraduate institution was because he knew his family was financially ‘strapped,’ and that he could not afford to go anywhere else. He pretty much knew that he had to stay home. He was not getting any help financially. This university was the least expensive, and he knew that whatever little financial aid that he got would cover it.

The Midwestern State College that Seth attended was a predominantly White school that had been going thru some serious issues. He states that this institution had been chartered as an urban university that was supposed to serve an urban population. The town itself was 50% Black and was becoming more than 50% Black, at the time. But to Seth, and many others, the university had consistently neglected that mission—addressing, and serving, the needs of the

immediate community. Also, just before Seth arrived at the university, there had been major incidents in which locals had accused the state university of institutional racism. People had charged, outright, that the institution was racist ‘to its core’ and that is just how it operated. Seth says this politically-charged energy was still there when he arrived. He states that the university was probably only about 10-12% Black, in terms of enrollment at the time, and that was being generous. But, the city was about 50% Black, at least. Seth was actively involved with the population of Black students on campus. However, the local community whose residents taunting to the university by collecting saying: “Oh, no! We refuse to let you get away with this.” So people were placing demands on his institution, saying, “You will get right this way.’

Originally, Seth chose to major in engineering in college, but that did not last but two quarters. By the middle of the second quarter, he had already ‘jumped ship,’ deciding to change his major to English. What influenced his decision to change his major to English in college were the classes he had taken in high school. It was not his college writing courses, because he felt that his first-year writing classes, English 101 and 102, pretty much ‘stunk.’ But, his Advanced Placement (AP) English class in high school did a lot to spark a love of language, and a love of literature; and this was on a level that was never a part of how English was taught to him before, and so he thinks that spark is what carried him over—what led him to ‘switch it up’ and become an English major.

Seth, along with one of his colleagues and friends, were among the first African American students to attend the university, complete the English major, graduate, and then, go on to do graduate work. They never really considered their progress to be part of a process of cultural or racial or cultural integration because there had been other Black English majors before them. However, over time, they both became aware that their success in the program was very

important. There had always been the specter of the remedial Black student: the perennial African American students who struggled in their first-year writing courses. Seth says that this was pretty much how the English department had come to view Black students. He feels that this perception in regard to Black students' culpability was somewhat diminished when Seth and his good friend, and colleague, "handled their business" in the department; they completed their Master's work and then moved on to get Ph.D.s. Seth states: "This blew their minds." He thinks it is always amazing how the performance of a handful of minorities can lead to this 'Othering' whereby people make assumptions about the overall intellectual ability, and competency, concerning those who are members of certain ethnic groups. He experienced this first-hand. He was told later that he and his friend really transformed how the English department looked at African American students. This person stated: "You guys came through. You made it."

Seth's goal, aside from wanting to 'make it'—both in terms of graduating from college and becoming successful as an English major—was getting a teaching certificate. His only desire was to complete his undergraduate English degree so that he could get a teaching certificate and go on to teach at his old school. However, his motivation for his chosen field of study, and later, his chosen professional career, changed after careful analysis and reflection of his own educational experiences. Seth was very motivated by a particular kind of pain—watching Black male students who he were every bit as smart as him, getting kicked out of school, tracked as remedial, or just dropping out, altogether, before they graduated high school. Some never made it to high school. He states:

Aside from what I told you, the other issue was— as an undergraduate English major, my only desire was to get a teaching certificate and to go teach in my old high school, if I could, [or] in my old district, if I couldn't. I was very motivate[d] by this kind of...this

pain of watching [African American] boys that I knew were every bit as smart as me get kicked out, tracked-out, dropped out...K-12. I wanted to teach high school English cause I knew something was happening with language and our students even though I really didn't have ways of conceptualizing it then. But, the further I got in the English major, the more, the more analysis of text, the more, bigger theoretical questions really interested me.

As he continued to read and analyze texts, the choice to continue on in graduate school became automatic. Seth thought, "Well, I minus well do a Ph.D." And he also asked himself, "Why're you going to go to grad school and stop at a Master's?" At this point, the desire was 'hatched' in terms of his pursuit of a doctorate in English. Other than his own desire to pursue a particular course of research, Seth did not receive any specific advice from a mentor who told him, "You need to go to graduate school." He did not have anybody say to him that this is what he needed to do. The closest thing he got to a mentor was a woman who worked at his undergraduate institution. She became a kind of unofficial mentor to him; somebody that he just sort of latched onto. Oftentimes, Seth would just go to her office, sit down, and talk. One day when they were talking, she asked him about his plans for the future. He informed her about his desire to go back to his old high school in order to teach kids from his neighborhood. She looked at him and responded by saying, "Would you rather go home and teach kids, or would you rather go to teach the people who're going to teach the kids?" This conversation occurred at a time when he was trying to figure out the 'whole grad school thing'; at this point, he knew that he was interested going to graduate school. For Seth, this conversation, essentially, sealed it for him. He was done working thru it. He knew that grad school was the thing for him to do.

Seth was very active in university life. He was very involved in on-campus activities

including student government. He did a lot with Black organizations on campus, and he was very involved in the English major. Although he experienced some condescending moments during his undergraduate career, overall, he felt that he was generally well-received, and respected by others, in his classes. In addition, he had developed good relationships with some of his professors. Based on his own experiences, Seth encouraged some of his friends to take classes in the English department, particularly with professors whom he knew. However, Seth's friends who decided to take courses in the English department ended up having very different experiences from the ones he had. Seth feels that as composition scholars, we, take for granted the current field of rhetoric and composition—the one that is able to readily deal with diversity, and also, diverse perspectives; the one that is able to deal with students and what they are bring to us, as composition scholars and teachers of writing. Some of his friends got completely “broken down” in their classes. Those undergraduate English professors had no interest dealing with diversity or in being open to students or what they brought to the classroom. In this way, his understanding of what Composition meant as a discipline started to evolve during this time. He states:

Even though I couldn't necessarily see it then, the way in which it evolved makes perfect sense. When I was in undergrad, I thought I wanted to study African-American literature. You know, literature was it—Harvard Renaissance, Black Arts Movement... You know, I had no idea that Rhet/Comp, One: was emerging as a discipline, Two: that it would be as powerful as [a] vehicle for dealing with questions of language and justice and a just society. But when I look back at the evolution—not just I terms of what evolved, but how it evolved—it makes perfect sense to me now. So, it just seems like all of the strands that I was thinking about, caring about, working toward; it seems like they have all come together now.

He watched his friends, the people whom he cared about, take classes in the department and fail. One of his friends knew something was wrong and wanted to drop the English course that he was taking, but Seth encouraged him to stay put. Seth told him: “He’s a good professor.” What Seth had failed to consider was his own situatedness in this milieu: his educational background had prepared him to do well in college. He was somebody who had taken AP English in high school. And he had always been very passionate about language and literacy. In whatever ways he felt that he had been slighted, he had always found ways of “cutting through.” His friends had very different experiences, partly due to their own backgrounds, but also due to their motivation.

At this time, Seth did not have an acute awareness of his “place”—his own location—particularly, in comparison to that of his friends. And so, his desire to move on, and do Ph.D. work in English, was born out of watching episodes like this, watching a lot of his peers automatically placed into special studies or remedial kinds of courses. So those were some of the things that affected him as he came through the major.

Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations

Seth has an extraordinarily busy academic life which includes consistently having to a great deal of beyond normal business hours i.e., 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, including time spent teaching or prepping for classes. Seth says that he is always working on the weekends and in the evenings “in some way or other.” He laughs when someone asks him, “How many hours do you work per week?” This kind of question becomes funny to him because he thinks that people outside the academy assume that academics or scholars live some kind of ‘life of leisure.’ Seth states, “[like] we drop in, teach a couple of classes, and then ‘be out.’” But, he would say that he teaches six credit hours a semester. So, if six of his hours are actually spent in the classroom,

then anywhere from six to twelve hours a week are spent just preparing for that class time. He also says, depending on what is happening in a course, anywhere from three to eight, to ten hours, could be spent reading, or responding, to student work. He says he probably spends about five to six hours a week directly mentoring students from those who come by to see him in to his office; this includes his graduate students. Then he spends another four or five years on committee work, or in committee meetings, whatever work prep is needed, and in whatever case; as it is, this requirement is different.

In considering his responsibilities in terms of teaching and service, including committee work, Seth also has to do quite a lot of reading as part of his research agenda. Also, the writing that he has to do as part of his research is essential and this is worked into hours that are spent not teaching, not prepping for classes, and not doing committee-related work. He states that even if he is at home attempting to be a 'lazy bum' that he is still churning out ideas about what is happening in class. And he might still be trying to figure out what is happening in a chapter that he has not touched upon in a few weeks. He is also trying to plan, and organize, what he has to read; also, he is still reading a piece of something, and leaving it alone. So, in many ways, as a scholar, Seth feels that he is working 'around the clock' even if he is not directly involved in work related to a meeting or some class. Seth puts in 'hard core work time' every week because he believes in trying to leave it alone on the weekends. Overall, Seth says he works anywhere from 40+ to 50 hours per week.

Even though he has never been an administrator, Seth's views on writing, and the teaching of writing, have been duly influenced by his exposure to writing center work. In graduate school, Seth avoided anything remotely related to WPA work because he did not want to be typecast as someone who only wanted to direct writing programs or do writing center work.

Since that time, Seth has gotten the chance to learn more about how things work, and get done, in terms of running writing programs, and doing writing center work. Based on his experiences, he has come to understand that there is much to value theoretically, practically, and administratively. He states:

No, I have learned that...I have learned that the programmatic side of what we do in Composition is every bit as rigorous as the work many of us do to write that book, to prepare those classes, to write those conference papers, even though WPA work still doesn't get the respect it deserves. I have come to see it up close, and personal, to see the ways and—you know, sometimes you don't know how the 'sausage gets made,' you know, you always have an appreciation of how the 'sausage gets made,' but then you see it, so.

His respect for his WPA colleagues has only grown over the years. One of these contacts has been Seth's faculty mentor who had previously run the writing program at his current institution. In actuality, he had heard stories before he arrived at the school. However, he is fortunate because his current position allows him to have invaluable contact with the staff, many of whom have done some form of WPA work. Thus, various committees, and chairs of the committees, including his departmental chair and the writing program director, and also, the director of undergraduate studies, have all afforded him a range of exposure concerning the nature of WPA work.

For Seth, there have been many critical junctures in his professional development. He talks about the critical turning points in his career, the things that stressed him, but also advanced his work. There were the times when he had to face himself, particularly, in terms of his scholarship, including his ability to complete the work, and accept his role as a researcher, and

scholar, in the process. The first critical turning point that he faced was all the stress and worrying over completing the dissertation; the transition of going from “All But the Dissertation” (ABD) to obtaining his doctoral degree. During this period, he went through a time of extreme worry and stress, and he remembers thinking, “Will I ever get it done?” and “Am good enough?” Those kinds of thoughts plagued him until he got it done. He went through the same thing when he was writing his first book. Seth feels fortunate that his first book was, generally, well-received and got a lot of respect. However, in the process of actually revising the book, there was a strange balance, a kind of back and forth, between some real belief in terms of what he was doing— confidence that he was on the right track—and some extreme moments of doubt. Again, he thought, “Will I ever get this done?” He thinks it is just part of *his* writing process. And he believes that it might be all the worrying that actually propels him through completing a project. But, he states, it is kind of rough to have to go about it this way. So, ultimately, he thinks that it would be easier for up-and-coming scholars, if they learned to trust the process more than he did.

The biggest job challenge he feels that he has faced, thus far, has been his Third, and Ten Year, Reviews because of the ways in which he had to describe and account for his work. He says it becomes this huge process: a person has to do all this writing and ‘narrativising,’ or narrative and storytelling, about what he or she has done, when he has always believed in just trying to get out there and do the work. So, this notion of “Now I have to write this 50-60 page document” where he spends time selling himself in terms of what he has done, and what he thinks he has achieved, and then, having to find some language that makes this meaningful for people who might not care at all what those things, or the communities that brought him to the academy, has been pretty uncomfortable for him. But it has also a challenge, too; and, he has been glad, in a weird way, that he had to go through it.

The ways in which his colleagues and coworkers have helped in achieving his success has been multi-faceted. Seth feels that he has been fortunate to have had very supportive colleagues at his current teaching institution; people who share a similar vision for what the discipline should be, and what teaching, and intellectual work, should look like. Right now, he is located in a place in which his colleagues value community engagement. They appreciate this aspect of his scholarship. Seth entered into a department, and a program, where the chair believed very much in what he was doing, and where the faculty had a desire to mentor him. He came in getting, what he feels was, pretty significant respect, even in terms of being a junior colleague. There are some things that Seth wishes could have been different in terms of the mentoring that he received when he first arrived at the institution. He feels that the good feelings, and the desire to mentor a neophyte, particularly in regard to those who say, “We believe in you,” does not necessarily translate into the kinds of structured conversations, and activities, that a junior colleague needs in order to learn and do well. And so, he kind of feels like he still had to figure a lot of things out on his own. Seth does acknowledge that, perhaps, some of what transpired had a lot to do with the peculiarity of his own personality: he is something of a solo soul, and he knows he has to learn to step outside of his comfort zone more. However, he generally believes that when it comes to how departments mentor their junior colleagues, that there probably needs to be more structure ways of thinking about what kinds of structured activities to put together in order to bring junior colleagues thru process of gaining tenure.

Relationships with Others

Seth says that his relationships concerning being a member of the professoriate have been solid. He came into his current position feeling respected and valued by his department. As a junior faculty member, he has been a little bit more ‘low key’ within the college and university,

just trying to protect his time a little bit. His current position requires him to be connected to other departments. Thus, while he is not on the African American Studies faculty, he has been very much involved in their work. For example, he has chaired Masters' defenses and also worked on department search committees. In this way, Seth has, to some extent, been working with a 'second body of work,' the kind that many Black scholars talk about. This is the kind of work that simply involves just being there and being available. Seth knows that is going to be there; visible and active in those contexts. This 'second body of work' means that Seth gets to spend more time mentoring the kinds of students who are looking for minority scholars, like himself. Because of this interconnectedness, he feels that people throughout the university are aware of him even though he is not necessarily intricately involved in a lot the 'bigger' stuff. He is saving that for after tenure.

Seth states that members of his department do not often have conversations about race. His department tries to have honest conversations about race, and so, there are spaces in which he has had those conversations with some of his colleagues. At the same time, he tries to make such kinds of conversations a part of his work; for example, when it needs to happen in a faculty meeting or when it needs to happen in a committee meeting, or when it needs to happen in regard to some aspect of professional development, he acts as a kind of mediator for the department. Seth remembers a specific incident that happened during one of his department's annual fall teaching conferences which happen at the beginning of every academic year. At each annual faculty conferences, all of the programs' part-time instructors or adjuncts, teaching assistants, and full-time faculty, get together to talk about scholarship and discuss key issues related to the profession. At one of these conference meetings, Seth was asked to present a topic and speak on a key issue. He started off by describing a joke often made by Black comedian, Chris Rock. He

explained to his audience how Rock had described, and laughed about, the notion of ‘Rich versus Wealthy.’ Seth segued into discussing issues concerning White privilege based on his explanation of the comedian’s joke. He felt that his presentation on this topic was presented in a far more direct kind of style than anyone probably would have wanted or appreciated. However, he tries to make such discussions involving race, Whiteness, and White privilege, a part of his everyday work. So, although, he might not have these deep ‘heart-to-hearts’ with individual colleagues, he tries to (re)present these ideas in the larger scheme of what he does.

Seth has solid relationships with several of his White colleagues, although he would not say that any of them were particularly close. He says that some of this is just because he describes himself as a ‘solo soul,’ that ‘solo soul’ part of his personality. However, he does feel that he has built some solid connections, and more personal ties, with a few of his White colleagues or coworkers. He says that there are many situations where he turns to his colleagues for their read on a situation, for advice on how to work thru something, or for their thoughts on how to navigate something. However, in terms of emotional support, he does not go there. For emotional support, he calls on his close friends and colleagues, who are usually other African American scholars in the professoriate. He turns to people that he feels that he has an emotional connection with and that he can kind of trust with his inside, internal, or private, life. However, in terms of what is happening at a particular meeting, or in a particular department, including what he needs to know about departmental politics, he definitely turns to his White colleagues.

Seth feels that it is very important for emerging minority scholars to develop close relationships with other minority scholars. However, he acknowledges that where one develops those relationships will vary. He feels that professional conferences are the place where it happens; that is, they provide opportunities for such interactions. Seth says the main reason for

this, in large part, is because at minority scholars' own individual campuses, people may sometimes feel very 'scattered' trying to find their own community. For example, at his university, there is no Black faculty association, or organization, on campus. He believes this is the reason why so many minority scholars feel scattered around his university, and perhaps, in his own department. He is aware that there are some other campuses which are much better about providing networking opportunities for minority scholars. Seth believes that whether it is one's home campus that is the space, or the discipline, or the profession, that it is absolutely essential that a scholar develops those kinds of relationships.

The Meaning of Being a "Scholar" in Composition

For Seth, being a scholar is not just about teaching, writing, or publishing, but also, being involved, and engaged, in terms of practice. He began thinking seriously about becoming a professor by the time he had finished undergrad. Seth knew that he wanted to go to graduate school and obtain a Ph.D., although he was not necessarily sure what was going to happen or how he was going to go about the process. In addition, his personal desires for pursuing academic work stemmed from his motivation to work in the community, especially in order to bring about change in the lives of those individuals who wanted to pursue higher education. Also, he was generally interested in the role of literacy within African American communities. He wanted to see sustainable practices in terms of the linguistic development in those contexts, especially in terms of archiving or preserving such discourses, and in doing so, working to teach and inform those speakers about their significance. Seth began to think: 'How do I combine activist practices in my role as a professor?' Also, as he got further into his Ph.D. studies, he began to consider the ways in which his activism, involving his work local in local communities, could inform his teaching or practice as well as his scholarship. In this way, he thinks about Robin D.G. Kelley, a

professor of American Studies, ethnicity, and history, and his work, *Freedom Dreams* (2002), in which he discusses the polemic undercutting the idea of ‘activism and intellectual work as being incompatible.’ Seth states:

Part of it is—I have got to steal somebody else’s words to share this—but it’s like what Robin Kelly talks about when he says that “intellectual work is activist work, too.” You know, I didn’t have an elegant phrase like that for it, but on some level I knew that doing serious academic work could be, not just fulfilling me personally—because I like thinking about ‘stuff’ or talking about ‘stuff’—, but that it could help us as a people deal with the major questions that we are trying to deal with. I knew that it could be... I knew that I could be some kind of presence for African-American students coming to the university. You know, one of the things I was shaped by was how very, very few African American professors I had. You know, and how a lot times I had to kind of build relationships with staff people, because, you know, we were able to get a few us up in these spaces. So, those are some of the issues that motivated me in that way.

Seth believes that there are three things are crucial parts to being a scholar. For Seth, being a scholar means, first of all, that the person is committed to the search. That is, a person is committed to doing intellectual work. He feels that in many ways that this kind of commitment cannot be measured; it cannot be qualified. Seth states there are those people who would probably produce tons of publications who might not impress man in the field—in terms of being a serious scholar—because his or her commitment to the search might not seem clear. So, first of all, being a scholar means that one’s commitment to the search is clear or that his area of research focus is clearly defined.

Secondly, Seth says that a person who wants to be considered a scholar has to do is

produce. He says that if one is not producing, then he or she is just reading a lot. Seth does not mean to define ‘producing’ as narrowly as having one’s work included in so-called ‘academic publications.’ He states that one can produce in many ways, although he agrees that for most academics, that producing in academic publications is a major part of scholarship. So, he feels that however it is defined, in whatever ‘producing’ means to an individual, that it is okay as long as this person is regularly producing something based on that committed search.

For Seth, the third thing a successful scholar needs is to be committed to wrestling with the big, difficult questions. He does not think that every project needs to revolve around epistemological concerns; however, scholars need to be committed to figuring out the ‘hard stuff.’ For African Americans, the hardest ‘stuff’ is simply being aware of how we live our lives: Where are we able to be all of who we are? How do we locate ourselves? And, what is our own situatedness? That, alone, can be a huge theoretical question. But, nevertheless, as scholars we must be committed to these big questions, the hard questions. What does it mean to be a scholar in the field of composition studies? For Seth, being a scholar in the field of composition and rhetoric means being serious about the business of studying language, and also, conceiving of writing and communication in ways that lead to a more just society. Seth says it is as simple as: “How do we get *free*?” For Seth, it is being committed to that search—for justice and freedom—as it is manifest in language, writing, and communication.

Ali Jones

Background

Ali Jones, who is in his mid-forties, is currently an associate professor of English at a medium, public Southeastern University where he teaches first-year writing, African American, and American literature, and also, ethics of communication courses in addition to teaching a

writing workshop. His primary areas of research in English include computers and technology, and linguistics, with a special emphasis on Ebonics or Black American Vernacular English (BAVE), and the uses of language in writing, and race. Part of Ali's current appointment includes his work with the writing program and his service as the coordinator of the freshman composition essay award contests.

Ali garnered both his Master's, and doctorate, degrees in English with an emphasis in rhetoric and composition. His first experience teaching writing occurred when he was a graduate assistant working towards the completion of his Master's degree. During the past few years, Ali has focused primarily on two areas of research in composition studies: the African American influence on the field of composition studies and the impact of online technology on writing pedagogy. Ali discusses how he became interested in those areas:

As an African American, I had a strong personal interest in African American studies and that personal interest prompted me to focus on African Americans within our field from an analytical and historical perspective. My interest in computer science and technology nudged me towards learning more about the impact of online technology on the teaching of writing.

Ali feels that those scholars, who have influenced his views on writing, and the teaching of writing, have changed since he graduated with his doctorate. Immediately following his graduate work, he felt that he was primarily influenced by Keith Gilyard, Shirley Wilson-Logan, Geneva Smitherman, Peter Elbow, Shirley Brice Heath, Lunsford, Marilyn Cooper, and Shaughnessy, and other scholars, who had provided broad historical overviews about the discipline. However, now that he has been teaching, researching, and writing for the past six years as a post-doc, he realizes that his former dissertation director and mentor, has had the most

impact on his views concerning teaching, researching, and writing. His former dissertation director has been an integral part of his personal and academic life for over 10 years. This mentoring relationship has proved to be a fruitful one for both of them. On countless occasions during his academic career, he has found himself drawing upon the learning that has transpired between him and his mentor based on their exchanges which he calls, “Socratic dialogues” or question-and-answer sessions concerning the nature of writing and how it connects to one’s own interests or passions.

Ali developed an interest in English, and literature, at an early age. In fact, has wanted to be a professional or creative writer since middle school. Even so, he did not intend to pursue an undergraduate degree in English. However, like many undergraduates, he changed his major right after committing to another one during his first year in college. Initially, he declared his major to be computer science, but during the second semester of his sophomore year, he got “burned-out” from spending countless hours in computer labs debugging Pascal and Assembly Language computer programs.” His only other interests, at the time, were in areas of writing, so he declared a major in English with an emphasis in writing. Anyway, by this time, he had taken enough computer science courses—12 hours, in all—to qualify for an additional concentration in computer science.

Most of Ali’s current work revolves around the teaching of writing, and working with his students in some ways, particularly in terms of trying to help them to become better writers. In regard to teaching with technology, he has taught some writing classes online. Part of his practice also includes being reflective about what he does in the classroom. So, in this way, the nature of his work also focuses on how he has come to see himself as a teacher of writing. The other aspect he thinks about concerning his day-to-day activities, including aspects of his

professional identity, is actually doing writing, himself; that is, what it means to be a writer. For Ali, publishing his ideas, and producing scholarship, is something that he consistently spends time doing; he makes this one aspect a priority concerning his professional development.

Ali participates in committee work, outside of teaching, that concerns itself with advocating, or making sure, that students in writing classrooms have their home languages respected. Ali states that his department's language policy committee mainly advocates for students' rights to make use of their own languages in productive ways in academic environments—whether those languages consist of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or Ebonics, Native American or indigenous North American languages, or any form of linguistic varieties used by Latino or Hispanic-speaking students. Ali acknowledges that the only way students learn to use their home languages successfully, and productively, in the classroom is when those languages are, in fact, respected in the classroom.

Ali thinks that cultural or ethnic, and racial identity is important for African Americans, and other minority groups, in the field of composition and rhetoric because they are outnumbered by a majority white population. He states, "Our difference allows us to stand out, and we have to make use of that difference to remind the majority population of the needs of other minority populations." However, he also feels that minority groups have other important interests and goals that do not directly connect to race, or cultural and ethnic, identity; yet, such issues do not appear to get as much attention as the issues that highlight 'difference.' Ali believes that the lack of recognition that minority scholars receive when pursuing areas of interest beyond ones involving race will be problematic for future minority scholars who may not fit into the current schema in regard to what the field calls "minority scholarship."

In terms of his professional identity, and negotiating multiple roles, Ali is not certain as to

whether he can say that one descriptor, including being an educator, teacher, teacher of writing, scholar, or researcher is more important than the other. In general, he tries to categorize himself as an educator. He tries to balance teaching, writing, and research within the limitation of his current 4-4, or four classes per semester, teaching load. Ali does not think that he would be happy just doing research. However, he does not think that he would be unhappy if he focused solely on teaching. He says that he enjoys being wrapped up in his thoughts as he pursues his research and writing interests, especially, as time allows. He enjoys the interpersonal connections he establishes with students as he teaches composition even though he often feels overwhelmed with the responsibility of teaching first-year writing classrooms where the student enrollment caps at twenty-four.

Early Life Experiences

Ali's father did a lot mentoring, and handled most of the disciplinary matters when it came to teaching him and his siblings what was right and wrong in terms of being responsible men and women. His father told Ali that a man takes care of his children or his family. His father talked to him about what it meant to be a strong Black man in terms of taking care of one's wife or partner, and his family, and acting as a role model whom others could look up to. So, Ali and siblings got a lot of those speeches when they were growing up; and a lot of discipline came from their father in that area. Ali cannot say that those were formal talks. They were just chats about how to live one's life. There was also much discussion about going to, or finishing, high school; it was something he often heard.

Besides his parents, Ali also received a great deal of mentoring from those who attended his church. Ali says that in many ways the church impacted his want, or need, to be in English studies, do work in terms of being a teacher, and also apply for minority scholarships. He thinks

that Sunday school was one of those things that provided him with the curiosity to sort of ‘dig deep’ into something like literature. In his Sunday school classes, they used special publications for teaching bible study lessons to children and adults. Along with his peers, Ali enjoyed looking at, and using, those books. Each week, his Sunday school teacher would give him and his classmates their Sunday school texts and assignments. Then, they would meet on Sundays to discuss the lesson; they would sit in a small circle at the back of the church. Students were asked their opinions in regard to the reading. Sometimes, young adults were asked to read certain quotes and talk about their meaning. Those kinds of literacy activities including writing, reading and interpreting text, and participating in small-group discussion were taking place within the church environment; even with respect to utilizing the Sunday school books. In this way, Ali feels that what he was asked to do in graduate school was very similar to what had been asked to do in church. However, Ali acknowledges in graduate school that he and his classmates did not ask, or answer as many questions, or participate in discussion, as he had done in Sunday school. But in Sunday school, they were allowed to talk freely and give their opinions. And for Ali and his peers, there was a little bit of competition in regard to who could give the best responses and get praises from their Sunday school teacher. He remembers this experience as being part of his literacy training. He often reflects on this experience and realizes that there was something going on there. What occurred as part of his Sunday school lesson sort of ‘hooked’ him into wanting to learn more about the reading process, including interpreting text; and this growing curiosity was developing in his Sunday school class. Eventually, Ali aspired to be a Sunday school teacher, himself. From about fourteen to sixteen years of age, the adults at his church allowed him to teach Sunday school. He remembers standing in front of his church and giving the Sunday school lessons. He remembers a lady, who was “eons older,” and called him, “Mr. Teacher.”

Ali's neighborhood, or block, was comprised of several African American families who lived in different houses. He says that it was a close-knit community. All of the families knew one another and he and his siblings often played with the neighborhood kids. Also, most of the families were somehow related to one another: whether they were third or fourth cousins, he and his family were somehow connected to those who lived there. Not all of the families attended the same churches. Some families went to the local Catholic Church, and others attended Baptist congregations. In terms of being together, knowing one another, and playing and socializing, there was a sense of being aware of what was going on in the community. Ali says that parents knew the neighborhood kids and kept a close watch over all of them. For example, if he got into trouble, his friends' parents would call his mom and say, "Your boys are throwing rocks at so and so's house" or "They're taunting Mrs. Emert's dog." Most of the kids were allowed to roam about and explore. He does not remember there being any restrictions on exploration, so he and his friends would always be 'out and about'; they, especially, liked to play in the woods. Ali realizes, now, that this play area was not actually a forest, but looked like it because they were so small at the time. Their real play area consisted of vacant lots with trees on them. He and his friends would explore them a lot. For him, it was a very comfortable place.

Ali says that he and his family talked a lot about church and other types of values in terms of doing what was right and being respectful towards one's parents and elders. However, he did not hear much, if anything, about this idea of just thinking about themselves as minorities, or as something 'less than.' He never talked about that sort of thing with his parents. For him, it was always something he internalized and sort of began to question in terms of why he was different from his White counterparts. Having a racial identity was something that Ali dealt with on the inside. Thus, he states that he really was not taught what it was, or what it meant, to be a

minority. When his parents did talk about being Black, Ali heard a lot of negative conversations and comments. His parents and most people in his community just seemed to be somewhat accepting that, “Yes, there is a difference,” but after that, there was a lack of exploration in regard to what that ‘difference’ meant in terms of being a minority. Ali says there was a sense of “being Black is a good thing.” But in terms of really talking about minority issues, or White issues, including being mistreated, unequal rights, or discrimination, or being mistreated because of one’s race, were things that were not thoroughly dissected. Ali states that he does not have a strong memory of those types of conversations having taken place in his household or within his community.

When Ali’s parents did talk about race, they tried to avoid making pejorative comments about minorities based on racist stereotypes. Even so, Ali can recall hearing some politically-incorrect, or inappropriate comments based on the status quo, being made about other races including Whites, Chinese, and African Americans. But he says, he does not remember such comments being extremely negative. Ali realizes, now that he is older, that although his parents used somewhat politically-incorrect terms for referring to other races, or ethnic groups, they never acted in ways that were racist. For example, his parents never said, “Don’t bring home someone from another race” or “Don’t associate with people who have a different skin color.” He believes that they did not want to instill those kinds of things in their children in regard to becoming separatists or having the desire to set themselves apart from others based on their racial or ethnic categorization. He says they were not that way, themselves. His mother worked at a nursing home and had some acquaintances that were White. His father also had a few White associates. There was this one Black female mechanic who regularly associated with people outside of her race. Ali recalls her describing some people as “being good” and some people as

“being ‘no good.’” She told him that there were some “no good” Black people, and some “no good” White people. Based on their conversations, Ali learned that it was not the case that all people, of a particular racial or ethnic group, were in ‘one camp’ and could be labeled as being good or all bad based on the color of their skin. A person’s character just depended on who they were. Ali believes that both his mom and grandmother felt the same way; they really judged people by who they were and not by the color of their skin.

Although he did not hear a lot about it, Ali knew that African Americans were generally less well off than the White families who lived in town. He could see it. He knew this because Black families, like his own, lived in different neighborhoods from those of the White families. Those White families who did live in Ali’s neighborhood were located in the front of the community, next to the main road. The houses of African American families were located in the back. So, there was an actual physical separation; a sort of line-of-demarcation. His grandmother worked for some of the White households. When Ali and his father would drive his grandmother to her job, they would drive past the White families’ homes. It was evident to him that his family was different from them because he could see how the White families were living. Sometimes, Ali went to the houses with his grandmother when she worked. She would say to him, “When you grow up, I want you to get a house like this.” She would show Ali all sorts of things around the house and say, “This is what they do, and they spend a lot of money on food.” She would teach him what he needed to do in order to live like the ‘White folk.’

School Experiences

The elementary schools that Ali attended were diverse in terms of race and class. The schools were ‘50/50’ in terms of the racial composition of African American and White students, including a mix of a few others. He also remembers there being Native Americans in some of

his classes. However, most of the African American students—because he was somewhat familiar with most of them—were somewhere in the same socioeconomic class that his family was except for a few. The exceptions were those African Americans who lived on the other side of town in nicer neighborhoods; they were considered middle-class and lived in the upper-class Black neighborhoods. He also had a teacher who was a Pacific Islander from Hawaii. But he remembers that there was definitely some diversity in those classes.

As a young child, Ali was left with a particular impression concerning diversity based on how teachers arranged their classrooms. The teachers divided their classrooms so that there were two separate groups of students in each class. One group was placed on the right side of the room, and another was placed on the left. The majority of the students of color were placed in groups, together, within the same classroom. Whites were placed in another group. The groups would be more diverse in some classes, otherwise, Blacks and Whites were put in two different groups. Ali recognizes, now, that teachers, and administrators, were probably doing some sort of ‘creative’ tracking system in regard to monitoring students’ progress as they passed through their educational careers. Ali vividly recalls a time when he was in the fourth grade when he became aware of this difference. There was one class in which he, and the other African American students, was seated on the right side of the classroom, alongside the teacher’s desk, but not directly facing it. The other group which consisted mostly of White students was seated directly in front of the instructor’s desk. The instructor gave select lessons to the group of students who sat directly facing her desk; she gave different assignments to those students who sat on the right side of the classroom. The students in the classroom were aware of the difference between the two groups. They based this difference on belief that the students who sat facing the teacher’s desk were the ones who were more prepared.

Although Ali was acutely aware that he was not one of the top students in his class, he does not feel that he was treated any differently in elementary school based on his race. He does not believe that the African American students were made to feel different by the teachers. There were a few of the more affluent ones, the African American students who lived in the nicer neighborhoods on the other side of town, who were placed in the same groups with the White kids. But, Ali says that the teachers did not treat those upper-middle class Black students, or the other group, in a negative manner. He thinks that he as well as the other students just sort of figured out that the students who were put in groups on the other side of the classroom were given different assignments; and students knew that those assignments were a little bit more difficult, perhaps. Ali was in the group with the average students or those who tested on, or at, grade level. He figured out that the other group was supposedly a little bit ahead of his group because, sometimes, they had a different textbook. So, Ali knew that the other group used the textbook for the smart kids. The teachers knew what was going on but they never explicitly mentioned it, nor did they try to encourage Ali, or those in his group, to excel so that they could get placed in group on the other side of the classroom. He recalls one parent who came into the school to complain, but all the students knew what was going on in terms of the situation. Ali was about six or seven years old at the time.

Like his elementary school, Ali's high school was comprised of a diverse student body which was made up of about fifty percent White, and fifty percent African American, students. Ali remembers there being somewhat of a balance in most of his classes. There was usually an equal mix of Black and White students along with other students from different racial or ethnic, backgrounds. In high school, Ali participated in several activities including the Beta Club, which was a national scholastic organization that students could join based on their grade point

averages. He also ran track. Although he did not finish his final season, he did go to a couple of track meets where different high schools competed against one another. Ali also took three years of French. Overall, Ali remembers studying, and his hard work led to him being placed on the college-prep track which was a program where high school students could take classes to help prepare them for college. Ali's motivation for wanting to do well actually began in middle school. During this time, there was a sense that the average, or below average, students were going to be go into vocational, or skills-training, apprentice-type work when they enrolled in high school. Although Ali thought this plan was okay, he had this idea in his head that he could do just as well as anybody else. So, he worked really hard, and chose the college prep track. His guidance counselor gave him a few warnings about the level of difficulty in regard to taking college prep classes. But, he studied a lot. And because he spent so much time studying, he did not participate in a lot of extra-curricular activities other than Beta Club or track.

Ali's support in high school was largely based on his hard work and determination as a student. He remembers his daddy praising him in the ninth grade for doing well. He does not remember if he made 'straight As' on his report card, but he did so well that his father gave him some extra cash to spend. So, Ali's greatest support came from knowing that his parents cared for him and also used him as a positive example for his younger siblings. His mother used to say, "Y'all need to do well like that Terry." It made him feel good, that his hard work was being acknowledged at home; like what he was doing was worth the effort. Ali also received support from his teachers. His high school teachers praised all of the students when they did well. However, while he got a great deal of emotional, and perhaps, psychological support, he did not get receive any help in the way of academic support such as tutoring from any of his teachers or his family. He remembers being on, what seemed like, a long quest, to try to figure out algebra,

and how to succeed at it. At the same time, he was also trying to figure out how to write effectively. Ali acknowledges that he spent a lot of time ‘inside his head,’ which he says he still does. He appreciates learning about subjects on his own, and trying to figure them out, without a lot of outside interference. Ali says that he did not think of things as being obstacles. He never thought of things as interfering with his progress. He only thought of them as a challenge.

When Ali thinks about having to do work hard that is challenging he enjoys it. It is a process that gives him something to reach for, and something to do that he enjoys doing well. He enjoys excelling. Ali feels that he enjoyed excelling in school even more than those kids who were in the advanced classes, especially from kindergarten to the eighth grade, because he enjoyed the challenge of just doing well, or better, than them. For him, there was some intrinsic motivation. He was out to prove something to somebody; he did not know who, but he was out to prove something. Also, he was consciously aware that he trying to prove that he could succeed as a student. To Ali, having to work hard did not feel like an obstacle. He kind of enjoyed it for the most part. He just enjoyed doing work outside of class, and he enjoyed the challenge. He thinks that something ‘clicked’ inside his mind with those sessions of studying and trying to figure things out. There was a kind of adrenaline, something ‘chemical,’ which he got from applying himself. Ali states that he got addicted to this ‘rush,’ and so, as a result, had to keep learning. He also felt like he had to keep trying to figure out how to succeed, and how to become better at something, whether it was math, science, or biology. For Ali, this adrenaline rush that came from applying himself was even present when he ran track. He just always wanted to figure things out, so that they never remained obstacles; they just became things that always motivated him to do better. This drive to excel became intrinsic. So, he worked hard for himself, but also, developed a desire to prove something. He realizes that his external versus internal motivation sounds like a

contradiction. But for him, this is okay because, honestly, it was a little of both.

Although Ali did not, necessarily, think about his career plans, or his future, he knew that he wanted to attend college. When he was in the eleventh and twelfth grades, he started thinking about what major he wanted to pursue in college. He thought a lot about where he wanted to go, and what university he wanted to attend. At first he thought he wanted to major in a science-related field. A few years prior to making this decision, his grandmother had bought him a computer, and he started playing around with it, trying to learn basic programming and figure stuff out. And then, he got his own small television to go with it. His new computer was basically like a regular keyboard, but there was a television that was included. He thought that he wanted to venture into programming in college based on his experiences playing around with his computer. In this way, Ali started to consider his future, and make the moves that he needed to make for going to college and obtaining a college degree. He had been on a quest to improve his writing skills since the seventh grade, when he had completed basic skills testing, and discovered that his writing was somewhat deficient. Well, this realization made him quite upset, and he was like, “that’s not true.” From this point on, he was on a steady quest to prove that he could write effectively. He worked on his writing, and eventually, got past that test. For Ali, it was like saying, “Ah-ha. You see; I can do well.” But after that, he always worked on his writing. He would experiment with writing at home, trying to write stories, including short stories, and also, descriptive pieces. Some of this foray into creative writing was inspired by his teachers; however, he had developed this idea somewhere ‘in the back of his mind’ that he wanted to write in addition to being a scientist or engineer. He had this image of the lone writer with the typewriter. But it was that imaginary sense of what a writer could be when he was in the eighth or ninth grade that really motivated him to work on his writing. He remembers a show that used

come on television when he was much younger. At the end of each episode, there would be a scene in which the main character was sitting at his computer typing furiously away on his keyboard. This character, the protagonist, recorded what happened to him, everyday, by typing it into his online computer journal at the end of each episode. So, Ali was like, “Cool.” It was an idea. It was that idea of being a writer, albeit, a kind of imagined one, that was working in his subconscious. And so, he thought that he wanted to be one, too. So, half-way through his sophomore year in college, he said, “Nah, enough of the science stuff, I’m going to pursue the writing thing now”; and that is what he has been doing, and working on, ever since.

College and Graduate School

Ali was expected to finish high school or at least get high school diploma. So, his parents and grandparents drilled into him, and his siblings, this idea of staying in school and graduating from high school. For Ali’s parents, succeeding in academics meant succeeding in life. He remembers them saying, “You’ve got to stay in high school. You’ve got to finish high school. You will never be able to succeed.” Or they would say, “You won’t be anything unless you finish high school.” However, he does not recall anyone telling him that he should go to college. For example, he does not remember anyone saying, “Okay, you need to finish high school and then go to college.” It was always, “Finish high school.” Sometimes his parents would talk way to Ali, and his siblings, about proper career choices along the lines of, “Maybe you want to become something or other.” For example, his brother was into cars, so his parents would often encourage his younger brother to become a mechanic. They would encourage Ali, and his siblings, to go into some trade with which they were familiar. But the dialogue was never about going to college. He got those kinds of cues from his high school teachers; and sometimes, from his middle school teachers.

The first teacher to mention anything to Ali about going to college was his seventh grade teacher. She told him that he might think about going to college, eventually. This was the first time that someone formally suggested to Ali, “You should go to college” and talked with him the process involved in furthering his education. His seventh grade teacher talked to him about keeping up his grades, or at least maintaining a certain level, in order to get into a college or university. This teacher was African American, but not the first African American teacher he had ever had. But when he thought about it a little bit, he says that the idea of going to college made sense to him.

The major criteria in Ali determining which college to attend had to do with affordability. He did not have a lot of access to funds or the financial support he needed. So, he chose to attend the university closest to where he lived. He was avid fan of the sports team there. He had grown up with memorabilia of the school’s mascot around his house. So, Ali chose to attend a predominantly White institution in the Southern United States. He calls his undergraduate institution, “P.W.I.” or “predominantly White institution” or “pink.” Ali says that, even now, the school remains predominantly White, as it has been for years. When he attended the university, it was no more than twenty percent African American. Based on his earlier schooling, Ali had gotten used to being in classrooms that consisted of mostly White students. Every now and then, there would be a student of another ethnicity. However, he never had the experience of being in a class in that was predominantly, or at least fifty percent, African American. Ali was adversely affected by the racial or ethnic composition of the university. It was an environment that did not always make him feel comfortable. Prior to enrolling, Ali knew that his institution would be predominantly White, which classes that consisted of low racial diversity; nonetheless, when saw another African American on campus, or had another student of color in his class, he got excited.

As an undergrad, he changed his major from engineering to English with a concentration in writing. Ali had gotten frustrated with the science track and could not envision himself becoming a full-time scientist, or this kind of professional, for the rest of his life. So, he chose writing because he considered it to be one of his strong points. Ali said that it seemed to be the best fit for him at the time. He admits that, at the time, he did not know a lot about the professional venues for those with Bachelor of Arts degrees in English, but he knew that he was good at writing and enjoyed it.

Ali's chose to attend graduate school because of the first African American college professor he was exposed to, who happened to be female. She had taught Ali literature as an undergrad, and this had been the first time he had been able to see somebody in that environment that looked like him. This experience gave him the idea that he could someday become a college professor, himself. He also just really enjoyed taking her class. He enjoyed seeing the kind of work she did as a professor. He started saying to himself, "I think I might like to do that, too." Ali knew that she was always writing, and writing well, and that maybe the best avenue for him was to probably get an advanced degree, so that in addition to teaching, he could move into a field like hers which would allow him to continue working on his writing. Ali was able to identify with this African American female scholar in such a way that it allowed him to be able to conceptualize himself as someone who could be a composition and rhetoric scholar, himself. He started to believe that, if she could do this, and be "here," that he could, possibly, and do it, too. This idea, which seemed to be simple to him at the time, became his main reason for going to graduate school; it also led him to talk to his professor. She gave him some advice about applying to graduate school and talked with him about pursuing a doctoral degree in English with specialization in rhetoric and composition. Also, Ali had a friend who was already pursuing the

advanced degree in English studies; so, this gave him the additional inspiration he needed to enroll in a Ph.D. program with an emphasis in composition studies.

Public World: Work, Professional Activities, and Career Aspirations

At present, Ali puts a minimum of fifty hours a week. He says that during the academic semester, he usually spends at least fifty hours a week working on things for the university. He says it is not the typical ‘9 to 5’ schedule; in fact, for the last couple of jobs he has been teaching on Tuesdays and Thursdays. So, usually he is on campus on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Those are the days when he spends time with his students. Also, he may have conferences with them on other days of the week when he is not teaching. In all, he spends about sixteen hours on campus during the week, and the rest of the time he usually works from home. For example, he does grading and reading for class at home. Also, he teaches an online class, so he is usually working on this class at home, as well. Ali talks about what it is like to balance his professional responsibilities with his scholarship. He states:

I give myself over it to it and I try to work in as much space as I can for working on my own projects. I try to make sure I’m doing some work for that conference. In terms of presenting, I have some incentives for keeping my scholarship going. And I always try to take advantage of opportunities that come my way; and once I get something, some project off my plate, I get more, but try not to take on too much. That sort of describes my typical work week, and sort of my framework for working.

Ali says that he “absolutely” works on the weekends. In fact, he works almost every day. Sometimes, he takes a day, and tells himself that he is not going to work, or do anything—whether it is on a Sunday, Friday, Monday, or Wednesday. However, ultimately, he feels that it is really difficult for him to take this time off and do nothing. Once he has been working with

students, they stay with him. He is actively engaged in thinking about his students, especially if he is trying to work on a student's paper, and trying to decide whether or not to write comments on it; or, if he is thinking about how he could help a student who might be having difficulties in his class. He usually spends his time working out ideas, particularly those which involve trying to figure out how to try to explain certain concepts to his students based on how they have responded to him during discussion or as evidenced by papers. Ali has discovered that his colleagues are doing the same kinds of things during the academic year. They are all working long hours, not the traditional '9 to 5'; most of them are staying up late to read or grade papers. Ali describes this process as being sort of 'artistic' whereby a teaching professional naturally falls into his or her own rhythm, particularly in terms of working with students outside of class. An academic scholar has to be able to find this kind of rhythm in order for him or her to actually work, prepare for classes, and do his or her own scholarship which includes reading and writing, along with other kinds of professional development. He does not mind working on the weekends, except the times when he tells himself that he is not going to work. During holidays, like Christmas break, he looks forward to working on articles or catching up on other aspects of his scholarship. At breaks, he will also plan his upcoming academic semester in terms of work. But, Ali says that he enjoys what he does most of the time, so it does not feel like 'work' all of the time; except, sometimes, when he has papers to grade and he does not want to grade them. Then, being a professor definitely feels like work.

The biggest career challenge Ali has faced, thus far, has been going up for tenure and promotion. During this process, he faced some of the same issues that all scholars face; being Black or White does not change these things. First, many feel isolated during the process of putting together their promotion packet. At this point in their careers, they have done a great deal

of teaching and professional development which includes publishing, working on various campus and departmental committees, and perhaps, serving in some administrative capacity as a WPA. However, putting together this information, and in a format where others can ‘share,’ and value your lived (professional) experiences, is a daunting task; and it is a task that an individual must go through alone. Secondly, although those scholars may have studied all the information concerning the process of going up for tenure, they still might not really know what is actually expected of them, particularly in terms of output. They may wonder, ‘What is the tenure and promotion committee really look for?’ ‘What sort of strengths or weaknesses should I address as part of my professional development?’ ‘Should I address any weaknesses?’ ‘How emotional, and personal or subjective, should I be in my narrative?’ ‘What does this style of personal/professional writing look like; how might it be different in terms of voice?’ Finally, many scholars up for promotion struggle with writing their narrative. They may have many things to say, but some are not familiar with telling stories, particularly about professional experiences. Thus, they may be uncomfortable doing this i.e., talking about themselves in a personal way, or feel ‘at a loss’ for how to deal with aspects of the genre. Even though researchers must write narratives of some sort, presumably on a daily basis e.g., emails, comments on student papers, and administrative report writing, they quickly realize that writing a *narrative* is an altogether different phenomenon; and so, they must become acquainted with stylistic aspects and also, reference models of other writers. They must find a style that fits their own.

Although the process is largely the same for most, African Americans and other scholars of color may face unique challenges when their go up for tenure and promotion. First, many lack mentoring. Those individuals may not have a faculty mentor as a junior colleague or they might

not have anyone with whom they feel they can talk to about the process. This situation causes emotional anxiety for some because although they realize that they are being heavily scrutinized in regard to their work, they may not have any idea of what to do. This anxiety is compounded by the fact that they feel the added pressure of being one, or one of a few minorities, and so, they feel like there is a lot at stake in terms of how they 'represent' their constituent communities i.e., ethnic or cultural groups. They do not want to 'fail' because failing to achieve tenure would mean failing to achieve certain professional goals which they feel could, possibly, have some political ramifications, including affecting the outcome of other minorities who want to follow in their footsteps and become (tenured) professors, themselves. Secondly, minorities going up for tenure may feel the pressure of having their work being carefully scrutinized. Some may feel that they are being *personally* scrutinized in terms of their culpability in regard to their intelligence, as though it is some kind of quotient. They may feel that the tenure process is an assessment of their intelligence whereby committees are thoroughly checking, not only their work, but looking at their worth as a scholar.

Ali states that, for him, the process was intimidating, not only to go up in front of people in his own department, but also, all of the university. He spent long hours working on his tenure and promotion packet. However, prior to putting together his information, Ali just spent time learning about the process. Ali says that he had to get up the energy, and make room for the energy, that it would take to keep moving forward in order to face this challenge; especially, since he did not have any 'inside connections' or close friends, who were on the tenure and promotion committee. At this particular institution, he did not have any mentors to guide him along the process. There was no one that he felt like he could appeal to, or turn to, for emotional or professional advice. Ali felt as though he was moving through the process, almost alone, at

times. Oftentimes, he simply had to find his own way; however, he got used to this process—figuring out things on his own.

So, going through the process of gaining tenure was extremely challenging, and at times, Ali had his doubts. However, he just kept pressing forward until he “got past” his department, and then, past his school. Ali knew that he would only get promoted, if the university signed off on his scholarship. He stated that this prospect is often a difficult one for scholars because this individual has people from all different disciplines looking at what he or she is trying to say, and determining whether it is worthy of tenure. He says that those individuals on the committee scrutinize every comma, every period, and also, carefully analyze the scholar’s use of language. The tenure and promotion committee took into consideration Ali being a Black man at a predominantly White institution, and the fact that he was in English studies which was something that was not a common occurrence for African Americans in academe. Everyone scrutinizes any individual up for tenure and promotion. Ali knew that there were cynical people, not particularly in his own department, but in other areas. He states that those individuals probably did not even know, or realize, that they were being cynical; but, he counted it all, nonetheless. For Ali, getting beyond the tenure process, and learning to hold his head high while moving forward, has been the biggest challenge that he has faced thus far in his professional career.

Ali has been fortunate, in his career, to have had the opportunity to work closely with writing program administrators. Ali’s exposure to writing program administration (WPA) includes the time he spent working as an assistant director of the writing center when he was a graduate student. In this position, he learned about working with writing center staff, including how to mentor tutors and do scheduling. His university also had a writing studio which was headed by a member of his dissertation committee. So, in addition, he worked with the writing

studio. Ali states that the writing studio was not like the writing center, but had its own ‘special feel’ to it. In both contexts, he got the chance to feel what it was like to work with students on their writing in environments outside of the composition classroom. Overall, his exposure to writing center administration (WPA) work was very positive and he really enjoyed working with students, one-on-one, with their writing. He thinks that becoming a writing center director is something that he would definitely consider doing in the future. Ali likes teaching, but would ultimately like to transition into something different. He has been talking with faculty, and the administration, at his current university about a possible move into WPA work. He says he is willing to look elsewhere if they are no professional development activities in writing program administration at his current institution.

Ali considers his work with an edited book project to be a critical turning point in his career. For him, that was “major.” He does not see it as a *turning point*, per say, but as a critical point: completing a book project was a goal that he had on list of things that he wanted to accomplish as part of his professional career. Other goals include finishing a few articles by the end of the year. Ali is also looking forward to working on conference proposals, and his own book project as a single author. In the future, he would like to do research in rhetoric and composition that focuses on blending the scholarly with the personal. At present, he is working on the completion of two shorter journal articles. Next, he intends to begin work on the book project or, start working on both projects simultaneously.

Relationship with Others

Ali feels that his relationships with other members of the professoriate have been good. However, as a Black scholar, he describes feeling like he has had to move between different cultures in order to learn this ‘new’ environment and become more familiar with others,

including those who may take their own situatedness for granted. And then, Ali feels, there are those scholars who find themselves in this space and are developing a sense of ‘place’ in a more natural way. Part of finding one’s place in a more ‘natural way’ is through networking and talking with other African American scholars in the field in trying to establish some sense of awareness of what other African American scholars are doing, and maybe, how that relates to one’s own experience, whether it is a similar experience or a different one; this helps emerging scholars to realize that there are, indeed, African Americans who are being productive in the field. He states:

So, for those coming into this field, including African American scholars, or other minorities, I would recommend...the most important thing is to make sure that they are participating in conferences whether local, or not local, in which they are exposed to others who are in the field being productive. I think that may help them to feel less like an anomaly. Whenever you are in those environments where you have a large gathering of professionals in the field, you can sometimes see a concentration of other others who look like you in one large setting, whereas when you go back to your institution, sometimes it’s less apparent. So, the most important action I would recommend that mentors take to ensure that that their minority scholars—their African American scholars—are successful, is to expose them to a constant that will allow them to see a diverse environment that consists of a large concentration of African Americans who are professionals in the field, so that folks will...come away with a strong personal connection... [And] get to be in some of these caucus groups that deal with issues that [they] may find important, that directly relate to African Americans. You know, you being to sort of feel ‘situated’ and not alone in this place that is genuinely known as

‘academia.’

At times, he has felt ‘forced’ to move outside of his comfort zone and into to the cultural space of ‘Others,’ specifically those of the dominant group. He has had to contend with White scholars—and others—who do not understand their points of privilege. Other than those issues, he feels that his relationships have been positive. Ali’s colleagues at his current institution have helped him in achieving success by not being extremely rigid in their expectations. They give him a lot of flexibility in terms of the courses he wants to teach and when he wants to teach those courses. So, he feels that they have been really supportive in regard to what he wants to do as a teacher-scholar and this has been the most helpful thing. He states that his colleagues are also respectful of his time, and they respect their own as well. He states:

[My colleagues] want their space respected so... We all get together, we all socialize, but we do a lot of respect in terms of recognizing that our outside activities are important to us. Whatever that may be...whether we have children, or whether we love walking, or reading in our neighborhood, there’s been a lot of respect. And there hadn’t been unreasonable demands placed on me about how much I’ve been giving the university when I’m not teaching; in that way, they’ve helped me.

Ali feels that he has a “good gig going on” at his current institution. His colleagues have been very supportive in giving him space, and also, allowing him to work at a pace that feels comfortable to him. For example, he is not pushed to produce an exorbitant amount of material in order to meet a particular deadline. Also, the institution where he currently works is not a large, public research-intensive one, and they value teaching. So, his colleagues allow him to take the time that is necessary to investigate theory, and do research that informs practice. Also, the department has been very supportive in terms of funding, and encouraging and supporting,

instructional development in areas related to teaching and learning in the classroom.

Ali says that although he has had some challenges being in the field, especially in regard to the beginning of his academic career, that he has not encountered any negative aspects that have made him question his decision to become a scholar in rhetoric and composition. The challenges that Ali faced when he was a junior, or emerging, scholar were daunting, however; and he attributed some of them to the fact that he was Black, male, and moving in a largely-White professional space: he thought those challenges were unique to him because he was an African American scholar. In time, he came to realize that his White colleagues had faced some of the same issues. He learned that those are just some of the challenges that one has to face when he or she is “on the road, when you’re traveling towards the Ph.D.” All individuals must overcome those potential obstacles which are hurdling at them if they are going to succeed. He states:

I haven’t encountered any negative issues that have made me think of questioning my decision to move into this environment. Most of my interactions have been pretty positive. I have had challenges; and perhaps, when I was in the field, when I was just beginning or starting out, I thought those challenges were somehow unique to being an African American scholar. But in hindsight, after socializing with nonminority, White scholars, I just realized that there are challenges in academia in terms of getting past all the hurdles, working with other professors, just working with people... Those are things you face. But initially, I thought, ‘well, maybe I’m experiencing these things because I’m the minority or because I’m somehow unique.’ But in hindsight, I realize[d] that a lot of my [White] colleagues face the same issues.

Ali had a White colleague who was pursuing a graduate degree at the institution where he

now works. His friend had already gotten his Master's degree in English at a graduate program that was located in another state. Ali's friend told him about his graduate school experiences, including the relationships he had with members of his dissertation committee, and the kinds of challenges that he had faced being student in his program. Ali realized that his friend's issues were some of the same kinds of issues that he had faced himself, while in pursuit of his Ph.D. Although his friend was working with different people, the politics, in terms of pursuing a post-graduate degree, was the same. And Ali states that he had heard those same stories over and over again from some of his White friends in academia. So, in hindsight, he realized that his experiences were more like their experiences than not.

However, Ali asserts there are some challenges that are unique to minority scholars. For colors of color, in addition to some internal pressure which may affect positive self-concept due being minorities in the field, and being evaluated in terms of performance i.e., going through the tenure and promotion process, there is also the added pressure of crossing the cultural divide. These individuals have to cross that cultural divide with White colleagues professionally on a daily basis, and also deal with other aspects of hegemony, not just in terms of "Whiteness," but also, in terms of negotiating the personal in professional spaces in academe. Thus, the only thing that Ali feels has been a major challenge to him concerning academia has been moving into other cultures, and moving outside of his comfort zone, especially in regard to interacting with, or moving in and out of, the dominant White culture. In this way, e has been developing an understanding of what it means to negotiate his personal and professional identities concerning the act of socializing with Whites, and those outside of his cultural group, in those types of spaces within academe. It has been difficult, at times, particularly when he has been the only one or one of only a few African American, or minority, scholars; this

has made him feel ‘different.’ An additional aspect of negotiation in terms of professional identity has to do with particular areas of scholarship whereby a minority scholar feels that he or she ‘must’ do research in specific areas that pertain to *them* e.g., cultural rhetorics, because they are more likely to be recognized, and thereby, produce top (minority) scholars in the field. Then the question becomes, ‘How do I negotiate my personal stance in regard to interpreting these experiences for others without stigmatizing or stereotyping my participants, or myself?’ Also, what if a minority scholar feels more vested in another area of scholarship? What should he or she do then? For Ali, these have been some of the challenges.

For the reasons cited above, Ali feels that it is important to develop close relationships with other minority scholars, but knows he has to be realistic. He recognizes that he is not in an environment where he is constantly occupying the same space with other African American scholars. He states that most African American scholars in the field are just ‘scattered’. Ali states:

We’re all over the place, so trying to really develop those relationships thru distance can be difficult. Joining committees is very important and a productive and a good way to build relationships; but, still I see African American scholars, and associates, once or twice a year at the most, and usually it’s during the conferences. And we communicate thru email when needed about professional matters that are very important. We may work on a project for professional reasons, once or twice a year but sometimes this occurs over periods of time. I have no consistent interaction with other African American scholars on a continual basis. So, it’s important to me, but I have to be realistic in how much exposure to those scholars I have; how much time we can spend building strong relationships. Usually, we build professional relationships that make us acquainted with

one another and that's because we're not occupying the same spaces.

So, Ali says that while it is important to build relationships with other minority scholar in the field, there are not a lot of opportunities to build those types of relationships because of the actual spaces that “we,” African Americans, occupy. However, he does not feel that not having those close constant relationships with other minority scholars has negatively impacted his ability to succeed in this environment. He says that as an African American scholar, that he has had to learn to deal with the environment, and the fact that he is usually operating as a ‘minority’ within spaces in academe. So, he says that one gets used to it and that an individual becomes accustomed to how to succeed without having that strong relationship with others—those who make look like you—on a continual basis. Ali states:

You learn how to cope and build a relationship with other scholars, including non-minority colleagues, or scholars, in general. Whether they are White, Asian, male or female, you learn how to build relationships. Those are the things that help you succeed in your own particular space; not necessarily just being connected to other African American scholars.

Ali feels that while his relationships in this academic environment are mainly professional, that in his department there is a blend between the personal and the professional; and there is also something else that he cannot readily define. He guesses that he is friends with his White colleagues in the department, or at least some of them, because they have all socialized enough so that they consider one another friends; and this is outside of being scholars. Ali feels this connection is a good one which sustains him in this environment. He also considers his former dissertation director to be a friend and colleague. They discuss issues outside of academia, including life, and how to balance the personal and the professional. So, Ali has those

kinds of personal relationships with others, but they are not necessarily with other African Americans in the field. Although, he does have those intimate contacts that he needs, and he makes use of that support when he needs it.

The only thing in regard to his associations with his White colleagues which he does not feel he receives is emotional support, and this is because he chooses not to share some personal aspects of his life with them. Ali reserves such discussions concerning aspects of his personal life, and what he needs in terms of emotional support, for family members or those who are really close to him. He states:

My former dissertation advisor—we are friends, we are colleagues. So, we talk about other issues outside of academia, life issues, balance issues. So, I have those kinds of relationships with others, but they're not necessarily African American in the field...The only thing is...I don't really get to the emotional part; I don't do that. I reserve that emotional part for family members and for those who are really, really close to me. I kind of put those emotional issues out there to my friends in the field. Some of them, y'know, we're close; and some of them experience when I get upset about issues related to academia. And some of them recognize, and know that they're tragic events in your life. They can see your emotions. They offer comfort.

Generally, Ali tries not to burden his friends or colleagues in the field who are often supporting him in other ways; the ones who support him on a day-to-day basis with work or departmental or institutional issues, and with publication or scholarship. Ali supposes that for him, such emotions are family-oriented, or they are extremely personal.

On Being a “Scholar” in Composition

For Ali, being a scholar in composition means thinking about writing, itself, and having goals for helping students to become more aware of their own writing. A comp scholar needs to be aware of current, and past, scholarship concerning the teaching of writing, and be able to articulate his or her own viewpoints by producing scholarship about personal experiences related to teaching writing—whether it is with technology, or based on the use of particular texts, readings, or other literature. Thus, for Ali, a comp scholar is someone who is always thinking about, and always attempting, to further along the concept of what it means to create better writers in this academic environment or context. This kind of scholar might seek answers to the following questions: ‘What does it mean to teach writing?’ ‘Is teaching writing is even possible?’ ‘Why is it important to teach writing?’, and ‘How does teaching writing relate to identity?’

One question that Ali has been thinking about in terms of writing scholarship, including being a ‘scholar’ of writing, is what it actually means—this idea of teaching writing. In relation to the teaching writing, Ali often thinks about the following:

How do you teach writing to students? How does that happen? Do you ever really do that, or do you help students to learn to become more aware as writers? If that’s the case, then at one point is writing taught? What’s the connection? If it’s not ‘taught,’ then who teaches students how to put the pen, the paper that creates the ideas, that creates the syntax (i.e. the particular discourse)? Is it something engrained or is it these teachers that are teaching the early forms of writing, and who are not as recognized in our field as they should be? Students come prepared. In the college level, when we encounter students, they are already writing. They’re writers. Whether or not they’re writing appropriately for the academic environment or for the audience, or whether it’s considered

academically-acceptable; those are the things we wrestle with.

In general, he thinks about that question a lot: what his responsibilities are in regard to his students. The other day, his students took their final exams and they were asked to think about their progress as writers and what they had been taught. He could tell by reading their reflections that basically, they had talked about things in class that they believed Ali had taught them about writing and about being writers. And Ali thought, “I didn’t really teach you guys *that*.” He felt he had assigned readings to his students, which they then read, and did something with, like write a paper. Also, Ali feels that when students handed in papers or assignments that it had been like a dialogue between him and them concerning whether they had met, or failed to meet, the objectives of a particular assignment. So, in this way, he feels that they were learning together. He wonders, “Is that really teaching?” He believes that the act of making meaning with his students is more like mentoring; it is guiding and assisting students with their understanding of what writing means in this particular environment. Thus, Ali’s concern in regard to his role as a teacher-scholar, particularly in regard to meeting the needs of his students, is an area that he is continually processing. He says that he likes thinking about this particular kind of thing, and that the older he gets, the more he will continue to reflect on it, and the more his answers will change, particularly in regard to how he sees things. He thinks that maybe the people who really teach writing are those first grade teachers where students are taught to take the pencil and put it to paper; this, in order to begin translating what they are saying, or their speech, into something written down on paper—something that is phonetically correct according to the ‘proper’ way of speaking. To Ali, those are the people who deserve the credit. He feels that a lot of things are going on in those formative years. To him, Vygotsky comes to mind, but he says that he is definitely is not as up on Vygotsky’s writings as he should be.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In presenting my participants' narratives in Chapter 4, my goal was to provide a foundation from which to consider differences in terms of scholars' lived experiences and the shared realities that they—along with other minorities—face as they prepare for, and engage in, professional spaces in academe. In this chapter, I provide a summary in regard to the results of my analyses of six African American narratives concerning their early life histories and professional experiences as scholars in the field of Composition and Rhetoric. As part of this discussion, I am not trying to present a single composite, or any grounded theoretical framework, as related to the conclusions I draw based on my analysis; that is, I do not want to present a homogeneous voice in regard to African American scholars and their experiences in the field of Composition and Rhetoric. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the themes that are common in regard to how those scholars choose to deal with aspects of race, scholarship, and other areas of professional development. This discussion also highlights aspects of their shared experiences and discusses the specific ways in which these six African American scholars negotiate aspects of what it means to be who one is within professional spaces in the academy, and specifically, within the field of composition and rhetoric. For this reason, when I mention “African American scholars,” “Blacks scholars,” or “scholars of color,” in this chapter, I am referring only to the six participants who I interviewed as part of this study. I begin this chapter by offering a brief overview of the methods I used to derive my analysis, and then I describe the themes, and conclusions, that I drew from my participants' stories. Next, I provide a reflexive autobiographical account of my own perspective concerning my role as an emerging scholar and

researcher in the field of composition and rhetoric. Thirdly, part of the discussion, I present implications of the study. Finally, I provide suggestions for further research.

Summary of Analyses

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of African Americans in the field of Composition and Rhetoric. Specifically, I wanted to explore the ways in which six African American scholars' early life histories influenced their development, and perceptions of themselves, in terms of becoming academic professionals. I also wanted to explore the ways in aspects of early childhood socialization, including environment as well as other sociocultural framework, i.e., those societal factors that influence on-going personal identity development such as class, gender, and education, affected how African American scholars' perceived of themselves in terms of having a racial, and professional, identity. In this vein, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do African American scholars situate themselves in their roles as scholars, teachers, and researchers in the field of Composition and Rhetoric?
2. How do African American scholars situate themselves in their roles as scholars, teachers, and researchers in the field of Composition?
3. (In what ways) does race, or cultural or ethnic identity, factor into professional identity construction for African American scholars in Composition?
4. How do the experiences of African Americans in the professoriate affect personal, and cultural or ethnic identity?

In seeking to answer my research questions, I utilized three levels of analysis for my study. First, I employed life story interview in order to gather first-person accounts of my participants' lives growing up as well as stories about their working lives as members of the

professoriate. Next, I used narrative analysis (Reissman, 1993) in order to reconstruct or retell my participants' stories. I coded all of my data and selected parts of the transcript, or first-person accounts, in order to construct my participants' narratives. For the final step of my narrative analysis, I constructed third-person narrative accounts of my participants' lived experiences. I chose excerpts from their first-person accounts which I thought were representative of key concepts i.e., from the narrative analysis. I chose to reconstruct participants' experiences through storytelling in order to highlight specific themes related to their early life histories and their current working lives as academic professionals. I discussed aspects of the participants' lives as related to those concepts. Those narratives revealed more detailed themes including childhood socialization and its impact on racial identity development; the effects of race on education and professional identity development; the impact of preprofessional training, including high school activities, on professional identity development; how racial identity in academia affects socialization and professional development; and the ways in which relationships with departmental faculty, and with peers, mentors, and colleagues, in the field-at-large, affects the development of professional identity, including the ways in which an individual negotiates his or her personal, and cultural, identity in public spaces within academe. The final step in my analysis involved using a six-step psychological, thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) in order to locate patterns across my data set.

My thematic analysis of the data revealed a causal relationship between the external and internal factors that shaped personal identity development and the impact of racial identity development on the construction of professional identity. The first part of the analysis looks at the ways in which scholars' conceive of their roles in regard to being scholars, educators, teachers of writing, and researchers within the field of Composition and Rhetoric. Participants

talk about their teaching practices and what it means to be intellectually curious by engaging in scholarly work that attempts to address the “big” issues. These scholars believe that such work should be public and contribute to something larger than academe. In this way, they believe that their roles as researchers involves activism in terms of mentoring, being actively involved in community outreach, and in doing the type of work that addresses how Composition and Rhetoric is situated within the larger contingency of English Studies.

Based on the second aspect of my analysis, the participants discuss how their experiences as academic professionals in the field of Composition and Rhetoric and the ways in which these experiences have affected their professional identities, particularly in regard to how they have come to see, and envision themselves, in regard to their roles as teachers of writing, educators, scholars, and researchers. They talk about how the negotiation of their personal identities within professional spaces in academe, and how this affects the ways in which they have become vested in the work that they do. Part of this process is acknowledging how their roles as minority scholars put them in key positions. They believe that scholarly work should be transformative in a way since because now, as minority educators, they work from powerful positions that can affect change. As such, these scholars feel that they must utilize their positions to help, and encourage, others; particularly, up-and-coming scholar. Thus, these scholars realize that mentoring is one of their most important jobs; and they seek to promote diversity in a positive way within the field of rhetoric and composition to contribute to its growth as a multifaceted, multiethnic professoriate. They realize that being productive in terms of scholarship is when one knows the appropriate, and most meaningful, ways to promulgate diversity.

The third finding of my analysis revealed how race impacted scholars’ childhood experiences, including early schooling, graduate or preprofessional training, and experiences in

the field of Composition and Rhetoric. Scholars also provide insight in regard to how their cultural identities and being minority scholars in the field continues to affect their scholarship, including their on-going roles as teachers, educators, and researchers. They talk about the politics of visible identity and how they must carefully negotiate the construction of their professional identities in regard to being minority scholars. These scholars address how their early experiences affected their understanding of issues of race, and racism, and discuss how their development of key interpersonal relationships with mentors, scholars, and colleagues impacted their views on issues of diversity.

In the fourth part of the analysis, African American scholars in this study talk about how their experiences in the professoriate have changed or challenged their perceptions of themselves, including how they envision themselves in their roles as academic professionals. These scholars admit that how an individual sees him or herself changes when he or she enters academe. They also discuss the ways in which their professional experiences impacted how they perceived of race and racial identity. Thus, developing self-confidence in relation to becoming a scholar, while negotiating one's role as a minority in academia, is a challenge. Making this adjustment is also complicated due, in part, to a climate which necessitates that a minority scholar develops, and maintains, close, positive alliances across cultural boundaries, i.e., with Whites and other minorities. One's visible identity as a minority scholar makes issues involving race, political. Therefore, as agents of change, African American scholars in this study seek to engage in discourses that promote progress in terms of what diversity means and how it can serve as a heuristic for new ways to approach scholarship, teaching, and learning.

Race, Identity, and Composition: Negotiating What it means to be ‘Who One is’ in the Professoriate

Many scholars of color in the field of composition and rhetoric choose to consciously acknowledge their cultural, and racial or ethnic identities, particularly as part of their scholarship. They are proud of their cultural backgrounds and do not hesitate to acknowledge this aspect of their professional identities and they often make this an active part of their professional lives. For scholars, there is no separation between race and professional identity; and in fact, in this study I found no marked patterns in regard to scholars making distinctions between being Black, being a minority scholar, or being a scholar in rhetoric and composition. However, scholars Seth, Pauline, and Stephen do make clear distinctions between their racial or ethnic identities and their professional identities; that is, between who they are and the work they do—and particularly, concerning their lived experiences and how those contexts influence their scholarship.

Scholars of color assert that having a strong sense of personal identity is necessary—and the means—for achieving success. They acknowledge that race and ethnic/cultural identity is an important aspect of professional identity. That is, having an awareness of their racial, or cultural, identities allows minority scholars to approach ‘doing the work’ they do in composition in unique ways. For Pauline, Stephen, and Seth, part of conceiving ‘work’ in composition involves ‘giving back’ to their communities. Thus, one of the ways in which African American scholars define ‘success’ is through service: the process of remediation in which they actively negotiate ‘giving back’ to their constituent cultural communities. In this way, they negotiate aspects of their racial identity with their work. Minority scholars realize that by achieving their academic and professional goals that they can act as mentors and role models for those individuals who are still striving to be successful.

African American scholars realize that how they choose to represent themselves is a political act. Stephen discusses aspects related to the notion of ‘visibility’ and how as a minority scholar, he cannot simply expect to simply disappear into the hegemonic mainstream. Ali says that it is important for him to be mindful of representation in regard to how he situates himself, i.e., in terms of voice and point-of-view. Both scholars acknowledge that even the language they utilize for research, and especially, for scholarship can be seen by those in the field as a minority “taking a stand” in regard to their positions on race and racial identity. Some Black scholars take on the “words of the White scholar,” but others do not agree with this, and will likely never use that language because as Stephen says, “it represents oppression and it represents my oppressor.” However, this same African American male scholar says that he is not going to make Black issues or “alternate discourse” the exclusive language that he uses because “that’s the language that White folks accept.” He knows he has to show mastery in terms of managing multiple discourses.

African American scholars agree that the representation of one’s racial identity has a great deal to do with their own personal negotiation of what it means to be who one is—and what it means to be who one is in the professoriate; especially, in regard to how this aspect of the self “looks” and “behaves” in professional spaces within academe. Scholars of color acknowledge aspects of double-consciousness, but also realize that they have right to choose whether or not they want to be “doubly-conscious.” They agree that it is all about positioning. Stephen contends that W.E.B. DuBois’s concept of “seeing oneself through the eyes of others and accepting the majority view as the actual representation of self” is something that has to be consciously negotiated in regard to being a minority within the hegemonic spaces of the academy. Because of the politically-charged nature of being “one of many,” African American scholars agree that it is

important for minorities in the academy to know how they enact themselves—that is, to be aware of who they are in their own constituent communities versus how they enact themselves in professional spaces with Whites, or others in academe, or outside of their in-group. They note that in professional spaces in which racial identity is visible, and where discussions of cultural identity, and race, “hit close to home,” it becomes impossible to “wear the Mask that hides.” So, the real issue becomes how to act as agents of change in order to bring about productive scholarship in areas that seem overtly “personal.”

For my participants, although being “African American” is not separate from being an “African American scholar,” they stress that such aspects of their personal identities, including race, do not ‘stand in’ for their professional identities. That is, Pauline and Stephen see do not see their identities as being equivalent to the roles that they occupy in professional spaces, e.g. not ‘minority scholar’ or ‘African American scholar’, but ‘African American’ *and* ‘assistant professor’, in the field composition studies. This distinction specifically concerns the different spaces African Americans occupy as academic professionals given the various roles which they are required to perform as members of the professoriate, e.g., teacher, researcher, and scholar. For Pauline, being “African American” is not separate in terms of being an “African American scholar”; however, she is not just an “*African American scholar*”—there are multiple lived experiences, and even professional realities, that shape and enliven her practice.

African American scholars in this study acknowledge that in regard to race and professional identity that they have to negotiate, or at least consider, how they represent themselves as minorities. They accept the fact that being Black scholars puts them in positions of power and that, as one scholar put it, “We can make us all look good or all look bad.” So, issues of race or not as ‘cut and dry’ as they would seem to be. Scholars of color know that they have to

consider how they want aspects of their cultural representation to be perceived by the public, or at least their majority-White constituents. What makes this dynamic so much more difficult is the politics that comes with positionality. For example, Stephen believes that there are those minority scholars who are “pimping” blackness in order to gain popularity; that is, appropriating identities for political reasons that are not really representative, in any way, of their actual lived experiences. Of course, it is the right of all individuals, to “wear the Mask,” or position themselves in any way that makes them feel comfortable; however, concerning one’s minority status, it becomes an issue of “fair representation,” and under the contradictory guise of promoting false assumptions, and beliefs, about being African American, particularly given the current political climate, could, in fact, cause further setbacks. Thus, while promulgating old stereotypes may seem easier—even to engage ‘progressive’ conversation—it could damage notions of “diversity” in terms of engaging in critical pedagogy, and scholarship, about the complexities of individuals’ lived experiences and what it means to be who one is within differing social, and media-based, contexts.

African American scholars assert that being a “Black scholar” means theorizing about how “we live our lives and where we are capable of being all of who we are, and making our experiences relevant to others –asking those big theoretical questions.” However, they realize that as Black faculty, they have to negotiate their roles in terms of mentoring their students, and how they will present issues of diversity and introduce those kinds of things into their composition classrooms. Negotiating their identities as professional role models is further complicated by the likelihood that majority of their composition classrooms will consist of mostly all-White populations. This situation is especially true in graduate programs. For example, Pauline has never had a black, Ph.D. student; however, she does not see this as an

issue, but looks for a different way to cope. Further, she believes that having positive mentors enables graduate students, and particularly those of color, to do better in achieving their goals. In fact, scholars of color believe that mentorship is more critical for the success of minority graduate students than race. Pauline, Ali, Stephen, and Barbara do not believe that those students' mentors have to, necessarily, be Black. But, they realize that based on their own experiences, it helps in proving oneself academically, particularly, as a minority—and even more so, professionally—if one has a mentor. Although he was in a mentoring program where he received advice from black scholars, Ali works well with his white colleagues in his current position as an associate professor. Barbara's role models—the ones she wanted to emulate—were Black female scholars, but professionally, she has been influenced by strong White feminist scholars. Stephen is willing to work with any scholar, regardless of his or her cultural background, if it is a good partnership that culminates in productive scholarship. Those scholars understand that being successful, for many up-coming-minority scholars, seems to come from a deficit. So, it becomes the issue of overcoming a psychology with the aim of reaching a threshold of positive growth; and not simply existing in a space in which an individual feels that she or he constantly has to prove him or herself. They are aware that such (academic) insecurities which often stem from early schooling experiences can still plague some minorities as they enter graduate and professional programs.

With respect to critically-engaging others within the field of Composition Studies, African American scholars are aware that they have to be mindful of their visible identities and how race and racist or culturally-biased as well as gender-based stereotypes, have the potential to offset aspects of their scholarship. They know that how they choose to situate themselves in terms of the work they do, particularly, as it relates to race and other minority issues is crucial.

Stephen and Aaron believe that being alert to stereotypes and the history that relates to being Black in the United States, and in regard to minorities in higher education, helps them to cope with a great deal of baggage that comes along their unique positions. Part of managing issues related to negotiating race and cultural, and also, professional identity, is first to realize that much of what goes on is a personal ‘thing,’ and that attempting to decontextualize aspects of one’s personal identity, and ideology, from on-going lived experience is difficult, if not impossible. Secondly, Ali and Seth believe it is important to come from neutral space in which to relate to another colleague and engage, and talk, about these issues; including, why this should be the goal. Again, while it is nearly impossible to objectify race and cultural issues, and get White scholars to understand key (personal) issues related to one’s conceptualization of race, an individual learns to handle those things as an assistant and associate professor in mirroredly-different ways than Barbara, Seth, or Ali did as graduate students. In regard to issues involving race and racial identity, African American scholars have determined that it is not only important for them to deal with those ‘hot-button’ topics, or people, when they feel it is necessary. They do not feel that they are at the ‘mercy’ of others when dealing with such things. However, those scholars recognize that they need to be attentive, and careful, with conducting themselves, particularly concerning positionality, and especially, when dealing with aspects of their research, teaching, and scholarship.

Scholars of color feel that they have to contend with issues concerning negative stereotypes as they relate to race and gender which make it difficult for them to socialize with others and develop professionally. African Americans have found that those in the field make assumptions about them, and their levels of professionalism, based on race or gender. For example, Barbara felt that those on the faculty thought that she was an “angry Black woman,”

because she spoke up and stood up for herself. Even so, she feels that she handles things very differently than she did as a graduate student. Dealing with the effects of negative stereotypes based on visible identities, can make it difficult for scholars of color to develop close, personal relationships with others. Aspects of socialization with other minorities, or Whites, is difficult for some African American scholars because they feel that people perceive of cultural differences in terms of the way they handle their interpersonal relationships as being racist; these scholars feel that such differences are often perceived as being negative and not just ‘different.’ For example, in some instances when scholars of color speak up for themselves, it can be seen as an act of hostility or failing to ‘go with the flow’; this, even though as an academic professional they feel that one is being groomed to be both an independent scholar and thinker, and therefore, he or she is not necessarily supposed to smile, nod, and say, “Yes.” For most, they feel that scholarship begins with passion and independence, and actually begins when a person says “No”; that is, when he or she actually feels strongly or disagrees with either an approach, interpretation, or methodology, and can begin to voice his or her opinions—in a well-informed manner—on the issue. For example, I do not know of any African American scholar who wants to be a ‘Happy Smiling Negro,’ and if education is meant to be liberating, than having ‘our’ voices heard, particularly as minority scholars, is crucial. And of course, some scholars in the field would say, ‘It’s all in the approach,’ meaning that some of the attitude that they associate with Black female scholars, for example, often gets in the way of ‘good conversation’—one which focuses on key issues that are fostered through ‘positive engagement and mutual understanding.’ But how does a scholar of color not ‘act Black’ if he or she feels very impassioned or strongly about something? For example, if an individual is passionate, happens to be Black, and really cares

about this area of scholarship—even if it invokes issues concerning race—how will this person not be seen as hostile, or at the very least, political?

Race and Identity: Negotiating Representation as a Minority Scholar in the Professoriate

In regard to lived experience and cultural differences, scholars of color acknowledge that there may be those in the field who assume that negotiating one's place and space in academia is, perhaps, different for African Americans, and other minorities, because "we" are minorities in terms of numbers. But beyond the politics of dealing with visible identity, Blacks and Whites do have similar experiences in the professoriate, and maybe, more alike than different. However, as Ali put it, perhaps it is the challenge of moving outside of one's comfort zone, and moving into the dominant or majority culture, and 'socializing in those types of spaces where you may be one out of two or three minorities,' that can be so daunting. One challenge in terms of negotiating professional identity is dealing with the idea of space and intimacy; deciding how comfortable one is in crossing the cultural divide and allowing a White colleague to enter into his or her personal space.

It is a fact that black professionals must make some make cross-cultural adaptations to adjust to mostly-white environments. For some, this cross-cultural adjustment may prove difficult. For this reason, some African Americans may choose to consciously change the language they use, and how they speak, or interact, with their white peers. They may also vary how they choose represent themselves in regard to the negotiation of the private/inner worlds in professional contexts. There are also challenges for African Americans in regard to developing informal relationships with other black, or minority, professionals in the field. In one way, it involves the on-going negotiation of self in regard to racial identity i.e. Black Identity

Development (BID), including how they have chosen to situate themselves, and conceive of race in terms of the work they do; and also, with respect to their negotiation of their professional identities in the field. However, other aspects of those kinds of relationships may prove difficult due to geographical space, and how often they get a chance to see one another, particularly because of the lack of minorities in the field.

African American scholars concede that race can become an issue. For example, in *Composition and Rhetoric*, Black and White scholars discuss race in terms of representation, and also, its relationship concerning issues surrounding the uses of language varieties such as Ebonics, or African American Vernacular English (AAVE), in the writing classroom. However, African American scholars contend that race does not generally become a ‘cultural’ issue unless there are some divisions going on between Black and White colleagues; *then* race becomes an issue. They are aware that the historical precedents of race—and class—can affect their relationships with others; and also, and why it is discussed in some contexts. Ali discussed how he became aware of class and its close correlation with race when he was much younger. He had a White, childhood friend in the seventh grade who wanted to visit him at his home. However, he was ashamed to let his friend come over because he knew his family was very poor. His friend did not care, and under normal circumstances, neither would he, but he knew that his friend would not understand. So, he ended the friendship and just made up an excuse as to why his friend could not come over to his house. Yet, he was aware that his White friend might have assumed he ended his friendship with him, and did not let visit him in his home, because of race.

The potential ‘hot-bed’ issue of race points to one major challenge facing African Americans in the professoriate: ways of dealing with conflict and how to handle internal, and external, stress. Scholars of color acknowledge that they have to learn to exist and socialize in an

environment that is largely outside of their comfort zones: to negotiate the personal in an academic space that is predominantly White while learning to deal with people from different cultural backgrounds, with have different experiences, and even different ways of socializing in terms of the way they handle their interpersonal relationships. Scholars of color admit that sometimes adaptation is fun and sometimes it is a chore; however, they know that they need to do those things in order to be successful. For example, Ali discussed having to move between his home, cultural community and academic culture which is predominantly White such as going to professors' or other graduate students' houses. Those spaces were very different from his "home" culture.

What has sustained most African American scholars in the field has been learning to appreciate the historical context, particularly in regard to minorities in U.S. higher education. They affirm that one's sense of Blackness involves coming to understand the historical-embeddedness of the self within the larger cultural context; this includes knowing the history of minorities in the composition professoriate. Scholars feel that this aspect of situatedness allows individuals to come away with a greater sense of self, especially in terms of agency, and knowing where their own roles as scholars, and their scholarship, fits within the larger context of the discipline. Stephen, Aaron, and Seth found that learning about history, early on, helped them to locate (positive) aspects of Black identity. These scholars read a great deal as children. This sense of history is something that many of them inherited from their parents and grandparents. They read Black history books and found the same kinds of books about Black history later in life. Such scholars believe that reading about Black history helps minorities to become situated with respect to what it means to be Black. They feel that it is the intersection of literacy, within

the realm of their personal experiences, particularly in regard to having a racial identity, which helped to develop their sense of agency.

Articulating and Practicing Activism: On Being an Educator in Composition and Rhetoric

The African American scholars in my study note that being a *scholar* means being published and producing work that others will read. Although the six scholars of color in this study believe that research is important, and should inform what they do in the classroom, they also believe that is essential to make that work public. In this way, a scholar's work must "speak" to other scholars. Seth stated that competent, productive scholars will only develop their reputations if they show a willingness to 'put their work out there.' Scholars in this study talked about the fact that research, writing, and publishing are very important because they are in this space where in their minds, and in their heads, they are thinking about what it means to be a scholar and to speak to other people in the field. To do that end, they contend that an academic professional must be willing to do the work that needs to be done—and do whatever it takes—in order for him or her to get published. Also, this person is open to wrestling with the big, difficult theoretical questions. In order for this to happen, this person must be committed to the search and to doing intellectual work; such an individual is one who produces, and not just reads. Those in the field write to speak to other academics and know that writing for journals is specific. For this reason, as a researcher, an individual should study things that one is greatly interested in; something that they have studied before and know something about. Those kinds of academic professionals are ones who write well and are able to get their views over to the audience. These individuals understand the needs of the audience, particularly in terms of expectations; however,

they do not lose their own voices in writing. They also keep their minds open to learning more about those things that they already know.

Seth and Stephen note that being an educator means realizing that one's intellectual work—particularly as a minority scholar—is activist in nature. To this end, Stephen views a composition and rhetoric scholar as a person who is serious about community, the business of writing, and also, studying language toward the end of producing a more just society. One's presence on a college or university campus, as a Black scholar, can help motivate, or inspire, other African Americans, or minorities, who come to the university. In fact, a minority scholar's visibility on campus can make an overall difference to the lives of many students (White or Black) who attend university there. For him, English education is not just about being present, but making a difference in the actual lives of students. This begs the question: "How do we, as a society, get 'free'?" African American scholars in this study believe that it is being committed to that search as it is manifest in language, in writing, and in communication. This begs the question: "How do we, as a society, get 'free'?" African American scholars in this study believe that it is being committed to that search as it is manifest in language, in writing, and in communication. Those 'English roots' are about more than just books or literacy, because teaching individuals to read will not necessarily liberate them.

In this way, African American scholars state that their practice is one of intentionality: they believe that writing and teaching are political acts. In their roles as academic professionals they feel that they are engaging meaning making within critical discourses and negotiating, with their colleagues in the field, the ways in which they are defining the discipline and what it stands for as a profession. Therefore, their positionality in terms of teaching and writing is crucial; and in this way, writing for publication in academia is a *very* political act. Beyond all the haggling

that goes along writing programs attempting to position themselves, respectably, within institutions, there is the local politics that comes with vying for one's own recognition as an academic. These scholars know individuals who are more well-connected in terms of who they know and have worked with in the field—and have others who recognize aspects of their scholarship—are in a better position to know what the peer reviewers of specific journals are looking for, and tend to have a better chance of getting published. Then, it becomes how much an individual wants to get involved in the politics of 'trying to play the game.'

The participants in my study also believe that what composition scholars do speaks well beyond the walls of the classroom. As such, they do not think that one's position as a professor in a university is innocent or neutral. They believe that their positionality is a platform for making the world more equitable. African American scholars believe instructors are representing the larger community and situating themselves inside of the struggle. Such persons walk in contested terrains and necessarily have to see themselves as being on certain sides of the fence, as ones that are powerful working for the power-'less'. Scholars of color believe that as academic professionals, and especially as composition scholars, they are working with people for the complete liberation of human society in areas in which they get to play. Stephen and Seth see their work as being transformative because they feel that their work as public and organic intellectuals is such that it could bring forth hope and change through the process of continual activity; that is, that idea of giving back to the community by putting in, and getting back, and getting others to help themselves. Stephen feels that Composition Studies is an area that is fairly progressive: the theories embedded in it are the same social ideas that help them to be vested in helping their constituent communities. In this way, he feels that he is constantly trying to present work that can somehow make the world a little better for the people who come behind him. He

notes that it is a difficult job, but one that speaks to the ideas of justice, and social justice in regard to making things a bit more equitable.

Those scholars note that doing the work that ‘speaks to others’ is ultimately built on a foundation of being thoroughly-engaged in doing scholarly research. They acknowledge that doing intellectual work encompasses making their work visible, and accessible, beyond the limited view of the academy. They feel that such persons must believe, not only in being committed to the search, but also, have a willingness to be engaged in being transparent about what academic work is all about and a desire to open up about their own journeys as professionals. They state that those who enter academe hoping to make a difference cannot expect to just teach classes; they must leave time and opportunity open for working on their scholarship. In this way, Stephen talks about a scholar as both an *organic* and *public* intellectual. Organic intellectuals talk about the grassroots work that needs to be done in local communities and what we need to do, as academic professionals, in order to be able to participate in such work. The goal of such projects is to make them sustainable within their local constituencies—community centers, churches, or neighborhoods. Further, the goals are to set up a situation by which a Composition and Rhetoric scholar works as an active participant with the project, serving in an official capacity as a professional liaison between the local community group and the university, and acting as a consultant whenever specific questions arise. Those scholars view themselves as joining in that commitment, knowing that such a commitment is necessary. This person acknowledges that all work is propaganda—it is political; and scholars of color believe that the ideology underlying the politically-charged nature of their roles is derived by acknowledging that the work that they do, in terms of their identities as “scholars,” is a verb—it is based on what “we” *do*. For example, since Pauline believes that her professional or scholarly

identity is based on being a teacher of writing, then by nature of her work, she is one who teaches. Thus, writing becomes the vehicle by which she grounds her intellectual work, commitment to pedagogy, and being activist in relation to how she engages, and instructs, her students.

African American scholars in this study noted that, in actuality, because of lingering issues concerning inequity in society, the power to enact change by minorities cannot come by way of retaliation, or even through the veiled hope of the complete amelioration of racism in society. They believe that the power to promulgate change resides in the notion that race and being Black has to do with realizing one's power and having a role to play in society. For these scholars, having a racial identity is a political act. Scholars of color are consciously aware of their own roles, including those being educators, teachers of writing, and researchers in the professoriate. They talk about being role models, or mentors, to other minorities, and they reiterate that in terms of Black identity, an individual has to be a pragmatist in terms of how he or she interacts with hegemony, especially when such individuals are being oppressive. In those instances, they feel that it is important for young African Americans to know Black history and what that means in terms of how being Black relates to being man or woman; for them, they feel that having positive role models as graduate students, and junior faculty, makes it easier for up-and-coming scholars to situate themselves in the field.

Doing Work that 'Speaks to Others': On Being a Scholar in Composition and Rhetoric

Scholars in this study note that being a "Comp/Rhet scholar" or academic professional in the field of Composition and Rhetoric means centralizing the work we, as scholars, are doing in the field—work done as minority scholars, and at-large—in order to build pipelines to other

constituent communities. It is not enough to do research in our field; they feel that we must engage in on-going conversations with those in other disciplines, including, but not limited to, fields such as psychology, ecology, economics, and sociology. They also engage with ‘Others’—namely, those who hail from different backgrounds than our own— in our field. In broadening this dialogue, minority scholars want to look beyond themselves as one “African American” constituency in order to consider the experiences, and working lives, of other minority groups, as well as other scholars, within Composition and Rhetoric. They believe that none of us do our work in isolation, and so, sharing our concerns and intellectual curiosities can only serve to further our co-joined interests in establishing ourselves as a situated, and multidimensional, profession.

Being a composition scholar involves the transformative action, the power to change people’s lives through reflection and action. In this vein, Stephen believes that English education should consist of at least four variables: language, reading, writing, and pedagogy. He feels that a ‘real’ educator in the field of English language learning, and teaching, whether it is the areas of literacy—reading and writing—or oral communication, must understand the significance of a student’s home language and how the use of, and the exposure to, Standard Academic English in school classrooms affects the student’s identity and performance. Ali also feels that English educators, and teachers of writing, should reflect on the ways in which classroom practices affect or inhibit students’ linguistic varieties. Stephen believes that English educators must understand what it means for a student to “read well” or at least at a level that is fluent and can help the student to learn and improve his or her own academic performance, specifically, in terms of being literate and developing the kinds of strategies that this student needs to help him or her in reading comprehension. This kind of educator understands theories of writing and the writing

process, and also, the modes and methodology that would help train future English teachers about how to teach English literacy.

African American scholars regard their roles as being ‘agents of change’ as particularly important. However, they acknowledge that the power to change actually starts from within an individual. They concede that, for them, overcoming challenges and obstacles that they faced in becoming academic professionals was the first part of being agentive and instigating, and promulgating, changes. They also believe that being an ‘agent of change’ involves being consciously aware of who one is, and being actively engaged, and committed, to bringing about such changes as they relate to the ‘politics of race’ in local politics or academic scholarship. Stephen stated that, for him, realizing his role as someone who could make a difference in the lives others was something that was “empowering from within.” As an agent of change, he believes that “Nobody’s power over us determines our moves and our steps. We’ve got to be willing to struggle and fight.” In this vein, minority scholars are organic intellectuals who work with constituents to bring about change in their local communities. As Stephen puts it, “We are not leaders of our race, per say, but builders of our communities.”

African American scholars in this study believe that as teachers of writing their research should inform their teaching. As such, they believe that a theory of writing must speak to the community, i.e., cultural and academic, is connected to one’s own experiences, and is relevant to a particular experience or cultural tradition. Being connected to one’s experiences, both in and out of the classroom, brings relevance to what they do as educators; it also speaks to the importance of their roles in their constituent communities—cultural, racial or ethnic, and also, local, or professional—play in them being able to articulate their practices in the field. The transparency with respect to their beliefs in regard to their own situatedness in the field is always

rooted in what “we,” i.e., African Americans, do, as writing and rhetoric scholars, and in how “we” see ourselves in regard to what “we” do. For example, Stephen stated, one can say that a theory of writing is a theory of practice, but it is not. He explained that “a theory of writing is a theory of writing. A theory of practice is theory of how to write.”

As builders of their constituent communities, one challenge that African American scholars have had to overcome is making the adjustment from what they conceived of as success when they were younger to understanding what their current roles, and responsibilities, are as minorities in the field. As children, and young adolescents, they equated being a professional with being successful. For example, as a child, Seth thought that being a professional was being a college graduate. So, he believed that becoming a professional came by way of obtaining a vocation, like when he went to the doctor’s office with his parents and saw people working in the kinds of positions that required a college degree. Stephen stated that when he was younger, he mainly wanted to become a professional because “he was going to get rich and get a good job.” Ali stated that he was told to finish high school because “without a high school diploma, he would not be successful.” Some scholars of color did not “struggle” so much in terms of their definitions of success, or with academia, but could only envision themselves working directly within their communities. However, those scholars did have an idea of the kinds of vocations that they wanted to be involved in when they got older. Often, their interests as children manifested in the kinds of literacy work they would do later on as writing, and rhetoric, specialists. Aaron stated that he aspired to be a preacher when he was younger, and stayed involved with theology, rhetoric, and the church as he got older. Also, Ali aspired to be a Sunday school teacher because he liked the role that literacy, including reading and interpreting texts,

played in his life; this included preparing scriptures for reading to the church congregation as a young adolescent.

For African Americans in this study, they affirm that being involved in one's local community, and having that self situated in terms of a Black identity, directly impacts aspects of their scholarship and the ability to be earnest, vested, and vocal in terms of giving one's opinion on key issues related to race and their constituency. Ali noted that church impacted his want or need to be in English Studies and do scholarship, or work, in terms of being a teacher. The church not only influenced his future profession, but also the ways in which he would come to look at research and scholarly engagement. Sunday school provided him with the curiosity to "dig deep" into something like literature. In Sunday school, he was allowed to speak and give his opinions; a kind of Socratic question-talk-discuss paradigm was enacted there. Aaron says that the street and the church are his foundations—in terms of his inner sanctum—but feels that the academy respects him more and gives him more latitude or more room "to play." However, he acknowledges that there is probably more space in an African American church in which to be spontaneous and "to play around with language" than there would be in a stricter, more traditional White European church. He noted how his interest in theology and philosophy, stemming from his own involvement in the church when he was younger, motivated him to study rhetoric as a graduate student.

African American scholars affirm that that being involved in the local community, including participation in community centers, and even attending neighborhood churches, is something that helps them to stay grounded in terms of having a sense of self, and maintaining a positive continuity in terms of what it means to be Black, representing the concepts of being Black, and being located in the black experience. This enlivens the idea that the (Black)

community is vital and thriving. For Stephen, his cultural context, via growing up in Detroit, gave him a critical sense of Blackness. However, eventually, he began to realize that one's immediate cultural context for shaping identity—whether personal or not—is not everything. Context is not everything. He came to understand that being in different environments, including where he attended university—far away from home and his local, constituent community—helped to refine and improve his sense of self. He states that being away from his local community gave him a different frame of reference than that of Detroit. He states, “It also gave me entrée into a different world, a different perspective. So the ‘prison’ through which I was looking at it, it become enlarged, and I began to see possibilities that existed beyond Detroit.” Seth notes how his current work through community engagement helps to enliven his practice; not only is he ‘giving back’ through his involvement with local literacy projects in his constituent community, he is also adding to his professional development as a scholar. As such, scholars in this study concede the importance of locale, and also, the significance having a sense of self through knowing one's history or place. However, they believe that, perhaps, being able to appreciate those unique frames of reference, or perspectives, from which one hails, cannot happen until an individual steps out from beyond them.

Challenges and Obstacles: Overcoming Potential Barriers to Success

For many of my participants, they had to overcome what they perceived as “barriers” to them achieving success. Those scholars, such as Barbara, defined “barriers” as aspects in their lives which had the potential to keep them from completing their educational goals, i.e. completing high school and receiving a diploma, and becoming successful. For them, success was ultimately defined in terms of reaching particular goals based on educational advancements which led to particular professional achievements.

Achieving personal goals on the way to becoming academic professionals helped scholars to believe in themselves, feel a greater sense of self-worth, and develop a positive self-concept in regard to their personal identities; that is, some success helped them to feel good about themselves and allowed them to achieve even more goals. As such, scholars talk about the importance of achieving success and what it has meant to them as professionals. Ali described being able to define racism for himself. He also talked about feeling confident in his abilities to succeed even though his home life had been difficult. He stated that, ultimately, feeling intelligent as a child, and believing in his own success, allowed him to overcome potentially devastating obstacles. For African American scholars in my study, being able to set and achieve specific goals helped them to overcome challenges and envision further pathways to success. Ali talked about being ranked at the bottom of his class, and being determined to improve his test scores and move into more advanced classes. He wanted to improve his overall literacy ability in order to take better classes that would help him to get into college.

For many of my participants, the difference between success and failure has been their ability to develop positive attitudes and self-concepts which has helped them to negotiate the challenges of the differing ecologies that they have faced. For several of my participants, having goals as well as seeing other achieve theirs, motivated them to continue on the pathway to success; thus, allowing them to overcome any challenges they faced along the way. For example, a few of my participants talked about having positive role models to look up to or emulate, and having mentors who actively participated in their personal growth and professional development. Those mentors gave them advice about being literate, the importance of education, the role of scholarship, and how to create an informal network of peers and colleagues in the field in order to help them land jobs or garner publication opportunities. Ali and Barbara talked about their

first time seeing black female professors while in college and realizing that they could see themselves doing the same kind of thing.

African American scholars concede that maintaining, and developing, self-confidence is necessary to publish so that one can survive and thrive in the academy. Being confident in one's scholarship enables an individual to put his or her work out there where others can see it. Scholars of color acknowledge that there is always an internal struggle in regard to "Am I good enough?" For example, Seth stated that periods of extreme confidence followed by extreme doubt still affect him, and his writing, to this day. Pauline, although a prominent and well-established scholar in the field, still lacks confidence in her writing ability. However, African American scholars assert that doing well in school, either graduate or otherwise, instills confidence in the individual that he or she can survive and ultimately achieve his or her goals. Seth noted how succeeding in his graduate program challenged both his Black and White professors' perceptions in regard to "low-achieving Black students." In addition, Ali discussed how he developed "literacy expectations" based on his participation in his local church which impacted him beyond academe. For the scholars I cited above, sponsorship in terms of literacy development enabled them to do well in school which ultimately hailed forth even greater levels of achievement. Furthermore, having mentorship and receiving advising as young people helped them to conceive of, and look for, mentors later on in their academic careers. Even as early as elementary school, African American scholars appreciated Black, and White, teachers who were clear about their politics and their belief in Black students.

For many of my participants, gaining knowing concerning what it means to be a scholar, and to be a scholar in composition, has promoted a positive self-concept, particularly in regard to professional identity. Most of my participants acknowledge that being a scholar takes focus,

inspiration, and dedication as well as support and encouragement; and all of this, in equal measure. Many of my participants realized that they wanted to become composition scholars after reading the works of scholars in the field while they were still in graduate school. They also stated that as they have developed as scholars in composition, they realize that it is particularly important to read the works of other minority scholars in the field. They feel that this readership, occurring among the scholars of color in the field, sets up an informal network of scholarship within composition. My participants also stated that although they feel that in some ways that have multiple identities given the roles that they are required to perform such as being teachers, writers, teachers of writing, scholars, educators, and researchers, that they do not feel as though they are separated or disjointed in terms of their professional identities. My participants stated that they felt that their multiple professional identities were somehow integrated; and they stated that regardless of the roles they are asked to perform, that their primary responsibilities are to their students. Pauline discussed the fact that she wants her scholarship to be a reflection of her teaching, of what she does in the classroom. She feels this is her primary role as a composition scholar.

Also, presenting their work with professors at professional conferences—as both minority graduate students, and junior faculty—helped them to feel that their work was valued; these experiences also helped them to appreciate how their own scholarship was situated within the larger context of the professoriate. Scholars affirmed that one aspect of mentorship that made such growth possible was the idea of transparency. Being afforded the opportunity to learned detailed aspects from their mentors, and role models, concerning the processes of journal editing and review, writing book-length manuscripts and submitting them for publication, and working on caucuses and committees gives the mentee a true chance for success. Also, the transparency

that results from having a mentor changes the emerging scholar's views about the field due to the fact that this individual is able to interpret the things that are going on, including the kinds of work that is going on, and this makes a difference in terms of setting goals as they outcomes he or she wants.

Productive Scholarship: Living, Learning, and Remaining Vital in the Professoriate

Scholars of color in this study acknowledge that being a productive scholar means working on scholarship whenever an individual has the time and opportunity. There is always work, even if they are not teaching, prepping for classes, working on curricula, or sitting in meetings. They feel that when professors are not in meetings or teaching classes, they ought to be reading and writing. In their positions as scholars, they always want to send their work out, and so, they 'carve out' days for writing. Black academic professionals are aware that both environment and context is important to the development of a minority scholar, particularly in terms of engaging in productive scholarship. Seth believes that the development of professional identity is as much about the institution or the university that an individual attends as it is about the people with whom the person works; it is also based on one's own "dogged determination." Deciding where to attend school and where to work and engage in scholarship can enhance, or hinder, a person's career. Ali notes that being in a place where one can remain liberal, or conservative, in order to stay true to one's politics and beliefs, helps an individual to locate a space in which he or she can affirm his or her ideas. In this way, preprofessional training, including time spent transitioning into the professoriate, can afford an individual with an opportunity for tremendous growth. Therefore, not having to take the time to find one's (professional) identity because one is in the wrong place, or has not located the appropriate context or environment, is highly beneficial.

Scholars of color in this study find that professional development, particularly the sort that lends itself to promotion, is fraught with difficulties. African American scholars find the tenure process, and in particular, the third and ten year review processes, to be especially tedious. When putting together their tenure packets, scholars of color are writing narratives about communities that they are involved in, and care deeply about, and they feel that sometimes their review committees could care less about the work that they are doing, even though this community is the one that brought the scholar to the academy in the first place. Also, for some, it is not always clear what a university, or program, counts as scholarship. For example, Ali stated that when hiring and tenure committees at some universities only consider peer-reviewed publications or articles published in major journals. They may not count book reviews or chapters in books.

Balancing issues related to teaching and scholarship has proven to be a difficult prospect for some scholars of color. Those scholars find that it is difficult to balance teaching, research, and scholarship—involving the type of research that leads to publication—with other aspects of professional development, including various administrative duties. Also, oftentimes, they feel that, as minorities, these additional duties seem non-negotiable; particularly ones that deal with diversity issues on campus. And although they feel fortunate to have gotten their relative positions, and know their presence is making a difference in the lives of their students, can be a worrisome situation. Serving on various committees, and dealing with so many diversity issues, can feel burdensome. Although they have many other responsibilities, African American scholars know that they must to make time for their research and scholarship. Scholars in this study are aware that in order for them to be successful in terms of getting their work ‘out there,’ that they must make the time for working on their own projects which includes preparing for

that upcoming conference. The challenge, then, becomes the negotiation of all these responsibilities, especially in terms of practicing one's pace and being productive in regard to scholarship. Ali describes this adaptation as an artistic process whereby he just sort of fell into his own rhythm in terms of working with students outside of class so that they actually did work; and also, preparing for classes and doing his own scholarship or professional development, including reading or writing. Either way, he admits that he works long hours, beyond 'regular' hours, grading papers and reading. Barbara discussed her difficulty in balancing administrative, and teaching, duties in two departments based on her joint appointment. Pauline says that she either does mostly administrative work, or some teaching, but finds it difficult to navigate both simultaneously.

On Locating the Individual: Finding one's Place within Spaces in Academe

Although the scholars of color in this study acknowledge the importance of their individual roles as educators, teachers of writing, researchers, and 'Comp/Rhet' scholars, and they realize that they negotiate aspects of their positionality on daily basis. As such, they actively pull from their 'storehouses of knowledge' depending on the context and rhetorical situation. Therefore, in reflecting on their multiple professional identities, or roles in the field, scholars of color believe that one's professional identities are not separate from one another because each role informs the other. For example, they do not separate being a *scholar* from being a scholar in composition. In fact, Barbara and Pauline started off doing work in different areas including feminist theory, and Women's Studies, but did not conceive of doing this research as a part of their scholarly identities; that is, they saw it as informing the work that they were doing in composition studies.

African American scholars note that in order to situate oneself in the field one must know one's place or positionality, and be able to locate a space whereby one may actively be engaged in and thinking about, research. This situation involves having a working knowledge of what it means to be an academic professional, or scholar, and do the work that is composition studies. For example, Seth and Barbara had no idea concerning what being a professional, let alone an academic professional, was about when they were younger. They simply thought it meant having a job where you worked in an office. They remember their parents telling them to keep up their grades in order to go to university—even though they had no conception what that actually meant. For this reason, graduate students, particularly minorities, must find mentors and latch onto them. Those students must discover those scholars, or professors, whose scholarship, and even administrative ability, they admire, and be able to mirror these individuals. Scholars of color note that mentorship is crucial for individual to be able to successfully navigate the professoriate and develop as a professional. These scholars are aware that having a doctorate is an apprenticeship; it is the initialization of finding one's voice and professional identity. Thus, a graduate student's tenure—towards becoming a full professor—starts the day that he or she is accepted into a doctorate program *and* start to see his, or herself, as an academic professional. As they apprentice in these early stages, they are beginning to take on that identity, and to develop a professional identity, in relation to these social mirrors in which they are involving themselves.

In this way, Ali conceives of *place* as having to do with the feeling of being comfortable in a particular space, including departments, programs, and institutions. He discusses it in terms of “finding your place” and note how important it is to be able to situate oneself; and they feel that this is especially true for minority scholars. Scholars of color note that occupying a space, but not feeling as though it is part of ‘your place,’ or not having a sense of this place because this

individual does not have any personal connections to a space, is detrimental to that individual's growth as a scholar. For example, how can a person negotiate aspects of being a scholar in terms of thinking about the work they to do as teachers of writing, researchers, or educators if they do not feel vested in the institutional or programmatic spaces they occupy? Thus, while having a space or location in which do to do composition studies work is a top priority, being able to feel connected to the place in which such activities are taking place is mandatory. Otherwise, the rewards that come from being both reflexive, and reflective, in regard to one's practice, particularly concerning being invested in this kind of research, may be lost.

The scholars in this study acknowledge that if an individual is unable to locate his or her 'place' in academe, or find a space in which to negotiate aspects of his or her personal, and professional, identities that he or she may struggle with realizing his or her professional goals. Those spaces are the ones in which scholars do the work that occupies the bulk of their time, and where they engage in the types of activities that make up the work which they envision themselves doing in the field. Ali stated that although *space* has to do with the physical aspects of where one is located, such as the local spaces, including the institution or university, department, and program, it also deals with how one is situated within those locales. As a scholar, himself, he is aware that the actual physical aspect of academia is one that is much larger. He recognizes that African Americans must be placed in situations where they see themselves in a different kind of space—that they are able to locate other individuals throughout academia who look like them in order to gain awareness in regard to how those individuals also occupy different spaces. Stephen, Ali, and Barbara discussed the fact that seeing others like themselves in academe allowed them to gain a sense of what it means to be a professional in Rhet/Comp; and also, it helped them to consider their own voices in their scholarship as they

thought about those other people as part of their audience as they were writing. Seeing other minority scholars and knowing how they occupy different spaces in academia continues to help them to feel more situated as writers. As such, they are able to envision their audience when they contemplate and write about scholarship.

Scholars in this study also state that the one challenge which they continue to face, regardless of their positions or how they are situated is their difficulty in attempting to articulate theories of practice in terms of the kind of work they are doing. Such scholars have ascertained that there is still a great deal of tension between theory and practice in Composition and Rhetoric. As Stephen implied, 'it is one thing to think about writing and to come up with theories of writing, and it is quite another thing to practice and structure it,' i.e., conduct research and come up with frameworks. African American scholars note that in order to ensure our longevity, as scholars, within a viable discipline, that as academic professionals we must continue to work against polarization, and even being polemic, within our departments, programs, classrooms, and also, institutions; that is, we must construct a framework from which to come together, constructively, and discuss issues which relate to us and to the work we do.

The Inter/Intra-Personal: Dealing with Challenges in the Professoriate

Scholars of color believe that there are, perhaps, some differences among Black and White scholars with respect to their shared realities in the professoriate. Black scholars feel that they have some 'shared' experiences due to their visible identities in terms of race. Being Black in a 'sea of Whiteness' makes one visible, and it also depends on the kind of work that an individual chooses to do; this can make a person a target as well. But at least in terms of representation, or racial group identification, a minority scholar is always very visible. Based on the politics of visible identity, African American scholars in this study stated that they tend to

feel more comfortable at particular institutions where there is greater diversity. Seeing others like themselves allows them to feel as though this is a place where they are welcomed; and that even if there is *difference*, it is acceptable. The larger context, beyond the university, is also important in regard to socialization. Therefore, when locating positions for employment, scholars of color look at environments or locations outside of the institution whereby they can engage in greater socialization. For example, Ali looked for a job where there was a larger African American population, and he knew that it would exist around more metropolitan areas. He was concerned that he would have been missing out on opportunities for more diverse socialization if he had moved to the Midwest.

Seth talked about not having black professional organizations on campus. A few of my participants discussed the problems that they have had in attempting to form relationships with other black colleagues. Stephen discussed his own difficulty in dealing with other black colleagues because of, what he feels are, their pre-conceived attitudes. He goes on to describe what he calls the “strange mentality” of the black professional; one that he finds he has a difficult time navigating. Ali discussed the difficulty that blacks in the field have with networking with other black scholars; that the spaces in which they occupy made it extremely difficult form close relationships. He stated that in the field of Composition most African American scholars are spread out across campuses all across the United States. As such, the best chance that they have to network, and to socialize, with one another is at national or regional conferences.

Scholars of color in this study feel that they have had to “pay serious personal costs” in order to get ahead professionally. Sometimes, professional growth comes at the cost of having families. For example, four out of six American African scholars who participated in this study were either unmarried and/or had no children. Also, many scholars of color have to ‘pay the

costs, personally' in terms of viable social and living arrangements. For example, socially, personally, and relationship-wise, situations may not be good for African Americans because it is difficult for minorities to live and work in some towns. However, because of the scarcity of tenure-track positions, taking a job in a less-than desirable location may greatly benefit the scholar in the long run. However, the question becomes: "Is it worth it?" Also, sometimes, scholars of color just want time away from the university—and the politics of it all—even if it is "at a cost." For example, Aaron makes sure that the university "can't hit him by Friday [because] he's off in his own world" or he is "reading or writing, or whatever," or working on his writing if he feels it is not going well.

Another challenge for minority scholars is realizing that even though they have sacrificed a lot to get where they are, they still may have a long way to go in order to achieve their professional goals. African American scholars concede that individuals may have to live in a place where they do not have many opportunities for socialization, even as they are doing their Ph.D. work and building their careers. For example, Barbara said that doing her Master's program work in the Northeast was difficult because she felt like she had no social life, but she was glad that at least it was a major city. However, she faced a similar situation while obtaining her Ph.D. in the Midwest. She says her lack of socialization, particularly with those from her own cultural community, made it extraordinarily difficult when she was working so hard to achieve her goals. Other scholars of color are challenged by self-defacing attitudes that stem from having a difficult past. African American scholars may be still be troubled by a past that said, "You can't possibly succeed!" For example, Aaron discussed how his life is surrounded by "flashpoints of riots" and that is why he is always so spirited because there is, and always has been, trouble in some way.

Making Places as Scholars in Composition: Racial versus Professional Identity

In addition to shared experiences, scholars of color contend that there is a difference in process, practice, and product in terms of ‘Black versus White’ scholarship. With respect to positionality, and situating oneself in the professoriate, scholars of color believe that when White scholars write for scholarship (publication) that it is technical; it is a different process. They feel that White scholars get frustrated by aspects of style, including considerations of language in-use, genre, and layout; that those things distract, or take away from the point it of all—getting to the argument; unless it deals with multi-modality and genre. However, Black scholars feel they approach the use of language in specific ways in order to make a point and for rhetorical effect. They engage in the use of language for a specific purpose, understanding that this is a specific type of practice. Black scholars do not look their at uses of language, especially within professional contexts, as specific instances or examples of *codemeshing*, or codeswitching, but as a way to engage in scholarly conversations through the use of a medium, which they, themselves, have mastered, and which helps them to achieve a very specific response from their audience.

African American scholars in this study believe that they engage in different modes of being with respect to narratives and writing. They assert that as Black, and minority, scholars they seem to have different narrative styles in terms of scholarship. These “alternative discourses” consist of the rhetorical uses of languages such Black English, or Ebonics, Caribbean English, poetics, music, and other literary elements that are infused into traditional types of professional narrative. The goal of those “hybrid” discourses is to engage readers in other modes, or perspectives, from which to consider the subject matter, and especially those which stem from lived experience or contextualized ideologies in terms of representation of the self. While they readily engage in those kinds of discourses, scholars of color feel that it is important to

acknowledge areas where aspects of this style originally developed; that is, these scholars feel they must acknowledge the rhetorical traditions of Black and other cultural communities, particularly as they want to pay homage to those cultural, and rhetorical traditions, by acknowledging the ways in which such discourses influenced the field of Composition and Rhetoric. In this way, they feel that they cannot “take the practice and leave the people behind.” For example, Stephen readily cites the work of scholars like Geneva Smitherman and Keith Gilyard whom they feel have remained true to themselves, and the Black experience, and are firmly situated in the Black Nationalist movements for which their works depends on the complex interplay of vocabulary and style.

Private/Public Selves: Negotiating Personal Identity in Professional Spaces

For many African American scholars, their negotiation of their personal identities within professional spaces involves dealing with the challenges, and complexities, of handling interpersonal relationships in academe. African American scholars feel that one of the real difficulties for minority graduate students in terms of socialization is developing an understanding what of it means to be a *scholar*. These students do not realize that once they enter graduate programs, they are not just becoming academics or scholars, they developing as whole individuals. In fact, some have no concept for what the purpose, and process, for training to become an academic truly entails. Aaron and Seth talked about wanting teaching certificates, but soon discovered that they were not just going to graduate school to teach writing. Barbara stated that she never wanted to ‘just teach,’ and like Ali, she enrolled in her English writing, or composition and rhetoric, graduate program so she could write and practice her craft. So, even the concept of *teaching* writing—something she knew she was going to grad school to learn more about—seemed like a paradox. Thus, acquiring an understanding of what scholarship

means, and also, being an academic professional, starts to help those students to begin to forge their own professional identities.

For other minority scholars, the struggle with professional identity development has to do with not knowing what being a ‘Comp/Rhet scholar’ is all about, so they struggle with the term, and also, coming to terms with what it means concerning professional expectations, and duties, in regard to their respective careers. Therefore, graduate school, or preprofessional training, provides a way for minority scholars to gain an understanding, and appreciation, of what it means to be ‘comp scholar.’ In fact, Barbara and Seth said that they had no idea what the field was all about before they took graduate courses. For example, participants talked about the fact that taking advanced courses in rhetoric and composition, and reading about aspects of critical pedagogy, and feminist theory, helped them to feel that maybe they wanted to be a scholar, that maybe there was a place for them in Composition and Rhetoric. In their classes, they were able to read the literature and the work of those scholars whom they felt ‘spoke to them.’

For Barbara, the term *scholar* was a difficult one to claim because it seemed so ‘highfalutin’, something that was somehow beyond them and impossible to achieve. However, Seth stated that those who cannot ‘nail down’ aspects of being a scholar or engaging in research relative to composition studies—especially in the beginning—tend to jump from ‘pillar to post’, like himself, and run the risk of being unproductive unless they can uncover an area in the field in which they feel comfortable and can focus their research.

African American scholars also note that negotiating one’s professional identity, particularly in regard to publication, is an on-going process. Ali agrees that although it might affect aspects in regard to their potential for publication, it is more difficult for a person of color to stand out if they do not engage in particular fields or specialties as related to research in

sociolinguistics, language, or cultural rhetorics. For example, if one's research, as a minority scholar, does not relate to race, or teaching Black students, it may be the case that his or her work is not recognized.

Mentoring and Socialization: Finding Justice through Giving Back

African American scholars believe that their experiences in the professoriate have changed not only how they see themselves, but how they perceive of their roles in academe. Being in this space, in academia, causes African Americans to see themselves in a new light; in some ways, it is like what W.E.B. Du Bois' said about the veil, and seeing oneself through the eyes of others—the white majority. In other ways, it is just to see ourselves in a different way, as an individual who respected and admired, for their intellect, and based on their hard work and the dedication that allowed them to reach a life-altering goal. This individual is one who is not denigrated but lifted up as an example for all others---all emerging scholars—regardless of race. In this way, scholars of color note that in terms of being an academic professional that an individual must deal with at least two aspects of self within the academy—the personal *and* the professional. Scholars in this study state that negotiating aspects of the personal in professional spaces is complicated by the fact that as scholars of color they must develop a persona that is beyond their “usual” selves—personalities that allow them to cross different cultural and social divides, but which also allow them to maintain some sense of privacy. What makes this situation all the more daunting is that African American scholars are developing these personas in spaces that are not located within their own constituent cultural communities. Stephen discussed this process as one in which he negotiates the personal in academe by developing a “symbolic self” that is in opposition to others; one in which he acknowledges that there is an oppositional form of power where people (in society) have power over others. This imagined self has possibilities

and it is where he believes that people operate with a sense of power in, and of, themselves. So, in this way, it is not power *over*. He believes that the proposition tends to change and it becomes power within, and in working with others, that drives an individual. He feels that he is the latter because he believes in building alliances with his colleagues because he knows such relationships are important: "If we're going to ameliorate injustice inside of society, we've got to forge connections; we've got to talk to people." Like other scholars who are committed to social justice, he notes that the intangible must be made tangible both in regard to personal responsibility, and educational efforts, if things are really going to change in society. My participants stated that setting goals and achieving them comes 'full-circle' for them as members of the professoriate. They discussed the fact that attaining 'true success' as an academic professional has not only meant overcoming personal obstacles, but also being able to be in a position to give back by helping others to achieve their goals. Most of my participants discussed the fact that they believed 'giving back' in terms of helping their constituent communities, i.e., local or global black diaspora, by providing social uplift in the form of encouragement, training, and teacher training was the primary component for being a successful scholar of color. Pauline, Seth, and Stephen talked about 'giving back' to their constituent professional communities through mentoring students of color in Masters' and graduate programs, including English as well as non-English majors.

In addition, scholars of color in this study feel that in terms of giving back, they 'clear the way' for Black scholars to get ahead in the field. They realize that their mentorship helps other minorities to effectively navigate, sometimes, difficult professional arenas. For instance, many blacks struggle with having and developing, close informal relationships with other White scholars. They acknowledge that some Blacks, and other minority faculty, do not feel

comfortable doing some of the networking activities with other White faculty because they know that these persons are not going to be able to be in their social network. However, African American scholars feel that Black scholars, and especially minority junior faculty, need to do informal things with other faculty in order to get to know others and feel more comfortable with them; this is a necessary part of socialization into the professoriate. Networking and other aspects of preprofessional training helps Black scholars to understand that they, too, can be scholars and have their voices heard, and also have their ideas represented.

While they discussed the significance of being able to develop positive relationships with other scholars of color, my participants also noted that it was just as crucial to their professional development to develop positive relationships with their white colleagues. For some of my participants, a major challenge was being able to develop this kind of informal network with white peers. However, many participants have discussed being able to have close informal relationships with their white colleagues. Several of my participants discussed interacting with white coworkers in their English departments. Also, Barbara and Ali talked about learning about socialization from their white peers. Ali, Seth, and Stephen stated that they consistently go to white colleagues in regard to professional questions related to academia.

The participants in this study believe that one of the best ways of making the world more equitable is through mentoring. These scholars are aware that mentoring, and successful socialization of up-and-coming minority scholars into the field is one area that is critical in terms of giving back. They are aware that mentoring is crucial for Blacks to become successfully integrated into the academy. The scholars in this study feel that socialization is one thing that is crucial for minority scholars to get ahead in the professoriate and have them feel that their work is valued. For example, Barbara states that it was as a graduate student, seeing Black female

professors for the first time, which enabled her to begin to envisioning herself as becoming a scholar. Also, for Ali, getting information and advice from mentors, as a doctoral student, such as how to land a tenure-track position and what it takes to obtain tenure, helped him as an emerging scholar to consider what was necessary for him to be successful and make it in academe. Getting to know other minority scholars, and developing close relationships with mentors, is also necessary for minorities to develop a sense of place in academe. Also, having supportive colleagues in the field, and especially, at their respective institutions whereby they can become involved in deeply intellectual environments, helps Black scholars to feel engaged in the kinds of work they do; particularly, the kind that deals with community-based activities that deal with their own constituent communities. Minority scholars want to feel that such work is appreciated.

Developing Selfhood: The Effects of Socialization on Racial and Professional Identity Development

Based on my analysis of participants' narratives, it is consistently the case that African American scholars in this study conceive of *racial identity* as a socially-constructed notion of the self that is enacted by different processes, lived experiences, and contexts which include their interactions with others. Those interactions occur at home, school, and in society via a process in which Blacks discover their roles and come to emulate the behavior, and learned attitudes and beliefs, of those with whom they come into contact—either mentors, advisors, or role models. Scholars concede that society's attitudes towards different minority groups, as realized by attitudes towards others, or as portrayed by media, tends to affect individual self-image. Negative or positive beliefs about the self are often internalized based on one's exposure to behaviors in

particular environments. More often than not, what scholars dealt with the most, as they were developing, were the constructs that challenged their (positive) self-concepts.

All of my participants have had a conscious awareness of their racial identities since early childhood. As such, African American scholars of color are aware of how their early life histories, particularly in regard to issues related to culture, and racial identity and self-esteem, continue to affect them in their daily, professional lives. African Americans also talk about how their local environments, including where they were up, affected how they were raised in terms early socialization. They specifically discuss how those environments impacted, or shaped, how they felt about and defined themselves in terms of, having a racial identity, i.e., what it meant to be Black. They talk about some of the negative effects of forced integration—which often took them out of their local neighborhoods—and how these new mostly-white environments impacted their attitudes about race. Specifically, they discuss how their perceptions of themselves changed, and how those new educational environments worked to positively or negatively to reinforce certain stereotypes. They also describe how various interactions with members of their own ethnic group—in, and out of, their local neighborhoods— affected how they came to see themselves in terms of having a racial identity.

Participants in this study discuss their first conscious moments in regard Nigresence, or an awareness concerning being Black and what this means in the larger social context. More often, than not, they had a run-in with a White classmate on a playground, were bused to a school in a majority-White neighborhood, or attended a “special” camp on the other side of town in a really nice neighborhood. It was during these experiences that as children they became aware that being Black was somehow different, and perhaps, it was a difference that was not, necessarily, “good.” Sometimes, they were encouraged by other Black peers to hang out with

their “own kind” and not to play or interact with Whites or others. Such incidences greatly impacted how they felt about themselves, and also, made them very self-conscious in regard to their own interactions with Whites. Barbara, Seth, and Ali stated that they did not talk with their parents about being uncomfortable race, or being Black. For example, Ali and his family did not talk about being Black or what it meant to be a minority in society. But those scholars’ parents did discuss, in their households, were those larger social issues affecting Whites and Blacks, and the historical effects of unequal power relationships that existed within the sociocultural constructs of American society at the time.

The first major barrier for many of my participants had to do with coming from family backgrounds in which there was a general lack of wealth. Pauline came from a working class family; her situation having improved after her father got a new job in another state; her family moved into a newer home in the suburbs after having lived in poor small rural town. Aaron’s father was well-educated, but chose to keep his family in a ‘rough’, mostly-Black neighborhood,; not the ‘projects’, but one of the segregated poorer suburbs outside of the city. Barbara, Seth, and Aaron grew up in ‘big city’ urban inner-city neighborhoods i.e., the ‘projects’, consisting of mostly poor Black and Latino families. Ali grew up in poverty (although, not abject) in the rural South. Growing up in these contexts meant having limited resources, including having limited access to a quality education. Several, but not all, of my participants came from poor urban or rural neighborhoods and attended schools with very limited resources. Those participants were consciously aware, as children, they lived in ‘da hood’ or ghetto, i.e., mostly-Black and Latino inner-city or urban neighborhoods consisting of primarily government housing and that they attended elementary, and middle, schools that had few limited or older, worn-out, or out-date

texts, computers, and classrooms. They recognized their own cycle of poverty and sought to consciously escape it as part of their futures.

As children, they were aware that they lived in poor neighborhoods and attended schools that had limited or below-standard resources. And they felt *bad* about this fact. Many of my participants stated that as children they started off simply wanting to be on equal footing with their peers. If they could not live in better neighborhoods, then, minimally, they wanted access to the same types of materials as well as educational and technological resources as that their more “well-off” counterparts had. But most of my participants realized early on that better schools with better resources was never going to be a plausible reality—unless, they *could* move to ‘Other’ neighborhoods—and so they had to learn to do better, and *be* better, right where they were.

Some of these participants discussed being negatively affected by their environments, or the very real constructs in regard to the challenges that they faced in their everyday lives. Those participants knew that the struggles that they faced were due to external circumstances that were largely beyond their control; however, some identified with those external circumstances to the extent that they become an internal reality which they felt mirrored who they actually were. Those participants stated that they were plagued by feelings of inferiority. As they progressed through their schooling, the internal struggle to mask feelings of inferiority became greater: they developed, and rehearsed, an inner conflict about who they were, and how they were located in their current situation, versus who they wanted to be. Their external realities only exacerbated those feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem.

For Pauline and Seth, desegregation, i.e. being bused from their mostly-black, and sometimes mixed-Latino, neighborhoods, resulted in poor performance or trouble with self-

esteem. For some, it was not the new racial make-up of the school, i.e. being mostly-white, which negatively affected them. It was simply the challenge of adjusting to a completely new environment. As a result of desegregation policies, many of the new schools that my participants were bused to, as children, were on the other side of town, away from the safety and familiarity of their homes, families, communities, churches, and neighborhoods; they were removed from people who *sounded* and looked them—people who spoke the same language and shared similar experiences. Whether it was based on the effects of racial identity development, or a change in cultural ecology such as the removal from familiar surroundings, the effect of changing schools had negative effects on several of my participants. Changing schools often resulted in increasingly rebellious behaviors including skipping classes, doing poorly in school, and lowered grades.

The Personal versus the Professional: Having Confidence—and Navigating Challenges—in Academe

Some my participants' attitudes of inferiority were also greatly affected by their changing ecologies. A few participants became keenly aware, and ashamed, of their perceived inferiority only after being exposed to those who were better-off than themselves. Those feelings of inferiority were uniquely tied to their realization that many of those who were "better-off" than them were white. Several of my participants talk about being bused to other elementary or high schools. Specifically, Pauline discussed her experiences being bused from poor, inner-city or mostly-black and Latino neighborhoods to schools in mostly all-white neighborhoods. My participants' attitudes of inferiority were affected based on their comparison of where they grew up versus where now attending school. Thus, their feelings of inferiority had a great deal to do with how they perceived, and felt about themselves in those differing environments. Their

attitudes were also based on how they negotiated aspects of who they were within those differing educational contexts. For many, their negative attitudes, and low self-esteem, in regard to how they perceived themselves had to do with their development of racial identities. Feeling inferior to whites or others who seemed more “well-off” than they were only compounded their own feelings of inadequacy.

In this way, my participants’ feelings of inferiority due to race, and racial identity, had a lot to do with how they saw themselves in relation to others; and how this affected changes in their perceptions of themselves over time. Several of these individuals had to learn to negotiate aspects of their racial and personal identities, within public spaces, e.g., graduate school and the professoriate. Overall, participants stated that receiving positive messages about African Americans through socialization at home, and being able to define race and racism, for themselves, growing up, helped them to develop positive self-concepts even as they faced challenges with schooling, including desegregation and adjustments to differing cultural/ethnic ecologies.

For many, this attitude of inferiority greatly challenged their positive self-concepts. Some participants describe feeling like a failure or having a fear of failure. Others felt as though the environments in which they grew up were their primary barriers to success. Some felt that “being black” was one of the greatest obstacles to overcome; that is, facing the challenges, and experiences, of minority in American society. Some describe feeling like failures *because* they were black. For the ones who felt inferior due to racial identity, they felt an overwhelming need to prove themselves. For example, they set goals to get themselves moved out of remedial classes, or challenged themselves to become better writers, in order to not be associated with those ‘underachieving black students’. Some of my participants had to deal with “culture shock”

when they left home and attended mostly-white universities. They talked about what it was like not having any other blacks, besides themselves, in their classes. My participants discussed feeling like they “didn’t fit” within those mostly-white spaces. For many, this transition was particularly challenging after growing up in mostly-black and Latino neighborhoods.

Scholars of color often found themselves consciously trying to do better by proving themselves in terms of their schoolwork. Some of this motivation was due to a student’s lack of preparedness which was based on inequities of segregation, and resulting, inequality of access. For others, it was the need feel on par with their classmates—both in terms of intelligence and capability. Stephen and Aaron talked about feeling “smart” as children and wanting to demonstrate their worth in the classroom. For example, Ali said that he was out to prove something when he was little. He did not know who he was trying to prove it to, but he was working hard, consciously, to prove something about his ability to write well. Stephen discussed seeing the humanity in education due to the fact that his educational environment was more humane than his home life. At school, he got fed and enjoyed a highly-structured and stable environment. His educational context was often better than his home life; this, even though the school was all-Black, located in a poorer area, and suffered from a lack of resources.

Some of my participants’ attitudes of inferiority also had to do with them being aware of the fact that they were ill-prepared to attend college. Barbara discussed not knowing how to prepare for going to college, including filling out certain forms or applications. Seth and Ali simply picked majors that they ‘liked’ and felt they were good at— subjects in which they knew they could excel. For several of my participants, the fear of failure still loomed large even after they graduated high school and entered college or university. Aaron attended community college to pull up his high school Grade Point Average (GPA) so that he could attend a four-year

institution. Barbara talked about feeling intimidated about applying to colleges because of her high school grades. She also discussed the fact that her mom had not been involved in the process of her applying to college, which included filling out financial aid forms. Stephen and Barbara discussed the fact they received little, or no, help from their parents or family members when applying for college. Some of their family members were apathetic. Some of the participants stated that their parents were somewhat apathetic because their folks were content that their son or daughter had graduated from high school. This was good enough. For other participants, the lack of help that they received from their parents, in so far as preparing, or planning, for college had a lot to do with their parents not being aware of what that it took to get into an institution of higher learning. Many of their parents knew nothing at all about financial aid or filing out college applications; they simply did not know anything about this process or how to go about finding out about it. Some of my participants were the first ones in their families to go to college or graduate school, so it was up to them to locate the proper information and resources if they really desired to go to school. Because of their general lack of knowledge concerning financial aid, many of my participants did not think they could afford to attend college. Seth talked about living and at home, and going to school close to home, because he knew he could not afford to go anywhere else. And he also knew that would not be able to receive any help—including financial help—from his parents or family. Stephen talked about knowing that he wanted to go to college, but not knowing about how to go about paying for it. He was actually told by a recruiter for the Marines about how to go about locating financial aid. She told him to talk with his high school guidance counselor about applying to college. Ali talked about financial reasons as being the primary criteria for him determining which college he would attend.

The feelings of inferiority which plagued many of my participants during their K-12 schooling, continued into their graduate studies and into their working lives as academic professionals. Some participants, such as Pauline, talked about feeling disrespected in the workplace due to gender or race. Seth discussed the fact that he believed that the professoriate did not care about the community from which he came; here, he was specifically talking about the ethnically-mixed or mostly-black neighborhoods in which he, and other scholars, had been raised.

Issues of Race and Racism: On Locating Justice, and Finding Power, in Academe and Beyond

Black scholars in this study attest to the fact that racism, for them, especially the kind that has to do with external mistreatment, has a great deal to do with issues of power. For African American scholars, racism can be enacted by anyone who treats another differently, and often in a negative manner, based on the color of his or her skin; this includes minorities who are racist against other minorities, such as those individuals who are racist against members in their own in-group. For instance, they noted there were Blacks who were racist against Whites, but did not have enough power to enact devastating effects on them. Thus, Blacks can be racist against other blacks, and although some scholars might call this, *internalized* racism, according to Stephen, he just calls it *racism*: “When another person hate[s] me because of the color of my skin and that person just happens to be the same color as me, it’s still racist.” This internalized, or self-hate, in regard to one’s racial self, usually comes by way of socialization in contexts, or environments, whereby individuals learn to emulate those attitudes, and behaviors, as they are manifested by others. Barbara highlighted some of her experiences dealing with intracultural racism. For example, when she was growing up, her parents and others often said derogatory things about

other Blacks, including the fact they could not ever do anything in terms of getting things accomplished, or ever do anything “right”; this, versus the Latinos who came with nothing, but were able to stick, and work, together, and who seemed to be doing better than Blacks.

Scholars of color first recognized their own racial identities as an effect of inequalities—a kind of racism made manifest by obvious differences in opportunity, education, and access. As children, when they visited those “special” summer camps, and attended schools in mostly-White neighborhoods as part of post-segregation, and they became aware of how they had been denied certain rights and privileges that had affected them and their overall quality of life. Even if their parents did not talk with them about the rights of minorities in society, they became aware of such injustices when they faced it themselves. The most obvious precedent in terms of racism that scholars of color faced was *external* mistreatment; that is, the overt form of discrimination in which individuals are treated badly based on differences in skin color. However, regardless of the whether the racism was silent or loud, there was the internal adjustment that one had to make in regard to how this hatred made them feel and think about themselves. Stephen stated, being black and “back in the community” i.e., being a part of the local predominantly African American infrastructure, definitely means speaking “the language,” i.e., Ebonics and the discourses associated with what it means to be Black, and being around people who are more familiar to him. He did not want to deal with the *silence of racism*—the silent kind of racism in which a Black man is being surrounded by Whites, or those, who do not speak your language, do not care about the things you care about, and are possibly militant towards your very presence as a person of color, and what they think you represent. This scholar also asserts that there is the loud kind of racism that “screams” at him every time he goes into a cafeteria or walks into a shopping mall.

Many had to deal with racism in all-white environments. Several participants discussed seeing black students in mostly-remedial or below average classes. They also discussed knowing about, or being a part of tracking systems in K-12, i.e., kindergarten through twelfth grades, which monitored the progress of students, and grouped students differently in different classrooms according to race and ability. Such situations led some of my participants to question both their worth and their “blackness.” Aaron talks about comparing his skin color to that of other blacks; enrolling in a mostly-White university after struggling in high school, college early on, he wondered if he was “good enough.” He also wondered if he sounded “black enough”. On campus, he remembered being asked several times by his white classmates if he played for one of the university sports teams.

Other African American scholars in this study discussed how they had been “diagnosed” by educators at some point during their early schooling as having deficiencies in writing, or reading, and how they had worked hard to prove that they were ‘good enough,’ or, at least as good as the other White students in their classes. Even though Ali realized that the class essays written by White students were based on “literacy games” concerning experiences that he was not privy to—based on his background and limited access—he still felt that he needed to work hard. However, those White students wrote stories about their vacations or travels as well as descriptive narratives about differing ecologies and environments; so, his own narrative writing became formulaic. Aaron discussed how he avoided reading in his college English literature class because he felt that those things did not relate to his own life. Also, he had struggled with his academic work prior to taking those courses. He struggled, and eventually found his voice, but it took time. Thus, in their early educational experiences minority scholars often lacked the content, and discourse, for engaging in the types of conversations that were

deemed appropriate for the standard academic English essay. Most scholars learned to “fake it” early on, and so, for some, the first aspect of negotiation in terms of personal, and professional, identity was a literary one.

Scholars of color admitted to having to deal with faculty and professors who did not think they were capable. For example, Barbara had a White creative writing professor who told her that she should go to graduate school because he thought there would be more money for minorities. She was not sure what he was trying to say: Was he basing his recommendation on her talent? But she knows that if she had not had her first Black female professors during that time she probably would not have gone about her graduate studies, and education, in the same way. African American scholars maintain that those kinds of mindsets prevail beyond preprofessional or graduate training. Barbara says that she is always cognizant of such attitudes, like when “[You] walk into a departmental meeting and you know you’re not going to so-and-so’s house.” She can get a sense early on “who’s for [her] and who’s not,” and she tries to cultivate those kinds of positive relationships and forget the rest.

Scholars of color also note the challenge of having to deal with people, i.e., coexist with, and adapt to, those who do not believe in them. One of the most difficult aspects for American Americans, in achieving confidence as professionals, has been the struggle for them to believe in themselves. Barbara talked about getting pregnant in high school, but being able to picture herself as this professional person and wanting a future and better life for herself. She had “messed up,” but knew that she wanted to go to college. Aaron discussed feeling lazy in school. One of his biggest obstacles was that, essentially, he just lacked motivation. He lacked interest in “stuff that wasn’t relevant.” He wanted that pedagogical cycle in “where you raised questions,” like the Socratic Method, and “you were challenged.” He knew that although he was in remedial

classes that he was not a remedial reader; after all, he was reading and studying theology at the time. So, for him, it was that combination of pedagogical failures, and being institutionalized within American schools which did not consider cultural factors, or really individualize the level of instruction to the degree that—he felt—they should have.

Some scholars of color did not feel that their experiences in terms of being separated out, and treated differently, as incidences of overt racism. They thought of such incidences as being more of the by-product, or result, of the injustices that they continued to face due to years of segregation. For example, one African American male scholar talked about how his teachers in kindergarten through twelfth grade were kind to pupils but separated students based on race and ability. He stated that the majority of Black kids was put into groups by themselves, and were seen as the remedial group—the ones who were behind in reading and writing ability. This scholar believes that those students were seen as having “less” ability based on the fact that they had not received proper training, or instruction, stemming from their backgrounds. The other groups of students, in his classes, were composed of mostly-White students and occasionally, there would be some Black students who would be placed into groups with the mostly-White kids. The groups who were on-level and mostly-White, and the groups who were below-level and mostly-Black, were given different kinds of assignments to do. Those Black students were not in the remedial group from more middle-class backgrounds and lived across town in the nicer neighborhoods. This scholar says that he learned “diversity” through this experience.

The Professional ‘Contact Zone’: Navigating Cross-Cultural Relationships in Academe

The six African American scholars in this study agree that interpersonal relationships that cross racial lines require a great deal of psychological and emotional adjustment. However, they

contend that it is necessary to make an attempt to forge such relationships. Such scholars affirm that learning about aspects of socialization through mentorship is necessary to cross that divide. The crucial factor that affects such cross-cultural interactions is the negotiation of the personal within professional spaces. Although developing close personal relationships, particularly with White professors, is a step that is crucial for gaining the kind of mentorship that would help individuals successfully navigate aspects of the professoriate, some minority graduate students, and junior faculty, feel that it is a personal intrusion on their space. For instance, some minority scholars may have never had any relationships—or, at least, very limited contact—with Whites in any capacity; and therefore, they do not know how to handle such differences. For other minority scholars, there is the ‘trust issue’: they worry that engaging in such close relationships with White scholars, and ‘getting their business out there’, can backfire on them. Scholars of color do not have much recourse if they falter in their intimate partnerships in the field due to the fact that every potential contact with mentors, colleagues, publishers, is equally important. However, discovering what mentoring really means once they became associate professors helped to make the transition much easier. African American scholars attest to the fact that aspects of mentoring have gotten better for them once they gained tenure and became associate professors, themselves. It was at this point that they became aware of how to mentor others. In addition, negotiating interpersonal, and cross cultural, relationships got better once those scholars felt more situated in their departments, programs, and institutions. Also, Ali stated that in his department, there is a blending of the personal and the professional. In this context, through his experiences in the professoriate he has socialized enough with White colleagues to consider them friends; and this is outside of them being mentors. It is a good connection that sustains scholars of color, like him, in the academy. However, for Seth, the need to sustain some boundary

between his personal and professional life, particularly with respect to his White colleagues, remains strong.

Strengthening one's relationships with colleagues is essential to navigating successful pathways, particularly in regard to enacting productive scholarship, and this often begins with good networking and interpersonal skills. For example, Ali maintains that not having a mentor makes the tenure and promotion process more difficult. He talked about having to devote time to learning about the tenure and promotion process even before he had the chance to get to his promotion packet. Ali had no mentors at his institution and no one to guide him. He felt that he had no one to turn to for emotional or professional advice. For him, it was a challenging process and he felt like he was moving through the process alone at times. Overall, he felt that he had to hold his high and move past his department, school, and everybody, and also, he was felt that being a Black man, teaching English at a predominantly-White institution meant that everything was scrutinized. For this reason, Black scholars in this study concede that it is easier if minorities network with other Black scholars. Those African American scholars who are interested in keeping up that kind of network—or a community of scholars—do so through keeping contact through emails, attending conferences every year, or by having close mentors who work with them when there is a call or special issue in a specific publication. African American scholars contend that 'going it alone' is not the best option, and establishing positive relationships and partnerships, especially with colleagues in the field, is crucial to achieving fulfillment and long-term success.

Although African Americans realize that diverse professional relationships with both Whites and Black scholars is necessary for successful engagement and advancement in the professoriate, some minority scholars acknowledge that they struggle with overcoming the "color

line” in regard to developing those kinds of intimate contacts. African American scholars admit that negotiating the boundaries of being actively engaged as minority faculty members in a majority-White, hegemonic context, can be a delicate, and sometimes, uncomfortable position in which to be. For them, the question becomes: “How much do I let ‘Others’ in?” Learning to trust those from a hegemonic demographic, who reserve the power to potentially undermine one’s confidence or ability, or negatively impact aspects of one’s professional progression, can be intimidating. Seth and Ali reserve the “emotional” part for family members and for those who are really close to them. They put that “out there” to friends in the field. Scholars of color are aware of powerful (hidden) networks among White scholars in the professoriate, and while they do not believe that everyone is “against” them, they are very conscious of the fact that this can potentially damage ties to resources that enable them to remain viable—even ones which they, themselves, may not be aware. Stephen’s experiences working in law enforcement parallels this notion. He worked as a corrections officer before going into academe and had to cross this kind of boundary—overcoming power relationships—with Black inmates. Necessity mandated that he cross power relationships in order to develop strong relationships with others, but he knew he had to be careful because these people were extremely dangerous. What he learned was that it was better to differentiate based on commonalities than in terms of attempting to mitigate inequalities. African American scholars reiterate that it is important for minorities to remember, that as junior faculty, while not everyone is for them, that everyone is not against them. For this reason, they feel that it is important to be positive and focus on those things, including relationships and interactions with others, which encourages growth. Ali recalled working through his Master’s work and the problems he faced when he kept trying to get help with his thesis. At the time, he did not “have a clue” as to what to do, including how to write it; and he

was still trying to adjust to this environment, i.e., the hegemony, of the academy. He had a White female mentor with whom he just remembers asking a lot of questions. He had a great many fears, including ones of failing and “messing up.” African Americans agree that pushing ahead, and doing the work, while regularly attending conferences, often brings out potential mentors who help minorities do well and succeed in the professoriate.

For some African American scholars, it has been difficult to develop, and maintain, relationships with mostly-White faculty. For example, Seth discussed how uncomfortable he was, as a graduate student, trying to reach out to White faculty members, some of which he knew did not believe in his abilities to succeed as an English major. Mostly, he feels that he was greatly impacted by how “very few” African American professors he had, and so he often formed relationships with Black staff members, including groundskeepers or secretaries due to the fact that there were so few Blacks, or minorities, within those spaces. Ali noted how the mostly-White faculty at his current institution has been very supportive. However, he acknowledges that when he has tried to have productive conversations with White colleagues in his department about race or other areas of scholarship, that it has not been easy. Also, he is aware that it is not easy to build those kinds of relationships with White scholars. He states, “There are generational differences where [faculty] members are 15-20 years older and there are family issues where [White] people are married and/or have children.” Thus, African American scholars acknowledge that they have had to make serious personal sacrifices to get ahead.

Some African American scholars have failed to form positive and/or informal relationships with whites based on their own internal attitudes. They have had negative experiences with whites in the past, and as such, they do not want to take the chance that they may be mistreated, again. Those scholars have had to deal with racism stemming from the

mistreatment that they received in the all, or mostly, white environments that they were exposed to while growing up, i.e. schooling, college, graduate school, or the professoriate. For many African Americans, the development of certain behaviors—either positive or negative—in response to their environment(s) was largely based on their relationships, in the past, with Whites. It is often the case that African American scholars have had to negotiate their inner/private worlds in professional spaces. They talk about the challenges of forming informal relationships with white colleagues, particularly based on the limitations of their own backgrounds in the negotiation of their personal identities within those differing ecologies. Many of their attitudes were unconscious: they were so busy dealing with the development of a positive self-concept, particularly concerning a racial identity, that they did not take the time to consciously develop close, personal (positive) relationships with whites. They were adapting to, and negotiating, aspects of their personal, and racial, identities within those contexts. Many African American scholars were unaware that their attitudes about themselves, or others, in response to their environment(s), were largely based on what stage they were in regarding their own racial identity development, i.e., Black Identity Development.

For other African American scholars, the lack of development of informal relationships with whites was not due to any lack of trust, or ill-feelings, particularly, based on mistreatment due to racism; many of these African Americans had limited experiences interacting with whites in their personal lives. In regard to their limited interactions with whites, some African American scholars are aware that they have different ways of communicating and seeing, i.e. perceiving, the world than their white counterparts. They know that some of those differences are due to the differences in the geographical spaces and places from which they hail; they acknowledge that some of these environments have been largely racially-segregated. However, this does not mean

that all, or most, black academic professionals grow up in ‘da hood’, or speak Ebonics, but it does acknowledge that there are racial or cultural differences among blacks and whites, especially in the United States. Further, there are ethnic and regional variations in terms of Black speech patterns, and also, cultural variations given the ways in which blacks and whites mix, or fail to interact in certain regions or cities, and with one each other in different contexts, i.e., work, school, church, professional activities, homes, and neighborhoods.

For all the reasons cited above, scholars of color in this study underscore the need to have, and develop, close relationships with other minority scholars due to the fact that it helps to build a professional community that sustains the individual. Minorities in this study say that they have gained support and confidence from their close relationships with other Black professors. Those kinds of relationships allowed minority scholars to network with others doing the same kinds of work that they do which enabled them to have resources and continues to make them viable in a field that might otherwise leave them out. Also, establishing and having those kinds of networks encourages scholars of color to participate in professional organizations, and attend regional and national conferences. At conferences, minority scholars get to see a large gathering of Black professionals, a situation they usually do not see at their institutions back home. Such experiences give them the opportunity to consider how their experiences are the same, or different, from others, and how other African American scholars’ experiences in the professoriate relate to theirs. Ali noted that it is when he attends conferences that he realizes how productive African Americans really are in the field. He knows that individual scholars have to get involved and “carve out a place” for themselves in the field, and for this reason, it is important to find things in which one is interested in order to feel “situated,” or grounded, with respect to locating one’s professional niche. For example, Barbara noted that meeting prominent

minority scholars like Geneva Smitherman and Keith Gilyard at the annual Conference on College Composition and Composition kept her from dropping out of graduate school, altogether. She also joined the Black caucus which really made a difference in terms of her own positionality in the field of Composition and Rhetoric.

Many participants discussed the fact that being able to achieve personal goals often came by way of being able to develop close relationships with peers, colleagues, and coworkers. Participants talked about the importance of being able to look to other African American colleagues and friends for emotional support. These scholars talked about being able to go to scholars of color in order to talk about private matters, including issues related to social justice. They acknowledged that it was important, sometimes, just to have members of their own community to share, or talk things over, with. Ali noted the difficulty in developing close relationships with other minority faculty given the spaces, and places, that African American as well as other minorities occupy in the professoriate. He stated that being so ‘spread out’ made it difficult to develop a close informal network with members of one’s own minority group.

Issues of Mentoring and Socialization: Negotiating Professional and Racial Identity

Because of the history of higher education in the United States, it is often true that individuals—and particularly minorities—who get Ph.D.s never do it entirely of their own accord. They almost always require a great deal of help and encouragement from family, mentors, and friends. Some are fortunate enough to be encouraged to stay-in-school and do well by parents, church leaders, or community organizers. Other minority scholars encountered White role models during their kindergarten through undergraduate education who encouraged them to become teachers or professors, and also, to do the work—and obtain the right kind of education—that was necessary to get them there. Ali discussed being able to participate in a

mentoring program at his graduate institution which brought several prominent minority scholars who had been in the professoriate for a long time. They talked with him, and others, about what to expect in terms of socialization, and what it was like to progress professionally within the field of Composition and Rhetoric.

Aaron, Seth, and Ali acknowledge that having Black male role models when they were younger helped them to become the men they are today. Those mentors taught them how to behave appropriately, especially in professional spaces where they would be one of a few minorities. For example, Aaron's father told him that he was now going to be in "high places" and that he needed to "calm down." He noted that where his father left off, his wife picked up. She simply said, "Smile more." Those Black male role models also taught them how to act like men and behave like adults. For example, Ali's father did a great deal of mentoring about what it means to be a man and take care of a family. Also, his grandfather made sure that he and his siblings did their homework. His family encouraged him to do, and complete, his studies, and this was an expectation. Scholars of color who lacked strong (male) role models also struggled with the concept of "family." As Stephen noted, he had no desire for a family when he was younger because he did not know how to desire "it"; he had no idea "what a real family was like." The real structure for him in terms of having a "community" was academia, and that became his "family," his safe haven. In the painful plight of his circumstances growing up, Stephen was fortunate to have a solid relationship with this grandfather.

Barbara and Aaron described the limited interactions they had with Whites when they were younger; they stated that their primary means of interacting with Whites was through the school system. There were many White teachers at school, mostly White women, and there were also many Black teachers. However, although there were Black teachers, there were hardly any

Black male teachers. The opportunity to engage with Black male role models came through church, home, and the local community. African American male scholars discussed the roles that their fathers, preachers, and other men in the church and local community played in directing their understanding of African American history and Black consciousness. Ali and Aaron talked about how their fathers encouraged them to read about Black history, literature, and poetry. They also discussed how their work in the church, as young preachers, made them interested in reading about theology and religion; this work promulgated their early relationship with ideas of rhetoric and writing; however, other scholars reported having heard positive messages concerning the history of African Americans. Also, they were taught by their grandparents that some people were good (who were Black) and some people were bad (who were Black), and that no one could not really decide a person's character based on skin color.

Having positive role models during schooling helped many of my participants to overcome feelings of inferiority and reinforce positive self-concepts. That is, their positive interactions with key authority figures helped them to develop the belief that despite dealing with difficult circumstances that they could, in fact, do well in school and succeed. Several participants stated that seeing black professionals, both in college and graduate school, and having black college professors, made a huge impact on them, including how they felt about themselves. For many, having those role models made them redefine the parameters by which they measured their own success. Prior to these encounters with black faculty, some had not conceived of becoming a member of the academic professoriate. But seeing these role models made many of my participants feel as though they could potentially be one, too. Thus, being able to identify with their black college professors helped them to overcome a kind of mental roadblock concerning their own scholarly potential. In addition to being role models, many of

those same black professors became mentors to my participants. My participants talked about how they received general encouragement from their black college professors and how they specifically encouraged them to attend graduate school.

The significance of my findings in regard to the role that mentorship plays concerning professional development of minorities is the fact that it is not necessary for role models, or mentors, to be black, or scholars of color, in order to make a difference. In fact, not all of my participants' role models and mentors were Black. My participants counted help from white role models as being just as good or equal to what they received from black or minority role models. For example, several of my participants discussed receiving support from white teachers when they were children. They talked about getting encouragement from white teachers who taught them in their mostly-black neighborhoods. My participants also discussed having white teachers in high school that encouraged them to do well in their studies. Those white high school teachers also encouraged them to go on to college. So, for most of my participants, race was not a mitigating factor for them in choosing a role model, or in developing a relationship, with a mentor. For them, the importance of mentorship was to have someone to look up to and who actively supported both their professional development and scholarship. The help that participants prized in terms of mentorship, whether the mentor was black or white, or from another ethnic group, was hands-on advice and training in terms of receiving information that made aspects of the process transparent for them; particularly, in regard to aspects of scholarship. As such, my participants appreciated receiving specific advice from mentors about scholarship or professional development, whether it was guidance concerning a particular major or discipline or in regard to actual research, including help with getting published.

For my participants, having positive role models and mentors helped them to overcome potential barriers to success. Several of my participants discussed that when they were younger their parents were role models for them. As role models, their parents set up positive images of black people and also taught them about issues dealing with racism. For some of my participants, understanding issues about race and racism did not come through having direct conversations about such topics with their parents. Rather, they watched how their parents interacted with members of other racial groups, including whites. Ali discussed the fact that he was well aware of the fact that his parents were neither racists nor segregationists. He stated that his parents associated with whites and had positive interactions with them. Other participants discussed the fact that their parents worked with whites. Ali recalls being told specifically not to judge a person by the color of his or her skin. He was told that color did not measure an individual's self-worth nor did it determine his or her character.

Implications of the Study

The Effects of Childhood Socialization on Racial Identity and Conceptualizations of Race

African American scholars in this study conceive of race as being a social construct. Based on childhood socialization, or the development of personal identity through one's interactions with others, African American scholars learned to see themselves as being different from other individuals. For many, racial identity development made such differences more apparent. Being bused out of their neighborhoods, and having experiences beyond their local communities, caused many African Americans to perceive of themselves in terms of what it meant to be Black or have a racial identity. Growing up, African American scholars also learned to ascribe certain characteristics such as 'smart', 'stupid,' 'superior', and 'inferior' to different ethnic groups. Thru schooling, and other aspects of socialization, they became aware of how

though looked through the eyes of others, particularly Whites. Those scholars discovered that such beliefs often stemmed from ideologies concerning the belief that they were different from—and that there were fundamental differences between—other human beings based their cultural, or ethnic, or racial backgrounds. This difference became a reality for many scholars because it was manifest in terms of real, tangible behaviors concerning how they were treated in differing ecologies as students, peers, colleagues, and scholars. They observed how Whites were treated differently from Blacks, like themselves, as well as other minorities.

The Effects of Race and Cultural Identity on Professional Identity Development

African American scholars in this study feel that cultural or ethnic identity is an essential part of one's professional identity, particularly concerning the work they do. These scholars consciously choose how they situate themselves given the spaces that they occupy in the professoriate as scholars, mentors, and teachers of writing. In doing so, they negotiate aspects of their personal and racial identities. As such, do not feel 'Othered' in the professoriate in terms of racial identity.

However, some African American scholars do feel that sometimes their voices are not heard, and that their ideas, or points of view, are not appreciated. They feel that they have other issues or goals related to the kinds of research they would like to do and in regard to certain topics pertaining to the type of scholarship they would like to pursue. Several African Americans have stated that they often feel 'boxed in' concerning particular research topics. Some minority scholars feel that they are expected to pursue specific research agendas such as race, minority student writers, or rhetorics of race, and also utilize specific methodologies such as ethnography or case study in doing so. In this way, they feel limited in terms of their own research agendas and in their approaches to doing research; this, even on so-called 'approved' topics. While it is

true that often African American scholars choose to do research on—and make connections to—race, they feel that other research agendas, and methods, are equally as important.

Some African Americans in this study feel that when they pursue research agendas that do not directly deal with race or ‘difference’ that their voices are not ‘heard’. As scholars in the field, they feel that such ideas are not even acknowledged. Such is the case even if they approach topics such as race and representation from different perspectives using alternative methodologies or theoretical frameworks. African American scholars know that they need to highlight ‘difference’ in positive ways in order to allow their voices to be heard, but they state that there are other equally important issues, and they also have research goals that are not directly related to race which they feel also need to be addressed.

In addition, African American, or minority scholars’ interpretations of race, and having a racial identity, which includes their takes on language and identity, particularly in regard to the classroom, may also vary. But are individual differences in minority viewpoints in regard representation, (lived) experience, and interpretation explored? Such topics, and perspectives, remain grossly underexplored because they are not taken seriously by the mainstream. That is, they are not usually considered by the majority culture in the professoriate as a “mainstream issue” within the field. However, more often than not, such topics are sidelined or marginalized, or covered as ‘special topics’ in certain issues in major journals *Composition and Rhetoric* such as the *Journal of Advanced Composition*, and left as research done by minority scholars. In this way concerning scholarship, and issues affecting their cultural communities, minority scholars are, indeed, ‘Othered.’

Thus, race affects how scholars define themselves in terms of professional identity or being a scholar, in regard to the work they do, and determines the ways in which they give back

to the community. It also affects how they negotiate aspects of their personal or private selves in academe, particularly in regard to socialization and the types of informal networks that they form with their colleagues and peers at their home institutions and in the field-at-large.

One of my participants said that the context of the professoriate changes who you are. But, I guess I would have to ask, “In what ways?” I suppose you would have to learn how to build those informal networks, and how to negotiate aspects of identity—given your role as scholar—in terms of scholarly identities, and also, in terms of race or how to conceive of the work you do, based on who you are; that is, the racial/private self versus professional/public self in terms of who you want to become in your role of being a scholar. While many do conceive of race as being important in terms of professional identity because of the nature of the work they do, the areas that interest them, and in regard to giving back, they also conceive of scholarship and what it means to ‘be a scholar’ in composition beyond race or merely personal or subjective issues.

In regard to work, issues concerning race in professional spaces also has to do with how African American or other minority scholars think that newly-minted minority scholars should be mentored and what those emerging minority scholars need in order to succeed in the field. African American scholars do not feel that those mentoring roles are the sole responsibility of White—or Black—scholars. Also, in terms of the devaluation of scholarship, all topics should be considered important, but special interest topics must not be labeled in such a way that they are off-putting, so that they would be considered serious for all in the field to study.

Work also includes aspects of community. So, here we are speaking of service. On the one hand, there is giving back to the constituent community which may occur on the local level, either in one’s neighborhood, or with individuals from that ethnic group in the local community

where the scholar works such as his or her current institution. Giving back also means volunteering or serving on committees that serve diverse interests such as in the department, program, or at the university level. Giving back also means serving the minority community in the field-at-large by being on various committees and representing the interests of their ethnic groups, so that politically those interests are represented, and the work of those scholars are not taken for granted, especially concerning their contributions to the field.

There is also an issue, however, with service versus scholarship. Blacks, by-in-large, do a lot of service work, but they have to make sure that while it is important, it feeds back into what would be considered ‘true scholarship’ so that it would be counted towards tenure and promotion. Most of the time, writing grants, and doing community service—while they speak to character and diversity—do not, necessarily, show a potential minority candidate’s abilities to produce or publish. Ultimately, the ‘giving back’ must be something that has tangible value in the field. Oftentimes, the kind of work that is expected of a minority scholar is not considered as having true value. This is true of administrative requirements which are sometimes ‘heaped’ onto the minority faculty member under the guise of service. This also includes research. Sometimes, it is not the research topic that is so devalued—for example, dealing with issues such as race, racial identity, cultural rhetorics, minorities and technology, or language—but the also the quantity of the research, particularly in regard to dealing with such topics. Previous literature has shown that while Blacks tend to do a great deal of research that such activities do not feed into scholarship. That is, minority scholars research a lot about the ideas that interest them, but still fail to get published. So, sometimes the research is just ‘service’ but does not become something that can serve the public good, particularly in a way that can be measured. If minority scholars

want their ideas to be heard then they have to get published. One thing that does stand in the way is dealing with topics that address minority issues, although those subjects are important, too.

But minority scholars must be willing to get more of their writing out for review and they must be able and willing, to create those informal networks that will allow them to do so. This means forming informal networks with other minority scholars in the field—regardless of their cultural, ethnic, or racial backgrounds—as well as forming those networks with White scholars. Those White scholars sit on editorial boards and are often more published themselves and therefore they have a wealth of information regarding scholarship and publication in particular journals. However, White scholars must be willing to look at specialized topic’ and take such research seriously when it comes from minority scholars. It must not be looked at as anecdotal and taken up in a special issue or as entirely subjective because it is taken from those who supposedly know more about such topics. Such topics should be incorporated into mainstream research agendas. And although Whiteness is a good start, more work should be done to integrate aspects of particular issues, instead of leaving them simply divided or separated. For example, if we, as scholars in the field of Composition and Rhetoric, wanted to study racial identity among Native Americans in our field, we would not simply look at Whiteness or Black identity, but field studies that look at race and looks at racial identity and how it has impacted the professional development of members of other minority groups in the field. We would also discuss multiple subjectivities and the negotiation of public and private selves within professional spaces in academe. That means that ‘alternative methods’ such as personal/professional narratives in current literature, for example, *Women’s Ways of Making It in Rhetoric and Composition* (2008), and *Teacher Identity Discourses: Negotiating Personal and Professional Spaces* (2006), and the life story interview method used for this study, must become the standard, and not alternative

methods, for conceiving of this type of research, also for contextualizing it in terms of validity and interpreting meaning. Such approaches are particularly important given what we can learn from personal stories and professional narratives.

Also, we must look at the work that minority scholars do that is not being mainstream research for *them*. That is, we must look at the other kinds of topics that minority scholars are interested in and allow *all* scholars to enter into those conversations. I am not speaking of affirmative action in terms of scholarship, but that those minority scholars whose work we have already come to respect be allowed to speak, and be heard, on other topics that have nothing to do with minority affairs. Such publications would open the door for emerging minority scholars to pursue interest in other areas in composition and rhetoric. This opportunity could provide invaluable insight into feminist or cultural rhetorics, lived experience, writing center research, writing program administration, assessment, and technology and media, and other areas of research which may have less minority scholarship. Some of those areas actually need to be incorporated into the study of minority groups. It would encourage minority graduate students to start or begin researching in those areas earlier in their academic careers, particularly during coursework when they are taking classes which is part of their initial socialization into the field. At this point, they can learn the proper discourses, including the appropriate methods and theoretical frameworks, which would allow them to pursue the kind of research that would lead to publication. However, such emerging minority scholars or graduate students must be encouraged to do so by mentors in the field—whether Black, White, Asian, Native American, Latino/Latina, or Chicano/Chicana. They must not be discouraged from pursuing research in non-minority areas but shown the proper way to navigate this discourse. If this particular mentor

or professor does not know much about this area, then they should point their mentee to another colleague or constituent who does.

Also, in terms of minorities having “chips on their shoulders,” they must learn that a crucial aspect of making it in composition is learning to depend on others for survival—having a strong support system. This is particularly important. And although this may be difficult for some minority scholars, particularly for those who have dealt with racism in the academy, they must learn to do so. It is crucial for their personal identity development.

Being a scholar in comp means “doing,” actively pursuing ideas, research, service, or teaching—in this way, professional identity is defined in terms of a verb. For my participants, the very nature of the work they do in Composition involves doing *what* is that they do, and doing this on daily basis as academic professionals in the field. Several of my participants stated being a scholar in composition meant recognizing the ways in which theory necessitates practice, and vice-versa. That is, thru their work as teachers, scholars, educators, researchers, and teachers of writing they are able to analyze, modify, and retract what they do based on the theories they develop in relation to practice.

Exploring Identity through Narrative Research: A Journey of the Self

I began my research journey with the uncovering of how I was historically-embedded within my research project; that is, considering what my interests were, what I would like to study, and how I might be potentially biased towards my subject. This exploration of the self, came by way of a graduate course that I took in research methods; namely, *Qualitative Research in Composition and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)*. As a preparatory course for doctoral fieldwork in composition studies, the professor had his doctorate students prepare research-based autoethnographies. The primary goal for his project was for

graduate students to explore their historical embeddedness within their proposed research topics. The reason for this type of exploration was to make sure that as emerging researchers we had a good sense of who we were in our position as researchers, and in relation to the topic, and if our situatedness within the research and the research questions, were truly representative of the methods and methodologies that we were proposing for our (future + dissertation) projects.

The product of the initial part of this discovery process culminated with an autoethnography. The basis of the autoethnography was phenomenological, and as such, looked at the lived experiences of the researcher and how those embedded ideologies brought to bear on the subject matter and the participants that he or she intended to study. The goal was to make such biases transparent to the researcher, and as something to be wary of heading into the study; it also had the potential of guiding one's methodological approach. The results of this self-ethnographic project revealed several recurring themes based on the 'running' narrative of my life. Those themes included: being aware of some cultural differences between myself and others when I was younger, but feeling 'bad' about it; becoming angry about cultural distinctions as I got older, and not wanting to have to fit within the paradigm of "Black" or White"; feeling like I was always having to prove my worth, but constantly feeling inferior; trying to maintain positive attitudes about race and racial identity, while evading the "issue" of being a minority in society; and trying to seek mentors and friends—White or otherwise—in the maze of academic life.

The autoethnographic research, along with a sociolinguistic pilot study about race, identity, and social practices for African American academic professionals, left me with more questions than answers. Thus, the nature of my dissertation study actually began as a heuristic

for self-discovery in regard to my own positionality or how I would potentially negotiate my personal and professional identities within the field of rhetoric and composition.

While this project—writing the research autoethnography—did provide the impetus for my research methodology, and for considering my situatedness as a researcher, it also opened up opportunities for me to compose myself, theoretically, as an emerging scholar. I began to think metatheoretically or metacognitively by exploring how our professor was using theory to get us to think theoretically about our own research. I discovered—and what was inherent from the texts and articles that we used for class—was that phenomenology was the theory that our graduate professor was using as a theoretical frame for his teaching *about* qualitative research methods and methodology. Specifically, phenomenology as a philosophy, research perspective, and possible empirical methodology emphasizes the lived experiences of participants—those being interviewed, researched, observed, or taught (Husserl, 1913; Heidegger, 1927; Van Manen, 1990; Munhall, 2001). In a phenomenological study, the basis for the use of the participants' lived experiences by the researcher is to capture the essence and the inherent meaning structures of the experience—what makes the experience what it is; why it is something significant to the life of the researched. The researcher's goal is to isolate the meaning structures in the narratives in order to evoke a sense of the life world of the participant/researched, particularly to capture the essence of the experiences for those who live outside of it—who have no sense of “being-in-the-world” in that way. Based on what I uncovered, from this point, phenomenology began to serve as a heuristic for me behind my exploration of the theories, methods, and perspectives concerning my research in composition, and the humanities, at large. With a budding interest in ecocomposition, i.e., how context and one's own situatedness influenced writing and being a

writer, as well, I begin to look at how methods and theoretical perspectives in our disciplines had begun to influence our research in composition studies.

As I began this study, it was phenomenological or based solely on participants' lived experiences. I simply wanted to capture the essence of their experiences being professionals—what the day-to-day aspects were like, and perhaps, get into the business side, the labor, i.e., that is, what makes composition and rhetoric *professional*? Over time, I began to realize that there was no way to see those participants as isolated from the contexts that gave rise to their experiences; how they interpreted their realities; and what impacted their decisions to become professionals. I wanted to hear their stories—their life stories, their whole story, their 'own' story—and I wanted to be able to extrapolate my interpretation of their experiences from their own interpretations of their realities. So, I turned to narrative research.

Within this research project, my research autoethnographic narrative, I am both in the role of the researcher and the researched—the subject and the author of this study. I use autoethnography as a way to uncover the meaning structures associated with my own lived experiences; I do this as a heuristic for uncovering my own inner lifeworld, and particularly, as a method of self-discovery along the lines of mediated consciousness—for others as well as myself, and 'Other,' too, within this project. In the beginning of my dissertation, I presented my autoethnography in which I used some lived experience description to explore the meaning structures inherent in the development of a racialized self or racial identity over time. However, somewhere, along the line, I realized that I did not know what "race" was—that is, apart from my own experiences and socially-constructed notions (stereotypes that I resisted against), and its vague concept as a "visible identity." I had read some research from critical race theorists

including Bell, but still had no concept of it from a purely epistemological conceptualization. So, I researched it; I looked within the fields of psychology and sociology.

From psychology, I learned about racial identity development. I discovered that racial identity development dealt with how minority populations or underrepresented groups in (Western) hegemonic spaces such as the U.S. adapted and negotiated aspects of who they were relative to being in these uneven contexts. Such models look at psychological or cognitive development of individuals and how contact/socialization, and context/environment, affect how they come to see (personal identity) and define themselves over time (particularly in terms of having a racial identity i.e. being Asian American, being Black, being Latino/-a, Chicano/-a). From psychology, and social psychology, I learned about Nigresence (or black identity development) and racial consciousness, with significant research coming from academic professionals in the fields of sociology and psychologist such as psychologist, Cross (1971), who coined Nigresence as a way to describe the changes he saw in Blacks, particularly in regard to how they saw, and felt about, themselves as they became aware of their racial identities over time. Cross's (1971) initial model of Black Identity Development (BID) was further developed, and expanded on, by Black identity theorists, and social psychologists, Bailey and Helms. I learned that BID is a model of racial identity development. So, based on this research, I recontextualized a great deal in regard to my identity and experiences, and uncovered the simple essence that (racial) identity is more than just acceptance or resistance, i.e., fight, flight or denial of racial self or stereotypes. And that representation of who we are, particularly in terms of visible identities and how they impact our lives, is more than just "We wear the veil," but an internal negotiation, and perhaps, renegotiation of how we situate ourselves in particular spaces,

including how much we reveal of our internal struggles, and how those exchanges impact who we are and how we see ourselves on a fundamental level.

What I also uncovered via this research, which was entirely new to me, was this aspect of professionalization and how the positionality we take in regard to the work we do, impacts our situatedness in the profession (regarding who we are as individuals). And that the reflexivity of one's personal self, is often a negotiation of who we are, who we want to be, and how we conceive of the work that is getting done in the field. I learned the structural nature of the kind of work we do, and how it can be counted by hours per week, time spent in the office, and on campus, in meetings, and grading papers. That we put "time in" going to school, working jobs, and attending classes, even in regard to socialization and going to parties. That our exchange—in terms of service and commitment—is a piece of paper that grants us access to opportunities to increase our "net worth," perhaps even though it may be mostly intellectual gains, and add value to what we represent. So, it seems to be the obvious case that being a professional is having an identity that is intrinsically valuable and means that it is worth something (a specialized labor). But when we think about "multiple-identities" is it multiple worth? Does it double, triple, quadruple, i.e., in regard to being a researcher, teacher, scholar, or educator, what we are worth? And what about areas of specialization such as African American rhetorics, feminism, gender studies, or digital literacy? Is it not like getting other certifications that create a breadth in regard to what the professional is qualified to do?

As I have been doing research on personal narratives concerning the lived experiences of African Americans scholars in rhetoric and composition, I have been looking at how they negotiate their identities as professionals, and also, how their early experiences may have affected their professional development. One thing I came to realize during this process, is that

while we “own” our personal identities, we negotiate that part of ourselves that is represented to the public; and further, that this exchange or professional/personal negotiation (of representation) also entails our positionality within our departments, programs, and universities; particularly, in terms of what they need in regard to their own situatedness. The common belief is that our roles—social or professional—are not separate, or distinct, identities but overlap in different ways according to the work that we do; thus, our multiple subjectivities—our multiple ways of being, inform our realities, and we may or may not be conscious how of we are using that stored knowledge, or sense of self, to inform our practice. Situatedness is how we define, or find, ourselves in a certain space. It is where we found our ‘place’ and feel comfortable with our interactions—inter/intrapersonal—including our scholarship, teaching, research, and mentoring in a specific space. This begs the question: Are we, i.e., especially as minority scholars, content with ‘what’s happening’ there, including how we are perceived by colleagues—particularly, in regard to our representation in our roles as scholars, or even, teachers; and also, how our work and scholarship is being received in this space? I find that often our situatedness is conscious because, as scholars, we tend to enact practices that reflect the kinds of work we would like to see done based on our own research, and teaching, agendas. So, our positionality—roles—in those spaces, can be negotiated. However, our subjectivities, or aspects of the self, that define who we are, may or may not be negotiated; it depends on how ‘in tune’ we are with our own, individual, ideological circumstances, and how reflexive we are in our practices. It also depends somewhat on our ‘visible’ identities and the politics of representation.

“Visible” identities are always visible. They cannot be ignored or hidden. And it brings to bear that depending on what programs, departments, and institutions value, there is a “hidden cost” or additional worth attributed to academic professionals that come through their doors—on

top of areas of specialization and multiple identities as academic professionals. So, how do they decide what is of value with respect to “visible” identities and what does this negotiation/exchange look like in terms of situatedness within departments and programs? Who loses and wins? So, this finally brings “us” to the big “I” from the personal/subjective (positionality of the researcher), to the “Is” of the participants’ stories and their personal/professional narratives to the conceptualization (of identity) and what it means to be who one is. Who owns *it* (identity/positionality) and how does its representation get negotiated, particularly within academe?

My own positionality as a black female stays the same regardless of my titles, e.g., ESL instructor, TESOL visiting lecturer, linguist, and composition theorist, although how I represent myself or situate myself as related to those positions may change—as I negotiate and relocate myself within that space relative to that position. So, it begs the question: What can we do in the academy to make it/this a fair exchange? Especially, given individuals’ personal and professional needs in regard to scholarship, and how they want to be represented, versus our needs in regard to the positionality/situatedness of our own departments.

We talk about “justice” in our field, but do we challenge “identity” as a commodity or do we just sell it as a by-product of joining the university: “find yourself” and “learn about ‘Others’”? Based on my research, I have discovered that “Identity politics” is not about identity at all, but about power relationships; that is, who owns the conceptualization of who we are, who can define it at will, or even refuse to discuss it they want to. I feel that although multiculturalism was problematic, the academy must not limit its critical, and perhaps, theoretical investigation of diversity. The academy must turn to valuing the visible; ‘face value’ in regard to visible identity is just the beginning of the story. As Composition scholars, we must be ready to complicate it—

by acknowledging lived experience and (our own) positionality or situatedness as human beings and professionals.

Suggestions for Further Research

While autoethnography is usually a case study of the self, often reserved for exploration of student writers as ‘subjects’ (see Canagarajah, 2012), it could serve to function as an important heuristic which researchers could utilize to explore aspects related to being transparent about their scholarship, research methodologies, and the positionality they take with respect to their research topics. For example, composition scholars may choose to utilize this approach to explore their own cultural identity development, or other ideological aspects related to selfhood that they feel may have potential to influence their scholarship. Undertaking this approach would allow them gain new perspectives related to their own ideological stance towards a subject, i.e., topic, or their participants, i.e. based on unconscious comparisons of their experiences with their sample population. Such an approach could help scholars to take a critical stance in regard to their positionality as teachers of writing, scholars, researchers, and educators in the field of composition and rhetoric, particularly in regard to the contextual or external factors, that influence their practice and views on theoretical approaches that they undertake in regard to practice, i.e., teaching, or other aspects of their work. This methodology would go a long way towards transparency because it would allow a researcher to be open about his or her about own ideology, i.e. belief system, with an insight for how his or her lens for looking at the world, including aspects of meaning making impact, or influence a scholars’ methodological stance, including the theoretical framework(s) that he or she uses in approaching their subjects, i.e. participants and topic. In addition, if autoethnography is utilized as a way to explore specific themes, as related to one’s scholarship, then it could make apparent those potential biases which

could affect aspects of the research including purposeful sampling, i.e., selection of participants, or even, data collection techniques. I feel that undertaking an autoethnographic approach should be the foundation for any case study research involving ‘Other’ subjects, e.g., L2 or second language writers, or ones involving all White or Black populations; that is, participants whose cultural background, i.e., racial or otherwise, a researcher has no knowledge of; and, this also includes those sample populations that a researcher feels that he or she readily identifies with, for the very same reasons. This kind of critical stance is particularly important since the field, itself, is so diverse—professionally—in terms of interdisciplinary perspectives, e.g. linguistics, sociolinguistics, rhetoric, and literature. This approach also acknowledges the ways in which personal histories, as related to practice, brings to bear on scholarship. Also, because there are so many ethnographic studies being done, I think it is particularly important to be more transparent in regard to one’s stance.

In addition to autoethnography, I used a narrative approach for much of this study. Specifically, I utilized narrative as a research method for interviewing participants whereby I utilized life history interview to get participants to tell their stories. I also utilized narrative analysis to reconstruct participants’ stories in order to capture the essence of their experiences in order to get a sense of their realities and to capture those themes which I felt were relevant to telling their stories. Based on my research agenda, I focused on African American scholars’ cultural identity construction and race, and adult identity development, including professional identity development. I took a feminist or dialogic approach to interviewing which included participants’ answering very personal questions, whereby the researcher, herself, had to disclose some very personal information related to her own identity development and current situatedness as an emerging (minority) scholar in the field. Sometimes, participants’ answering those

questions resulted in rather lengthy conversations with the researcher. I found that in some instances participants readily participated in telling their stories and talked at length about their lived experiences, especially childhood stories, which included talking or relaying information about significant events in their lives. I also used narrative analysis to reconstruct participants' stories to get a sense of their lifeworlds in order to capture the essence what life is, or was, like for them as African Americans, and in order to offer a context for reconstructing their stories. I knew that, in a sense, I was attempting to reconstruct their realities. I found narrative analysis to be particularly relevant in places where participants were not reflective or overly thorough in their responses, or did not make certain connections between their early life histories and their current professional lives; or did not reflect on them. This narrative approach was very important, methodologically, because I was engaging in meaning-making with my participants through the retelling of their stories; and this provided a kind of vehicle for triangulation. I think that narrative analysis is a very important, and appropriate, method for gathering personal stories, and for relaying professional histories. I feel that it is a critical method for historicizing the field of composition and rhetoric because it can be used as a way to capture missing viewpoints and histories that have influenced the field. I feel that because of there has been extensive on-going research concerning narrative analysis, especially over the last several years, that it can be a thoroughly useful and sound technique for capturing lived experience—in a way that biographical data or an ethnographic or case study cannot. Biographies, and even case studies, may relate histories of their subjects, and also focus on the 'study of the subject,' particularly in regard to how such influences their current practice, i.e., teaching or writing. Narrative inquiry used in educational research allows the investigator to analyze teachers' practices and teachers' reflections on thinking and teaching (Behar-Horenstein and Morgan 1995). The storyteller or

primary participant, and the participant-observer, work together to reconstruct the narrative that relates the participants' lived experiences. The participant tells the story and the researcher negotiates the meaning and the interpretation of the events of the story with participant and constructs the narrative. So, in a way, the story is intersubjective along the lines of interpretation; it is told 'together' (Behar-Horenstein and Morgan 1995). In this way, narrative research goes beyond artifact analysis because it offers more a detailed respective related to individuals' lived experiences, including their personal reflections as well as offering information that may not seem entirely relevant to (telling) the 'story.' However, such data, or 'extra' information, may reflect biases or missing histories that have not even been accounted for, and could change the methodology, entirely; that is, different artifacts may be collected. Also, based on new discoveries, artifacts may be analyzed in new ways, using new approaches; and, even the ways in which the researcher uses observation to collect data may change. In so much as one considers the relevance of all other approaches, narrative analysis is essential for telling the story that has not been told. I now believe that narrative inquiry or 'storying' our lives should be part of socialization process of emerging scholars who are coming into the field; it is the 'true' or 'real' discourse, and perhaps, will become a way to make meaning—not as an alternate discourse, necessarily—but one that makes up the body of voices that represent our field. If my role is to be that of a trustworthy researcher, then it will be my responsibility to capture their voices—not as a way to negotiate meaning or power—but for the sake of capturing the 'truth' of their experiences as they have lived them. Capturing 'real' lived experience, as much as is humanly possible, is something that I now consider to be one of the most important and significant aspects of doing research.

Recommendations

One of the things that sometimes happens with mentoring, particularly in regard to some of the mentors who are in the field of rhetoric and composition, is they take it for granted; that is, they get socialized into academe and being a professional at such a young age that they do not understand why others simply do not just ‘catch on’. But for many of our first-generation, college and graduate students, they simply have no idea as to what is going is happening, or ‘how the sausage gets made’; so, it becomes important for those emerging scholars to be properly socialized into the profession. Often it is the case that for many minority, and working-class, students, they have not had the exposure to professional academic environments and so they do not know how to prepare for entering, and engaging in, the kinds of contexts or spaces, and practices, that occur there. In this vein, it is crucial that mentors, i.e., advisors, be taught to be explicit about certain kinds of things—to be able to tell students exactly, and explicitly, what steps they need to take—such as creating informal networks with peers in both their classes and departments; how to get to know journal editors, and the steps needed in order to secure publication; or even, how to bridge cross-cultural ‘contact zones’ with their White professors so that they know how to negotiate personal and professional spaces in academe, even in terms of discussing what is expected of them in regard to a particular course, including how to properly take a test or complete a certain kind of project or assignment. Those kinds of teaching areas are important so that those students do not start off being seen as unprofessional, aggressive, or even belligerent in regard to the initial stages of creating their professional reputations. Thus, there are expectations of the academy when students enter the (graduate school) doors, and mentors cannot assume that students, especially minority and working-class students understand those expectations, even if these students have already garnered Master’s degrees or were previously

enrolled in other post-graduate programs. White scholars, and mentors, might even have to explain what “White-boy talk”, i.e., professional discourse, is and how minorities may have to make decisions concerning how to effectively negotiate aspects of language, both in terms of their identities and professional representation in regard to writing and scholarship. For example, perhaps, in this case, mentors could talk with their mentees about hybrid discourses. Either way, it is important for scholars to understand that mentoring occurs on at least two levels: (1) their direct interpersonal relationship with the mentee and (2) an understanding that the process of socialization is not ‘natural’, but part of the construction of a particular identity concerning the roles, i.e. being a teacher-of-writing, educator, scholar, and researcher, that an individual has to somehow incorporate into his or her own personal identity. For all the reasons cited above, I believe that it would be beneficial to have workshops at conferences also books that teach advisors how to work most effectively in their roles as mentors, and perhaps, role models. Although there are currently general guidelines for this practice, I think it is important to situate it within the field of composition and rhetoric because it would serve as a crucial step in seasoning up-and-coming scholars.

Some in the field are genuinely worried about dwindling numbers in membership in the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the *Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)*, even though the numbers in attendance there are still quite high. However, it has been my experience in attending this annual conference, CCC, that it is ‘too big’ and impersonal, and ‘too White.’ In this space, as an emerging scholar, I have it to be very difficult to create any sort of informal network with peers. Many professionals come to CCCC to meet up with old friends, or colleagues, or to participant in their respective caucuses. Oftentimes, this conference seems to focus on ‘rising stars’ or eminent scholars and not so much

on those who are new to the profession, or would like to become more involved. Also, because I have different interests, and areas of specialization, i.e., composition studies, L2 (second language) writing, and applied linguistics, it is not as easy for me to pick one caucus, go to their meeting, and join up. What about other areas of interest I may have and want to learn more about such as digital literacy or working with technology? I know I have a flair for those subjects and I might want to work with others on this kind of scholarship. Of course the short answer is: “Go to some workshops, sit in on some caucus meetings, and go to presentations that deal with those topics.” But, the real issue comes back to socialization and knowing *who* to talk to about *what*. There are real efforts being made—and some real difference being shown—in the numbers of Black faculty as well as faculty of color in the field, including graduate students. However, I believe that we still need to invest a great deal more money and time in pursuing this effort. Also, it is also far more important to centralize the work we are doing in the field, so that we *can* showcase it. Most of the issue involves money and generating enough revenue to facilitate a meaningful endeavor that educators would like to join in on. So, eminent scholars, published authors, top-name publishing company executives, and even top educational technology mavens, are sought out as advertisers for the event; and this approach, does indeed, generate numbers, which in turn, generates revenue. However, is it not also equally important that we have the kinds of professional commitment to our scholarship that is truly representative of our field? Is this way, we, i.e., as scholars, should make sure that all of our constituents are represented equally including Latino/-a, Chicano/-a, Indigenous or Native American, Black and Afro-Caribbean at our conferences? So, while it may not generate a great deal of revenue to reach out to instructors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), or tribal schools, should not we do so, anyway? By making a monetary commitment— and thinking in

terms from a purely economic perspective in regard to the future—it would behoove the profession to build constituent pipelines to the Black, Latin, and Chicano/-a communities—especially, graduate students—by inviting them to some conferences, getting them to meet Caucus members, and encouraging them directly to join the field, engage in research in specific areas, and the hope of instilling in them the desire to become Ph.D.s in rhetoric and composition. We simply need greater representation in terms of minority scholars in order to diversify the field. One suggestion I do have is to encourage the establishment of more workshops at CCCC by minority scholars—up-and-coming as well as established ones—that deal with more ‘diverse’ issues such as second language writing, transnational and translingualism, teaching with technology, digital literacy, and the impact of technology on African American students in first-year writing classrooms.

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APPENDIX A—INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Email Interview Questions

1. What is your educational background?
2. What prompted your interest in the study of those subjects?
3. If your undergraduate or graduate major was in Composition, did you originally intend to pursue a degree in this area? What led you to choose this major?
4. What was your first experience teaching writing? Were you a graduate assistant (GA), teaching assistant (TA), teaching associate (TA), teaching fellow (TF), adjunct, or temporary faculty member?
5. What do you consider to be your primary area(s) of research in Composition?
6. How did you become interested in doing research in those areas?
7. What people have influenced your views on writing and the teaching of writing?
8. In what ways do you feel that African Americans have contributed to scholarship in Composition?
9. Which of the following is more important in terms of your professional identity: being an (1) educator, (2) teacher, (3) teacher of writing, (4) scholar, or (5) researcher? Why?
10. Do you think that race and cultural/ethnic identity is an important part of one's professional identity? Why or why not?

Part I. Early Life Experiences

1. Where did you grow up?
2. Did your mother work when you were a child? What kind of work did she do?
(Probing Questions: Was your mother very involved in her work? That is, did

- she talk about her work at home? Did she bring work home? Did she like her job(s)?)
3. Growing up, can you recall any messages or advice that your mother gave you about being a black woman/man [a woman/man] or minority? What advice did she give you?
 4. Now, tell me about your father. May I ask questions about your father? What kind of work did he do? (Probing questions: Did he work at home more than one job while you were growing up? Was your father very involved in his work? That is, did he talk about his work at home? Did he bring work home? Did he like his work?)
 5. What messages or advice did your father give you about being a black woman/man [a woman/man] or member of a minority group?
 6. How many children were in your family? Where were you in the birth order? How would you characterize your parents' expectations of you and/or your siblings? (Probe: Did you receive different messages from the ones given to your brothers/sisters?)
 7. Who were the significant people in your life as a child? (This can include immediate and extended family, friends, individuals in the community, and anyone else you particularly remember.)
 8. What was your neighborhood like? What was its racial, ethnic, and class mix?
 9. As a child, how did you first become aware that you were black or that there was something different about being black? [As a child, how did you first become aware that you were a member of an ethnic group?]

10. Were you taught special values about being black? What were those values?

How were you taught them? [Were you taught special values about being a member of your ethnic group? What were the values? How were you taught them?]

11. How did you parents talk about race? About issues of being black? Did they ever

talk about your role as a black person as you grew older? [How did your parents talk about race? Were you aware of being a part of a dominant-minority [minority] group? What was this about?

Now let's focus on your school experiences.

1. What type of elementary school did you attend? What was the racial composition of the school? How were you treated in school?

2. Were you treated in any special ways because of your race [ethnicity] while in elementary school?

3. In high school what was the racial composition?

4. What activities did you participate in while in high school?

5. What supports were there for you in high school? What obstacles? Were any of the obstacles due to your race [ethnicity]? How did they affect you? [Were any of the supports due to race [ethnicity]? How did they affect you?

6. While you were in high school did you think about going to college? Did you think a lot about your future? Do you remember having any career plans? Describe them.

7. What was your ideal vision of being an adult? What were you taught to aspire to? Who taught you? How were you taught?

8. While you were growing up, what historical events stand out in your mind?

College and Graduate School

1. What factors were important in your choosing a college? What major did you choose? Why?
2. Where did you attend college? Who were the important people and influences in your decision to attend college?
3. Was it predominantly a black or white setting? [Was the ethnic/racial make-up of the institution diverse or mostly black or white?] How did this impact your experiences in college?
4. What led you to choose graduate school? Who were the important people and influences in your decision to attend graduate school?

Part II: Early Life Adult Experiences (Follow-up Interview)

The next set of questions focus on your career and other aspects of your adult life.

Transition from First Interview

1. How did your career and life plans evolve from your early career influences, such as your family and school influences?
2. At what point in life did you decide on your career goals? How has your career goals changed? Why?
3. What expectations did you have for your life when you were twenty—personally, socially, and for your career?
4. What other factors contributed to your career selection?

In this second interview, I'd like to get some idea of your public world: those life dimensions that reflect your career, professional activities, and career aspirations.

1. Can you tell me about your current job or position? What is the nature of your work?
2. What is a typical workweek like for you? How many hours do you work?
(Probe: How many hours do you spend mentoring students, going to meetings, grading papers, etc.?) How often do you work on weekends?
3. What has been your exposure to writing program administrators and coordinators? What did you learn from this exposure?
4. What was your first major change or advancement—movement to a job or position with significantly more responsibility, challenge, and pressure than prior jobs?
5. What do you see as critical turning points of your career? Why?
6. What's the biggest job challenge you have ever faced?
7. What kinds of personal sacrifices have you had to make to get where you are today?
8. How have your colleagues and coworkers helped in your achieving success? What other support would you have liked?
9. We sometimes invest in developmental activities that we hope will pay off. Have you done this? Which of these activities have proven to be particularly valuable? (Probe: Education? Courses? Workshops?) Which of these was waste of time? (What additional activities such as fellowships, grants, or other research-based activities were valuable to you?)

General Questions about the Professoriate

1. Do you think “rising to the top” and becoming a scholar in composition and rhetoric is different for black men and women in comparison to white men and women? (Other minority groups)?
2. Do you believe that some parts of the professoriate are more likely to produce top black scholars [researchers] than others? Which ones, and why?
3. Are there certain jobs or types of jobs you see as critically important in seasoning [mentoring, socialization] emerging black scholars in composition?
4. Do you see any differences between black and white colleagues’ styles in terms of scholarship? (Probe: Research? Teaching?) What are they? Can you give me an example of that? When are you most likely to be aware of those differences? Can you tell me a story that illustrates those differences?
5. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) sponsors programs and policies to help with the development of minority scholars in the field. What one change would improve both the quality of your professional development and your experience as a minority scholar in the field?
6. Do you think that it is important for minority scholars to give back [service] their constituent ethnic/cultural communities? (Probe: In what ways?)
7. What does being a ‘scholar’ in composition mean to you? (Is being recognized as a minority scholar important to you?) Does scholarship mean research, teaching, or theorizing? (Probe: Does being an active member of the professoriate mean doing research, teaching, publishing, or doing service?) Why do you think this?

Relationship(s) with Others

1. As a black scholar, what has your relationship been like with other members of the professoriate? (Probe: At your university? In your department? Program?)
2. How important to you is it that you develop close relationships with other minority scholars? (Probe: With other African American scholars? With white scholars?)
3. Are there white colleagues in your department [at your university, in the field] that you turn to for support—either emotional or task related? In what situations would you turn to a white [black] colleague [man or woman] in your department [program] for support? Can you tell me about those times?
4. Would you say that you are particularly close to any of your white colleagues [men, women] in your department [at your university, in the field/professoriate]? Tell me about this relationship. In what ways are you close? How did this relationship develop? Do you ever discuss your cultural differences? (Do you ever discuss cultural issues?) Has race ever been an issue in this relationship? How has the relationship changed over the course of time?
5. Are there white colleagues [male or female] that you find you have conflict with? Can you tell me about a time when you were particularly troubled by a conflict with a white colleague [male or female]? (Probe: How did you handle this situation? Do you think race was an issue?)

We are at the conclusion of our interview. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me? Did anything surprise you or did you find anything particularly interesting?