Dr. Elsie Scott: I am Elsie Scott. I am the director of the Ronald Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center at Howard University.

Interviewer: Can you tell us a bit about personal background so, specifically where you're from, what was home or family life like for you growing up?

Dr. Elsie Scott: I'm from a town called Lake Providence, Louisiana, it's in northeast Louisiana, northeast corner. And I grew up in a family of eight children, the daughter of a Baptist minister who was also a civil rights activist, and my mother was a homemaker. And we grew up during the era of... I grew up in an era of civil rights, an era when my father was very much engaged in the civil rights movement. And as a result, we had a lot of hard times in terms of surviving some of the oppression and the assaults and so forth that were placed on my family as a result of my father's activism.

Interviewer: I see, and how were you introduced to the field of political science?

Dr. Elsie Scott: Dr. Jewel Prestige is probably how a lot of people are introduced to political science. Dr. Prestige was a student at Southern University, and she was the chair of the political science department. My father had wanted me to be a lawyer because he felt that there was a need for Black lawyers, especially in North Louisiana and so when I went to college, I was focused on becoming a lawyer. And Dr. Prestige knew him through some of the political circles, but she won in terms of who was going to be... who was going to win, whether my father would have me become a lawyer or she would have me becoming a political scientist. So, that's how I ended up becoming a political scientist because of her influence.

Interviewer: Great, I see. And where did you go to graduate school?

Dr. Elsie Scott: Where else? University of Iowa where Jewel Prestige was the first Black woman to receive her doctorate, and she wanted me to fall in her... her footsteps.

Interviewer: Can you tell us a bit more about your undergraduate and or your graduate school experience?

Dr. Elsie Scott: I'll start with my undergraduate. I went to Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and it was the at that time, it was the largest predominantly Black undergraduate institution in the country. And, uh, I wanted to go to Howard originally because I had heard about the demonstrations and everything, Stokely Carmichael and so forth at Howard University. But my parents didn't have Howard University money, so I went to our state supported school, but it was it was a great opportunity. I wanted to go to an HBCU, even though a lot of the predominantly White schools had started admitting Black people, even the ones in the South. But because of having grown up the daughter of the civil rights leader and having been subjected to cross burnings and my father was even shot during that period, I did not, I wanted to go to a Black environment where I felt people respected me on regardless of my race. And so that's one of the reasons why I wanted to go there, and it was a great experience. It gave me a chance to really appreciate my Blackness but also to learn that there were no limitations on me because of my race, and I met a lot of friends who have become lifelong friends as a result, and I met Dr. Jewel Prestige who had a great impact on my life. And so, I left there and went to the University of Iowa. It was not a good experience. It was just different in every way possible. I came from Louisiana, I grew up in a predominantly Black home, I went to a predominantly Black college, and I had never met a White person my age and maybe more in person, I think one person my age the whole while I was growing up because we... everything was segregated when I grew up.

Dr. Elsie Scott: And so, to go from, you know, a Southern University to Iowa. It was like going to a foreign country and when I got there, I started looking for Black people, looking for the Black section of town, only to find that there was no Black section of town. There were maybe five Black families there and all of them were affiliated with the university in some kind of way. And... but the good side, I guess, was that was the first year University of Iowa had recruited undergraduate Black women. They had always had... they had a liberal reputation. They had... had a lot of Black athletes there over the years and they had also opened their doors to Black students for graduate school, Black students from the South who couldn't get into the LSU's or the Alabama's, etc. So, when I got there, it was a cultural shock because of the few Black people and also it was a culture shock. Because I came from Louisiana where we ate a lot of spicy foods and seafoods, and in Iowa they ate a lot of potatoes, we ate rice. They had a lot of beef, we ate fish. So, and Louisiana was a warm climate... I didn't own a winter coat. And I got to Iowa, uh, by coldest weather while I was there was, what, minus 27 degrees, so it was... everything was different. I was the only Black person in my department and that was somewhat of a struggle, uh, just, uh, I guess relating to some of the professors and students and not having any friends there in the program. So, it was... it was not the easiest, but I did stay there long enough to get my master's degree and then I left.

Interviewer: That must have been incredibly difficult. And you've touched on this quite a bit, how would you characterize the political social environment, um, while you were in college or graduate school and additionally, were you involved in any social or political activism as a student at Southern University?

Dr. Elsie Scott: I... that was, uh, post-civil rights era and, uh, at first, I think I felt like I missed out on something because I was too young to be part of the freedom riots and so forth. And... but my generation, my class, we had to find our own way as to where we fit into fighting for the liberation of Black people. And so, we became part of the Black Power movement and, uh, so we started the natural hairdos and a lot of other political activity on the Southern University campus, as well as, uh, relating to some of the other universities. And so, we... we did. Uh, we had a professor, Alex Willingham, who's a political scientist, and Alex was sort of the leader of the radical faculty, people at, uh, at Southern University. So, we learned a lot from him. He had us reading a lot of Black books and exposing us to authors. Shelby Lewis, Dr. Shelby Lewis became part of the faculty. And when she came there, you know, Dr. Prestige was a female role model for us, but Shelby was even more so because she was single at the time, she wore short skirts, and she wore... she drove a sports car, and so she... and she had been to Peace Corps. She had lived in Africa. So, I think the two of them were really, uh, our activist leaders on the campus, especially in the political science department and so, I became a part of student government. I was on the student senate, I was editor to the yearbook, I pledged a sorority, so I was very active on campus, well-known on campus. But, you know, also was one of the smarter kids on campus too, so I always kept my grades up despite any political activities I was engaged in. And so, when I left Southern University, I went to the University of Iowa and it was a totally different type of activism there because there, we were the minority. And my father, my father who's a civil rights activist, he had to come to grips with the difference in my generation and he is. That we were into Black power, that we were not demonstrating to integrate schools, because we decided that... that would have been a failure, and that my father, if he had been along with us, he would have agreed with us. But, uh, and so, when I went to Iowa, I became more involved in the Black Power movement, and there were about 200 Black people out of 20,000 at the university.

Dr. Elsie Scott: And there was an incident my first year there where one of the Black students, he might have been one of the basketball players, but I know he was a Black male student, was arrested and we felt like he had been arrested on bogus charges. And we realized that we didn't have a way of notificating... no notifying people around town if wanted when something happened to one of us. So, I became part of the group that we started a Black directory, finding every Black person in Iowa City, especially all the ones that were at the University. And we got their names and phone numbers and told them, you know, that we may have to call you if something happened to any of us. And I started a Black newspaper while I was there because the Black on White. I was co-editor along with an undergraduate student. The university gave us a Black house and that's where we would congregate and, uh. I but, uh, I had Jet, the subscription of Jet Magazine, and most people didn't. I may have been the only person around with a subscription, for all I know. I had to take my Jet Magazines off to the Black house and people would stand in line to read what was happening out in the Black world away from Iowa. So,

that's, I guess, that's sort of a summary of some of my political activity when, uh, when I was at Iowa and at Southern.

Interviewer: Thank you. You mentioned a lot of your families and particularly your father's civil right... civil rights activism. Um, did you see any translation, I suppose, from your... your family's activism to your own activism in college, or rather, did you see it impact your trajectory in college?

Dr. Elsie Scott: I definitely saw a trans... uh, a transition, as well as a relation between, because civil rights was what my father's generation was engaged in and they thought that was the way that, uh, Black people would be liberated. If we fought for integration of schools, our integration of public utilities, uh, integration of... of everything, you know, whereas we would be treated as equal citizens in the country. So, I grew up, uh, appreciating the fact that I was Black and not feeling that it should hinder me from doing anything. My father's activism taught me that you shouldn't just accept things because maybe that's what the state law said or even what the federal law said. That if you felt like it was an injustice, you should fight against it. And so, that trans... uh, we, my dad's children, I think most of us, uh, learned from my father and became activists. That my parents sort of pushed us to public service occupations because they felt like you shouldn't just... you shouldn't just be a citizen, that you should contribute, you should be constantly contributing to... to others, to society and making society a better place. So, uh, I just, you know, we just did in a different way. We accepted less than my father's generation, but we were probably able to accept less because of what my father's generation had done. They had opened a lot of doors where some things that we might have been killed for if we had come along in that generation and tried to do some of the things that we were doing. But it was a different society, that more people in the United States were accepting of Black people as citizens, as opposed to being a property of what we had come here originally when we were brought from Africa.

Interviewer: Are you a first-generation scholar or were you the first in your family to attend college or graduate school?

Dr. Elsie Scott: No, I was not. Uh, my father had a Bachelor of Theology, my father's sister was our schoolteacher, she had graduated from college, and then my older siblings had gone to college.

Interviewer: Wonderful, that's where you went for your PhD?

Dr. Elsie Scott: Yes, uh, I'd received my master's from the University of Iowa. I had about maybe about 12 hours that I could have carried over into a PhD program, but I just decided that I could not stay at Iowa longer. It was right after the Kent State killings. Kent State was where some students at Kent State University were killed, for the general demonstration, and these were White... these were White students. And I sort of felt like, okay, if they will kill their own children... And this was the National Guard then, there was no safe space out here. And so, I decided to, uh, take my degree, my master's degree. Let me just say one good thing about Iowa, that, uh, I had a professor there. I don't know whether I would have completed my master's if I had not gotten a professor called John R. Smith Houser. And he was one of the leading scholars on judicial process. He had been a congressman for one, uh, one session, a U.S. congressman and he lost his election because he was too liberal for Iowa. And so, he came back, he was on leave of absence from the University of Iowa, and he came back to the university. And I did not have any friends with any of the faculty, but when he came, my department chair said that there's a new professor, a professor coming back to the university, and he needs a graduate assistant and maybe you can... maybe you can be his assistant. I shall try him and because I definitely don't like the one that I that if I have professor now and I won't call his name, uh, but when Dr. Smith Houser came, we immediately bonded. He was a scholar of civil rights and he was so impressed when I had told him about my father and... and he just really became, uh, my mentor at Iowa. And so, I'd... I decided that I wanted to specialize in judicial process because of Dr. Smith Houser and so, I wrote my master's thesis on federal judges and political change in Louisiana or federal judges in Louisiana.

Dr. Elsie Scott: Race related, I was studying cases, some of the cases that my father had been engaged with, and he just thought that was great. That my father had brought a lawsuit against the state of Louisiana, so, uh. So, but still despite the fact that he was there, and I was getting along with him, I still decided that there was not enough other reasons to stay at Iowa. Dr. Prestige could not understand why I hated Iowa so much. I hated as much as she loved it, but I told her I came on a different time. And that she was a married woman before she came there and she had other concerns, maybe, but I was still a single woman there and it just was not for me. So, I left there and, uh, so I was trying to figure out what... what... what do I do and where am I going to go, because I don't have any money except in Iowa and I don't want to stay there. And so, I started applying to, uh, become an instructor at various schools and so, I got it. I got offers at several schools, but then, uh, a guy named Tony Brown, he used to have a show called Tony Brown's Journal that every... every Black person used to watch on Sunday night. I think he was ahead of the journalism school... communication school, I think at Howard University at the time. But he came out to Iowa, they had a conference out there and I met him, and he started talking to me about my career, where I was going. And he said, “Well, I know a school that you might want to teach that would fit you.” And he said, There's... you ever heard of Federal City College?” And I said, “No, I never heard of it.” He says it's in Washington D.C. and it's, uh, a lot of radical type people, there Black and White and... and they're really... the students are really into activism.

Dr. Elsie Scott: He said, so you might want to try that. So, I checked it out and, uh, interestingly enough, that the chairman of the political science department was a former student of Jewel Prestige. So, Jewel Prestige is just intertwined with my life, you know, she knew my daddy. So, you know, it was just... it was just meant that she... for her to be my mentor for life. And so, uh, the chairman had graduated from Prairie View when Dr. Prestige was there, so I applied, and I got a position there. And a lot of my students were older than me, but they were... they were really activist type, and they got me involved in the community and all kinds of organizations. And it was... it was a good... it was a good fit, but I still wanted to get the PhD because if I was going to be up... be in political science, you really needed a doctorate. And, uh, and so I started scouting around and so, how I could get some money because I really didn't, I couldn't pay my own way to go through graduate school. And the Ford Foundation had a scholarship that was, uh, that was designed for Black students and so, I applied for that, and I got a Ford Foundation Fellowship. And you could go to any accredited University in the country, so I started searching around looking at Ohio State and some other places, then I got a call from a man named Mac Jones. And Mac Jones told me, Mac Jones who was also a former student of Jewel Prestige, and he told me that he had gotten some money to create a PhD program at, uh, Atlanta University at that time. And he was trying to recruit people who already had master's degree because he wanted to be able to show progress and keep the money flowing from the Ford foundation. And so, he had... he was calling a lot of us Black students who had master's degrees at predominantly White schools. I never thought about, uh, that I could get a doctorate from a Black college and so, I ended up, uh, coming to Atlanta University because of Mac Jones asking me to come. And when I read about it... it seemed like an interesting place to be, and... and Jewel Prestige just gave it her blessings also. She was not as upset about me leaving Iowa because I was coming to join Mac Jones at Atlanta University. So that's how I came there and that's where I received my doctorate.

Interviewer: Wonderful, and you touched on judicial politics a bit earlier so, can you tell us about your research trajectory or more so what was your dissertation topic? What's your current main area of focus?

Dr. Elsie Scott: Yes. I, uh, I wanted to... wanted to continue in judicial process as my area of concentration, but when I came to Atlanta U, I felt like the lead professor there after having studied with Dr. Smith Houser who was one of the leading scholars in the country. And then to come to Atlanta U, and the person that I felt like he was some of the one of the weakest links in the in the program there. And right after I came to Atlanta, I got, uh, I got a job even though I had a full fellowship, but I was offered a position with the United Church of Christ, and they were doing stuff around police... police, uh, brutality and the actions of the police toward Black community. So, they hired me to help them design some hearings to work with the city council around police issues. So, I had never considered studying about the police because it really

wasn't a... it really wasn't an academic field at that time. There was no such thing as criminal justice and... but also, I was working there for them and working with the city council and so, when it came time for me to write my dissertation, I was going to do, uh, I was gonna do a follow-up to my master's thesis. Then somebody said, well, why don't you do something different? You know, write something, write your dissertation on the police and so, I had read every book even though I hadn't studied an academic as an academic field. I read every book that I could put my hands on or about policing, and a lot of sociology departments where then if it was anything on policing. You had to take it in sociology and... but I decided to make it a political... a political science topic. So, my doctoral dissertation was the politics of the police and predominantly Black cities. So, I looked at Atlanta and Newark, New Jersey looking at some of the first Black mayors in cities and how they dealt with the police as, uh, you know, a division of city government.

Dr. Elsie Scott: And so, uh, that's where I end up writing my dissertation and that changed my whole setting, I guess, in terms of what I was going to do, uh, because this was really not a political science field. And some universities were now starting criminal justice programs, so do I try to stay with criminal political science or do I go to criminal justice? So, I decided to try to stay in the field of political science and make political science integrate more these police studies there and, uh, and so I ended up going to Rutgers University. Rutgers University had a School of Criminal Justice there, just started, and so they hired me as an instructor while I was writing my dissertation there. And so that's how I got going to mainstream criminal justice, uh, as opposed to political science, uh, mainstream political science. And that changed, you know, by having written my dissertation on the police, it changed my whole field of study. Because there were not that many people that knew that much about the police, so I became known as one of the experts own on policing and there was no other Black woman doing research in the series. So, a lot of... a lot of doors were opening to me, people were calling me and wanting me to do this, that and, uh, and so I got out of academia to a certain extent because there were so many other opportunities for me in the field of criminal justice. And so, I was working at what I taught. I taught in a political science department at Federal City and then I taught at, oh, I taught at the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers, and I taught political science, uh, at Saint org, then I taught criminal justice at Central. So, I was just dancing between the two fields and so that's sort of how I have done throughout my career, is not really being wanting to be in mainstream criminal justice because I'm really a political scientist, but not really as far into political and mainstream political sciences as I used to be because my... my areas of concentration really fit more in the School of Criminal Justice than in political science. So, I've been dancing between the two, uh, all of... all of my career but it's been interesting, I I've... I've really enjoyed studying both.

Interviewer: We're going to shift gears a little bit, so to you, what does being a Black political scientist mean?

Dr. Elsie Scott: It's a good question, uh, being a Black political scientist is, uh, well we could just simply say it's a person of color a person, of African descent who's a political scientist. So, uh, but beyond that, you know, when we really look at NCOBPS, uh, the National Conference of Black Political Scientists and why we are involved in NCOBPS, why I became a member of... of NCOBPS beyond being Jewel Prestige's student, and she was a founder... But, uh, it really has meant that I am responsible for studying, uh, topics that other people may not find of interest, or they may not even consider to be appropriate topics in political science. It also means... a Black political scientist to me means that I have a responsibility in terms of grooming the next generation, not just in the classroom but also recruiting them to... to go to graduate school, assisting them while they're in graduate school, helping them to understand the ups and downs of the world as a... as a student, and helping to become helping grow the next generation of scholars. I think, uh, a lot of the Black people I know who are Black political scientists, who are members of NCOBPS especially, they see themselves as having extra responsibility of, uh, of working closely with students and that's one of the reasons why some people teach at predominantly Black universities. Because they want to, uh, help the mold the next generation and they want to make certain that they get the attention, uh, and the extra attention that some of them need in order to be successful.

Interviewer: Thank you, um, and you've spoken on this a bit already, but what challenges if any have you faced, uh, throughout your career either due to your race gender or your chosen field of study?

Dr. Elsie Scott: You know, it's interesting, when I tell some of the younger ladies that I didn't really feel a lot of, uh, discrimination, I felt much more discrimination because of my race than I did because I was a woman. I, uh, political science was a dominantly male field when I got into it, but I really didn't feel that. You know, like at Southern University, there were two or three us women in the department primarily guys, but the department chair was a woman. And so, I never felt like I was treated as less than in that department, uh, because I was a woman. And when I came to Atlanta University, we had about maybe about half women and half men in the program and we had male and female faculty people. So, I never... I never really felt like I was discriminated against because of my gender. Uh, when I was at Iowa I feel like I was discriminated against because of my race, but there were maybe only two or three White women there in the program, one White woman was well accepted they seemed to treat her well and they felt like she was smart, and all that the other White woman I felt like they were sort of discriminating against. Her, I wasn't sure why it seems like she might have been coming from a poor background just based on the way she dressed, uh, but for some reason I felt like she was somewhat discriminated against and when she's sometimes tried to befriend me, I was kind of nervous because they didn't seem to treat her well. And I said, well, is she nice to me because she's looking for somebody who's being treated bad like her? Uh, well that hurt me even more

because I'm already discriminated against because I'm a Black person and so, if I align with her as a woman...

Dr. Elsie Scott: So, you know, I... I wish I could have met her outside of Iowa so we could talk about this, as to whether I was ignoring the sexism that was there because I was so caught up in the racism that was there, but I did notice that it seemed like she was treated... treated differently. But I felt like I was just treated differently because of my race and I could have been... I could have been a man because I know Alex Willingham had been there in the program before me. And they didn't... it didn't seem like they liked Alex Willingham a lot and I felt that, you know, Alex was one of Jewel Prestige's students, but I felt that they took me in and gave me a... an assistantship because they... they had had such a hard time understanding Alex as a Black man. And I felt like... they felt like when I came there and because they loved Jewel Prestige, that I wouldn't give them any trouble, and then when I came there and I was a Black Power advocate, they didn't know what to do with me because I was supposed to be like Jewel Prestige whatever. They thought that she was... because they loved her and they didn't like Alex Willingham who was her student who she sent there. And so, but then... they said, okay, we're gonna try another one, okay, we'll take a woman this time. And, uh, and then she turned out to be a radical like Alex Willingham, so I just felt like... it's... okay, it's the race. Uh, and I don't know... I don't know how they how they felt like Jewel Prestige fitted into all of that, but it was interesting that they seen everybody to a person seem to love Jewel Prestige there. And even I have talked with, uh, departments here who's there now, he's heard of Jewel Prestige and... and they just worship her, you know, they love her. And I'm happy they did that, and she couldn't... she couldn't understand why I didn't have the same relationship with these people. And, uh, and she but... she would always try, I mean, she would be on the phone with them talking with them when I'd call crying or whatever saying about how I felt like they were treating me. And, uh, it... it was... it was just an interesting, uh, period of time and I don't... I... I don't know what else to say about... about Iowa, as to why I had a hard time there and why I didn't get along with the professors except for Dr. Smith Houser.

Interviewer: How have you seen your political and social activism transformed from your childhood to your graduate school experience and to now as a senior scholar and a professional?

Dr. Elsie Scott: I think my childhood and my upbringing really was the pathway to who I have become now. Because I was raised to give service, I was raised to give back, I was raised to get in a field where I could, uh, I could give back to people as opposed to just making money. I was never taught that I should be in an occupation just... just to make money. So that's... that's who I was as a child. That's who my parents mowed me to be and that's who I became as a young adult. And so, I've always... I've always felt like I'm responsible for helping the next generation and I was respond... I felt responsible for helping my younger siblings to, uh, to thrive. And the same thing in the political science profession, same thing with my... with my students that I've had,

and even, you know, all the other jobs I had outside of academia. I primarily worked with non-profit organizations, so all my jobs has been non-profit, government, or educational institutions. So, that's just who my parents grown to be and that's who I am.

Interviewer: That's remarkable. Uh, what so in your view what is necessary in order to further diversify the discipline and to make it more equitable and welcoming to scholars of color in the profession?

Dr. Elsie Scott: Well, having gone back to academia 10 years ago after being out of the field for a while, I've had a chance to... to work with graduate students at Howard University, a Black institution. And one of the main things I have found that our students need is they need opportunities, but they need money. They need the money to go to graduate school, they need the money to be able to go to graduate school and not have to work, uh, so that they can focus on their classes. Because I found, you know, with having a fellowship, it really allowed me to focus on being a scholar and I didn't have to worry about paying bills. And uh, because I had, you know, my scholarships, and my assistantships, or whatever paid for that and so that's one of the biggest things. And even at how... how I find that Howard is losing out on a lot of graduate students because we don't have the money to support our graduate students. And I watch students come there who graduated undergraduate from, uh, predominantly White schools and they want to get the Black experience and so, they come to Howard because we wanted two schools that... two HBCU's that offer PhD in political science. And so, they want to come and have that type of experience, but admitted them end up dropping out because we don't have the money to support them, uh, where they don't have to work in. Washington D.C. is a very expensive place to live, so they can't afford to pay that rent or they're working two jobs and therefore their studies are... are failing. So, money is a big thing. Another thing is... is mentoring... is that they need people, uh, professors who are going to take an interest in them, are going to help them to steer their careers, help them to... help them stay focused. And, you know, I find that we're, you know, almost every predominantly White school when I was coming along, uh, and then even after especially after I left, I guess, the next generation behind me that you ask them, you know.

Interviewer: How did you get through, uh, this university?

Dr. Elsie Scott: Usually, often it was a Black professor, like a, uh, Haynes Walton, like a Dick Nelson, like a Diane Pinderhughes. So, you had those Black professors who teach at predominantly White schools who take an interest in the Black students, and the Black students know that they can go there and talk with them and get some guidance as well. As you know, just, uh, being there for the... listening to them, making them feel like they me... they have meaning despite some of the racism that they may feel. So, I think this is the main thing is... is you need mentors. You need people who care about you, and you need money, first and

foremost. Almost... probably it's the money part, because you may be able to find a mentor at another school that can help you from the outside, but if you don't have the money just to pay your tuition, uh, we will... we will not be able to... to get that next generation. And that's one thing you know I... I like it in NCOBPS, we are talking about how do we get more money, uh, to... to support students to come to professional conferences? You know, I've watched some of the students come to the, uh, NCOBPS conference, some of the graduate students who don't have Black professors at their universities, and they come here and they bond. They have the [inaudible] they have the Nadia Browns, and... and all these... all these are great young women and men, uh, who are at NCOBPS and they come here and they can find people who will talk to them, who will listen to them, and who will give them... try to give them some guidance on where to go. So, uh, that's a plug for NCOBPS, that NCOBPS becomes a place that's welcoming and also a place where you can find mentors even if you don't have one where you're in school.

Interviewer: So, on that note, in addition to the existing diversity, equity, and inclusion programming, what is your advice to associations, either like NCOBPS, like APSA on how best to support Black scholars in the profession as they approach milestones in their career?

Dr. Elsie Scott: Okay, both APSA and NCOBPS have put in programs over the years that have been very beneficial, like the Ralph Bunche program. So, I think if we can continue those types of programs where you have summer programs, or... or education stipends, or travel stipends, uh, I think we need to keep those, uh, going. Uh, to keep employees at APSA like a Kim Mealy, like a May King. And so, you have people there who are going to contribute each other the conscience of the organization and, uh, and remind them of how important these types of programs are. And then NCOBPS, I feel like, you know, we keep the conferences going. To continue to have portions in the conference where they... the graduate students can get together and... and share ideas, share problems, and then they bond because, you know, they start bonding across universities. You know, my first NCOBPS conference, I met Diane Pinderhughes, Lorenzo Morris, Charles Henry, uh, there's a few others. Most of them are not dying and are probably the only ones that still very active in NCOBPS, most of the others have retired and decided that they want to hang up their hat, but dying and I are still here. And we still feel like we have something to give back to... to people who would be our grandchildren now, maybe. But, uh, but yeah, I think that, you know, even some of us some people after they retire continue to try to give back, whether it's through money, time, or coming to the conference and just spending some time with somebody around the bar.

Interviewer: So, shifting gears again, you have held a number of very important leadership positions in the profession including as former NCOBPS president and like you mentioned, director of the Ronald Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center. So, what in your view makes a good leader?

Dr. Elsie Scott: First thing is a good leader has to be somebody who listens. Uh, and you try to get the pulse of the organization where you work and understand what the needs are of your employees and the needs of the organization, and then strive to, uh, to achieve that. Now, I served outside of academia, I served, uh, as president of, uh, President and Chief Executive Officer for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. And when I... it was interesting, the day that I was appointed I got more calls from people saying you have my sympathy then people who were praising me for getting the job. And I said, this is strange, why aren't people congratulating me and saying we're so happy for you, instead of these people calling and saying you have my sympathy? But instead of me taking that as to mean that I was not going to be able to be successful in that position, I thought about, okay, why haven't other people been successful? Why did they not last over two years? Or so, what... what did they do right, what did they do wrong and... and this studying, you know, studying the organization. I knew a lot about the organization, but... but also studying the organization in terms of the people who worked there, our constituents. Who were our constituents? What were some things we could do that had not been done in the past? And so, I think a good leader of an organization, you know, I... because at the Ron Walters Center, I had to start that from scratch. I'm the founding director and I have to write... I have to write, uh, the... the, uh, the whole scope will work everything about the organization. So, I... that was a good thing, I guess, because I got a chance to decide, you know, in conjunction with the university and Mrs. Walters and so forth, as to what the Ron Walters Center should be. I didn't... I didn't get handed and say, this is what you're supposed to do so as a leader there. I had to make it into something. I had to make it come alive. There was a piece of paper that the... the Board of Trustees adopted and said, we want to create this Ron Walters Center, but it was no meat on the bonus, they would say. And so, I had to... I had to do that, I had to raise money. And so, as a leader, there... I've had to do a lot of things that I didn't anticipate.

Dr. Elsie Scott: When I got there... there were a lot of things I didn't have to do with my previous job, but, uh, because my previous job, you know, whose money was there, and money was flowing pretty good, I should say. But, uh, coming to the Ron Walters Center, it has been a challenge just in terms of... of one, making sure that it was a priority for the university and, uh, and then, you know, finding the money to do the things and getting the right personnel working there. And, uh, so, uh, we just celebrated 10 years so we must have done something... something right. And as president of NCOBPS, you know, that's a volunteer position. And [inaudible] Dempsey did some interviewing with some of the former presidents and leaders of NCOBPS, and she dug up a lot of research and she says that, uh, when she came to interview, and she said that you're the only president elected of NCOBPS who didn't have a PhD. And I said, you know, you're right. But I... I take it as an honor too, that they trusted me enough to elect me when I was writing my dissertation. Uh, Mac Jones was partially responsible for me becoming president, I think, but, uh, I knew that... I knew at the time that I had to get... I needed to get my dissertation done in order to get the respect as a leader in NCOBPS. And so, the other presidents who've come behind me haven't had to... haven't had to operate with, uh, the fact that they don't have...

they haven't completed. And I beat Linda Williams as president, which, uh, Linda Williams who's now deceased, but Linda Williams was a great scholar. And, uh, but I think it was more of... I was at Atlanta University, she was at Howard University, and it became more of a Howard versus Atlanta U competition and us picking up all our friends who were at PWIs. And that's how I won the election. So, it wasn't a matter that that I had more to offer the organization than Linda did, it was more of a who had the most friends. Who knew the most people and who had the most campaign managers out there, uh, to do it. But, you know, the... when you are the president of an organization, a volunteer organization, often you don't get a chance to do as much as you thought you'd be able to do. And that's one of the reasons why I urge the presidents of NCOBPS to stay involved, because you only have, well they now have two-year term, but we only had a one-year term. And it's only so much you can do during that period, but as a former president, you can continue to provide leadership, you can mentor the... the current presidents. I found bonds with Todd Shaw, with Wendy Smooth, with, uh, Shayla and others who have come after me, and they know they can pick up the phone and call me, and I'll be there for them.

Interviewer: To ask quickly, uh, do you have any advice for junior scholars that are coming up in the profession?

Dr. Elsie Scott: Yeah, I guess I do. When they call me, I do have something to say to them, uh, for the junior scholars. Uh, I've one I think they need to, uh, understand that there's a need and it's on their shoulders now to keep the profession going, uh, that higher education is under attack now. Uh, I just watch where in Kentucky and some other states now, where you don't have to have a college degree to work in city gov. I'm working in state government and so I think that we are at a point now where in the United States, higher education is not valued as much as it was when I started. And so, we have to, uh, get younger people to understand that higher education is going to... look... only going to survive if you are there and making certain that you provide the leadership, that you make people understand why there's a need, why there's... why is there a need for a PhD in political science. What do political scientists contribute to society? So, that's what I would be working on with young people, trying to get them to become advocates for the profession because it's on your shoulders now. We have care... I've carried it for a number of years. It's time for me to move off of center stage and Jewel Prestige carried it, and she's gone now. May King is gone. So, many, you know, they have gone on and now my generation, we are in the process of transitioning off. So, it's... it's your turn. That's what I'd say to younger people. It's your time and, uh, you know, study and see what we did right and what we did wrong when we were on that stage. And then you understand how you can be better than we were

Interviewer: Thank you for that. Before we wrap up, is there anything else that you would like to share with us today?

Dr. Elsie Scott: Oh, I think I've probably talked enough. It's been a pleasure.