

## **The Making of the African American Professor of Adult Education**

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The purpose of this research was to provide historical and philosophical information regarding the field of Adult Education from the perspective of African Americans Professors of Adult Education (AAPAE) by engaging participants in reflective dialogue regarding their experiences as doctoral students. This article utilizes the findings from African-American Professors of Adult Education to provide information about the making of “The African American Professor of Adult Education”. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information about the relationships among and influences of major professors and doctoral students. Without exception the AAPAE spoke of changes towards diversity and of the long way to go in this direction. Many felt being marginalized provided a different perspective. The newest African-American Professors of Adult Education must be activists of social change through politics and scholarly research from the platform of the professorate. African-American professors are dealing with issues of discrimination in the field of Adult Education by replacing the gatekeepers, developing more collaborative research, and by providing opportunities for people of color to participate in scholarly activities.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout history there have been numerous examples of adults being educated, yet the field of adult education has existed formally in the United States since 1926 (Knowles, 1977). The education of adults of African descent has existed in this country since they were first brought to this country as adult slaves (Whiteaker, 1990). “However, few authors have recognized that African-American scholars existed in higher education” (Caplow & McGee, 1958). With respect to the field of adult education, there was a dearth in the literature regarding

African-American scholars until Merriam's and Cunningham's (1989) *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education* included the chapters "History of Adult and Continuing Education" (Stubblefield & Keane, 1989) and "Racial and Ethnic Minorities and Adult Education" (Briscoe & Ross, 1989).

To have discourse regarding the African-American professor of adult education, or critical race theory in the field of adult education (Delgado 1995), the liminal perspective of African-Americans in graduate school is essential. Critical theory involves the investigation of power relationships within a culture where forms of oppression exist (Delgado 1995). Beginning in the 1920s, critical theory evolved into critical race theory during the 1970s (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The origin of this racialized discourse was rooted in anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, and politics. However, the writings of proponents like W. E. B. Du Bois and Max Weber have been included among the critical race theorists and legal scholars such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Richard Delgado and Roy, L. Brooks as well as adult education professors (Delgado; Jean, 2011-2012, Gates; West 1996.). Thus, this discourse begins with African-Americans in higher education.

Moore and Wagstaff (1974) provided a detailed account of a discussion about African Americans in higher education. While discussing the key assumptions of a workshop speaker in the 1970s, a junior college student said, "Send an African-American student to an all-White college; it is good for the student. Send a White student to an all-African-American college; it is good for the school" (p. 130). This did not change when the focus of the discussion changed from students to faculty. Moore and Wagstaff continued:

When John Munro left Harvard University to join the staff at Miles College, a small, predominantly African-American institution in the South, his actions made newspaper headlines, and national magazines carried the story. Someone at Miles College later remarked that they were never allowed to forget how fortunate they were to have him and how much he would offer the college. There was no doubt about his competence and ability. None of the media or Harvard colleagues mentioned the possibility that Miles College may have had something to offer Dr. Munro. (p. 130)

Historically, as African-American professors joined the faculty of predominantly white colleges, many were isolated personally and professionally. They were treated as if they came only to be enriched without enriching the institution. According to Franklin (1990), "The world of the Negro scholar is indescribably lonely, and he [she] must, somehow, pursue truth down the lonely path, while at the same time making certain that his [her] conclusions are sanctioned by universal standards developed and maintained by those who frequently do not even recognize him [her]" (p. 131).

The existence of African-American scholars in higher education was recognized by the Caplow-McGee study (Caplow & McGee) released in 1958. The 1971 Hodgkinson's study in American higher education relied on data from the U.S. Office of Education, and makes no reference at all to the African-American scholar. Hodgkinson's (1971) book about change in American higher education attempted to state which changes had taken place, where they occurred, how they took place and what they meant for the future of higher education. Unfortunately, the omission by Hodgkinson of the increased presence of African-American scholars in predominantly White institutions affirms that the African-American scholar was not viewed as a major change in American higher education (Moore & Wagstaff, 1974).

African-American professors have indicated that while they see the need for research, teaching should have greater priority. In the past some African-American professors described articles as pointless, witless, irrelevant, and without academic or intellectual value to warrant the time, effort, and cost for their production and dissemination (Moore & Wagstaff, 1974). This accounts for, to some degree, the lack of literature by African-American professors including those in adult education. Even though the majority of African Americans subscribed to professional publications and held membership in and attended professional meetings only a small minority tended to present their ideas in written form. In Moore and Wagstaff's study (1974), 20% of the respondents working in four-year institutions had written a book; 7% in two-year colleges and 9% in four-year institutions had edited a book; 21% in both categories had reviewed a book; and 17% in two-year colleges and 34% in four institutions had written at least one article. Additionally, Moore and Wagstaff found the African-American respondents were not asked to co-author. Despite the fact that only 30% of the non-minority faculty had published a book, 78% of them were tenured. Therefore, less than 40 years later, the best approach, if not the only, to glean information about African-American Professors of Adult Education is from interviews with African-American Professors of Adult Education.

African-American scholars were working at majority colleges and universities, and their ideas and opinions were regularly sought as information to be used in research and writing. They served as liaisons between White researchers and non-White subjects, provided frames of reference and perspectives for research activity, and were frequently the foci of research. However, the African-American professors were seldom invited to participate fully in the research activities. Although hundreds of thousands of dollars were available for research, financial assistance to support the scholarly efforts of African-American professors was virtually nonexistent. This was in higher education in general and included the field of adult education.

This study explored the field of Adult Education from the perspective of African-American Professors of Adult Education. The problem statement and the purpose of this qualitative study were also taken into consideration in formulating the research questions related to this article:

1. How were these African Americans initiated into the professorate?
2. What about the field of adult education appealed to these African Americans?
3. What influences were perceived to have shaped or contributed to their philosophical perspective?

The findings of this study illuminate the relationship and influence of major professors and dissertation committees on African-American adult educators who became Professors of Adult Education. Other influences, such as books and publications that had direct and indirect influences on African-American Professors of Adult Education (AAPAE) were examined.

## **METHOD**

This study collected information from senior African-American members of the field, and analyzed their perspective on the field, along with how their major professors influenced their views. All had been university professors at some point in their career, some had moved on to university administration and others had moved into retirement. The criteria for the purposeful sampling was that the interview participants were a) African-American professors of adult

education, b) working or have worked in a university setting, and c) were one of the first African Americans to receive a doctorate in adult education.

### **Data Collection**

The research questions were answered through the process of descriptive self-disclosure, although there were some measures of evaluative self-disclosure included. According to Wagner-Raphael, Seal, and Ehrhardt (2001), the process of increased self-disclosure is paralleled with increased intimacy. Descriptive self-disclosure differs from evaluative self-disclosure, because the later divulges both positive and negative and makes self-assessments. Descriptive self-disclosure simply describes self while assessing how one feels about others.

Personal interviews of African-American Professors of Adult Education were conducted by the researcher as a means of gathering information about their lived experiences. Interviewing requires a trusting relationship between the interviewer and the participant. This cannot be accomplished without attaining some degree of emotional engagement and a large degree of openness between both participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The intersection of race and ethnicity of this interviewer and the AAPAEs encouraged a trusting relationship. This researcher also established an open line of communication as well as maximized the degree of emotional engagement with the participants.

### **Data Analysis**

The data was organized prior to beginning analysis and allowed the researcher to refer back easily to specific components of the data. Transcripts and documents were carefully read multiple times to become familiar with the data. The researcher used initial and open coding for analysis and labeled meaningful units of the data. Coding the data brings meaning to the words before the researcher identifies themes and organizes them into reasoned categories (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). Following this portion of analysis, the researcher used constant comparison while iteratively reviewing the codes looking for patterns and relationships and grouped them into thematic categories (Patton, 2002).

### **Trustworthiness & Credibility**

Since qualitative research involves complex situations that may not be replicated, the transferability of findings requires the reader to make his or her own decisions as to whether the findings are applicable to their own situations (Merriam, 2009). The researcher aimed to provide adequate description to allow the reader to make his or her own interpretations. In addition, credibility (Merriam, 2009) could have been influenced by the researcher's biases, self-identifying as an African-American, and the way in which data were interpreted. Since the research was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, the researcher maintained a critical awareness of how the researcher's biases might color the findings. To minimize the threats to trustworthiness or validity, there were four actions that the researcher executed in the data analysis process: (1) triangulation, (2) member checking, (3) peer review, and (4) rich, thick description.

## FINDINGS

Data collection began in a small southern town on a hot July Monday at the professional office of the spouse of a long-time adult educator. Although the introduction had been made face-to-face, all of the other connections had been made via email and telephone. On this sunny summer morning as I got out of my car, the first participant greeted me like a new in-law and said, “You must never have worked in the fields.” I wondered how he knew, blushed a bit and admitted that I had not. He said, “I knew it, if you had there is no way you would be driving a convertible.” I laughed and followed him inside. The reference to the fields was a cultural thing. African-Americans had been educated to get out of the hot sun of the fields, specifically the cotton fields. Education helped to distance them from the fields and anything remotely associated with them, including shiny red convertibles. Thus, the interviews began.

I had so much and so little in common with these souls being interviewed. We were all African-American, all adult educators at some point in time, but all had come to the field through different vehicles. They were sociologists, farmers, teachers, administrators and preachers, who like me, had stumbled upon this thing called adult education and found a home. More than a few found the field fit what they were already doing, so decided to seek a terminal degree to legitimize their work with adult learners. One had applied for a job in adult education and had to go to the library to look it up before going to the initial interview. She got the job and a career.

I sought to find the answers to my research questions, but found much more. I found myself among my family. I had not been truly lost, just a foster child wandering from one academic home to another. I had been taken in, because it was the right thing to do. This patchwork quilt called “Professorate of Adult Education” had not been handed down to me from generation to generation like Maher’s (2002) second generation professors’ inheritance. It was thrown down to me as a lifeline. Each participant’s primary goal during the interview was to help me complete this process, to pull me up from one level to the next. They unselfishly gave me what they knew I needed.

The interviews began with the researcher assuming the role of a new in-law; each subsequent participant took on the role of another family member. Another face-to-face interview took place in the living room of a participant who quickly earned the role of grandfather. He had entered the field in 1955 and informed me that he would read the interview guide aloud and I could write down his answers as they were being recorded. I was not about to disrespect him in any fashion, so there I sat, writing the answers while trying to look professional. He, on the other hand, sat on his sofa with his “Gold Toe” stocking feet propped up on an ottoman. I could easily have been mistaken for his granddaughter writing down the family history.

I would have rather had *Granddad* take a switch to me than to listen to one of his answers, because it vividly portrayed the racism he had experienced. When asked about his disappointments, he said:

Not many disappointments, other than the struggle to overcome the Blackness. If I had been white, I would have moved faster, but you never forget that we had to overcome hurdles, roadblocks to get where we are. It took people a long time to see that Blacks have some value. You know they had this policy of letting 10% Blacks in class and 90% whites then they would find another ways to delay you, hoping that you would become disgusted and quit (Waldrum, 2005).

This new-found Granddad told me to find someone I could trust and to latch on to them. He warned me about racism and the trap it set for us. He told me that my intellect could work against me, to hurry to finish this and be on my way; like he was kicking the tires on a 1955 Chevy I was about to drive off in.

The first face-to-face interview with a female adult educator found her to be almost motherly. She was excited about the project and the nature of the research. We spoke in the conference room outside of her office at her university. She searched the bookcases for works by influential authors. She pulled down several adult education “cookbooks” with dog-eared pages and notes in the margins. Her shelves were full of “*soul food cookbooks*” with recipe excerpts stuck in between the well-worn pages. She gave me cuttings from her herb garden, articles that she had written. Next she had me taste the *nouveau cuisine* of *Making Space* (Sheared & Sissel, 2001), *Freedom Road* (Peterson, 2002), and *Sistahs in College* (Johnson-Bailey, 2000). The recipes she shared with this researcher, now seemingly her favorite niece, were heavily seasoned with bell hooks and Paulo Friere. There was also the spicy Caribbean flavor of Ian Baptiste and the Africentricities of Scipio A. J. Colin, III.

The importance of this sort of research was not lost on her as she added the name of this study to her vita while I sat there. She emphasized this fact by telling me to make sure that I documented everything, that it was important for tenure in the future. This researcher had just been “cited,” but would she ever be able to cook in adult education like this?

The last of the face-to-face interviews took place near the end of the data collection process. We met in the participant’s office at her university. She had completed the questionnaire and was enthusiastic about being interviewed although it was apparent that her time was valuable and she did not have much to spare. Her words were deliberate and she methodically answered all of my questions. She was the epitome of professionalism, not making a superficial connection with me based solely on race. Our connection at first was more like that of two adult educators conducting scholarly research. She gave credit to her academic mentors who were not of African descent, but she also gave credit to her peers and to the few who had gone before her. Then she became my sister, telling me how her real mentors came from her family. Nothing anyone had shown her academically could come close to the role models that she had found within her community. She told me how her mother had gone away to nursing school without the prerequisite science courses. She studied into the midnight hours to keep up, because going home was not an option. The participant’s grandmother had saved pennies under the dining room rug to send her only daughter to nursing school; going home because she was not prepared would have been a personal affront to all that her mother had sacrificed to send her there. This was a role model; this participant, my sister, was mentored by examples of strong Black women. In that instant, she became my newest role model.

During each interview I listened, took notes, and taped the responses to all of the questions. The responses to the questions regarding the field were always given in a professional straight forward manner. Telephone interviews were equally exciting. I could hear the enthusiasm in the voices. Not once did I hear that I was just being tolerated. All except one of the participants were at their desks and had set aside the time necessary for the interviews. I had difficulty reaching one of the participants by telephone, because she was changing offices. After I had placed several calls that missed the participant, she finally called me. Her entire interview was at her expense, because she called me from the telephone at her residence.

While talking with one of the male participants, I initially found nothing to connect with other than the fact that he was of African descent and had obtained his Bachelor’s and Master’s

degrees from a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in the South, as had I. I found myself disliking him slightly, which irritated me a great deal. I had considered reflexivity as a part of this process, and took it into account during each interview. However, I learned to accept the fact that my subjectivity enabled me to understand and empathize with the participants. For the first time, I had to consider being subjective as it related to opposing views. Because of my connections with each of the other participants, the shared influences, I found it difficult to hear one participant take a different stance on the issues. I prepared to write him off as an “outlier” and continued analyzing the data. The redeeming value of the interview was that this feeling lasted only during his initial interview and seemed to dissipate each time I listened to the taped conversation or re-read the transcript.

I found myself listening more closely to the responses of a more personal nature like those regarding experiences of the participants. The answers were never negative, although they gave negative information. The biases brought to the table by the interviewer, although unspoken, were utilized by the participant. Like Belenky’s (1996) *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, critical race theory recognizes the concept of epistemology or a system of knowing (Ladson-Billings, 2000). This epistemology existed between the researcher and the participant; both knew that racism existed, and both knew that because the researcher was of color, she had experienced racism herself prior to conducting this research.

According to Smith and Colin (2001), every aspect of the lives of African Americans has and continues to be impacted by racist attitudes, ideology, and practices. Therefore, defining racism was not necessary nor was the documentation of the time or place of the discriminatory event in the life of the researcher. The participants added to that foundation when discussing their own experiences. These experiences, although colored with racism, were described without bitterness towards those whose hands held the discriminatory paint brush. Things just were. These new peers via telephone were more like distant cousins who had not spoken in ages. The shortest of the telephone interviews was for one hour. After the initial *catching up*, the conversations were relaxed and comfortable, sometimes continuing for up to two hours at a time.

## DISCUSSION

The researcher began making a connection of some sort with each of the participants by reading as much about them as possible. The researcher’s position was first that of an African-American and second that of an adult educator. That second position included 20 years of employment in a university setting, the last 10 years of which was as an Adult Educator. Throughout the study, the researcher mentally processed her experiences as each participant discussed his or her experiences. The researcher thought about how she would answer the question if it were posed to her. The similarities and differences of experiences between the researcher and the participants were many. The researcher was able to connect with each of the participants in at least one area other than race.

Major similarities were related to mentors and indirect influences. The remaining similarities were as varied as the answers to the questions, but there was at least one similarity between the researcher and all but one of participants. The researcher and several of the participants received undergraduate degrees from HBCU’s, or had attended/worked at the same university. In other instances, the researcher and several of the participants had a connection to specific areas of the country. The works of the certain authors directly or indirectly influenced

both the individual participants and the researcher. Neither the participants nor the researcher had had a major professor that was of African descent.

The differences were in areas such as geographic location, age, and gender. The participants were geographically dispersed and lived in 10 different states. There was an age difference of five to 25 years between the researcher and several of the participants. The researcher and all of the participants differed in undergraduate disciplines. The researcher was born and raised in New England and completed her education in the South. This distinction was shared with none of the participants. The participants either were born and raised in the South and completed their education in the South, were born and raised in the South and completed their education in the North, or were born and raised in the North and completed their education in the North.

The influences of the major professor that the participants attempted to pass on were related to three broad areas with unclear boundaries that often overlapped. The first area of influence given by the participants dealt with the “Doctoral Experience” or what the participants felt should take place during doctoral studies. The second area of influence given by the participants dealt with societal and civic involvement. The third area of influence given by the participants dealt with the relationship between the doctoral student and the major professor.

Doctoral students, according to the participants, should be given opportunities to write/publish by being included on research grants. The participants believed that doctoral students should be able to hold the position of Associate Principal Investigator on research grants. Participants further stated that the major professor ought to invite the doctoral students to present at academic research conferences. The participants felt that by allowing doctoral students to present at conferences, other students would be influenced by these examples. The major professors taught how to conduct research.

. . . the idea of taking it outside of the classroom. My major professor was never satisfied with just what the book says and having a nice wonderful time in academic bliss. So the idea of taking your work outside, the emphasis (was) on the celebration of difference. Diversity! The emphasis on celebration because in whatever they are doing, a project, teaching, researching to insure that diversity of opinion, diverse voices and positionalities are brought to bear, especially the disenfranchised. That was key to my committee. Rigor, I know in our postmodern world especially a feminist postmodern world the term rigor is now said to be patriarchal. I tell you that Phyllis Cunningham is somebody who taught me rigor. The idea that no stone is unturned, you systematically go at an idea looking at every angle of it, rubbing it as hard as you can (Waldrum, 2005).

The participants stated that doctoral studies should be a collaborative effort with several students conducting research on different aspects of the same issue. In order for the dissertation process to be successful, the participants felt that students should be given total access to the major professor during this period.

According to the participants, the doctoral students need to be actively involved with the community and society as a whole. To achieve this, classes were and should be held off campus, out in the community. The participants experienced the major professors involving their students in community action activities and dealing with issues that affected the members of society at large.



Cyril Houle had an influence on me from the standpoint of being open and honest and also being very community involved. I didn't think that he would because he was so up there, I didn't think that he would be involved in the community. I lived in a Black community, I mentioned it and he came out with maybe 10-12 graduate students one Saturday and met with us and the City Counsel and other members and talked about how to strengthen the community. He toured around and we ate dinner. . . . I was so impressed and I haven't gotten over that. To this day, I do a lot of my classroom teaching when I take my students out into the community. We eat out and have classes in local restaurants (Waldrum, 2005).

The major professors encouraged relationships outside of the classroom that included home and family. The relationships allowed the major professor to mentor the student and to pass on values from their own experiences. These relationships furthered the previously mentioned concept of total access of the student to the major professors.

Phyllis Cunningham gets involved with her students personally, in their lives. I am learning to do that probably because of her. Teaching doesn't stop in the classroom for her. She organizes all kinds of social events so that she can get to know her students so that she can become a three-dimensional person. Cunningham's teaching reminds me so much of belle hooks engaged pedagogy, the whole being, body, soul and spirit is involved. That is a *Phyllis Legacy* that I am continuing (Waldrum, 2005).

The participants believed that doctoral studies must be a collaborative effort between two adults interacting as equal co-learners. This encouraged such concepts as independent thinking, creative innovative instructional approaches, and being a maverick when necessary.

#### Divergence from the Major Professor's Influence

The divergence from the major professors and influences were in similar broad areas. The first area related to the perceptions about what should take place during doctoral studies. The second area of divergence given by the participants dealt with the relationship between the doctoral student and the major professor. The third area of divergence from the major professors was related to the area of race.

The participants diverged from their major professors by demystifying the doctoral experience. As professors, the participants have included students in research grants, a departure from their experiences as students. As major professors, the participants tried to give all doctoral students the opportunity to present at conferences. The participants also diverged by not treating students who needed more guidance as if they lacked intelligence and by giving special attention to all doctoral students.

As professors, the participants tried to differ from their major professors by not being involved in too many projects such as writing, teaching, and advising doctoral students at the same time. An important difference was to do a better job of keeping commitments to doctoral students, being prepared for class, and providing feedback throughout the doctoral process. "From experience, I learned how frustrating it is to work with someone who is in a position to make or break the project, then they don't keep their end of the bargain. I have really tried to do that very differently" (Waldrum, 2005).

The participants felt that their major professors were grounded in different intellectual paradigms than the participants, both then and now. Participants' interests were, and remain, in

the history of African-American Adult Education and in the African-American community at large. The major professors had a different ideology.

I guess you diverge when you become your own person and I have not thought that clearly about it. I am an African American, I am not white. [My major professor] had mentioned once when I received my Ph.D. and I was 28 years old. He said, “You, young male, white, golden boy, you can go out and the world is your oyster so to speak. . . .” I said: “oops, I am not white!” (Waldrum, 2005).

Male participants felt like they had to diverge from the teaching style of White major professors. The major professor was more casual and a more personal type of a friend; the participants did not feel that they had that luxury. The participants felt they could not have a casual personal relationship, because their students were for the most part Caucasian and female.

My positionality is quite different than his; in that respect, we are very different. I think it has everything to do with race. He was a White male. On a personal level, I think he would agree with this, he was very conscious of this; he was very engaging and had a very nice human touch to him. I know that as a Black man, I don’t have that option with students, because I am seen differently. I also present myself differently; I have a different agenda, concerns, and interests. I don’t think you can come across in the same way. Students would not view him and me in the same light even though we were both professors and even though I trained with him. We would be viewed very differently. My stance toward students has always been very encouraging, but always sort of keeping it at arm’s reach (Waldrum, 2005).

Some of the participants felt they did not diverge from the influence of the major professors. Rather than change from the value system of the major professor, the participants added to that understanding.

I do not think I have diverged, I think I have added to that understanding. Because a lot of what they enabled me to do was to explore reality in a construct that was important to where I am right now. That is the sole idea of looking at things through the lens of race, class, and gender or a woman’s perspective, and really trying to give voice to more of what I consider a poly-rhythmic reality. So it is not that I have diverged, I have grown somewhat in trying to make sure that yes, within all of that it is still within the context of really looking at, being critically reflective at all times about what those things mean and how they affect what I do (Waldrum, 2005).

### *Formative Influences*

The participants were asked to elaborate on direct and indirect influences in their lives. Without exception, the participants named other African Americans who had influenced them directly. First mentioned were people with no degrees at all, such as parents, grandparents, or other family members. Some named older African-American males from their community and others felt that the African-American culture itself was directly influential. Classmates, colleagues, and peers were also listed as direct influences.

African-American Professors of Adult Education who were found to be directly influential (in alphabetical order) were: Sampson Buie, Scipio A. J. Colin, III, Talmadge Guy, Edwin Hamilton, B.W. Harris, Johnnie Harris, Velma Harris, belle hooks, Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Vanessa Sheared, and Ronald O. Smith. The two African-American Professors of Adult Education most often mentioned were Scipio A. J. Colin, III, and Edwin Hamilton.

Colin gave encouragement at the African-American Pre-Conference of the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) throughout the years to those who presented there. Her assistance included advising the participants in ways of improving their work. Her actions were seen by the participants as being altruistic. Several of the participants felt that Colin was one who could be called on throughout one's career; she was informative, knowledgeable, and helpful. She never gave the impression that she did not have time to help.

She pulled me aside and told me things that she thought I still needed to do to work on it. She gave me some ideas for it and using it after the dissertation was written. I always appreciated that she took the time to do that, because she didn't have to. It was clear that she was very interested and trying to help folks get a start and to get started in a positive direction. It was such an altruistic kind of thing because there was nothing for her in it, in the doing of it (Waldrum, 2005).

Hamilton was mentioned by most of the participants as a modern day African-American pioneer of the field of adult education. During the initial networking stages of this research, he was named as the person who I should include in this research most often. His last known position was at Howard University; several messages left on his voice mail at Howard proved fruitless. After several phone calls to Howard University where the Adult Education program had been merged with another, I finally spoke with someone who knew him. Unfortunately, Professor Edwin Hamilton had passed away the previous year.

Direct influences from the field of Adult Education who were not African American were identified as (also in alphabetical order): Jerald Apps, Stephen Brookfield, Rosemary Caffarella, Phyllis Cunningham, Ron Cervero, Paulo Friere, Cyril Houle, Jack Liday, Carol Kasworm, and Jack Mezirow.

Jack Mezirow, I have gotten to know Jack quite well, with his perspective transformation and his working through that particular theory. I wouldn't say an awful lot of other people. I have followed, for example, Paulo Friere's work. I have followed it for years, and I do buy that oppression does exist and it's awful and it's harsh. I have never been exactly clear on how I would apply it, and I think people who take these harsh stances on one side of the issue or another tend to blur the reality that exists if you are really going to solve problems. I do not like those who take a black and white ideological stance. If you say that the people who need help sometimes contribute to their own impoverishment, then they say that you are blaming the victim and that's not good. Well, it's true, they buy into the ideology of oppression and they sort of start acting the way that the oppressors see them, then they have this oppressive identity and they are acting that way. I understand how they get there, but they are acting that way. In order for them to change or for significant things to change for them they need to get out of that mindset, [but] before they can get out of that mindset, they have to recognize that they have a problem. If you say that, others sort of attack you and figure that you are all wrong to

even mention it. I don't buy that, I think that you have to solve problems by identifying what they are and what role you contribute to them (Waldrum, 2005).

When asked to elaborate on the individuals who had been indirect influences, the participants gave a multitude of names. All listed at least one African-American. The African-Americans mentioned more than once are (again, in alphabetical order) as follows: Johnetta Cole, Scipio A. J. Colin, III, Anna Cooper, W. E. B. Du Bois, Edwin Hamilton, Belle Hooks, Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Alain Locke, Leo McGee, Violet Malone, Ira A. Reid, Vanessa Sheared, and Booker T. Washington.

What I found from reading stuff that I found out about from McGee and some of my sources just inspired me. There are people who have been a part of the field that maybe I have not heard a lot about, but whose ideas were not that different from some of the ideas developing. There I taught Alain Locke and Anna Cooper. I think Locke because of the inter-cultural/multi-cultural focus that he brought to the field, as well as being an early forerunner of the leaders who [happened to be] African American. Anna Cooper, not as a person recognized as a leader within our field, but somebody who I just sort of stumbled across (Waldrum, 2005).

All of the indirect influences were not from the major professors or the adult education literature; these influences were not always positive. Experiences in the classroom, as facilitators also indirectly influenced the participants. This influence was indirect because the persons involved did not set out to influence the participant nor were they made aware of the impact of the experience.

Yes, one comment in particular, when I was doing training in Illinois. I was asked to come in and do a workshop on helping students set realistic goals. There were two nuns in the session, and as I sort of worked through that session and I finished. They finally said, "That was good but you didn't answer my question." So I said, "What didn't I answer?" "You didn't tell us how should we tell *those* students that they can't do any more than what they are doing now because of their heredity?" I have gotten that same comment on two different occasions. These are people who are teaching in those literacy programs. It sort of helped so that I could go back and look at training programs and at the same time content. [I asked myself] What are you actually teaching in the classroom? So for me, even when I am teaching . . . in the classroom, and those adults, Train the Trainer so to speak. When I am talking to them, [I tell them] you need to be sort of cognizant of this; because if this is the way you think about this then of course you are passing this on. (You being these nuns) When you begin to look at Adult Learning, there are two parties in the classroom and a lot of the adults leave the classroom because they see that you [the teacher] are not sincere in what you are doing or there is some barrier that you are erecting there and you need to be aware of that. . . . I think in those terms when I talk to people in that vein. I am looking at that kind of information, it becomes an issue with how you are framing your lectures and you need to know what your own biases are. You need to know how that impacts the students you are working with. It also comes across when you are developing programs as well (Waldrum, 2005).

Although the experience was negative for the participant, it became a positive influence that motivated the participant to critically examine biases of the adult educator and the influence of those biases on presentation and program development.

However, the participants who had entered the field the earliest found that there was very little relating to African Americans in the Adult Education literature. No book in the field had an impact on me. If I were to put it into the context of identifying and helping me to understand what was not there, then I would say every book in the field. No book helped me to understand what was not there. Merriam and Elias, I was not there (Waldrum, 2005).

In the courses we were taking, there were no books, or nothing at all, in terms of the African-American focus . . . nothing about African Americans and their thirst for knowledge, the Freedman's Bureau. . . nothing about how people read through the light of the door at night during slavery trying to get an education. . . none of that was brought up. . . evolution of HBCU's, the first African Americans to go to college were adult people...(Waldrum, 2005).

The participants discussed their late 1980s search for resource material on diversity, specifically related to African Americans. One of the participants remembered asking Larry Martin and Jovita Ross-Gordon about resources in 1986. "Shortly thereafter they began working on a book that end up serving culturally diverse populations. . . the book that Martin, Ross-Gordon and Buck Briscoe edited in 1990. . . that *New Directions* book. That was one of the first pieces and of course Scipio Colin's work on Garvey (Waldrum, 2005). It was incumbent on the participants to conduct research focusing on Adult Education of African-Americans or at least to include them in the research they were conducting.

I think we need to have Blacks writing about issues of the field as it pertains to them. Historically people have written what would be published. Often the literature paid no attention to issues related to Blacks. So you couldn't get published. Certainly, we are free to do that now, so maybe that is where the literature/research has to go. We have to tell our own story, which is the only way our story will be told. There is another piece to this. If another Black researcher disagrees with you, it's that person's obligation to write a rebuttal and then to create the dialogue, then to create more (Waldrum, 2005).

Not all of the influence from publications was positive. Some comments were critical of the *Handbook of Adult Education*, had been seen as the manual for the field of Adult Education. Social activism within the field of Adult Education held an appeal for certain types of individuals. ABE, GED, Literacy, and various community-based programs addressed the societal ills partially caused by voids in the education system. The voids impacted individuals with lower socioeconomic status; addressing these voids appealed to the African-American Professors of Adult Education with backgrounds in sociology.

Another salient point was that Adult Education appealed to the humanist side of individuals with a religious/spiritual background. This religious connection between adult education and the African diaspora has existed since slavery, and continues to permeate adult education for these modern day African-American professors of adult education.

The field of adult education was not the greatest influence on the philosophical perspective of African-American professors of adult education. The philosophical perspective of African-American Professors of Adult Education was most influenced by who they were as members of the African-American diaspora, and was impacted most by personal “factors.” The participants’ philosophical perspective was largely influenced by their culture, family, mentors, and members of their community. However, one influential supportive professor from the dominant culture was identified from within the field of adult education. This professor’s influence permeated the careers of the participants and contributed to the ways they interact with those who follow. Two African-American Professors of Adult Education were identified as being influential and supportive. Their influence also permeated the careers of the participants and the ways they interact with those of color that follow.

The literature from the field of adult education was influential to a certain degree, but was found to be lacking. Because the African-American diaspora was not recognized in the early adult education literature, the influential literature did not necessarily emanate from the field of adult education.

The perspective shaping phenomenon common to the African-American Professors of Adult Education was that of marginalization. Although there have been changes within the field of adult education, African-American Professors of Adult Education found themselves just within the margin, while being kept at a distance from the center. However, this provided a distinct advantage that, according to Wynter (1992), marginalized groups do not speak to negative economic, political, and social experiences. Because the marginalized rely on the dominant group to sustain them, they are forced to learn dominant practices. Being just within the margin has given African-American Professors of Adult Education “wide angled vision” necessary for research from within the margin while having a “fish-eyed” view of the center.

The change in the face of adult education and in the voices being heard in the adult education dialogue was seen as the greatest change witnessed by the African-American Professors of Adult Education. The adult education professoriate is no longer a white, male bastion. The professoriate is now largely comprised of women, with increasing numbers of those of color. Additionally those participating in the dialogue are also women and minorities. The secondary change has been in the growth and visibility of the field. The field of adult education is no longer defined solely by literacy and continuing education issues; human resource development largely contributed to that growth.

There was not a lot of discussion of personal experiences, but occasionally, the responses included what happened to them, how they were treated, and opportunities which they had not been afforded. It was intimated that there had been events or experiences that had bearing on their adult education career that kept them from the cutting edge of research and publishing. There had been discrimination within the field, but this was never the focus of this research, it was understood. Discrimination existed in terms of writing, publishing, and promotion. However, it seemed pointless, to both the participants and the researcher, to go into detail which would rip open the scars of the wounds that long ago healed.

Many of the things that have transpired in the field of adult education have been positive, but there remains a long way to go. The participants did not pretend to know what the future held for the field of adult education. The future needs for the field were discussed. The issue of professionalization of the field or, at minimum, the certification of those who teach ABE/GED is an issue that should be revisited. In the future, adult educators need to be more politically proactive rather than reactive. The field of adult education needs to reenter the realm of social

activism with adult educators operating from the role of societal change agents and political activists. African-American Professors of Adult Education need to be about the business of globalization of the field of adult education, in practice, as well as research. The field of adult education must be watched closely as it continues to make space for “other” sub-groups, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation and hold the dominant culture accountable not so much for crimes of the past, but for implementation of change for the future.

### IMPLICATIONS

For the most part, the information provided by the participants was positive, rarely was anything negative said. While discussing the lack of people of color in the field, experienced discrimination, and racism, very little was verbally articulated, it was understood. Relaying the message of inadequacies in the response from the field of adult education on the issue of race and/or racism in the United States was paramount. The participants felt that as African-Americans, they are honor bound not to be silent about racism. As a part of the professoriate, they must give entrée or the respectability to openly discuss racism or areas that were previously taboo. This should all be accomplished while dealing with concepts of power and conflict as a part of the adult education practice. The concept of power is undertaking a changing of the guard, from the predominantly white, male perceived *gatekeepers*. As a society, change is resisted until it is brought to someone’s attention that the current system is defective.

There has been reluctance on the part of those in power in adult education and the African-Americans in the professorate to draw attention to the racial and discriminatory inadequacies in the field of adult education. Those in power have been reluctant to have attention drawn to any discriminatory practices or institutional racism that has existed or continues to exist. As a society, individuals have not been able to draw attention to these sorts of practices without laying blame or holding those in power responsible. In the past, African-Americans had been reluctant to draw attention to discriminatory practices or institutional racism because as a society, the tendency is to *shoot the messenger*. This is no longer the case with African-Americans in the adult education professorate as exhibited by the work of Colin, Guy, Johnson-Bailey, Peterson, and Sheared to name a few. These issues are also being addressed by those from the dominant culture such as Brookfield and Cunningham.

These influences have shaped the participants’ philosophy. Their philosophies now address the solutions to these negative practices. Their philosophies are pro-active rather than reactive to what has been the norm. They address the solutions by providing opportunities for people of color to participate in scholarly activities, such as facilitating doctoral students to present at conferences, be co-principal investigators on research projects, and to help them publish before the dissertation stage of the academic career.

These salient issues became more obvious when the participants discussed their recommendations and views of the future of the field of adult education. The overwhelming issue was the need for more opportunities for African-Americans to participate in research. To this researcher, this clearly stated that the participants did not have opportunities to participate in this venue, but if given the chance would change this for those who follow.

Additionally, not enough research has been conducted about African-Americans, and the participants felt that African-Americans should be the principal investigators in this area. However, African-Americans should not be limited to this area. African-Americans are capable of conducting research in all areas.

During the past decade, African-Americans have come to the forefront by publishing and conducting research in adult education that focuses on African-Americans. While strides have been made in this area, mainstream adult education seems to include African-Americans as an after-thought or an addendum. Although the inclusion of African-Americans in the research, as well as African-Americans as the authors, has been a positive change in the field, they should not be limited to research solely about African-Americans. African-American Professors of Adult Education have proven that they should be the primary researchers in the area of African-Americans.

The torch to uncover racial discrimination in the field of adult education has been passed from the African-American pioneers of adult education to those who follow. The mandate is to uncover injustices where they exist, but more importantly to change the field by eradication of injustices whenever possible. Those who follow must move the field of adult education back to an era of social action and be actively involved with social change including the political arena. This should be accomplished from the platform of the professoriate through scholarly research and political activism. African-American professors of adult education must move out of the classroom and into the community it serves. Moving away from community-based programs was not seen as positive.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH**

This study addressed the African-American professors of adult education in the field the longest, the first generation of African-American Adult Educators, or those who could be called African-American Pioneers of Adult Education. Further research should be conducted that examines the philosophical perspective of the second wave of African-American professors of adult education, those who have entered the field since the late 1990s. Now that there have been contributions to the field of adult education by African-American Professors of Adult Education, has the philosophy of the new-comers been impacted?

Research of this nature should not be limited to African-American professors of adult education, but should include pioneers of other racial/ethnic groups. Asian-American, Latin-American, and Native-American professors of adult education are fertile ground for research. The perspective of these diverse groups of the field of adult education should be studied to add to the depth and breadth of information about the making of professors of adult education of color. This should be accomplished by engaging those from these cultures in reflective dialogue regarding their experiences as doctoral students. Additionally, gender is an area for study within all racial/ethnic groups that should be addressed.

Comparison studies of the backgrounds of those entering the professorate of adult education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be conducted with those entering the field of adult education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The research should not end there, but should be related to globalization. What are the similarities/differences between professors of adult education in North America and Europe? The African-American professors of adult education in this study discussed their relationships with major professors from the dominant culture. How do African-American major professors influence doctoral students from different ethnic groups or from the same ethnic group?



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