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THE NEW NEGRO TEACHES WRITING: G. DAVID HOUSTON'S ACTIVIST RHETORIC
AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY

by

JIMISHA I. RELERFORD

Under the Direction of Michael Harker, PhD

ABSTRACT

This study contributes to a growing body of localized institutional microhistories that recover rhetorical education at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). My research analyzes the pedagogically-focused scholarship of G. David Houston, a Howard University professor and chair of the Department of English during the New Negro movement of the early twentieth century. Using Susan Kates's concept of *activist rhetorics* as a heuristic, this study shows that Houston's work exemplifies an *embodied* pedagogy that responds directly to Howard University's unique institutional, historical, and social location.

INDEX WORDS: Activist rhetorics, Composition history, Composition pedagogy, Literacy studies, Howard University, Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), G. David Houston, New Negro movement, Microhistory

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JIMISHA I. RELERFORD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2014

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2014

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AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY

by

JIMISHA I. RELERFORD

Committee Chair: Michael Harker

Committee: Lynée L. Gaillet

Mary B. Zeigler

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

December 2014

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the family, loved ones, and amazing sister-friends who have continued to encourage and support me throughout my academic career. I especially thank my mother, Shirley, for being an unending well of inspiration, and my son, Nathan, for sharing Mommy with her dreams.

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1 INTRODUCTION

During my first year as a graduate student studying Rhetoric and Composition, I enrolled in *Composition Theory*, a survey course designed to introduce Composition Studies as an academic discipline and trace the historical and theoretical underpinnings of contemporary composition pedagogies. I found myself fascinated by the varied accounts of the field's genesis, by the narratives of origin and development written by such luminaries of composition historiography as William Riley Parker ("Where Do English Departments Come From?", 1967), James Berlin (*Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*, 1987), John C. Brereton ("The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925," 1995), and Robert J. Connors ("The Abolition Debate in Composition: A Short History," 1996). However, the more I read, the more I suspected what my research would later confirm: that there were significant gaps in the field's popular historical narratives, many of which marginalized the experiences of students, teachers, and theorists of writing and rhetoric who existed on the periphery of mainstream American academia.

As a graduate of Howard University, a historically Black institution, I found most striking the relative scarcity of historical accounts of composition instruction and rhetorical practices at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Although my research eventually uncovered important scholarship on rhetoric and composition history at HBCU's – Keith Gilyard (1999), Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean C. Williams (1999), and Scott Zaluda (1998) are among some of the first Rhetoric and Composition scholars to highlight the absence of African American voices in the field's narrative histories – I realized that the existing scholarship has barely scratched the surface of the rich, complex rhetorical traditions that have developed at HBCUs across the country. The course material that I interrogated in *Composition Theory* be-

came for me a source of provocation for further research. When I continued my studies of composition history and pedagogy in other courses, I found myself constantly searching for representations of HBCU students' and professors' experiences with teaching, learning, and theorizing writing. My desire to see more narratives of composition instruction at HBCUs thus became the motivation for this research.

This study seeks to contribute to existing scholarship on Rhetoric and Composition history at HBCUs by telling the story of one professor of English at a specific institution in a particular historical moment: Howard University professor G. David Houston, who taught at Howard from 1912 to 1919. Houston was heavily involved in the wave of campus protests that influenced Howard professors, students, and alumni in the early 1920s. This study examines Houston's involvement in activism at Howard through the lens of his 1920 article "Weaknesses of the Negro College" and the "Alumnus" articles, a series of anonymous editorials published in the *Baltimore Afro-American* of which Houston has been identified as the most probable author. A broad historical survey of Howard's institutional history contextualizes Houston's campus activism by extensively detailing the historical events and social imperatives that shaped his tenure at Howard. Specifically, this chapter examines the school's founding during Reconstruction as a biracial institution, its development into a Negro university, and the rise of the New Negro movement, a significant cultural and historical development for middle-class African Americans of the 1920s that influenced the widespread campus activism in which Houston became embroiled. Having situated Houston's work at Howard within its specific contextual location, this study then analyzes the pedagogically-focused scholarship – that is, scholarship dealing with the teaching of writing – that he produced while at Howard, namely his 1919 article "Reconstruction in the Teaching of English." My research shows how Houston's efforts to reform the teaching of Eng-

lish at Negro colleges, alongside his attempts to reconstruct the administrative structure of those colleges, constitute an *activist rhetoric*, a term coined by Susan Kates in 2001 to describe instruction in rhetoric and writing which differs from mainstream rhetorical pedagogy in its awareness of the interconnectedness of language and identity, inclusion of politically relevant writing and speaking assignments, and emphasis on community service and social responsibility (1-2). By examining Houston's scholarship and the specific contextual imperatives that shaped it, this study asserts that Houston's is an *embodied* pedagogy; that is, a pedagogy of "situated knowledge" that responds directly to Howard University's unique institutional, historical, and social location (55).

My research continues the work of scholars who have begun to deconstruct what composition scholar Jeff Rice describes in *The Rhetoric of Cool* (2007) as Rhetoric and Composition's "grand narratives" of origin and development (13). Rice appropriates this term from French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, who argues in his classic 1979 treatise *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* that modernist thinkers organized history through the development and repetition of "grand narratives" (*grands recits*). Published in French as *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir*, and translated to English in 1984, Lyotard's seminal work defines the grand narrative as a kind of universalizing abstraction which tries to make sense of history as a series of related events rather than discrete, singular happenings. He criticizes grand narratives like *democracy*, *capitalism*, *Marxism*, and *Enlightenment* as a hallmark of modernism. Conversely, Lyotard suggests that postmodern knowledge-making is more compatible with "little narratives" (*petits recits*): modest, narrowed, localized historical accounts that replace the sweeping generality and universalism of grand narratives with historical pluralism, acknowledging "a multiplicity of discourses and practices" (Lyotard 60-61, Browning 36). It is this "little

narrative” approach that David Gold promotes in *Rhetoric at the Margins* with his argument for “diverse institutional microhistories” (2) to complement “broadly drawn, comprehensive master narratives¹” (7) in historical research on rhetoric. Gold draws upon the work of Italian historian Giovanni Levi, who helped pioneer the method of inquiry known as *microhistory* in the 1970s. Levi describes the practice as “essentially based on the reduction of the scale of observation, on microscopic analysis and intensive study of the documentary material,” and microhistorians contend that such inquiry reveals evidence and insights rendered invisible by broader, more universalizing narratives (99). Gold suggests that the tension created by applying microhistory to a Rhetoric and Composition historiography already dominated by master narratives can affect a fuller, more nuanced understanding of the history of rhetoric and writing (7). As such, this study adopts a *petit recit* approach to historiography, applying microhistorical methodology to the investigation of Professor G. David Houston’s pedagogically-focused scholarship at Howard University in the 1920s.

This study investigates published scholarship as documentary evidence of Houston’s pedagogical practices at Howard University. Using a synthesis of historical-archival inquiry and discourse analysis, my research approaches the documents as discursive texts that reveal specific insights about the contexts in which they were created. I triangulate the historical documents using secondary research on the social history of African American education, the institutional history of Howard University, and the teaching of rhetoric and composition at HBCUs.

My study seeks to answer the following questions: In what ways does Houston’s pedagogically-focused scholarship reflect his distinct experiences as an African American scholar and educator? How did his pedagogy respond to the unique institutional, social, and historical con-

¹ Translations of The *Postmodern Condition* render *grands recits* as “grand narratives, meta-narratives, and master narratives,” terms that are often used interchangeably by scholars applying Lyotard’s theories on postmodernism.

texts of teaching at Howard University? How did Houston negotiate the contradictions inherent in reproducing a mainstream liberal arts educational agenda at a historically Black university? In what ways does his pedagogy demonstrate an activist, embodied rhetoric that responds to the needs of Howard students? Chapter 1 foregrounds my work within existing developments in revisionist historical research. This chapter argues that even as Rhetoric and Composition historiography begins to move beyond the archival turn's emphasis on the recovery of localized historical accounts, scholars in the field must continue to investigate the marginalized rhetorical traditions that developed at HBCUs. Chapter 2 examines G. David Houston's involvement in campus activism at Howard in response to administrative policies of President J. Stanlee Durkee in the early 1920s. The chapter situates Houston's activism on campus, particularly his efforts to reform the traditional administrative apparatus at Negro colleges, within the framework of Howard's institutional history and post-Emancipation social history in the American South, particularly the genesis of the New Negro movement. Chapter 3 argues that along with his plan for restructuring the existing Negro college administrative structure, Houston's scholarship on writing instruction at Negro colleges and his efforts to reform English teaching practices result in an activist rhetoric that responds directly to the practical, everyday needs of African American students.

As a researcher, I recognize that the intensely personal nature of this project will undoubtedly influence my analysis. Having earned a bachelor's degree from Howard University with a double major in English and Classics, I am keenly aware of my connection to the university and to the scholarly tradition represented by Howard's English department. I approach my own positionality as a researcher much in the same way that Liz Rohan describes her perspective in "The Personal as Method and Place as Archives: A Synthesis." Rohan draws upon a feminist

research methodology to critically examine the affective elements of the research process, particularly the role of emotional attachments to research subjects. Similarly, I assume the role of a “vulnerable observer,” using my positionality to enhance my research, rather than attempt to neutralize it in the interest of investigative detachment (246).

2 REVISIONIST (MICRO)HISTORY: RECOVERING HBCU RHETORICAL TRADITIONS BEYOND THE ARCHIVAL TURN

This chapter discusses the necessity of continuing to recover the work of African American scholars and rhetors at HBCUs in light of current trends in revisionist scholarship. Beginning in the 1990s, the so-called “archival turn²” in Rhetoric and Composition, with its emphasis on primary investigation and historiography, heralded the recovery of voices, spaces, and ideologies previously silenced by the field’s dominant historical narratives. Prominent scholars such as Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean C. Williams, Keith Gilyard, and Scott Zaluda challenged Rhetoric and Composition historiographers to be more inclusive of African American voices in particular. However, over a decade after scholars began to deconstruct and revise the field’s accepted narrative histories, meaningful gaps persist in the historical record, and the rhetorical traditions unique to historically Black institutions remain strikingly under-theorized. This chapter argues that even as revisionist research begins to move beyond the recovery of localized histories, scholars must continue to mine the considerably under-explored rhetorical terrain at historically Black educational institutions. Investigating the rich rhetorical traditions that developed on

² It is worth noting that three special editions of leading journals in the field that have addressed the renewed interest in historical-archival research in Rhetoric and Composition beginning in the late 1990s. A 1999 issue of *College English* (Vol. 61, No. 5) included a section entitled *Archivists with Attitude* which featured four articles from notable scholars with extensive background in archival inquiry: John C. Brereton, Linda Ferreira-Buckley, Steven Mailloux, and Thomas P. Miller and Melody Bowden. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* dedicated its Winter 2002 (Vol. 32, No. 1) issue to feminist historiography, with particular interest on historical-archival research method and methodology. Most recently, the September 2012 special issue of *CCC* (Vol. 64, No. 1) revisited research methodologies, including articles addressing archival research by David Gold, Lynée Lewis Gaillet, and Heidi A. McKee and James E. Porter.

HBCU campuses across the country would contribute to a more textured, multi-vocal understanding of Rhetoric and Composition's documentary history. Furthermore, HBCUs provide ideal subjects for applying a new model of historical revisionism that focuses on integrating recovered subjects and narratives into existing scholarly conversations.

In the September 2012 special issue of *College Composition and Communication (CCC)*, scholars David Gold and Lynée Lewis Gaillet assess the current state of archival research in Rhetoric and Composition and suggest new directions for future practice. Gaillet and Gold both demonstrate how Rhetoric and Composition historiography has moved beyond the field's so-called "archival turn," which focused heavily on the recovery of subjects previously neglected by historical research in the field (Gold, Morris). Gaillet's "(Per)Forming Archival Research Methodologies" emphasizes the necessity of reinvigorating archival investigation by revisiting canonical accounts with new research questions, new locations of inquiry, new positionalities, and new technologies (36). In "Remapping Revisionist Historiography," Gold insists that historical work in the field must begin to move beyond simple recovery and begin to integrate localized, recovered subjects into existing narratives (17). Both articles underscore the movement of archival research away from isolated local histories and toward a complex, multi-vocal perspective that uses the local to build upon, rather than revise, previous historical scholarship. Essentially, the authors offer the field a new definition of *revision*, one that replaces the popular model of recovering marginalized and overlooked narratives and inscribing them alongside existing historical accounts. Future historiography in the field, they suggest, should integrate the old with the new, reinvigorating well-known historical narratives with localized accounts and generating new insights that can inform larger historical conversations.

Although Gold and Gaillet's analyses of Rhetoric and Composition historiography move beyond the type of isolated, localized recovery work that characterizes the field's archival turn, it is important to note that such research was integral in highlighting the lack of an African American presence in the field's popular historical narratives. In the 1999 special two-part issue of *College Composition and Communication* entitled "A Usable Past,"³ Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean C. Williams's "History in the Spaces Left: African American Presence and Narratives of Composition Studies" and Keith Gilyard's "African American Contributions to Composition Studies," both challenge the field of Rhetoric and Composition to critically articulate the gaps and limitations in its historical narratives. The articles specifically call for researchers to recover the contributions of African American scholars, rhetors, and educators at HBCUs, which served as the primary academic spaces for African American students in higher education before the legalized end of segregation in 1964. Gilyard indicates that African American thinkers from the post-slavery era to the present have maintained a persistent and meaningful presence in composition's disciplinary history (626). However, the African American presence in the documented history of composition studies remains underrepresented. Royster and Williams suggest that the tendency of composition scholars and the field at large to valorize certain "officialized" master narratives resulted in a failure to recognize the "simultaneous existence of multiple viewpoints" in the field's disciplinary development (568). The authors contend that while early historical narratives were instrumental in establishing the *what* and *why* of composition studies as

³ Several special editions of leading journals in the field have addressed the renewed interest in historical-archival research in Rhetoric and Composition since the late 1990s. "A Usable Past" in *College Composition and Communication* (Vol. 50, No. 3 & 4) commemorated the field's movement away from "a chronicling of major figures and intellectual lineages" in favor of a more inclusive focus on "the wider social practices, contexts, and discourses that have shaped and driven the teaching of writing" (Harris 559). A 1999 issue of *College English* (Vol. 61, No. 5) included a section entitled *Archivists with Attitude*, which featured four articles from notable scholars with extensive background in archival inquiry: John C. Brereton, Linda Ferreira-Buckley, Steven Mailloux, and Thomas P. Miller and Melody Bowden. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* dedicated its Winter 2002 (Vol. 32, No. 1) issue to feminist historiography, with particular interest on historical-archival research method and methodology. Most recently, the September 2012 special issue of *CCC* (Vol. 64, No. 1) revisited research methodologies, including the articles addressing archival research by Gold and Gaillet, as well as an article of the ethical implications of primary research by Heidi A. McKee and James E. Porter.

an emerging field, none of them are “comprehensive, definitive, or all-inclusive,” and each history represents a specific ideological and cultural location (Royster and Williams 564). Analyzing the limitations of historical accounts, they contend, will reveal underrepresented dimensions of composition history that, when explored critically and meaningfully, can extend the purview of master narratives to reveal a more textured disciplinary history.

A Rhetoric and Composition historiography focused on the integration, rather than recovery, of marginalized voices must still acknowledge the continued presence of gaps and limitations in accounts of the field’s past. Although we have thoroughly deconstructed our dominant narratives, according to Gold, teachers in the field who require broad, general overviews of Rhetoric and Composition’s disciplinary development still rely heavily on such narratives (19). Likewise, scholars and theorists remain wedded to the ideological premises of totalizing historical narratives (19-20). In particular, Gold emphasizes the persistence of James Berlin’s well-known epistemological taxonomies, which classified early twentieth-century writing instruction according to three discrete theoretical models – objectivist, subjectivist, and transactional – that in turn grounded three major pedagogical approaches – current-traditional rhetoric, the rhetoric of liberal culture, and the rhetoric of democratic discourse. The persistence of such narratives suggests that future revisionist research should not seek to abandon the recovery of local histories, but to reveal new insights by reorienting recovered narratives within and against existing historical knowledge. This synthesis of recovery, integration, and reorientation forms an ideal methodological framework for investigating rhetorical history at HBCUs. Scholars who perform the type of revisionist historical work that Gilyard and Royster and Williams challenged the field to produce have recovered significant writers, teachers, scholars, and institutions, but on the whole, the field has barely scratched the surface of the lengthy history of rhetorical traditions at

historically Black institutions. Thus, even as historical scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition begins to move beyond simple recovery to a more complex model of revisionist historiography, we must continue to delve into the rich history of Black rhetors and rhetorical spaces, including HBCUs. Only by continuing to expand our knowledge of localized African American rhetorical histories can we begin to integrate those histories into larger narratives, complicating an already complex understanding of the field's past. Furthermore, as this study will show, the ideological and pedagogical fluidity of rhetorical practices at many HBCUs as well as the abundance of underutilized HBCU archives and repositories makes these scholarly communities ideal subjects for applying principles of the new revisionism that Gold and Gaillet propose.

This research extends the work of scholars who, in response to the muting of African American voices in Rhetoric and Composition's historical narratives, have published locally-situated, contextualized institutional microhistories of writing instruction and rhetorical practices at HBCUs. One of the earliest examples of such research, Scott Zaluda's "Lost Voices of the Harlem Renaissance: Writing Assigned at Howard University, 1919-31" (1998) examines archived evidence of faculty writing at Howard University during a twelve-year period in the early twentieth century. Susan Kates's *Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education, 1885-1937* examines the rhetorical practices of pedagogues at three educational institutions for historically marginalized student populations, one of which is Wilberforce University, an HBCU founded in 1856 in Wilberforce, Ohio. David Gold's *Rhetoric At the Margins* (2008), echoes Kates's methodology, examining rhetorical education at three Texas institutions including Wiley College, a small Black liberal arts school in Marshall, Texas founded in 1873. More recently, Susan C. Jarrett's "Classics and Counterpublics in Nineteenth-Century Historically Black Colleges" (2009) analyzes student-produced periodicals at Fisk University, Atlanta University, and Howard Uni-

versity, and Kendra Fullwood's "*Pro Christo et Humanitate: Making Lives through Community Literacy and Partnerships at Shaw University*" (2007) reveals a history of community-literacy practices at a North Carolina HBCU. Studies such as these have been vital in recovering HBCU rhetorical traditions; still, Reva E. Sias and Beverly J. Moss observed just three years ago in "Rewriting a Master Narrative: HBCUs and Community Literacy" (2011) that over a decade after Royster and Williams and Gilyard pointed to the absence of an African American presence in the Rhetoric and Composition's historiographical literature, the invisibility of African American educational spaces in the field's master narratives remains deafening (8). Thus, even as the field's historians adopt more complex methods of analyzing the past and synthesizing localized histories with existing narratives, the necessity of continuing to recover the rhetorical heritage of HBCUs cannot be overstated.

Although each of the aforementioned researchers has contributed to the growing body of historical scholarship on rhetorical traditions at HBCUs, this study emphasizes Kates's work, particularly the relevance of her methodological approach to contextualizing and analyzing African American rhetorical traditions that developed at a historically Black college. Kates examines the elocution pedagogy of Hallie Quinn Brown, an African American professor of elocution at Ohio's Wilberforce University. She situates Brown within the nineteenth-century elocution movement – elocution, the practice of formal, expressive public speaking, flourished as the most popular form of rhetorical instruction from 1850 to 1910 and was integral in extending American rhetorical instruction to the general population (53-54). Kates notes that unlike popular mainstream elocution practitioners and theorists, Brown's elocution curricula demonstrated a keen awareness of the relationship between local communities, particularly the African American community, and elocutionary practice (54, 58). As a result, Brown wrote and published elocu-

tionary texts that diverged from those of mainstream elocutionists in three notable ways: first, their inclusion and celebration of African American linguistic heritage; second, their reclamation of marginalized aspects of African American history slave narratives and Black participation in the Civil War; and third, their emphasis on social consciousness and community ethics (60-61). Kates upholds Brown's elocutionary pedagogy as representative of an "embodied rhetoric" – that is, a rhetoric situated within and generated to actively address the concerns of a particular community (54-55). It is this embodiment that makes Brown's rhetorical pedagogy a truly *activist* endeavor. In this study, I employ Kates's concept of embodied, activist rhetoric as a heuristic for investigating the pedagogical practices of another African American educator in a specific geographical location and historical moment. Just as Kates situates Hallie Quinn Brown's pedagogy at the intersection of the mainstream elocution movement of the nineteenth century and the social, political, and intellectual marginalization of African Americans, my analysis situates G. David Houston's English pedagogy firmly within the confluence of several contextual imperatives: Howard's specific institutional history, the broader history of the post-emancipation "Negro education" movement (which is itself situated within the history and culture of mainstream American higher education), and the emergence of the "New Negro" movement in the 1920s and its role in spurring student and faculty activism on Black college campuses. Houston developed pedagogical practices that embody his unique institutional and historical circumstances, and that, as this study shows, exemplify an activist rhetoric that responds simultaneously to each of these imperatives.

3 G. DAVID HOUSTON: ENGLISH PROFESSOR, CAMPUS ACTIVIST

This chapter examines G. David Houston's tenure as a Professor of English at Howard from 1912 to 1919, paying particular attention to Houston's involvement in campus activism during faculty, student, and alumni protests against J. Stanley Durkee, Howard's eleventh president (1918-1926). The chapter extensively details the historical context of campus activism at Howard in the 1920s, arguing that a convergence of institutional and social forces that emerged early in the school's development influenced the onset of activism during Howard's time at the university. Specifically, this historical overview points to moments of institutional significance during the university's first fifty years that contributed to a growing activist impulse among Howard students, alumni, and faculty at the turn of the twentieth century. The chapter then locates Howard's institutional development within the broader trajectory of post-Emancipation social history – the American South's reinstatement of institutionalized segregation, the resulting “Negro education” controversy, and the rise of the “New Negro” movement all influenced the wave of activism that swept across Black college campuses, including Howard, throughout the 1920s. This confluence of socio-historical developments provided a backdrop for Houston's efforts to reform both Howard's administration and, English instruction in Negro schools, and for the development of an activist, embodied rhetoric that responded to the unique needs of African American college students.

Little biographical information on Houston's early life exists, but the few available facts suggest that his upbringing within the cradle of New England academic culture heavily influenced his professional life. Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1880, Houston completed the secondary programs of both the English High School of Boston (in 1898) and the Boston Latin High School (in 1900). Directly after high school, he continued his studies at Harvard, where he

was a classmate and friend of future President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Houston earned his undergraduate degree in 1904, and later returned to Harvard in 1916 for a Master of Arts and again in 1930 for a Master of Education. During his time at Harvard, Houston demonstrated a remarkable aptitude in the formal study of written and spoken English, and after accepting his first professional position in 1904 as head of the English department at the Tuskegee Institute, Houston devoted much of his attention to the teaching of composition (“G. David Houston” 583). However, by 1906, Houston had grown disenchanted with Tuskegee’s leadership. Following a dispute with Booker T. Washington, the president and so-called “Wizard of Tuskegee,” he left the school for brief stints teaching English at the Frederick Douglass High School in Baltimore, Maryland (1907-1910) and the M Street High School in Washington, DC (1910-1912) (Harlan 153, “G. David Houston” 583). In the early years of his career, Houston established a reputation as an “excellent drill master” in the teaching of composition according to the “Harvard style” of current-traditional rhetoric, and in 1912, he joined the faculty of Howard University. It is important to note here that Houston’s experiences teaching at both vocational and liberal arts institutions helped him develop a unique theoretical perspective on teaching English to Black students. As Chapter 3 will show, this bi-modal perspective of Negro education would later influence his development of an activist rhetoric that specifically addressed the needs of the masses of Black students.

Houston served as Chair of Howard’s Department of English and successfully taught both composition and literature until President Durkee’s arrival in 1918 (“G. David Houston” 583-584). A Congregationalist minister, Durkee was appointed following the resignation of Stephen M. Newman, whose relaxed, laissez-faire leadership style had resulted in a decentralization of administrative power at the university. Under Newman, the deans of Howard’s individual colleg-

es enjoyed control over their own autonomous spheres of influence. Unaccustomed to such diluted administrative authority, Durkee and the Trustees completely reorganized the university's department structure, effectively demoting two of Howard's most powerful Black deans. George William Cook, who had been at Howard for a total of fifty-seven years as a student, professor, dean, acting president, athletic organizer, and alumni secretary, was demoted when his Commercial Department was closed under Durkee's reorganization plan, and after the restructuring of the College of Liberal Arts into several smaller, weaker schools, its dean, Kelly Miller, a professor of sociology and mathematics at Howard for over thirty years, was appointed to the deanship of the newly-formed and nearly powerless Junior College (Dyson 371; Wolters 93- 95). Durkee also replaced the individual college deans' secretary-treasurers with a school-wide *secretary-treasurer-business manager*, a new office that reported directly to the president and essentially gave him complete control over the university's finances (Logan 198; Wolters 94). Durkee likely celebrated the reorganization as a success for his administration; however, in true New Negro fashion, the deans' vigorously opposed his actions, garnering widespread support from fellow faculty members, including G. David Houston. For the remainder of Durkee's tenure at Howard, Houston would lend his voice and pen to calls from Black intellectuals at Howard who challenged the president's ability to work with influential Black intellectuals, and thus his fitness as the leader of a Negro university, resulting in a swell of activism on Howard's campus.

Although he left Howard in 1919, Houston found himself embroiled in the widespread campus activism that involved faculty, students, and alumni who opposed President Durkee's administrative policies. A mere year into Durkee's administration, Houston published "Weaknesses of the Negro College," an impassioned demand for "reconstruction" of Black schools at the administrative level that directly reflected the situation at Howard and echoed faculty mem-

bers' opposition to Durkee's administration. Houston has also been identified as the most probable writer of the "Alumnus" articles, a series of fifty exposé-like pieces published in the *Baltimore Afro-American* from April 1925 to June 1926 that criticized President Durkee's management of the university and called for his removal from office. The surge of campus activism that formed the backdrop of Houston's publications did not occur in a vacuum; the complex institutional undercurrents that framed Houston's tenure at Howard in the early 1920s reflect equally complex social and historical developments that began to take shape early in the history of the university. The period from Howard's founding in 1867 to the early 1900s included several moments of institutional significance, many of them resulting from the series of social and political upheavals that characterized the American South following Emancipation and Reconstruction. In several cases, the university's responses to the shifting sands of American racial politics created sharp criticisms and simmering resentments among faculty, students, and alumni, which in turn undergirded the growing activist impulse on campus. Thus, in order to understand the institutional forces that shaped Houston's activist work at Howard, it is necessary to digress here and examine the university's first years of development – its founding at the outset of Radical Reconstruction by prominent members of Washington, DC's Congregational Church, its early growth into a biracial, coeducational multiversity⁴, and its evolution into a predominantly Black institution. These developments were instrumental in laying the foundation for the political, historical, and social circumstances that would influence Houston's campus activism and his scholarship in the 1920s.

⁴ Clark Kerr coined the term *multiversity* in 1963 to describe the contemporary Western university model that emerged during the first half of the twentieth century. According to Kerr, the old nineteenth-century university was defined as "a single community of masters and students" – that is, a community of scholars dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge as its own end (1). On the other hand, the multiversity is defined by the presence of a variety of communities – communities of undergraduate and graduate students, communities formed by individual schools and colleges, communities representing various departments and disciplines, etc. – each concerned with its own interests. Wolters asserts that Howard was "the only Black multiversity of the 1920s," with 150 professors teaching in seven undergraduate colleges and five graduate schools (70).

3.1 Prelude to a Negro Multiversity: Howard's Founding and Early Years

In order to understand the activist impulse that Houston embraced at Howard University in the 1920s, one must first understand Howard's unique history, dating back to its founding in 1867, and the ways in which its growth and development encouraged the radical spirit of the "New Negro" that emboldened the school's faculty, students, and alumni in the early twentieth century. Howard was one of over 200 Negro colleges and universities established during Reconstruction in response to exigencies created by the plight of the post-war South (Brown & Ricard 119). Following the war's end in 1865, the Union was forced to confront the dire situation presented by some 4,000,000 newly emancipated slaves, the vast majority of whom were uneducated, illiterate, and poor (Dyson 38). Thousands of these *freedmen* chose to abandon the rural areas of the South, where a war-ravaged infrastructure and a hostile White population sharply curtailed the opportunities available to Negroes. In search of better circumstances, they flocked to the country's cities and industrial centers. Washington, DC was one of the most attractive destinations for freedmen, owing to both its symbolic significance as the seat of the pro-emancipation Union government which had freed the South's slaves and its actual significance as a hotbed of abolitionist fervor before and during the war. The nation's capital was also the home of several relatively successful schools for Blacks, some of which had been opened for free persons of color as early as 1807 (Dyson 39; Logan 9). Washington's Black population of 10,000 in 1860 more than tripled after the Civil War – nearly 43,000 Negroes were living in the city in 1870 (Dyson 38). Like most of the country's freedmen, the vast majority of DC's newcomers were destitute, and many received direct assistance from the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly called the Freedmen's Bureau. The lynchpin of President Lincoln's Reconstruction agenda, the Bureau was established to "provide for the temporal wants of the refugees

and freedmen; to promote justice among the freedmen and former masters; to reorganize the labor of the South, and to provide education for the freedmen and the ‘poor Whites’” (6). The Bureau was aided in its mission to educate free slaves by independent northern benevolent societies and Christian denominational organizations, which were largely responsible for establishing and maintaining the first *freedmen’s schools* (Dyson 40; Wolters 4). However, both the Bureau and private philanthropic organizations faced a more daunting task than they anticipated in raising a previously enslaved population to the full measure of freedom, citizenship, and humanity, particularly in what was increasingly revealed to be a still hostile social and political environment. The plan for what would eventually become Howard University emerged as a response to the difficulties experienced by the Freedmen’s Bureau and Christian denominational organizations in their efforts to assist the country’s Negro population.

Of the denominations active in the South during Reconstruction, the Congregational Church was one of the most influential, particularly in the nation’s capital. On November 20, 1866, the First Congregational Church of Washington, DC’s Missionary Society met to discuss plans to establish an institution for the training of Black preachers (Dyson 44; Logan 13). Among the attendees was celebrated Civil War veteran and Commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau General Oliver Otis Howard. Howard’s firsthand knowledge the plight of the country’s freedmen had convinced him that freedom would not be meaningful for Blacks without the training and nurturing of capable Negro leaders. Furthermore, Howard, along with many of his fellow Congregationalists, was genuinely committed to the ideal of racial egalitarianism that embodied radical Reconstruction, and he was particularly interested in providing educational opportunities for freedmen (Logan 13, 67). It is not surprising then that the Missionary Society approved a plan for the “*Howard Theological Seminary*” in recognition of Howard’s personal investment in the

institution as well as his position of influence in Congress. The plan made official the society's intent to establish a school for Black preachers, setting the wheels for Howard's founding in motion.

Within the six months between the Missionary Society's initial November meeting and the opening of Howard University on May 1, 1867, the twelve original "corporators," who had previously established themselves as the school's Board of Trustees, considered goals for the institution that were significantly more ambitious than a simple theological seminary. The Trustees first suggested the addition of a normal school for the training of Black teachers, believing that including a normal school in the charter would improve the institution's chances of gaining federal approval (Logan 3, 14; Dyson 44). A month later, the trustees amended their plan to include departments for agriculture and medicine. Thus, on January 23, 1867, the Trustees introduced Senate Bill 529 for the incorporation of Howard University, "a college for the instruction of youth in the liberal arts and sciences" (Logan 20). The trustees met six days later to clarify the term "youth" and voted that students would not be denied admission to Howard based on sex. Notably, there was no discussion of race at the meeting, suggesting an implicit understanding that race would also be irrelevant in admissions decisions (21). The corporators were quite unequivocal in their intent to make Howard unique among American universities as a coeducational, biracial liberal arts institution that educated Black men and women alongside White men and women. On March 2, 1867, President Andrew Johnson signed the Charter of Howard University into law (Dyson 44; Logan 22-23), and Howard officially opened its doors on May 1, 1867. The new university was a novelty in the country's educational landscape, as Walter F. Dyson aptly observes:

Many applied, asking if it were true that Negroes could enter. Married men applied to enter, and if possible, to bring their wives. Many without money made

application. Many without preparation, except the ability to read and write, wished to enter. They wrote to learn if preachers only were admitted. Poor White boys applied for admission. White students at Oberlin wished to come; they thought it would be cheaper...It was a new thing in the country—a university where Black and White, old and young, married and single, ignorant and informed, male and female—all could enter, with or without money. (47)

Dyson's description reflects the incorporators' lofty ambitions for "the first university south of the Mason-Dixon line to be dedicated to biracial education" (Green 69). However, the conciliatory atmosphere at Howard would not last; by the turn of the century, the university had become embroiled in the turbulent racial politics that swept the nation, shattering the egalitarian ideals of Reconstruction and laying the foundation for American race relations for decades to come. The South's shifting social landscape and the resulting racial tension on Howard's campus led to broiling resentments on the part of Howard's Black students, professors, and alumni and paved the way for the activist movements that rocked the university during the first decades of the 1900s.

3.2 Sowing Seeds of Dissension: Howard's Growing Activist Impulse

Houston's campus and curricular activism grew out of a wider activist surge that swept Howard University in the early twentieth century. The basis of this activist impulse, which heightened in the 1920s and engulfed both students and faculty, can be traced to Howard's founding and early years of growth and development and the resulting confluence of historical, institutional, and social dynamics that created an atmosphere ripe for rebellion and challenges to the status quo. In particular, three aspects of Howard's founding and early development contributed to the swell of activism in the 1920s: heavy military influence during the school's early years, the nature of Howard's funding, and racial relations between Whites and Blacks on Howard's campus. These developments were instrumental in creating a mood of dissension and disapproval that gave rise to the campus activism that defined Houston's tenure at Howard.

From its inception, Howard reflected the considerable military influence of its founders, many of whom were either active duty or retired Army officers. According to Dyson, nine of the original seventeen incorporators and ten of the first eighteen trustees were “ex-soldiers” (50). Prior to 1874, military men dominated the university’s leadership structure, serving in influential positions on the Board of Trustees including secretary, treasurer, and financial officer, and occupying eleven of the school’s thirty-three faculty positions (50). The military regime’s influence was evident in the school’s rigidly defined organizational structure: by 1874, the university was divided into eleven autonomous departments (Normal, Preparatory, Medicine, Law, Theology, Music, Commerce, Industry, Agriculture, Night School, and Military), each of which was overseen by the Board of Trustees through a departmental head who reported directly to the university’s president (51). Furthermore, from the school’s founding in 1867 to the end of General Howard’s presidency in 1874, the daily life of a typical Howard student was “essentially that of a soldier,” with the administration and faculty enforcing strict regimentation of students’ dress, behavior, and daily movements (Dyson 53). However, perhaps the most significant indicator of military influence on the school’s early leaders was Howard’s highly centralized administration. Howard’s charter outlined a rigid, hierarchical leadership structure reminiscent of a military chain-of-command, with a Board of Trustees at the head wielding near-total control over the university. Of the first eighteen trustees, three served as president and eleven served as professors or officers of the school (Dyson 52). The Board was empowered to appoint the university’s president, secretary, treasurer, and “such other officers, agents, or employees as needed” (Logan 22). Moreover, the trustees were responsible for appointing the university’s professors and setting the salaries of each faculty member (22), and in 1870, the trustees approved a resolution requiring that each of the school’s departments retain at least one trustee on its faculty (Dyson 52).

In its early years, Howard's powerful Board of Trustees was instrumental in weathering the storm of academic, financial, and administrative troubles that beleaguered the young institution; however, by the 1920s, both faculty and students had begun to question the largely unchecked power of Board and its representative on campus: the president. The heavy centralization that once contributed to Howard's founding and helped usher in several decades of development consequently became a liability when confronted by students and faculty who demanded more control over their school.

Although the influence of the founders' military background was evident in the everyday operations of the new university, the influence of their religious background was less pronounced. Howard was founded by Congregationalists, but the university was never officially affiliated with any particular denominational body. Donations and grants from supportive Congregational churches helped fund the fledgling university, but it was primarily the Freedmen's Bureau's financial assistance that sustained Howard during its first five years (Wolters 70-71). As the Bureau's Commissioner, General Howard authorized the initial payments for Howard's first tract of land and used Bureau funds to erect the school's first buildings (Logan 26, 63). Including direct appropriations, grants, and donations, the Freedmen's Bureau contributed more than \$528,000 to Howard University between 1867 and 1872 (Dyson, 17; Logan 63). It is not surprising, then, that the Freedmen's Bureau's dissolution in 1872 strained the school's finances (Dyson 301; Logan 60). Howard's financial situation remained precarious until 1879, when Congress began making annual appropriations to the university, the first of which was received in 1880 (Logan 60; Wolters 71). However, supporters of the appropriations faced significant opposition in Congress, and university administrators constantly faced the threat of a withdrawal of federal funding until Congress amended Howard's Act of Incorporation to officially authorize the annual

appropriation in 1928 (Wolters 71). During the decades prior, Howard's leaders were necessarily cautious of displeasing Congress and, in turn, threatening the annual appropriation. The university's reliance on federal funding thus resulted in de facto Congressional influence in Howard's affairs (Dyson, 429; Wolters 71). In the first half of the 1920s, this lingering threat against the school's finances would lead to tensions between, on the one hand, President Durkee and Howard's administrators, who were dedicated to cultivating Congress's goodwill toward the university and, on the other hand, student and faculty activists whose demands for increased involvement in the school's governance increasingly jeopardized the favorable relationship between Howard and the federal government. Howard's tenuous funding situation thus contributed to on-campus conflicts in 1920s, conflicts in which G. David Houston was heavily involved.

Although Howard's leaders feared the termination of federal funding for nearly fifty years, Congress never stopped its financial assistance, and the annual appropriations became a mainstay of the university's finances. Congressional assistance meant that unlike other private Negro institutions, Howard never had to rely on White missionary and philanthropic organizations for funding. Even as students came to resent Congressional influence over Howard's leaders, the government's appropriations resulted in a campus essentially free of the "tutelary discipline" characteristic of other Black schools (Wolters 71). By the 1920s, according to Raymond Wolters, there were "relatively few restraints at Howard," compared to the "detailed Victorian provisions for dress, study, and deportment found at other Black colleges" (73). The military men who controlled Howard during its fledgling years likely could not have fathomed the degree of freedom students enjoyed in the early twentieth century. Ironically, this freedom empowered students to challenge the few restraints still imposed on Howard's campus, which led them to

make demands of the school's administration that were unprecedented in Negro higher education.

Howard's founders would likely have been surprised by the relative social freedoms afforded to students in the 1920s, but they might have been even more startled by the demographic character of the school they established as the first university in the South explicitly dedicated to integrated education. For several years, Howard successfully educated White students alongside Blacks (Green 89). However, the egalitarian fervor of Radical Reconstruction had begun to wane by the late 1870s as the federal government sharply curtailed its intervention in the southern states. In 1877, President Rutherford B. Hayes declared a "hands-off" policy in the South, and by 1883, the Supreme Court had nullified most of the laws enacted to protect the freedmen's civil rights (Logan 67). Southern states passed strict Black Codes, laws that disenfranchised the freedmen and legalized segregation; in 1896, such laws were bolstered by the Supreme Court's official validation of the legality of the "separate but equal" doctrine (109-110). Many former abolitionists were swayed by the arguments of the Social Gospel and Social Darwinism for the inherent theological and scientific bases for the inferiority of the Negro race (Logan 109; Winston 685). As early as 1867, Howard's first president, Reverend Charles B. Boynton, displayed solidarity with the Social Gospel agenda in a sermon before the First Congregationalist Church. Boynton expressed his belief in the inherent, divinely-designed differences between Whites and Negroes, insisting that "God would not have made them different if He had not intended a separate destiny for them" (Logan 58). Thus, support for racial segregation abounded, even among the more progressive segments of White society. In fact, by the 1920s, social theories of White supremacy and Black inferiority had become so entrenched into the nation's collective psyche that one of the primary aims of Negro education, and of the professor examined in this study,

was to counteract the effects of negative images African Americans and instill racial pride into students at historically Black institutions.

The increasing racial stratification at Howard during the early 1900s eventually led Black faculty and students to contemplate the necessity of African American leadership for the school, a development that would heavily influence campus activism in the 1920s. The spread of segregation in Washington, DC meant that Howard, envisioned by its founders as a bastion of biracial education, seemed destined to become a “Negro university.” The population of White students and teachers began to decline as early as 1890 (Logan 107, 110). By 1940, Howard’s evolution into a predominately Black institution was so complete that less than one percent of its student body was White (37). The school’s shifting demographic makeup created a delicate situation for White administrators and professors. During Reconstruction, White professors who taught Blacks were ostracized in the South, forcing them to intermingle with their Black students on a daily basis. As a result, Whites and Blacks at Negro colleges formed close relationships based on both groups’ marginalization from southern White society. Over time, however, the professors were afforded a measure of acceptance into White society, provided that they distanced themselves from their Black students (Wolters 79-80, 92). In order to maintain favorable relations with the White community, Howard professors were forced to accept the color line and make “ignoble compromises with White supremacy”: they lived in White neighborhoods, sent their children to White schools, and joined White social clubs (92). White professors and administrators understood that the school’s survival depended on the tolerance of the surrounding White communities, but Blacks felt that Whites in positions of leadership should be willing to sacrifice their standing in White communities and identify themselves with the interests of the Negro race (92). By the 1920s, Whites and Blacks at Howard were strictly segregated, resulting in tension

between White administrators and faculty members on one hand and Black students and faculty on the other. A significant segment of the majority-Black student body, along with faculty and alumni, came to believe that the discontent on campus could only be alleviated by an African American led administration, giving rise to demands for a Negro president to lead a Negro college (Wolters). Fortunately for these would-be reformers, the 1920s saw the arrival of the African American cultural renaissance known as the *New Negro movement*, and with it a wave of protest and rebellion that swept through Howard University and Black college campuses across America.

3.3 “The New Negro on Campus”: Black Intellectuals in the 1920s

When G. David Houston served as a Professor of English at Howard University from 1912 to 1919, the African American cultural and social revival known as the *New Negro movement* had begun to flourish in African American communities across the country, especially in northern urban centers such as Harlem. Houston remained heavily involved in on-campus politics at Howard well into the 1920s, spurred by the radical, race-conscious ideals of the new movement. The New Negro mentality spurred Black intellectuals like Houston to challenge White administrators for control over Negro colleges. Thus, in order to fully contextualize his efforts to reform both Howard’s administration and English instruction in Negro schools, it is necessary to understand the movement’s significance as a vehicle for widespread activism at HBCUs across the South, including Howard.

In 1925, Alain Locke published his much acclaimed anthology *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, a 400-page tribute to the reawakening of artistic and intellectual expression that defined Black America in the 1920s. Locke denounced the “Old Negro,” a stock figure of American history who was not a human being but a formula – “a something to be argued about, con-

demned or defended, to be 'kept down,' or 'in his place,' or 'helped up,' to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden" (3). Essentially, the Old Negro was defined by his passivity, his willingness to view himself from the "distorted perception of a social problem," an identity constructed *for* him by White supremacists and White benefactors alike (4). The "New Negro," on the other hand, was defined by a reoriented self-perception, which replaced "the psychology of imitation and implied inferiority" with a new consciousness that emphasized self-respect, racial pride, and group solidarity (Locke 4). The New Negro rejected the compromise and accommodation that marked previous generations' interactions with White America. Having endured the trenches and fronts of World War I to "make the world safe for democracy," the New Negro returned home with a renewed commitment to challenging the ascendancy of White supremacy and procuring for Black people all the rights and privileges of American citizenship (Wolters 16-17). Whereas the Old Negro depended on White philanthropy and relied largely on a White agenda for the betterment of the race, the New Negro demanded cooperation, not condescension, from Whites, along with the freedom to achieve the objectives of the race according to its own principles (Locke 10-11).

Manifestations of the New Negro's "vibrant new spirit" abounded following the Great War – the protests and riots of 1919's "Red Summer," the popularity of Garveyism and the Black Nationalist movement, the mass migration of southern Blacks to urban and industrial centers of the North and Midwest, the growth of organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League, the establishment of an organized Negro press, and the rebirth of urban African American artistic expression and creativity known as the Harlem Renaissance (Wolters 17). The New Negro movement also emerged as a driving force in a widespread campus protest movement at Black colleges in the 1920s. As a respected professor of philosophy at Howard, Locke himself

was closely involved with developments in the Black intellectual community brought on by an influx on of young, vibrant, and increasingly radical men and women who came to college campuses brimming with New Negro principles. The number of African American students in Black college and university classrooms rose dramatically in the 1920s, and the Black community insisted upon academic and professional training that would allow them to take advantage of new economic opportunities in urban areas (Wolters 17). Furthermore, by the 1920s, college-bred Blacks viewed themselves as a vanguard of the race, and the increasing number of educated Negro scholars and professionals bolstered the Black community's confidence in its leaders. Rather than relying on paternalistic White egalitarians to lead the charge for racial progress, Blacks began to look within their own community for leadership (17-18). On college campuses, this renewed demand for self-direction and self-reliance in Black communities resulted in a wave of rebellions by students, professors, and alumni who demanded Negro control over the education and training of Negro youths. These "Black college rebellions" potently displayed the New Negro spirit and prompted significant modifications in the both the methods and aims of Negro education (18).

Perhaps one of the most striking effects of the New Negro movement on college campuses was Black intellectuals' rejection of vocationalism, the philosophy of Negro education that had reigned supreme in the previous generation. Perfected by U.S. Army General Samuel Chapman Armstrong at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute and championed by Booker T. Washington, a student of Armstrong's and the founder of the Tuskegee Institute, the vocational model sought to realign post-Reconstruction Negro education with the American South's existing power realities. Proponents recognized that the resurgence of White supremacy in the South rendered the egalitarian goals of Reconstruction virtually impossible, and that racial uplift would

only be feasible with the cooperation of the ruling class. Armstrong and Washington encouraged Blacks to avoid antagonizing Whites and postpone demands for equal citizenship rights, and to set as their most immediate goal the attainment of economic security through vocational training in the types of skilled labor necessary for employment in the South's burgeoning industrial sector. (DuBois 27, 88; Wolters 87). The vocational model succeeded in placating both Southern Whites, who believed that Negroes were biologically unfit for rigorous intellectual work, and Northern benefactors, who understood that the success of Negro education required the endorsement with Southern Whites. As such, White philanthropists began to favor vocational education as early as the 1880's, and in 1890, the Federal government passed the Second Morrill Act, which allocated "land-grant" funds to Negro schools that specialized in agricultural and mechanical training (Winston 681; Wolters 10). Black colleges' survival often depended on eligibility for land-grant financing, and the Second Morrill Act resulted in mass transformations of Negro liberal arts colleges into vocational institutes, essentially validating a standardized curriculum for Black schools and instigating the "vocational phase" of Negro education that would endure for the next fifty years (Wolters 10).

After Armstrong's death in 1893, Washington became a *de facto* impresario for the Hampton/Tuskegee model. He formed alliances with leaders of southern White society and courted wealthy White capitalists in the North. So powerful was Washington's influence that the industrial model's primacy remained largely unchallenged until well after his death in 1915. However, the arrival of the New Negro movement onto college campuses in the 1920s emboldened Black students, professors, and alumni who resented the Hampton/Tuskegee model's seemingly passive acceptance of White supremacy, mistrusted the White philanthropists who funded vocational institutes, and rejected the vocational program's aim of producing Negro laborers ra-

ther than Negro leaders. Demanding an educational philosophy that would prepare Negro students for rigorous intellectual work, community leadership, and racial service, radical Black intellectuals turned instead to the liberal arts model of education advocated by W.E.B. DuBois, Washington's most vocal critic. A graduate of Fisk University, a Negro liberal arts college in Nashville, Tennessee, and the first Black man to earn a doctorate from Harvard University, DuBois believed that the Negro school should aspire to produce "men of power, of thought, of trained and cultivated taste" (30). He encouraged Negroes to look to the history of the great Western civilizations for proof that broad liberal arts education, with emphasis on a traditional classical curriculum, was most appropriate for the task of producing enlightened and empowered citizens (26). Interestingly enough, by the 1920s, classical study had declined significantly at mainstream American liberal arts colleges, and DuBois's critics ridiculed his outmoded commitment to traditional education in the Classics (Wolters 19). However, DuBois insisted that in order for the Black race to achieve the fullness of its potential, promising and talented Blacks should be educated using "methods pointed out by the accumulated wisdom of the world for the development of full human power" (DuBois 26). Proponents of the classical model believed that vocationalism was a program of "special education" designed to destroy the "higher aspirations of the race and the means of their realization," to socialize Black students for their subordinate role in American society (Winston 683; Wolters 15-16, 22). In contrast, the New Negro movement, with its uncompromising insistence on equality of the races and full citizenship for Blacks, helped fuel the belief that a broad liberal arts curriculum was necessary to train qualified Negroes, especially teachers and intellectuals, whose leadership would help to uplift the race from its dependent condition.

So successful were proponents of the liberal arts model for Black schools at turning the tide of Negro education in the early twentieth century that in a 1930 address to Howard University graduates, DuBois, who eventually adopted a philosophy of curricular pluralism, lamented Black academia's near-total desertion of vocational education (98). Faced with the rapidly evolving landscape of American industry and the perception that the vocational model was a "cynical political strategy, not a sound educational policy," the Negro industrial schools were slowly but surely transformed into liberal arts colleges and universities (Winston 683; DuBois 98-99).

However, New Negro intellectuals were not content with changes in the theoretical model of education used in Negro schools, and by the 1920s, they were intent on effectively wresting control of Negro education from White benefactors' hands. For Black scholars of G. David Houston's generation, involvement in their colleges at the administrative level was a decidedly political endeavor that related directly to racial uplift. During the post-Reconstruction era, when segregation became the law of the land and Negro inferiority was reestablished as the natural order of American society, young, educated Blacks had challenged White supremacy on several fronts, and continued to do so well into the twentieth century. Black leaders and laypeople alike challenged the legality of racist and separatist policies, resulting in numerous high profile legal battles.⁵ Prominent Negro activists, including Ida B. Wells-Barnett and James Weldon Johnson, raised awareness of the horrors of lynching and anti-Black terrorism (Robinson). Their efforts were made possible by the steadily increasing publishing power of the post-Reconstruction Negro press, which began to flourish in the 1890s and expanded so rapidly that in 1920, Black publishers successfully produced and circulated nearly 500 independent periodical titles (Detweiler 1).

⁵ Historically significant Supreme Court cases include the well-known *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which legalized the doctrine of "separate but equal," as well as *Williams v. Mississippi* (1898), which upheld voter registration measures (e.g. grandfather clauses, literacy tests, and poll taxes) designed to disenfranchise Black voters; *Guinn v. United States* (1915), which declared grandfather clauses unconstitutional; and *Buchanan v. Warley* (1917), which declared segregated housing unconstitutional ("Civil Rights Chronology"; "American Anti-Slavery and Civil Rights Timeline").

Furthermore, in perhaps one of the most impressive developments of post-Reconstruction Negro life, African Americans began to formally organize, collectively confronting the challenges of systematic race-based oppression by establishing organizations such as the *National Association of Colored Women* (1896), the *American Negro Academy* (1897), the *Niagara Movement* (1905), the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (1909), the *National Urban League* (1910), the *Association for the Study of African-American Life and History* (1915), and the pan-Africanist *United Negro Improvement Association* (1914) (“American Anti-Slavery and Civil Rights Timeline”; Winston 682). Many Black professors, who were well-acquainted with this era of activism, believed that the spirit of selflessness and service that defined the previous generation had declined among educated Black youth of the 1920s. Locke described the purpose of Negro higher education as the training of “a racially inspired and devoted professional class with group service as their ideal,” yet many seasoned intellectuals believed that graduates of Negro schools were more interested in entering professions and joining the ranks of the burgeoning Black middle class than in working for racial uplift (qtd. in Wolters 88). Perhaps the most scathing appraisal of Negro students can be found in DuBois’s Howard commencement address, in which he lambasts the average Negro undergraduate for having “swallowed hook, line, and sinker the dead bait of the White undergraduate” (92):

Our college man today is, on the average, a man untouched by real culture. He deliberately surrenders to selfish and even silly ideals, swarming into semiprofessional athletics and Greek letter societies, and affecting to despise scholarship and the hard grind of study and research. The greatest meetings of the Negro college year like those of the White college year have become vulgar exhibitions of liquor, extravagance, and fur coats. We have in our colleges a growing mass of stupidity and indifference. (92)

Kelly Miller, Dean of Howard’s College of Arts and Sciences, echoed DuBois’s exasperation with Negro students, noting that the altruistic, “missionary” zeal of turn-of-the-century college-

educated youth dedicated to the betterment of the race had been replaced by the selfish, “mercenary” motives of students who had adapted to White American middle-class individualism and materialism (89). Thus, the presence of New Negro ideology on college campuses offered a well-timed opportunity for the Negro intellectual community to recapture its enthusiasm for collective service and racial uplift. The New Negro movement, with its emphasis on racial pride and group solidarity, provided the Black intellectual community with a language and philosophy of racial uplift for a new generation of Black students. The changes that took place on Black college campuses and the increasing influence of Black intellectuals in Negro higher education presented a unique opportunity to restore student and alumni commitment to activism and service to the race. It was this New Negro philosophy that bolstered campus activists at Howard University in the 1920s, including Houston, who challenged outside control over Negro education.

3.4 The New Negro at Howard: Houston’s Anti-Durkee Activism

The full impact of the New Negro mentality at Howard began to surface after President Durkee, having set a distinctly combative tone for his administration, found himself at odds with some of Howard’s most esteemed Black professors barely a year after taking office. Houston submitted his resignation in 1919, believing that Durkee and the Trustees were complicit in a “long-standing racist campaign to limit the opportunities of Blacks” (Wolters 96-97). In the same year, Houston published “Weaknesses of the Negro College” in *The Crisis*, the official journal of the NAACP, then edited by W.E.B. DuBois. Houston argued in “Weaknesses...” that while political, educational, and social institutions of the time upheld “reconstruction” as a “watchword for the age,” Black colleges still clung to medieval tendencies (122). He outlines three characteristics of Negro colleges – the tradition of the preacher-president, the mistake of electing unqualified White presidents, and the antiquated structure of trustee boards – that make them inferior to

more progressive mainstream institutions. Unsurprisingly, the “weaknesses” he emphasizes directly reflect the complaints leveled against President Durkee by dissident Howard faculty members. Howard professors derided the presence of what they considered to be “religious dogmatism” at Howard. The tradition of piety, undergirded by strict codes of moral discipline, was commonplace at both mainstream and Negro institutions during the nineteenth century; however, the White intellectual community had begun to stress secular scholarship rather than morality at the turn of the twentieth century, and by the 1920s, Black academics expressed a similar desire to abandon religious influences on education. (13). At Howard, and many other HBCUs, there was no clearer indication of the Board of Trustees’ outdated missionary ideals than its insistence on appointing ministers like Durkee to the university’s highest office (122). Houston insists in “Weaknesses...” that in order for the Negro college to become less of a “medieval monastery” and more of a “modern and progressive institution,” it must shed its missionary influences and focus instead on instilling mental discipline and academic freedom (122). Furthermore, “Weaknesses...” implored Black colleges to appoint qualified Negro presidents instead of unqualified White ones. Houston challenged the ability of white presidents to work with influential Black intellectuals, stating that a “[W]hite president is sure to destroy his strongest colored professors, for he is sure to feel uncomfortable in their presence, and knows that he cannot control them” (123).

Durkee’s controversial disputes with Houston and other notable professors including Carter G. Woodson,⁶ Alain Locke,⁷ George William Cook,⁸ and Kelly Miller⁹ bolstered Hou-

⁶ In 1920, Woodson, professor of history and dean of the newly created School of Liberal Arts for upperclassmen, tried unsuccessfully to secure the Trustees’ approval for a course in Black history and culture. The Board denied his request, and Woodson resigned after serving only one year on the university’s faculty (Wolters 98).

⁷ After Locke was appointed as head of Faculty Salaries Committee in 1921, he and 60 faculty members attempted to secure raises from the Board of Trustees by redirecting funds intended for new buildings and equipment. Locke’s committee also requested a defined salary scale for professors. The committee petitioned the Board on three separate occasions, until finally the Trustees agreed to a salary increase in 1924. However, so insignificant were the raises that faculty members were insulted rather than appeased. Furthermore, the professors learned that dissidents of

ston's argument that White presidents of Negro colleges were often weak and unqualified, and thus were intimidated by powerful Black professors (123). Houston's final exhortation to Negro colleges, to reform trustee boards to allow for alumni participation, reflects a direct request of the Howard's General Alumni Association for alumni representation on the Board of Trustees. Essentially, Houston's article launched a thinly-veiled public attack on President Durkee's administrative policies, adding fuel to a growing sentiment among Black faculty members: that Howard's administration was more concerned with consolidating power and eliminating faculty opposition than with fostering the social and economic advancement of the race.

By 1925, dissident professors and alumni, had grown so frustrated with Howard's administration that they began to call for either the resignation or dismissal of President Durkee (112-113). In an attempt to sway public opinion against Durkee, his critics launched a disparaging campaign against Howard's administration in the Black press. The most flagrant representation of this campaign was a series of fifty articles published in the *Baltimore Afro-American*, colloquially known as the *Afro*, from April 1925 to June 1926. Written under the pseudonym "Alumnus," the articles combine letters, sworn statements, resolutions, official documents, and personal opinion pieces into a scathingly critical exposé on "Durkeesim," the author's catch-all term for maladministration at Howard (Farrar 45-46, Wolters 111-112). The *Afro* never revealed the true identity of "Alumnus," but according to Raymond Wolters, the mastermind behind the articles

the administration received smaller raises than supporters, and as a result, Locke's committee publicly criticized the Durkee administration's arbitrariness in setting salary amounts and granting promotions (Wolters 103-105). In what appears to have been an act of retaliation, President Durkee convinced the Board to dismiss Locke from the university a year later, along with three other professors who had publicly criticized the administration (107). Locke would not return to his position until reinstated by Durkee's successor, President Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, in 1927 (135).

⁸ Dean Cook was demoted when the Commercial Department was abolished during Durkee's centralization efforts. In 1925, following the disputes with the Faculty Salaries Committee, President Durkee recommended the retirement of Cook, who had spent fifty-seven years as Howard as a student, professor, dean, acting president, and alumni secretary (Wolters 95-96, 107). Cook was subsequently elected alumni secretary under President Johnson (135).

⁹ Dean Miller vigorously opposed President Durkee's division of the College of Liberal Arts, and in 1924, he accused President Durkee of attempting to restrict his right to speak on public issues. Durkee responded by persuading the Trustees to assign Miller to a public relations position that would take him away from the university for the majority of the academic year. The ensuing outrage from the faculty and the Black press convinced the Board to reverse its decision, but the incident gave credence to the Black intellectual community's mistrust of President Durkee (Wolters 99-101).

was none other than G. David Houston (111). In his 1998 study of the *Baltimore Afro-American's* first 58 years (from 1892 to 1950), Hayward Farrar agrees that Houston probably wrote the articles while he served as principal of the Armstrong Manual Training School in Washington, DC (46). Houston would have based his articles on information he received from members of Howard's General Alumni Association, the organization leading the charge to oust Durkee (46). Whereas professors still employed at Howard necessarily feared the administration's reprisal if they publicly renounced Durkee, Houston, who had resigned five years earlier, and dissident alumni were bound by no such official ties to the university. Farrar observes that Houston would have found in the *Afro* a willing ally in his campaign to publicly malign Howard's administration – the newspaper's editor, Carl Murphy, was a former professor of German who left his post at Howard in 1918 due to his dislike of President Durkee's policies. Furthermore, the *Afro* had previously shown considerable interest in campus unrest at historically Black institutions. From 1924 to 1925, the publication's close coverage of protests at Fisk University supported student and alumni efforts to remove Fisk President Fayette McKenzie (42). The *Afro* began its involvement in Howard's campus politics soon after: on March 28, 1925, the newspaper exposed Durkee as president of Boston's Curry School of Expression, a private elocution academy that did not admit Black students. Durkee's critics seized upon the information, and on April 18, 1925, the *Afro* published "Alumnus's" first article, which questioned the propriety of Durkee's dual presidencies. The articles continued almost weekly, with "Alumnus" repeatedly flaming the fires of the Curry school scandal, detailing student protests on campus, and questioning Durkee's early policy changes. Throughout the series, "Alumnus" lobbied four main complaints against Durkee, repeatedly accusing his administration of driving away esteemed Black professors; censoring students, faculty, and alumni; promoting a culture of sycophancy among

faculty; and adopting a submissive attitude toward racism (Farrer 45-46). With each article, “Alumnus” fortified his narrative of a repressive, vindictive administration that had succeeded in alienating Howard students, faculty, and alumni.

If Houston was indeed the author of the “Alumnus” articles, then he, along with *the Afro* and Howard’s General Alumni Association, played a significant role in forcing President Durkee’s resignation. The series served as a powerful platform for dissidents of Durkee’s administration, and in December 1925, the constant negative publicity and resulting public outcry helped force the Board of Trustees to investigate charges brought against the president by the Alumni Association, the Howard Welfare League, and four professors, including Alaine Locke. Although the Trustees exonerated Durkee of all charges and reiterated their confidence in his fitness as the university’s leader, the *Afro*’s continual publication of the Alumnus articles and the General Alumni Association’s unrelenting crusade against him eventually proved to be too much pressure for the administration, and in February 1926, Durkee resigned from the presidency of Howard University (46). Following his resignation, “Alumnus” led the campaign for the appointment of an African American president; the final “Alumnus” article appeared in June 1926, when the Board voted to appoint Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, the Harvard-educated Baptist minister who was sworn in as Howard’s first Black president the following December (46). Assessing the importance of President’s Johnson’s appointment, Raymond Wolters notes that while students, faculty, and alumni at other Negro colleges demanded larger roles in the management of their institutions, Black intellectuals at Howard insisted upon control of the university (136). Indeed, the 1920s campus protests resulted in a decisive victory for “New Negroes” at Howard; the success of their efforts reinforced the belief that Black schools had outgrown the paternalism of White overlords and that the African American intellectual community was fully capable of as-

suming responsibility for Negro higher education.

4 THE NEW NEGRO TEACHES WRITING: HOUSTON'S ACTIVIST RHETORIC INSTRUCTION

Houston's heavy involvement in campus unrest during President Durkee's administration reflects an abiding commitment to New Negro educational ideals. Principal to his criticism of Durkee was his belief that for Black students, higher education should first and foremost serve the social advancement of the race. He echoes this belief in "Weaknesses of the Negro College," which demands a reconstruction of traditional administrative structures that, in his opinion, inhibited the ability of Black colleges to effectively educate young African Americans. A year earlier, Houston had similarly applied the trope of *reconstruction* to the teaching of English in Black colleges in "Reconstruction in the Teaching of English," published in the *Howard University Record* in 1919. Houston's demand for a reformed Black college administration mirrors his call for "reconstruction" in secondary and undergraduate English instruction: just as "Weaknesses of the Negro College" outlines a plan for overhauling HBCU administrations, "Reconstruction..." presents a blueprint for improving the efficacy of college English instruction, specifically at Black institutions. This chapter examines "Reconstruction in the Teaching of English" as evidence of Houston's composition pedagogy. Houston argues that instruction in the English language for Negro students should lean less toward theoretical education and more toward practical instruction (29). Toward this aim, he developed a reconstruction plan that diverges from traditional mainstream English pedagogy by elevating the role of composition training, encouraging a cross-disciplinary model of English instruction, and professionalizing the teaching of English. When considered within the context of the Negro college, these aims support a kind of hybrid

composition pedagogy that incorporates aspects of both the vocational and Classical-liberal arts models of education and responds directly to the practical, everyday needs of Black students. Houston's efforts to reform English teaching practices, particularly when considered along with his campus activism, results in an activist rhetoric that embodies the radical self-determinism of the New Negro mentality and reinforces the demand for Negro education to serve the interests of the Black community.

In "Lost Voices of the Harlem Renaissance," Scott Zaluda observes that writing assignments at Howard University were "at once conservative, subversive and creative" (233-234). Drawing from a vast array of historical literature, including institutional histories, scholarly publications, and faculty-produced textbooks, Zaluda explores the ways in which the writing assigned in humanities disciplines at Howard reflects the tensions experienced by faculty faced with the complicated task of simultaneously reproducing *and* subverting the social and ideological culture of the American academy. Black faculty and students, Zaluda explains, adopted and reproduced the prevailing standards in education, but they also constantly contested those standards by questioning how the humanities disciplines defined themselves and how disciplinary discourse defined African Americans (233-234). The Black academic community thus experienced a kind of DuBoisian "double consciousness" in the imperative to adopt the dominant standards of the American academy while creating their own discourse community that critiqued and challenged the very standards they sought to emulate (240-241). This sort of pedagogical paradox is evident in Houston's argument for reconstruction in the teaching of English, which emphasizes the practical, utilitarian function of English – composition – over its theoretical, aesthetic function – literature. Zaluda recognizes in Houston's pedagogy echoes of the "conservative rhetoric" used to promote the special education agenda of manual and vocational training for Negro

schools (244-245). However, labeling Houston's plan as *conservative* ignores the complexities of his pedagogy. In fact, Houston's plan for reforming English instruction responds directly to the needs of Black students and teachers by rejecting the extreme ideological polarization that characterized Negro education after Reconstruction. In doing so, Houston develops an embodied, activist rhetoric that challenges the expediency of the vocational-Classical divide.

"Reconstruction in the Teaching of English" exemplifies what Susan Kates calls an "embodied rhetoric," that is, a rhetoric of situated knowledge, located within and generated for a specific community (54-55). The reform measures outlined in the article could universally apply to English instruction at mainstream institutions, and Houston never specifies that his reconstruction plan applies primarily to the teaching of English at Black colleges. However, Houston published his article in the *Howard University Record*, an in-house publication for which he served as managing editor. His choice of periodical suggests that Houston likely wrote and published "Reconstruction..." for a very specific audience; namely, Howard University faculty and members of the African American intellectual community. Black intellectuals of the 1920s were largely barred from publishing their scholarship in popular professional and academic periodicals, and were compelled by necessity to create and maintain their own journals, magazines, and newspapers, many of which, like the *Record*, were associated with educational institutions. According to the 1907 inaugural issue of the *Record*, the publication served as the "official organ of the university," providing a "medium of communication between the university and its alumni, patrons, and friends" ("Forward"). The issue specified that the editors of the *Record* envisioned it as a "magazine of facts" related to the university rather than an academic journal, but as the publication expanded, it also served a pedagogical purpose, offering a space for scholarly discussion and review of "those educational principles, methods, and ideals for which Howard University

and kindred institutions especially stand” (“Forward”). Houston would have understood the institutional and pedagogical thrust of the *Record*, and his decision to publish in Howard’s official journal implies a keen awareness of the audience for his work. It is likely then that Houston did not, in fact, presuppose a universal application of his plan for “utilitarian” English instruction – the *Record* allowed Houston to disseminate his reconstruction plan to a target audience of Black scholars and professors of English at Negro schools. Of course, publishing in the *Record* would not necessarily have restricted his article to an all-Black audience; indeed, in a January 1920 article published in *The Classical Weekly*, a publication of the *Classical Association of the Atlantic States*, the author, listed only as “C. K.,” commiserates with Houston, stating that “the much be-deviled teacher of the Classics will find comfort in what Professor Houston has to say...of the ineffectiveness of English teaching in School and College” (97). C.W., who takes care to specify that the article was written and published at “an institution for colored men and colored women” (and who declines to attach his full name to the article), insists that Houston’s experiences teaching English could easily apply to the professor of Latin and Greek, and suggests that Houston’s plan might be useful for reconstructing the teaching of Classical languages. Thus, Houston’s scholarship may have, to some extent, reached beyond the boundaries of the Negro intellectual community, but his article addressed a need specific to African American educational institutions, providing a pedagogical roadmap for teaching English at historically Black colleges and universities.

Houston’s vision for English instruction at Negro colleges emphasizes what he describes as the *utilitarian* function of English – namely, composition. According to Zaluda, Houston’s call for utilitarian English instruction differs from the type of language training advocated by other professors of English at Black liberal arts institutions and exemplified by fellow Howard

professor Alain Locke's pedagogy. Locke, he argues, assigned exams and quizzes in his philosophy courses that required students to demonstrate mastery of *good English* (236). Locke's understanding of *good English* aligned with popular Progressive era notions of literacy as a marker of social and civic identity. Progressive academics generally believed that literacy was necessary for economic and social uplift – *good English* did not refer strictly to standardized, grammatical usage; it was indicative of class status and moral uprightness (236-237). Thus, for Locke and other Howard professors who were influenced by the discourse of Progressivism, *good English* came to represent the language of “intellectual or social advancement,” whereas Houston's *utilitarian English*, Zaluda implies, seems to evoke a “discourse of intellectual inferiority” (245). Zaluda's juxtaposition of *good English* and *utilitarian English* parallels the characteristic schism between Classical liberal arts education and vocational training for Negro students in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: practical, utilitarian English instruction, it would seem, signifies a vocational agenda, whereas the liberal arts model aligns with the more intellectual function of language. However, a thorough analysis of “Reconstruction in the Teaching of English” reveals that Houston's pedagogy resists such uncompromising polarization between what he views as complimentary functions of language instruction.

Houston's “Reconstruction...” emphasizes mastery of practical, utilitarian English instruction as prerequisite, not anathema, to successful engagement with the literary function of language. According to Houston, instruction in English should target three primary goals: teaching students to adequately express their own thoughts, teaching students to interpret the thoughts of others, and broadening students' cultural outlook through literature (29). A student who can successfully express his or her own thoughts is then better equipped to interpret the thoughts of others, and a student who has mastered both self-expression and interpretative textual analysis is

poised to truly understand and appreciate literature. Thus, Houston argues that in order to successfully interpret and analyze literature, a student must first develop his or her “critical faculty” (31). He insists that instructors can foster students’ ability to critically examine their own thoughts and the thoughts of others through “systematic drill in analysis and synthesis” – training which is most effectively achieved through composition instruction (31). Houston’s argument is significant within the context of educational trends of the early twentieth-century, particularly the devaluation of both Classical rhetoric and English composition as worthwhile academic pursuits and the ascendance of literary study as the central component of professional scholarship in English. Numerous scholars have analyzed the subordination of rhetoric and writing to poetics in English departments: Donald C. Stewart asserts in “The Status of Composition and Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1880-1902” (1985) that the primary interest of English professors in the late nineteenth century was proving that English and the modern languages were as worthy of intellectual study as Latin and Greek. Most professors thus resisted teaching such an “uncongenial subject” as composition (734). Robert Connors makes a similar argument in “Rhetoric in the Modern University: The Creation of an Underclass” (1991), in which he attributes the decline of rhetoric to two major developments in academia: the turn-of-the-century shift of American colleges from the small, private undergraduate college model to the German system of large, research-focused universities and the change in focus from oral discourse to written composition as the object of rhetorical training (55-56). Connors laments the resulting transition of the honored and respected professor of rhetoric of the 1800s into the oppressed and marginalized composition teacher of the 1990s (55). In “Literature and Composition: Not Separate but Certainly Unequal,” (1998), Sharon Crowley argues that late nineteenth-century English professors developed novel humanist attitudes toward literature as a source of reality, truth, and beauty, which led them to

denigrate composition as elementary and pedantic (85-86). These three scholars document the ideological and institutional advancement of literary study and the concurrent oppression of rhetoric and writing that defined English departments in the early twentieth century. However, Houston's plan demonstrates a complete reversal of the entrenched hierarchical arrangement of English studies. "Reconstruction..." introduces the radical notion that *only* structured practice in composition can provide students with the skills of interpretation and analysis necessary to truly appreciate literary texts. Houston believed that since mastery of writing was necessary for mastery of literary analysis, then written composition, not literary study, must form the "spinal column of instruction in English" (29).

Houston further responds to the exigencies of Negro higher education by aligning his pedagogy with progressive developments in mainstream English instruction. Specifically, he advocates an early model of *writing across the curriculum/writing in the disciplines (WAC/WID)* in which professors emphasize the written exercise and the recitation as measurable demonstrations of students' acquired knowledge in all subjects. Houston argues that study in any subject furnishes some practice in either written or oral composition, and consequently, all faculty members should consider themselves instructors of English (32). Most professors of the time, he insists, viewed the English department as a "foundry with a repair shop attached": the foundry molds the student's written, and often spoken, English while the repair shop mends any flaws or errors in the student's speech and writing (32). As a result, professors of other subjects were freed from the responsibility of instructing students in writing, speaking, and the critical interpretation of texts, which became the sole province of the English department. Houston rejects the notion that professors should ignore English instruction and dedicate themselves solely to the teaching of their "special subjects," observing that "a lesson in any subject is, at the same time, an exercise

in English” (32). He insists that professors of other subjects should be well-acquainted with the work of the English department, specifically the problems encountered in the teaching of English and the symbols used to call attention to errors in student writing (33). Essentially, Houston promotes a cross-disciplinary model of composition instruction that represents progressive ideals for writing instruction in American schools. David Russell states in his 1992 article “American Origins for the Writing-across-the-Curriculum Movement” that calls for every teacher to teach writing can be traced to progressive education efforts that emerged in the 1880s. However, writing instruction in American colleges remained largely separate from content-area instruction until the rise of the WAC movement in the 1970s. Within this context, Houston’s plan can be understood as one of the few “developmental models” for cross-curricular writing instruction introduced before the WAC movement took shape in the late twentieth century. Remarkably, his early attempt to improve student writing across the disciplines presages present-day WAC/WID pedagogies.

Houston’s vision for systematic cross-disciplinary writing instruction is significant given his expertise in teaching composition based on the Harvard style of current-traditional rhetoric. According to David R. Russell, current-traditional rhetoric resulted in “inner-directed” pedagogies that viewed writing as a learned skill largely unrelated to content (55). Houston’s plan abandons this aspect of current-traditional instruction; his view of language’s central role in teaching the content of all subjects reflects a more progressive philosophy: that of the cooperative education movement that flourished between 1900 and 1925. Based on the educational philosophy of John Dewey, cooperative education emphasized democratic, transactional communication within a discourse community. Deweyan reformers in the field of English promoted interdisciplinary language instruction and cooperation across disciplinary boundaries. These ideas became so

popular among early twentieth-century English scholars and educators that in 1917, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) incorporated elements of cooperative education into a national reorganization plan (Russell 60). Although Houston's race would have barred him from membership in the NCTE, his plan for cross-curricular writing instruction suggests that he remained abreast of the ideological currents and pedagogical trends that transformed English instruction at mainstream colleges and universities. Within this context, "Reconstruction..." refutes Zaluda's suggestion that Houston's composition pedagogy "is not related to the *good English* of intellectual and social advancement" and aligns more closely with the aims of vocationalism. Instead, the article reinforces Houston's assertion in "Weaknesses of the Negro College" that Negro schools must match mainstream White institutions in academic vigor and curricular integrity in order to successfully educate African American students.

For today's composition scholar, "Reconstruction in the Teaching of English" provides a striking example of the kind of ideological and pedagogical fluidity that, according to David Gold, is still lacking in the field even today (17). Houston's commitment to modernizing the teaching of English to benefit the masses of Black students results in a kind of curricular pluralism that bridges the ideological gap between the vocational and Classical-liberal arts models of post-Emancipation African American education. Houston's experiences teaching at both a vocational Institute during his tenure at Tuskegee and a liberal arts university during his years at Howard would've provided him with a unique perspective on the strengths and limitations of each model. This perspective likely influenced the type of writing instruction he advocated in "Reconstruction in the Teaching of English," which encourages a sort of hybridized composition pedagogy that incorporates aspects of both vocationalism and liberal arts education. "Reconstruction..." suggests that whether considered from a vocational or liberal arts perspective, sys-

tematic practice in written, and often oral, composition served an essential social purpose for Black students. Literate Blacks were more equipped than their uneducated peers to achieve and champion social advancement, since the general public considered proficiency in written and spoken language as the standard by which a person was or wasn't "convicted of unpardonable ignorance" (30). Furthermore, Houston argues that although literary study produced a heightened self-awareness and a broadened cultural outlook for students able to critically analyze and truly appreciate literary texts, rigorous instruction in writing was far more practical and necessary for the majority of Black students, who would *not* become literary scholars but instead pursue less "genteel" occupations (29). He insists that an adequate command of writing and speech was necessary for many of the professions into which Black students would enter, whether industrial, commercial, or academic. Consequently, his reconstruction plan emphasizes composition instruction as *prerequisite for* and *companion to* the study of literature. The result of this marriage of classical literary study and utilitarian instruction in composition was a flexible, fluid composition pedagogy that acknowledged the futility of the extreme ideological polarization that was characteristic of Negro education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Houston's plan suggests an awareness of the Classical/vocational dichotomy's limitations insofar as it recognizes that strict adherence to one ideological construct or another potentially stifled the effectiveness and expedience of English instruction at Negro colleges. Thus, by integrating aspects of both the liberal arts and vocational philosophies, "Reconstruction in the Teaching of English" provides a model for deconstructing existing epistemological binaries and exemplifies a disruption of the assumed correlation between ideology and pedagogy.

5 CONCLUSION

This study examined the rhetorical scholarship of Professor G. David Houston, whose tenure in the Department of English at Howard University coincided with the rise of the New Negro movement. Houston's scholarship reflects his distinct experiences as an African American scholar and educator during the height of the movement and the resulting wave of activism at HBCUs across the country. His involvement in radical campus activism at Howard in the 1920s and his scholarship promoting the Black intellectual community's interests in African American higher education was heavily influenced by New Negro ideals. Particularly, "Weaknesses of the Negro College" called for an overhaul of the traditional administrative structure at historically Black colleges and universities, and "Reconstruction in the Teaching of English" presents a blueprint for improving the efficacy of English instruction for Negro college students. In the latter, Houston advocated a writing pedagogy that emphasizes the *utilitarian* function of English rather than its *aesthetic* function. He observed that training in composition was vital for vast majority of students at Negro institutions, who would enter professions that required adequate speaking, writing, and critical thinking skills. Furthermore, "Reconstruction..." insists that composition training offers the practice in synthesis and analysis necessary to successfully study literature. Houston's focus on utilitarian English instruction as prerequisite to literary study reflects elements of both the vocational and liberal arts models of Negro education, resulting in a kind of hybrid pedagogy that disrupts the assumed correlation between ideology and pedagogy. Houston's scholarship on the Negro college and English pedagogy constitutes an activist rhetoric that responds directly to the needs of Black college students of the early twentieth century and embodies the social aims of 1920s Negro education.

For over 150 years, HBCUs have been educating Black students who, for a significant portion of the schools' existence, were not allowed to attend mainstream, predominantly White colleges and universities. According to the 2010 Executive Order authorizing the *White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, there are 105 recognized HBCUs located in twenty states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, each with its own history, its own legacy of professors, both in English departments and in others, who developed their own situated rhetorical practices (Sec. 1). This study continues the work of scholars who have begun to recover the marginalized voices of rhetoric and composition professors at HBCUs. However, existing scholarship on the subject barely scratches the surface of the rich history of rhetorical traditions that developed at Negro institutions. More scholars must undertake this type of work to make our field's documented histories more inclusive and provide a fuller, more comprehensive understanding of our disciplinary history.

As this study has shown, continued examination of rhetorical practices and composition pedagogies at HBCUs opens unique opportunities for new research. Not least among these is further recovery of generations of professors and scholars who taught rhetoric and writing in Negro institutions. Even as the Rhetoric and Composition begins to move beyond a model of historical inquiry based on simple recovery, scholars must remain committed to revising the field's historical narratives by revealing marginalized and silenced accounts of rhetorical instruction. Many of the historians of HBCU rhetorical history cited in this study, including Zaluda, Kates, Gold, and Jarrett, emphasize the necessity of continued study of rhetorical traditions and pedagogical practices that developed outside of mainstream educational institutions. Archival repositories on HBCU campuses contain underutilized collections and materials that could add dimension to our

disciplinary histories by acknowledging overlooked Rhetoric and Composition scholars and teachers and revealing diverse pedagogical practices.

In addition to the abundance of potential recovery work made possible by HBCU archives, studying HBCU rhetorical histories also provides ideal opportunities to apply the principles envisioned by both Gold and Gaillet for revisionist historical research beyond the archival turn. For instance, previously marginalized narratives of Rhetoric and Composition instruction must be integrated into existing chronicles of the field's history. My analysis of Houston's scholarship in this study demonstrates one method of doing so: by examining the intersections and variations of the pedagogical practices used to teach HBCU students and those employed at mainstream institutions. Whereas early twentieth-century English professors at mainstream institutions largely denigrated and devalued writing instruction, Houston emphasized instruction in written and oral composition as the highest priority for English instructors at Negro institutions, insisting that the masses of Negro college students would enter professions that required adequate command of writing and speech. Recovering the localized histories and pedagogies of HBCU professors like Houston and integrating them into existing narratives of rhetorical instruction can only bring scholars closer to realizing a richer, more textured understanding of the field's history.

Furthermore, for many scholars in the field, HBCU repositories serve as new locations of inquiry for the making of new knowledge, particularly by using historical subjects to invigorate existing scholarly conversations. My research on Houston demonstrates this integration of historical knowledge with contemporary scholarly concerns. Houston's plan for reconstructing English studies rejects overly-simplistic ideological dichotomies – vocational/liberal arts, good English/utilitarian English, literature/composition – in favor of a more fluid pedagogy that addresses

the practical needs of African American students. The result is a historical model for disrupting existing ideological binaries and challenging the assumed correlation between ideology and pedagogy that still persists in Rhetoric and Composition scholarship today.

The body of scholarship on rhetorical practices and composition instruction at HBCUs proves that such studies can produce valuable and necessary contributions to Rhetoric and Composition scholarship; however, the converse is also true: Rhetoric and Composition scholars can certainly contribute meaningful knowledge to the historical study of Black institutions. This study exemplifies one such contribution: my research on Houston complicates the oversimplified narrative of conservatism that has been applied to professors of writing and other subjects at Negro institutions. In his 1995 study *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College* John Brereton suggests that during the period his research covers, 1875-1925, “most black colleges seem to have taught writing in strict accord with the standards of White America” (21). HBCU historian Michael Winston had made a similar observation in 1971 about the “second generation” of Negro scholars who earned PhDs and engaged in teaching and research from 1920 to 1945. Winston insists that although Negro scholars during this period demonstrated an expected preoccupation with issues of race and Blackness that deviated from their counterparts at mainstream institutions, on the whole they remained “methodologically conservative and generally reflected the dominant trends of American scholarship” (696). However, several historical studies of rhetoric and writing instruction at HBCUs, including this thesis, have begun to deconstruct this narrative of conservatism, revealing African American scholars’ negotiations with and diversions from mainstream pedagogical practices. My study of Houston’s scholarship reveals an embodied, activist composition pedagogy that sought to align English language instruction with the needs of African American college students. Kates described the ways in which Hallie Quinn

Brown altered traditional nineteenth-century elocution theory and pedagogy as a professor and practitioner of elocution at Wilberforce University, and Gold analyzes the racially-conscious critical pedagogy of Melvin Tolson, a professor of English at Wiley College from 1923 to 1947 who's classroom instruction incorporated aspects of "classical, current-traditional, liberal, social-epistemic, and African American rhetoric" (17). Continued exploration of rhetorical traditions and pedagogies at HBCUs would likely reveal other narratives that refute the narrow categorizations and descriptions of Negro scholars. Such research would provide new locations and subjects for knowledge-making in the histories of both Rhetoric and Composition and Black colleges and universities.

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