“YOU WANT TO BE THE FIRST, BUT YOU DON’T WANT TO BE THE LAST”: CAREER PATHWAYS AND EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK PRESIDENTS AT HISTORICALLY WHITE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

by

THELBERT W. SNOWDEN, JR.

(Under the Direction of Georgianna Martin)

ABSTRACT

Seventeen percent of American college and university presidents are classified as a member of a minority racial or ethnic group; African American/Black college and university presidents only make of eight percent of those leaders (American Council on Education, 2017). Recently, historically, white liberal arts colleges (HWLACs) have been leading the charge in diversifying the American college presidency, with at least five new presidents who identify as African American/Black since 2013 (Lewis, 2016). A handful more of African American/Black presidents at HWLACs have since been added and it is important that the stories of current African American/Black college presidents be told in order influence and support future leaders. This study explores the career pathways of eight African American/Black presidents who lead (or have lead) HWLACs. Through their experiences, they offer a glimpse into their rise to the position of president at their respective institutions and the impact race has had on their abilities to lead. Most of the presidents had considerable experience as academicians prior to their appointments while others were prepared through leadership in industry before moving into higher education. Each of the participants held the distinction of being the first of their race to be

named president at their respective institution; and some actually, became presidents at more than one institution. Furthermore, the presidents consider their position as a call to service and assume a responsibility to influence future diversity in higher education leadership. Each president's story presents opportunities that can be used to help prepare future leaders through professional development, mentoring relationships, and the improvement of doctoral (and terminal) degree programs.

INDEX WORDS: African American college president, Black college president, College president, Higher education leadership, Liberal arts college, Diversity, Academy, Narrative inquiry, Critical race theory, Career pathway

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DEDICATION

To my darling wife, Lesley. Thank you for riding this academic wave with me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

African American/Black college presidents are rare, even with the inclusion of presidents who served in this capacity at historically Black colleges and universities. In 2016, African American/Black college presidents accounted for approximately eight percent of the American college presidency, a two percent increase from 2011 (American Council on Education, 2017). That means, of the 4,583 degree-granting institutions in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018c) in the 2015-16 school year, a few more than 360 of those were African American.

African American/Black administrators possess the academic credentials and the work experience to warrant the appointment, albeit at a much smaller percentage. The National Center for Education Statistics (2018a) indicates that 8.8 % of African Americans/Black people were conferred doctoral degrees in the 2016-17 school year, a small but steady increase in recipients from previous years. In relation to those college presidents who possess doctoral degrees, more than 81% of African American/Black college presidents possess a doctoral degree, more than white male presidents at 76.6 %, but less than the 87.6 % of white, female college presidents who have attained a doctorate (American Council on Education, 2017). Forty percent of African American administrators who ascended to the level of president previously held the position of chief academic officer, provost, or other senior-level executive (American Council on Education, 2017).

The role of chief academic officer continues to serve as the "typical path to the presidency" aspiring administrators to ascend to the presidency (Hornak & Mitchell, 2016, p. 132). Historically, chief academic officers are faculty members who have risen to administrative positions such as deans, vice presidents, or provost. Unfortunately, that path, too, is often less accessible to women and People of Color because the promotion process from junior faculty to faculty to administrator is still primarily structured by older, white men who perpetuate an antiquated status quo of power and preservation (González, 2010). In 2016, 72% of women of color and 59% of men of color who were college presidents had not achieved tenured faculty status (American Council on Education, 2017). Lack of tenure for women and People of Color, however, cannot be solely blamed on the idea of systemic racism within the academy. More than 35% of African American college presidents, in 2016, had become tenured faculty at some point in their careers while less than 30% of white college presidents had achieved tenure status (American Council on Education, 2017).

The present study will examine the pathways and experiences of African American/Black college presidents at historically white liberal arts colleges (HWLACs). The stories revealed from their journey should provide insight into the trials and triumphs of ascending to the college presidency, where it is clear that African American/Black administrators are underrepresented. While some strides have been made to diversify the presidencies of several, selective liberal arts colleges since 2013 (Lewis, 2016), there is usefulness in understanding how African American/Black administrators can aspire and achieve presidential appointments and how to navigate the academic and social spaces of HWLACs.

Statement of the Problem

Modeled after the residential colleges of medieval Europe, and introduced to the American colonies in the 17th century, the liberal arts college sought to educate Christian men who shared a common culture and zest for knowledge (Martínez Alemán & Salkever, 2003). The model emphasized the development of young, white men to be pillars in the colonial community, intended to "preserve newly imported European cultural norms, training of the clergy, and creation of the new ruling elite" (Arendale, 2011, p. 59). The liberal arts college is small in size, yet prides itself on its ability to "offer a highly personalized approach to teaching and learning" (Stimpert, 2004, p. 43). Scholars also argue that liberal arts colleges make up for population deficiency by maintaining a commitment to community development and general knowledge skills that prepare students for an ever-changing economy (Martínez Alemán & Salkever, 2003; Schmoll & Moses, 2002).

The first liberal arts colleges in America were rooted in the religious orders of the day; however, as higher education became more popular, the establishment of institutions "completely independent of any church" became just as appealing (Astin, 1999, p.78). The founding of Harvard College in 1636 signaled the beginning of higher education in America, but it also created a dominant, white culture that still permeates throughout modern-day institutions (Dittmer, 2017). For more than 200 years, this brand of education served the interests of the white elite. The creation of HBCUs in the 1800s provided freed slaves with the opportunity to gain some semblance of equal footing as sympathetic white people believed an educated Black population would rebuild a nation in turmoil. Government intervention, and integration, would expand these opportunities by making it unconstitutional to deny persons the right to education based on color, creed, etc. Brave, young men and women passed angry mobs that called for

anarchy and harm at the introduction of African American students to their student body. Even as African American student enrollment became more commonplace, Claerbaut (1976) believed a continued sense of disenfranchisement among those students can be attributed to an alignment between the institution and "a given ethnic-religious group" (p. 7). Integration may have given Black people access to equal opportunities; however, it had not softened the hearts and minds of those citizens wished to maintain separation of the races.

Provisions such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and rulings like *Adams v. Richardson* (1972), were passed to give underrepresented students access to institutions of higher education that had been previously inaccessible as a result of race-based policies (Orlans, 1992). *Adams v. Richardson* (1972) argued that the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) had not properly enforced the desegregation efforts, or lack thereof, of Southern states as mandated by Title VI (Byrd-Chichester, 2000). District Judge John Pratt found in favor of the plaintiffs, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and that the 10 states identified in the suit—Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Virginia--were in violation of the Title VI mandate (Drezner & Gupta, 2012, p.108). Pratt's directive was that each of the 10 states found in violation "were ordered to produce comprehensive plans for desegregating their colleges and universities, and HEW was given until June of 1974 either to approve those plans or to begin court action to cut off federal assistance to the institutions" (Egerton, 1974, p. 29). This case, and others, proved pivotal in removing barriers to diversify student, faculty, and leadership opportunities at schools with majority white student population—while also lobbying for the allocation of resources to HBCUs (Drezner & Gupta, 2012).

In a study regarding organizational success and diversity among liberal arts colleges, Winston (2001) concluded that high levels of diversity have a positive correlation to high levels of organizational success. Furthermore, Winston (2001) concluded that population demographics and accommodations for those that the leadership might serve should be accounted for when exploring the diversification of leadership. College student diversity is outpacing the diversification of collegiate faculty and executive administrative positions (Dittmer, 2017; Jackson, 2004). Statistics from Snyder, Dillow, and the National Center for Education Statistics (2013) indicate that the percentage of non-Caucasian students almost double that of non-Caucasian faculty, 38.8% to 20.7%. In a more stark contrast, the American Council on Education (2013) reports that 30% of the American college student population is comprised of students of color, dwarfing the percentage of African American senior administrators who account for 2.3% of the college executives. In other words, students of color see fewer faculty and administrators that look like them (McClain & Perry, 2017) while faculty and administrators of color struggle to navigate a "bicultural existence" in the workplace to fit in (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014, p. 240). Both severely, and negatively, affect retention of persons of color in higher education (Lewis, 2016; Simmons, 2013).

The lack of diversity in executive positions in higher education, especially at the level of president, is well documented. More than 70 % of current college and university presidents are white, in their early 60s, possess a doctoral degree, and have more than five years of presidential experience (American Council on Education, 2017). Even with a small increase in presidential diversity, 17% of college presidents are minority (non-white) college presidents; and women of color equal a little more than a third of the overall number (American Council on Education, 2017). Racial discrimination aside, women of color who are, or aspire to be, college presidents

must also contend with "gender bias and cultural differences" to persevere in workspaces where they are rare (Viernes Turner, 2007, p. 7). As higher education bears witness to what has been described as the "graying of the academy," there is an apparent need for the development of succession planning that creates opportunities for a more diverse pool of administrators to take the helm (American Council on Education, 2017).

To understand the experiences of African American/Black college presidents at HWLACs, it is important to gather the information directly from the source—other African/Black American college presidents at HWLACs. Research portrays college presidents (regardless of race or gender) as terminal degree holders, experienced faculty, and older professionals (American Council on Education, 2017). Because a large number of these individuals are white males, it could be hypothesized that race plays a larger factor in ascending to the presidency, discouraging aspirants who have not subscribed to the perceived status quo. Even if the minority candidates possessed the desired qualifications, the question remains if they would have to compete with historical biases to achieve the presidency. Soliciting the experiences of African American/Black college presidents gives voice to how the notion of a "natural progression" to the presidency holds a different meaning for minority professionals and how that understanding may influence future minority presidential candidates (Mezirow, 2003).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the career pathways of African American college presidents at HWLACs in the United States. In addition to exploring their educational and occupational pursuits that led to their presidential appointment, this study investigated the role in which race influenced their decision to pursue a presidency and their current experiences with race as the president of a HWLAC. The 2017 American Council on Education's annual

presidential survey provides a comprehensive glimpse into the profile of college presidents, including those who identify as a minority. I used a narrative inquiry approach to be more specific about the career pathways (educational and professional experiences) utilized by African American/Black presidents at HWLACs. I sought to gain insight into how their aspirations began to develop over time to pursue a presidential appointment, their experiences as an African American/Black college president at a HWLAC, and the role race has played in their presidency.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by investigating the following questions:

- What are the career pathways of African American/Black college presidents at historically white liberal arts colleges?
- What are the experiences of African American/Black college presidents at historically white liberal arts colleges?
- What influence has race had on the experiences of African American/Black college presidents at historically white liberal arts colleges?

Operational Definitions

The following terms were used consistently throughout the development of this study.

Ed.D. (Doctorate of Education) - a practitioner-based, doctoral degree program (Townsend, 2002) that "prepares students for the professional practice of educational leadership" (Eddy & Rao, 2009, p. 11).

Ph. D (Doctor of Philosophy) - a student-centric, doctoral degree program that, historically, prepares recipients to pursue research opportunities in a number of disciplines (Eddy & Rao, 2009).

Historically white liberal arts colleges (HWLACs) – institutions of higher education whose campus culture is rooted in whiteness. These institutions, typically, have majority white student populations along with an upper level administration dominated by white males (Harris & Usher, 2008).

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) – Institutions of higher education developed to educate Black/African-American students. Students who attended HBCUS found the institutions to be more supportive in their academic and social development (DeSousa & Kuh, 1996).

American Council on Education (ACE) – The American Council on Education is a membership-based, national organization designed to influence policy in higher education. Specifically, the organization sponsors a number of programs dedicated to the development of senior administrators that include women and minority groups (McDade, Dowdall, Marchese, & Polonio, 2009).

Carnegie Classification - The Carnegie Classification uses a multi-factor system to group colleges with similar characteristics. According to McCormick and Chun-Mei (2005), designations are assigned "by looking at empirical data on the type and number of degrees awarded, federal research funding, curricular specialization, and (for undergraduate colleges only) admissions selectivity and the preparation of future Ph.D. recipients" (p. 52). Using the Carnegie Classification system, liberal arts colleges are classified as *Baccalaureate Colleges: Arts and Science Focus*.

Career Pathway – Educational and professional experiences obtained by faculty and administrators that lead to desired career outcomes in higher education leadership (Nash & Wright, 2013).

Significance of the Study

The institutional climate of a college or university has significant impact on student development. Hurtado (1994) presented a four-frame concept, comprised of the "historical, structural, perceptual, and behavioral dimensions" that account for how students from marginalized populations understand how they fit into the collegiate environment (p. 22). Her study focused specifically on Latino students' socialization and persistence; however, the concept can apply to any non-white population on campuses where the institutional climate consists of a majority white administration and student body. Students of Color who often find themselves as one of a few of their race/culture among the general body experience feelings of tokenism and unsure of their abilities to influence the campus culture through their efforts inside and outside of the classroom due to a perceived lack of support (Park, 2009). Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen (1998) posit that structural diversity may provide the most physical evidence for institutional diversity, but other factors control how visible that level of diversity might be. Liberal arts colleges present the optimal environments to foster diversity due to their small size, not in how many students from diverse backgrounds they can attract and retain, but in the quality of the student's experience with individuals from another culture (Umbach & Kuh, 2006). The appointment of an African American/Black college president at a HWLAC enables the students to experience institutional diversity at the highest level.

In addition to affecting student experiences, developing a study on the experiences of African American/Black college presidents at HWLACs (and African American/Black college presidents overall) is important to developing future diversification of higher education leadership. Holmes (2004) reveals in a narrative study about the experiences of six African American college presidents that mentoring was a powerful tool in higher education. The

consensus among the six participants was that mentoring was necessary for professional growth, having found career-altering opportunities through their mentor. Additionally, the presidents indicated that they had formed cross-racial mentoring relationships in their early career with white administrators, mainly due to the lack of African American/Black administrators in their fields (Holmes, 2004). As beneficial as those cross-racial relationship might have been, race remains a factor in how the relationships are formed (Lee, 1999), or not formed, as students and future administrators place high value on race as a connection to mentors (Leon, Dougherty, & Maitland, 1997; Williams, 1997). Connecting with a mentor who holds a significant position within the institutional hierarchy, and in similar fields, was found to be the primary reason for seeking a mentoring relationship (Lee, 1999). Still, a strong need exists for students and future administrators to "to see someone like them in mainstream colleges and universities" especially at those considered predominantly white institutions (Williams, 1994, p. 20).

Theoretical Perspective

The primary theoretical foundation used in this study is critical race theory. Critical race theory finds race and racism woven into the fabric of society (Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009). It calls for the public to recognize the areas of dominance and privilege that keep People of Color in subordinate roles and disturb these atrocities where possible. The concept of white supremacy has evolved in the United States. Slave patrols administered policing measures in the colonial South to control the massive slave population in the 1700s (Turner, Giacopassi, & Vandiver, 2006). Southern rage aimed at post-Civil War operations bore the Ku Klux Klan, who used vigilante tactics and blatant terror to preserve their claim to power, lasting well into the twentieth century (Verdugo, 2014). Today, white supremacy manifests itself as extremist, white preservation societies such the League of the South and the Council for Conservative Citizens

American Rights (McVeigh, 2004). In 2016, the presidential candidacy and election of President Donald Trump empowered the Alt-right movement, imploring the white man (or woman) to subscribe to a nationalist and race-baiting agenda that pits "'us' versus 'them'" (Kardaş, 2017, p. 98). An example of this ideology can be seen in the Charlottesville protests where white nationalists squared off against a litany of counter-protestors over the preservation of Confederate monuments, a riotous scene that ended in the death of a white female who participated in the demonstrations against the divisive antagonists (Pearce, Armengol, & Cloud, 2017). It has, however, become more common for white supremacy to take form as a more subdued type discrimination through exclusionary practices in executive boardrooms where white, cisgender males decide who enters their ranks (Parsons & Plakhotnic, 2006).

Critical race theory is rooted in the study of law. Social justice scholars and law professors, Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado laid the foundation for critical race theory in the 1970s to supplement achievements of the Civil Rights movement and to combat the less overt, but still scathing, display of racism of the day (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Critical race theory is comprised of five tenets, each proposing a means to normalize racism. The first tenet suggests "racism is difficult to address or cure because it is not acknowledged" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 8). Both white and Black people prefer equal treatment to confronting racial discrimination unless it is under the most egregious of circumstances (Crenshaw, 2000).

The second tenet of critical race theory suggests that white people would rather maintain the status quo of racism in America. Termed as *interest convergence,* white people become advocates for racial equality as long as the outcome benefits them (Bell, 1980). The desegregation of public schools is often the most common example used in literature. Embroiled in the Cold War, because of strained relations post-World War II between the Soviet Union and

the United States (and other nations), desegregation represented commitment to exhibiting human decency in the United States (Dudziak, 1995; Noblit & Mendez, 2008). The *Brown v. Board* (1954) decision provided the proper front for white elites to maintain control over the educational systems, developing bussing policies to satisfy desegregation plans and, in some cases, creating "segregation academies" that were maintained by local government and private supporters to preserve Southern status quo (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 7). Black children would benefit through access to proper educational facilities and instruction (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Fast forward to present day, a more recent study suggests that the election of President Barack Obama as the first African American President of the United States was orchestrated to serve liberal and conservative interests that portrayed the U.S. as an increasingly progressive nation (Delgado, 2015).

The third tenet of critical research theory characterizes race as a social construct (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The dominant group defines what race is and assigns it to whomever they perceive fits said description. An example of how this concept manifests itself in society might be as visible as differentiating who belongs to what "race" by the color of the individual's skin. Additionally, the association of stereotypical characteristics to individuals based on their skin color, religion, or geographic origin prove to be just as much of a detriment to human relations.

The fourth tenet, differential racialization, suggests that the dominant race characterizes minority populations based on their perceptions of how races are expected to exist within society. This aligns with stereotypical images like the "Black Sambo" or radicalized Muslims (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This concept also questions the intersectionality of racial groups and that there is no uniform identity among human beings (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

The fifth, and final, tenant suggests that People of Color have a “unique” story to tell white people about their lived experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 10). This notion holds some truth, however, there is no guarantee that one story mirrors the other. An example of this is the assumption that a Black male from urban California can attest to the same experience surrounding race and diversity as a Black male from rural Georgia (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examines career pathways of African American/Black college presidents who have assumed the role of president at historically white liberal arts colleges (HWLACs). Additionally, the study will inspect how these individuals have experienced race upon their ascent to the presidency and how it has prepared them to lead institutions that were not built by individuals of color.

In this chapter, I explore the literature associated with diversity within higher education leadership, specifically, the role of president, and how race affects the diversification of this manifestation of race in today's society. Next, I explore the literature on the history of liberal arts colleges in the United States. Developing an understanding of how whiteness has, and continues to, manifest itself within these spaces sets the foundation for the discussion of a lack of diversity among its students, faculty, and administrators. Additionally, the literature review will analyze the literature on the American college presidency and what opportunities higher education administrators have to achieve the goal of becoming a president as well as the impact of race within "the academy," the proverbial proving ground for faculty and administrators to exercise their presidential aspirations. Finally, the literature explores the profile of African American/Black college presidents and the influence of their appointments on American higher education leadership.

Historical Context of Liberal Arts Colleges in the United States

The liberal arts education spans millennia, and believed to date back to the time of the Greek philosopher Socrates (Ryan, 2009). The style of education was termed "*liberalis"* and students were known as "*liberales,"* references to a curriculum that was designed to inspire independent thought (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 267). The basis of the liberal arts education focused on two categories of instruction. The *trivium* focused on "literary arts" while the *quadrivium* focused on "mathematical arts" (Van, 2011, p. 234). The *trivium* included a curriculum that stressed the importance of language and grammar. The *quadrivium* encompasses arithmetic and geometry, but also includes arts and the sciences. Over the course of history, institutions of higher education began sprouting about in larger, Western European culture centers such as "Bologna, Paris, Salerno, and, a little later, Oxford" in the 1100s (Shugart, 2013, p. 9). Access to education abided by systems where opportunity belonged to those who had significant means, or free men, while those whom were laborers did not have the leisure to participate in getting an education (Margaret & Polet, 2002). As a result, the European college model favored a smaller classroom model that is still evident in today's liberal arts institutions (Van, 2011).

The Colonial College

The colonial college sought to develop "civic and religious leaders" in 17th century America (Boyer, 1996, p. 19). English migration to the New World offered the promise of freedom to worship in the new colonies; however, Puritan leaders persecuted anyone who did not conform to their ideals of Christianity (Barry, 2015). White, privileged children reaped the benefits of a low student-to-teacher ratio concept and were afforded residential housing that fostered social and intellectual experiences under the watchful eyes of their religious administration (House, 2003). Honing the "skills of the ruling class" would remain largely

consistent throughout the existence of the liberal arts college even after the development of HBCUs and other minority serving institutions (Lind, 2006, p. 54).

Harvard College, the first of its kind in the United States, built its foundation on the Calvinist faith in 1636 (Sharpless, 1915; Tachikawa, 2016). Among its early faculty, and its founders, were English, college-educated men who sought to revive the customs of the mother country and establish itself as a religious power in colonial Massachusetts (Rudolph, 1991). Over the course of the next 120 years, eight additional establishments would claim the same designation of *colonial college*. Those institutions were William & Mary, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, Brown University, Rutgers University, and Dartmouth College (Drezner, 2006). Six of them, now, hold the distinction of being labeled an Ivy League school.

The Liberal Arts Curriculum

The liberal arts curriculum has evolved over time. Still, the focus remains on training the mind of the whole student, "training for citizenship" that empowers the learner to become an active participant in society (Lind, 2006, p. 52). Denham (2002) arranged the evolution of the liberal arts curriculum into three distinct periods, two of which were deeply entrenched in the humanities. During the colonial period, the academy relied on the European education model that emphasized "both the Reformation and the Renaissance" (Denham, 2002, p. 5). Tachikawa (2016) counted Hebrew and Greek as major subjects in Harvard's early curriculum. In addition to the classical languages, "Latin…rhetoric, literature, divinity, ethics, arithmetic and geometry, physics, natural and moral philosophy, astronomy, and some history" were also subjects of study (House, 2003, p. 481). The curriculum was designed to assist students with developing a deeper understanding of God and, ultimately, transform them into a good people (Nguyen & Null,

2008). Ultimately, it was the lure of the sciences that inspired early college administrators, scholars, and the ruling elite to choose experiential learning over a God-centered education (Denham, 2002).

Denham (2002) identified the second period between 1789 and 1865 as an expansion of higher education. Liberal arts education began to take a turn towards the 18th and 19th centuries, adding mathematics and sciences to the curriculum and shifting away from Christian indoctrination (Nguyen & Null, 2008; Tachikawa, 2016). As a result, the number of liberal arts colleges increased with modified curriculums, including Union College which "became the first liberal arts college in the nation to include engineering in its curriculum" (Denham, 2002, p. 7). In addition to engineering, colleges began to institute programs in the humanities, arts, education, and healthcare (Cohen, 1998; Denham, 2002). This would prove to be beneficial as colleges began to open for women and freed Black people. In a response to the changing landscape of education, the Yale Report of 1828 argued that a core curriculum is necessary to student development and that there was room for both old and new methods (Denham, 2002). The third period, the post-Civil War Reconstruction and Industrialization, saw a development of colleges that enabled the American population to strengthen the workforce. The obliteration of slavery toppled a vile economic system, forcing both white and Black populations to adjust to the change and seek education for specific careers (Denham, 2002). By this time, a number of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were established to provide a vocational education to freed Black people.

Black People and the Liberal Arts

Black people have long been exposed to studying the classical arts prior to migration to the American colonies (Goings & O'Connor, 2010). The legacy of higher education in Africa,

and possibly the world, can be traced to the Nile River Valley "as early as 4100 BC" and had provided the foundation for the European conception of liberal arts through the Greek philosopher Thales (Cook, 2014, p. 687). Both versions exhibited similar adherence to strong moral values and critical thinking skills that would be beneficial to existing population (Cook, 2014); however, the Westernized version of a liberal arts education was though to value the acquisition of power and status as a result of participation in learning activities (Agresto, 1999).

The advent of HBCUs in post-Civil War America provided the answer to educating the newly freed slaves (Goings & O'Connor, 2010). The basic concepts of a liberal arts education--reading, writing, and arithmetic--represented new possibilities for former slaves. A proper education provides a few points of pride, including the ability to make an honest wage and the opportunity to transfer skills acquired to a larger population of slaves who were just as eager to be educated, including their families (Goings & O'Connor, 2010). Private, white benefactors and sympathetic groups from the North bankrolled these operations in favor of helping redevelop a broken nation with functionally literate Black people through general education, and later vocational skills that were supported by whites looking to maintain societal dominance (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Redd, 1998).

One important aspect in the debate of the advancement of Black people in America pit Booker T. Washington's industrial education against that of the liberal arts education championed by W.E.B. DuBois. Washington, a former slave, had navigated his way to the Hampton Institute, the brainchild of Samuel Chapman Armstrong, which favored manual labor as educational and a means of economic freedom (Beyer, 2010). As President of the Tuskegee Institute, Washington believed that African Americans could achieve a purposeful existence by supplying the labor force to rebuild the American infrastructure after the Civil War (Generals,

2000) and gain equality through achieving "a substantial level of economic success" (Vela, 2002, p. 88). In his famous address to white America, known as the Atlanta Compromise, Washington bargained for Black peoples' civility for Southern white aid to support industrial education (Rucker & Jubilee, 2007).

Opposite of Washington's plan for the race, the Harvard-educated W.E.B. DuBois posited that Black people raise their position in American society by supplementing economic power with intellectualism and cultural acuity through "higher education and education in the liberal arts" (Dennis, 1998, p. 150). DuBois recognized that there was merit to Washington's advocacy for a more practical, educational experience. Where he mainly opposed Washington's philosophy was that the focus was too narrow-minded in that it only prepared Black people to be subordinates and not prepared to be engaged in societal matters outside of their roles as day laborers (Williams, 2004). DuBois believed that racial uplift would be achieved through developing a "talented tenth," a Black elitist society that included "lawyers, doctors, professors, and other professional positions" (Aldridge, 1999, p. 362) to challenge white supremacy in early 20th century America (Cain, 1995). By rivaling their white (and often, male) counterparts in vocation and political power, Black people could participate in the processes involved with creating equal opportunities for the race as a whole.

The American College Presidency

The American Council on Education (ACE) provides a periodic look at the overall landscape of American college presidents, and the face of leadership has largely remained unchanged. Since 1986, the American college president has been characterized as an older (60+), married white male with a Christian religious affiliation, a terminal degree, and previous experience as a college president (American Council on Education, 2017).

Traditional Pathways

ACE's Presidential Survey is not the blueprint for achieving the college presidency. Presidential aspirants are, however, encouraged to pursue educational and professional experiences that enhance their candidacy. Aspirants who have achieved a doctoral degree (Ph.D. or Ed.D.), or a terminal degree, are widely considered desirable candidates as they have proven they possess the intellectual capacity and wherewithal to seek the highest level of education in their respective fields.

In 2016, more than 42% of American college presidents have risen to the position after serving as the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) of an institution of higher education, typically, in the role of provost or senior academic affairs administrator (American Council on Education, 2017). Those numbers have remained consistent since 2001, peaking in 2011, when CAOs at 59.5 % (doctoral degree granting institutions), 44.7 % (master's institutions), and 44.2 % (bachelor's institutions) were appointed president of a college or university (American Council on Education, 2017). The remaining percentages are spread over a number of administrative positions, including previously serving as a president at another institution, a senior campus administrator, or working outside of education all together (American Council on Education, 2017).

The starting point of a chief academic officer begins with incremental advancement from the role of faculty member, receiving an increasing amount of managerial duties as the individual is promoted from "faculty to department chair to dean to CAO" (Mech, 1997, p. 283). It is common that chief academic officers balance duties that serve a myriad of constituents. Mintzbergh and Alexander's managerial role frameworks offer a glimpse into just how complex the roles of CAOs are (Mech, 1997). The main job of the CAO is to serve as the "administrative

head with responsibility for all academic affairs at the institution" and a member of the president's executive team, a role reserved for leaders of their respective divisions (Murray, Murray, & Summar, 2000, p.22). Mech (1997) posited that because there is not a formal training program for CAOs, possessing keen interpersonal and organizational skills to navigate relationships among the mid-level management and the faculty base as well as monitoring academic well-being of the institution.

Nontraditional Pathways

While at least 42% of higher education administrators advance to the presidency from the CAO position, in 2016, that still leaves another 58% that advance to the presidency through other routes (American Council on Education, 2017). An increasing number of leaders who have risen to the position by sharpening their skills in the higher education field have come from outside of the faculty track. Depending on the prestige and institutional offerings of the institution, the percentage of individuals who ascend to the presidency from a non-academic affairs position ranged anywhere from 20 % to 37 % in 2016 (American Council on Education, 2017). Those positions include other senior administrative positions at institutions of higher education, such as chief diversity officer, chief student affairs officer, or otherwise. Additionally, some presidents who are considered nontraditional have "no professional experiences in higher education" at all (Wollen, 2016, p. 3). That includes former leaders/educators of K-12 institutions, business executives, senior clergy, former politicians, and nonprofit executives might be selected to operate at the helm (American Council on Education, 2017).

College presidents who do not come from the academic affairs side of higher education are becoming more common at liberal arts institutions, where "a third of the 2014 generation of presidents at stand-alone liberal arts colleges are nontraditional" (Beardsley, 2017, p. 47).

Nontraditional pathways are described by any career experience that is outside of the scope of the faculty-to-senior administration route. That also includes non-faculty related departments on college campuses. Because liberal arts institutions and colleges in general, are increasingly faced with challenges that need innovative solutions, nontraditional presidents present the opportunity for institutions to breathe new life into a position that demands a lot of the appointee. An argument can be made that candidates from nontraditional backgrounds might be more prepared to handle the pressure of issues outside the scope of academia. Adaptability and ambition are essential to the chief executive experience (Beardsley, 2017). Additionally, nontraditional candidates exhibit a proneness to be more visible and engaging with constituents outside of the academy as well as challenging the status quo to address issues that potentially negatively affect the institution (Beardsley, 2017).

Responsibilities & Duties

Higher education leadership requires a myriad of skills to take on senior-level administrative tasks at the highest level. The higher education enterprise is now evolving into a more business-centered model of operation, balancing market trends, and knowledge creation with revenue development and cost saving measures (Mellow & Woolis, 2010). Serving at the pleasure of a diversified constituency that includes students, alumni, government, and faculty carries a number of "expectations and concerns" (Mohnot & Shaw, 2017, p. 408) that leaders must contend with to be successful at their position (Conway, Mackay, & Yorke, 1994; Sathye, 2004).

Bolman and Gallos' (2011) two-part model champions exposure to experiences that develop "a vision and setting goals" to stimulate their intellectual acuity (Mohnot & Shaw, 2017, p. 408). Additionally, the second part of the model encourages behaviors that promote

socioemotional learning necessary to future administrators to meet the needs and challenges of the respective departments/institutions (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). In contrast, Mohnot's Academic, Administrative, Liaising, and Global Contextual model offers a more comprehensive approach (Mohnot & Shaw, 2017). There is an emphasis placed on the acquiring formal education and the understanding of higher education concepts; talent management; networking; and addressing "contemporary issues" (Mohnot & Shaw, 2017, p. 408). It is widely acknowledged, and backed by statistics, that race and gender remain a factor in the diversification of executive leadership in higher education (Fisher & Koch, 1996). Subscribing to a more comprehensive leadership model, along with aligning with an institution that is committed to administrative and faculty diversity, would prove beneficial to women and individuals of color in their efforts to compete in a white male-dominated industry.

Pitfalls

It is understood that the American college presidency is not the easiest of jobs. Whether traditional or nontraditional, college presidents face tremendous pressures to deliver leadership that satisfies the expectations of multiple constituencies. In her book, *On Being Presidential*, Pierce (2011) highlights five areas where college and university presidents often fall short—effectively derailing the goals of the institution along with the tenure of the president.

Judgement. The president ultimately serves as the chief executive office of the institution; however, the individual's decision-making is constantly critiqued based on their abilities to meet university objectives. Examples of actions include gross mismanagement of funds for the personal benefit of the president, unceremonious layoffs without warning, and unpopular cuts to student activities (Pierce, 2011). Presidents are expected to display some level of rationality when carrying out decisions that impact the institution yet, the president might

choose to satisfice constituents in fear of uncertainty (Simon, 1993) and their own "unconscious biases and conceptions of purpose" (Tarter & Hoy, 1998, p. 213).

Communication. The effectiveness of presidential communication is not limited to the actual message, but also the method of communication, the confidence in communicating that message, and the intended impact of the message being communicated (Bourgeois, 2016). Failure to communicate important decisions to governing boards or berating staff/faculty with disparaging remarks have created toxic environments that negatively affect a president's tenure (Pierce, 2011).

Management Style. Risk and financial management are two major cogs in the development of competent higher education administrators (Paige, Norwood, & Noe 2013). Mitigating the number of risks that could potentially affect the business of the institution in a negative way often comes when the president has not accurately assessed the pros and cons of decisions (Paige, Norwood, & Noe 2013). This includes properly managing the institution's ability to maintain financial resources. Presidents are responsible for having working knowledge of the institution's financial status and, more often than not, asked to contribute to the financial institution through fundraising activities. The longevity of the president's tenure might very well lie in the balance depending on his/her ability to do so (Pati & Lee, 2016).

Planning. Strategic planning is a fluid, adaptable process that "requires an appreciation of where the institution and its members have come from, their current state of development and their aspirations for future growth" (Delprino, 2013, p. 79). Presidents must balance their ambitions and plans for a modernized institution with the available, and forecasted, financial resources to ensure they do not lose sight of the mission of the institution or overpromise new changes that place those resources in jeopardy (Pierce, 2011).

Visibility. Relationship building is critical to presidential effectiveness and it is important that the president create a culture of transparency and collegiality (Pierce, 2011; Woollen, 2016). When presidents choose to lead with deceit or take a cavalier approach to decision-making, the individual risks career and the well-being of the institution by conflicting with its constituents (Pierce, 2011).

Diversification of the American College Presidency

The American College Presidents Study recognizes the importance of the diversification of the presidency to the promotion of equity and inclusion among its student body populations (American Council on Education, 2017). Centuries of organizational culture established by white elitists have placed talented, non-Caucasian higher education faculty and administrators at an unfair disadvantage concerning employment (Dittmer, 2017). Today, changes in how current and future generations of students are educated and what is expected of those who lead them are triggering an evolution of the American higher education system, including liberal arts colleges (Baker & Baldwin, 2015). Like other institutions of higher education, liberal arts colleges are battling against rising tuition costs, streamlined delivery of educational objectives, and job placement (Baker, Baldwin, & Makker, 2012). The diversification of the American college presidency might prove to be a step in the proper direction to address these changes.

By increasing diversity among American college presidents, institutions and students are both likely to gain from the appointment. Institutions mired in controversy over a historical lack of diversity in their professional ranks are able to exhibit a show of progressiveness to their stakeholders. Additionally, students of different backgrounds can look to the appointment of the president as a win diversity, with hopes that the administrator plans to address concerns overlooked by previous administrations. Unfortunately, strategies to attract minority candidates

have been thwarted by universities turning to experienced, white male candidates to fill vacancies (American Council on Education 2017). Even with the inclusion of HBCUs and minority-serving institutions, presidents who identify as any other race except white/Caucasian make up less than 20 % of the presidential population, with African American presidents accounting for only 8% of the total number (American Council on Education, 2017). African American women seeking to ascend to executive leadership positions also bear the dual burden of racial and gender bias. Female candidates have been scrutinized more about their abilities to adapt to the institutional climate or how they plan to handle familial responsibilities in addition to their ability to perform the duties as president (Jackson & Harris, 2005).

Perpetuating Racism in the Academy

According to Denton (1997), institutional racism on college campuses is not as overt as it had once been prior to civil rights laws passed less than 60 years ago. Rising to the level of tenured faculty or senior administrator is not impossible, however, small steps in creating inclusion are still overshadowed by exclusionary practices caused by a white monopoly in higher education. The concept of racism has evolved since the Civil Rights era (Hudson, 1999). Persons of Color may not be terrorized in the streets by vigilantes wearing menacing hoods or deliberate signs that dictate privilege, but racism now manifests itself in the form of social behaviors designed to "systematically (dis)advantage certain groups" (Clair & Denis, 2015, p. 858). Clair and Denis (2015) describe these attitudes as *new racism*, practices that white people use to support equitable treatment on the surface, but do not advocate for provisions that level the playing field of access and inclusion.

Symbolic racism replaced the traditional form of racist behavior exhibited towards Black people prior to the Civil Rights movement (Kinder & Sears, 1981). With segregationist practices

having been legally deemed unconstitutional, animosity towards Black people was attributed to those legal actions creating opportunities for equality (Esposito & Romano, 2014). It was believed that programs such as welfare, bussing, and affirmative action created a culture of laziness among Black people that "violated such traditional American values as individualism and self-reliance, the work ethic, obedience, and discipline" (Kinder & Sears, 1981, p. 416). In another form of new racism, termed *laissez-faire racism*, scholars contend that the transformation of blatant and overt racism to a more defensible form of discrimination that can be explained by Blumer's group position theory. (Bobo, Kluegel, & Smith, 1997). In Blumer's group position theory, the white, dominant group perceives equal rights policies as a threat to dominance pre-dating the Jim Crow era (Samson, 2013). Thus, white privilege needed to be validated because the crutch of economic and political power were no longer viable (Bobo et al., 1997).

Colorblind racism allows white people take an objective approach to absolve themselves of guilt and the responsibility of confronting racist ideologies (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Harper, 2012). White people rationalize dominance and systematic discrimination through the lens of progress, societal need, and lack of understanding how the world works (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Martinez, 2009). As a result, explaining the low number of administrators and faculty of color in higher education could be justified by the lack of tenure-track/executive positions or lack of education/credentials (Martinez, 2009).

Implicit bias refers to consistent exposure to "images, attitudes, and assumptions" (Marks, 2015, p. 22) set the tone for assumptions, positive or negative, that drive one groups' perceptions (Clair & Denis, 2015). Stereotyping becomes an unconscious act that is intended to carry no ill will as little thought is put into what is being expressed, however, the receiver of the

behavior experiences angst and distress as a result (Massey, 2011; Trower, 2009). Examples of implicit bias against People of Color in higher education would be evident in how they are treated based on the spelling of their names or how they choose to wear their hair. Responses to these interactions may vary, including covering-up their authentic selves and assimilating into the institutional culture to mitigate risk of upsetting white colleagues (Aziz, 2015).

The concept of racialization can be described by certain attributes (physical or intellectual) and experiences, or lack thereof, prescribed to certain groups of people (Clair & Denis, 2015; Duhaney, 2010; Vasquez, 2010). Outsiders are often prejudged about their abilities to reach standards of "success, progress, and quality" as forms of racial profiling supported by white privilege that created those standards (Iverson & Jaggers, 2015, p. 39). An example of racialization in higher education leadership is the concept of pigeonholing African Americans into diversity or multicultural positions. Scott (2016) warns against African American male administrators taking on these positions and limiting advancement options that are not aligned with senior executive positions.

African American/Black College Presidents

It is important to note that the reference to a "Black" college president (or administrator) is all-encompassing with respect to the racial classification of persons who identify as African, West Indian, and African American as that these racial groups share a bond as products of the African continent prior to slavery (Jackson & Cothran, 2003). A level of strife that exists due to the assimilation, or lack thereof, of individuals into European groupthink that further separates them from their cultural roots. An example that speaks to the need to make this distinction can be found in the origins of Dr. Wayne A.I. Frederick, president of Howard University, who is a native of Trinidad and Tobago (Wayne Frederick, 2014).

The Black college president remains something of an anomaly in higher education. It is more common to find research that exists regarding Black college presidents at HBCUs than predominantly white, four-year institutions due to more individuals occupying presidential appointments at HBCUs. Patrick Healy, a Jesuit priest, became the first person of "African descent" to lead a predominantly white institution with his appointment to president at Georgetown University in 1873 (Fikes, 2003, p. 121). Slavery had not yet fallen when he was ordained in the faith, however, his fair complexion offered him the benefit of a child born of an illicit affair between master and slave, the benefit to pass through society with fewer barriers. HBCUs aside, no other African American/Black person held a presidential appointment at a predominantly white institution until Clifton Wharton, Jr. became the first African-American to be named president of Michigan State University in 1969 (Fikes, 2003). In another 15 years, Wilbert Lemelle would be chosen to lead the private, liberal arts centered Mercy college, "a four-year, predominantly white college in Dobbs Ferry, New York" (Fikes, 2003, p. 121). Incrementally, more would follow Healy, Wharton, and Lemelle to the presidential post, shattering the racial barriers of institutions that had only less than a quarter of a century ago refused to grant them admission. Morris (2015) noted that "when excluding minority-serving institutions, the percentage of minority presidents stayed at 9 percent from 2006 to 2012" (p. 11). Since then, the percentage has slightly increased to 16.8 percent, 7.9 percent of those being African-American (American Council on Education, 2017). In the next section, I will explore the characteristics or career path similarities exhibited by these individuals.

Terminal Degree(s)

One common denominator among the professional profile of college presidents, regardless of race, gender, or otherwise, is the possession of a terminal degree (American

Council on Education, 2017). By all academic standards, terminal degrees (e.g., J.D., Ph.D., Ed.D.) represent the pinnacle of educational pursuit, a mastery of technical concepts and skills that prepare recipients for scholarly and career advancement. Shockingly, even with the increase of minority student enrollment and the attainment of advanced degrees by minorities, only a small percentage of Black educators enter the college presidency pipeline.

Navigating the pathway to the presidency has proven to be difficult for African American administrators based on a number of factors, including a lack of experiences and education (Holmes, 2004). With respect to the attainment of terminal degrees (including J.D. M.D., etc.), more than 180,000 doctoral degrees were conferred in the United States in the 2016-17 school year, accounting for almost nine percent of the total number of doctoral degrees who identified as African American/Black (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018a).

Faculty Appointment

There were at least seven times as many white male and female faculty members than any other racial or ethnic group of faculty in 2015 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). The percentage of Black faculty members at some of the highest rated institutions "are significantly below the national average of 5.2 percent" ("Black Faculty," 2007, p. 67). For instructors who chose to persist to the level of faculty (specifically, tenured faculty), they find themselves at a crossroads in pursuit of their research interests, navigating advancement, multiple levels of discrimination, and their ability to navigate campus politics (Stanley, 2006). While present-day student populations in higher education have shifted to exhibit a more diverse makeup, the power afforded to white faculty members, because of their "white racial identity," (Abdul-Raheem, 2016, p. 53) allows them to maintain control over how issues of race and culture are addressed inside and outside of the classroom (Quaye, 2012).

Administrative Pathway

If achieving a doctoral, or terminal, degree is not hard enough, ascending the ranks of a sparsely diverse working culture like higher education leadership presents an even bigger challenge for African American/Black higher education administrators. In Fall 2017, African American/Black higher education executives and senior administrators, male and female, accounted for approximately 10% of the total executive/managerial personnel in higher education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018b). In addition to advancement to executive/managerial positions being hindered by racial inequality in higher education, Scott (2016) posited that pigeonholing also affects chances for advancement, suggesting that positions in diversity matters limit the scope of their total experience as an administrator.

A Portrait of African American/Black Presidents in Higher Education

The legacy of the Black people in HBCU college presidency begins in 1863 with Bishop Daniel Payne, the 1st president of Wilberforce University; however, "his historical significance as a president has not made it into higher education literature" (Freeman, 2010, p. 158). Other private institutions founded by Black people would soon follow including the Tuskegee Institute and Bethune-Cookman College (Tradition, 1997). Yet, even in the advent of their own institutions, leadership was not automatically bestowed to the care of formally educated Black people. The Morrill Act of 1890 mandated that Southern states provide accommodations for Black institutions to exist (Gasman, 2009) with the caveat that these states would continue to "gain access to federal funds in order to develop White land-grant colleges" (Fryer & Greenstone, 2010, p. 119). By championing a largely industrial curriculum of study at these institutions, white reformists believed that Black people would achieve a level of self-sufficiency to maintain the docility of their slave pasts while serving the interests of Southern white society

through labor (Dennis, 2001). Backed by *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which provided separate but equal accommodations complied with the law as HBCUs provided Black people with their share of access to a public education (Fryer & Greenstone, 2010). Gasman (2011) revealed that a number of HBCUs were still under the leadership of white, male presidents up until the mid-twentieth century, which created a level of discord among the race with regards to the abilities of Black administrators of the day.

HBCU presidents' background characteristics slightly above the overall American college president profile in terms of average age and length of service as a president; however, an overwhelming majority of HBCU presidents have "obtained doctoral degrees in education or higher education from predominantly white institutions" (American Council on Education, 2017; Freeman and Gasman, 2014, p. 19). A number of their paths to the HBCU presidency run parallel to that of other institutions of higher learning by them making their way through the academic rank, however, the authors note examples of nontraditional hires were not out of the question. The religious affiliations of the instructions remain, yet no literature has come forth to speak to the impact that the religious beliefs of the individual influence their capability to do the job or be selected for the position of a school with a particular affiliation. Additionally, the president must have a deep appreciation for the history of HBCUs and its overall influence on Black scholarship.

Patrick Healy, the first Black president of Georgetown University, was the first of more than 100 Black higher education administrators to hold the title of president (or the chief management role) at a four-year predominantly white institution from 1873 to 2004 (Fikes, 2003). In 1969, Clifton Wharton was named president, the first African American president, at Michigan State University (Fikes, 2003). Dr. Ruth Simmons, became the first Black president of

Brown University in 2000, signifying that there might be a changing of the perceptions about Black leadership among the most elite institutions of higher education (Roach & Brown, 2001). There has been a trend in diversity hiring, that as recent as 2013, seven small, private liberal arts colleges with majority-white student populations have chosen Black administrators to lead their respective institutions (N. Lewis, 2016). Black administrators, however, have not fared as well when penetrating the ranks at public institutions, especially in the South. Dr. Rodney Bennett was named the president of the University of Southern Mississippi in 2013 (University of Southern Mississippi, 2017). Until his appointment "no Black person has served as the president or chief executive of a predominantly white four-year college or university in the former Confederate states of Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Louisiana" (Fikes, 2003, p. 122). A major inhibitor to diversifying the college presidency at predominantly white, four-year institutions has been the lack of access to the advancement pipeline (Jones, 2014). Administrators aspiring to senior positions have long subscribed to a level of scholarship and leadership positions to secure support for future opportunities. Unfortunately, issues such as workplace socialization and persistence levels have dogged aspirants for quite some time.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the qualitative research design employed to complete this research study. In this chapter, I describe the methodology used in this study as well as my plan for selecting participants. The description of the qualitative design includes the data collection strategy, participant selection and solicitation. I conclude the chapter outlining how the data was analyzed for credibility and trustworthiness.

Klenke, Wallace, and Martin (2015) define qualitative research as "a process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting or context" (p. 6). A key part to understanding the lack of diversity in the American college presidency, especially at HWLACs, is to gather in-depth data chronicling those experiences. Employing a qualitative research design calls for engaging in a number of collection strategies that allow data to be analyzed and interpreted for future use (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One of the most common of those strategies is conducting interviews to extract rich data to inform the study, making up for the lack of observation of "behavior, feelings, and how people interpret the world around them" (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016, p. 108).

Positionality

My educational and professional experiences often find me as one of few persons of color in higher education leadership. It is important that I acknowledge my biases toward the deficit research that exists surrounding the lack of diversity in addition to my ambitions as a future college president (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also acknowledge that my roles as both a mid-

career higher education administrator and doctoral student in student affairs leadership might influence the study based on my own experiences and perceptions about the study (Guido, Lincoln, & Chavez, 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

A recent conversation with a sitting college president, a white male, in his 60s, who had served as both a faculty member and administrator at the predominantly white institution, left me questioning the concept of inequality in the American college presidency, specifically at predominantly white institutions. When asked about his own ascent (which I was aware of prior to our meeting), and what advice he had for aspiring presidents, he responded by describing his path as a "natural progression." Institutional diversity is paraded around as a marketing tool and ratings booster, yet, at the highest levels of the academy, People of Color are disproportionately represented. Only a handful of the individuals in the room, most of whom were faculty and administrators in areas of diversity relations, could be identified as African American/Black and I left that event wondering what a natural progression looked like for an African American/Black college president. The research is clear that African Americans/Black people lag in both the advanced levels of education and experiences that warrant promotion within higher education (Holmes, 2004). My work and educational experiences hardly measured up to the president, having toiled for more than 11+ years in subordinate enrollment services roles with elevated titles. While I will surely pass him on the number of degrees earned, the pipeline to the chief executive position of a college feels no more natural than it did when I started researching this topic.

I examined the career pathways and experiences with race of African American/Black college presidents at HWLACs to shed light on the glaring deficit of African American/Black administrators in higher education. Historically, there has been little evidence of a "natural

progression" for administrators of color to follow, in a system where the leadership is littered with older, white men (Bourgeois, 2016). If institutions of higher education are sincerely committed to attaining a level of diversity that is reflective of today's society, it must begin with diversifying senior leadership that bring a fresh perspective as to how today's liberal arts institutions will educate and thrive.

Theoretical Framework & Epistemology

This study uses a critical/transformative paradigm to inform the study on the experiences of African American/Black college presidents at HWLACs. I sought to understand not only the career experiences of the African American/Black presidents, but also develop an understanding of the challenges that race presents throughout those experiences (Mertens, 2010). A critical/transformative paradigm challenges ideas perceived to be normative behavior towards oppressed or disadvantaged groups (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). According to Guido et al., (2010), one of the basic tenets of the critical paradigm is the "structural/historical insight developed through a dialog often by uncovering stories using a historic, economic, or sociocultural lens" (p. 9). The use of a critical/transformative paradigm supports exploring the research topic through the lens of critical race theory where the stories of the research participants are extracted to highlight the accomplishments of African American/Black college presidents and their persistence to lead environments where People of Color are underrepresented on all levels (Johnson & Quaye, 2017).

The axiology of the critical/transformative paradigm is rooted in equity and social justice (Linder, 2015; Mertens, 2010). In this study, research participants discussed their experiences as African American/Black college presidents HWLACs and the role race played in those experiences. The ontology of the critical/transformative paradigm defines what is real through

the historical lens of how the influence unfair and unequitable practices or opinions had on the experiences of the participants (Guido et al., 2010; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Linder 2015; Mertens, 2010). The epistemology of the critical/transformative paradigm is described as a transactional experience between the researcher and the researched (Guido et al., 2010; Linder, 2015, Mertens, 2010). A critical/transformative epistemology supports the need for a qualitative research methodology, such as narrative inquiry, where knowledge is shared through discourse and "empowering to those without power" (Jones, Torres, & Armino, 2014; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Linder, 2015; Mertens, 2010, p. 32).

Drawing upon the fifth tenet of critical race theory, highlighted by revealing personal narratives, I developed qualitative interview protocol to draw out specifics about the participants' experiences to inform both white and Black audiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In addition to data collection, critical race theory informed how I analyzed the data collected from the interview. Graham, Brown-Jeffy, Aronson, and Stephens (2011) suggest approaching the analysis of the data from a critical lens should be rooted in the historical context of racism in higher education.

Narrative Inquiry

I used a narrative inquiry approach for this study. The study sought an understanding of the experiences of African American/Black college presidents at HWLACs through an account of the participants' experiences over the course of their careers in higher education. Using a narrative inquiry approach, I gathered rich data to reinforce the known experiences of the participant group but also reveal more intimate details to enhance the data collection process (Guido, et. al, 2010).

Narrative inquiry is supported through the art of storytelling. Storytelling is ages old, chronicling our existence and passing on culture; however, it was not until the 20th century that it became recognized as a "source of understanding the meaning of human experience" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 34). Narrative inquiry drives data collection, analysis, and reporting strategies for this research study. Narrative inquiry creates, or explains, meaning through storytelling and serves "as a way of understanding experience" (MacDonald, 2014, p. 255) with the intent of creating change for the participant and the reader (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I chose narrative inquiry because it provides opportunity to bring the accounts of African American/Black presidents at HWLACs to a public audience (Polkinghorne, 2005). Because of the small number of presidents who fit the description for the study, and the low numbers of African American/Black individuals entering the college presidency overall, the stories revealed could be as reflective and therapeutic for the participant as it is inspirational and informative for those who read the study.

Using a narrative inquiry approach, I interviewed eight participants about their career paths leading up to, and throughout, their appointment as an African American/Black college president at a HWLAC. Additionally, I explored the participants' experiences with race in the academy and its influence on their time as president. I developed the interview protocol with the understanding that narratives connect separate events to "increase our understanding" and "display the significance that events have for one another" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 13). Also, narratives should explain social constructs for specific audiences (Riessman, 2008). Additionally, narrative interviews ought to make meaning of participants' experiences for self-reflection (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Participants

Participants who identified as African-American/Black, higher education administrators who serve (or served) as president at HWLACs in the United States were recruited for this study. Initially, I reviewed a list of institutions considered by the Carnegie Foundation as "Baccalaureate Arts and Sciences" to provide a selection of institutions where participants served in the role of president (Wilson & Yontz, 2015, p. 53). There were 246 colleges and universities identified as *Baccalaureate Arts and Sciences*, based on the Carnegie Foundation's designation, including 13 institutions classified as historically Black colleges or universities (Carnegie, 2018). The presidents of the historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were not included in the study because the institution does not fit the institutional description needed to complete the study. Next, I performed a Google search of "African American/Black presidents at liberal arts colleges" or "Black presidents at liberal arts colleges" was to get a list of individuals who serve in the role of president. Each school's leadership/administrative webpage, where it was determined that there was a participant that fit the search criteria, was reviewed and cross-referenced with the search results to confirm the identity of the participant.

Recruitment

I identified all of the participants recruited to participate in the study through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling enhances the "understandings of selected individuals or groups' experience(s) or for developing theories and concepts" (Devers & Frankel, 2000, p. 264). More specifically, using homogenous sampling, a purposive sampling technique, ensured that all participants recruited for the study fit the necessary profile to address the research question. The resulting participant group is assembled to respond to the interview questions with "the most information on the characteristic of interest" (Ebubedike, 2018, p. 76). Attempts at snowball

sampling were performed during the recruitment phase. With such a small number of (living) African American/Black presidents who have lead HWLACs, suggestions for additional participants overlapped with participants already identified. Participants who fit the research profile were recruited via e-mail (Appendix A) during the Fall 2018 term. Additionally, individuals who were identified as "assistants" to the president were copied on the correspondence for scheduling interviews with presidents who were willing to participate. After a review of each president's calendar, interviews were scheduled with the assistants in, mostly, one hour blocks based on the president's availability. Both the president and the assistant were forwarded copies of the informed consent (Appendix B) for review prior to the interview.

Data Collection

Eight participants who identified as African American/Black and, currently serve as (or previously served as) the president of a HWLAC were interviewed for this study. A copy of the informed consent (Appendix B) was sent to both the assistant of the president and the president prior to the scheduled interview. It was agreed upon by the dissertation committee that soliciting oral consent from the participant added another level of security to help protect the identity of the participant. Additionally, pseudonyms were used for both the participant, institutions mentioned in the interviews, and persons of interest who were mentioned in the study.

I read the informed consent to each participant prior to beginning each interview. The participant was notified of their rights and privileges as a research participant and advised that the conversation was being recorded for transcription purposes. After receiving oral consent, the interview began. Participants had a number of options to participate in the study; however, the most common means of participation was a phone interview. I conducted two face-to-face interviews with one local participant (whom was a retired president) and another participant

visiting in the local area for a conference. Opdennaker (2006) noted that face-to-face interviews are beneficial because "social cues, such as voice, intonation, body language etc. of the interviewee can give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee on a question" (para.6). No Skype interviews were conducted during the course of the research study, however, conducting synchronous interviews during future research should be considered for location issues and the added value of interpreting nonverbal cues to guide the interview (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The interviews lasted between 45 – 60 minutes. Participants were asked a series of open-ended, semi-structured interview questions. Interview questions were guided by an interview protocol (Appendix C) developed prior to the recruitment of the participants. The interview questions were developed to discuss information about the participants' career pathways to the college presidency, their experiences as a college president, and the influence of race during their presidencies. Questions were asked in a pre-determined order to the ease into the transition the other topics of discussion. I asked probing questions (where needed) at each juncture to allow myself and participant explore "new ideas on the topic" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 111). Each interview was audio recorded for transcription and, later, data analysis purposes. After the interview was completed, participants were advised they would be receiving a transcript of the interview for member checking purposes and welcomed to provide any additional feedback should they feel the need to. Additionally, I sent a handwritten thank you note to all participants for their willingness to be involved in the research study.

Data Analysis

I employed a thematic, narrative analysis to review research as it focuses on the text of the collected data (Butina, 2015). Thematic analysis is characterized as the basic form of qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), both "flexible" and "not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective" (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3352). Specifically, a six-phase cycle was used to divided the collected into two levels of analysis that identify initial and secondary coding as well as how to develop conclusions and report the findings. The first three phases were data review and transcription, code development, and theme development. First, upon completion of each interview, I listened to each audio recordings for a minimum of two times to become familiar with the responses of the participants. Next, I used a transcription service to transcribe each of the eight interviews for review. In between the code and theme development, I listened to each of the recordings again to ensure accuracy of the transcription. In addition to listening to the recordings, I made manual, brief notes throughout the transcription to provide a simple level of coding to help group patterns within in the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Each transcript was manually reviewed. Each section, and subsequently, the initial coding system, was identified by a color-coded system to help organize the data for further review. initial codes were identified, those with similar meanings or association, and grouped together to develop overarching themes that represented the participants experiences within each section. To identify themes, I assigned quotes from each participants' story to the coded sections and compare amongst each other. By using this method of analysis through a critical/transformative lens, the participants remain the focal point of the study (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012).

I performed the second level of thematic analysis by analyzing the themes that emerged during the third phase from the initial codes and "the refinement of those themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96). Next, themes consolidated into existing themes that are consistent with the aim of the research study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The results of the theme analysis revealed three distinct themes that are discussed in Chapter Four of the research study: The participants' connection to the academy, experiences with being the first leader of color, and an understanding of service and responsibility to the future diversity of higher education leadership. In Chapter Four, I aim to tell a compelling story about the commonalities across the participants' narratives and how the analysis of the data warrants "merit and validity" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 99).

Trustworthiness

Maintaining a level of goodness, rigor, and trustworthiness requires thorough examination of the research process at multiple stages. Guba and Lincoln (1989) introduced a four-frame concept to signify what constitutes as a trustworthy study. In order to be trustworthy, a research study must exhibit "credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability" (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017, p. 3). To establish credibility, I performed member checks among the research participants give them an active role in data interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Participants were sent copies of the transcripts and asked to review to clear up any misinformation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participants were also asked to provide any additional comments to their narrative about their feelings associated with the interview to assist in adjusting parts of the interview process or replication of the study (Magolda & Weems, 2002). No additional comments were received from the participants. "Thick descriptions" of the participants' experiences were reveled in the narratives through detailed quotes from to account for transferability (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Nowell, et. al, 2017, p. 3). Dependability was

established by employing another researcher to perform an audit of the research process (Koch, 1994), where my positionality on the research topic is critical to how each section of the study is developed (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Finally, the confirmability of the study was addressed by ensuring that the findings are reflective of the data revealed in the research.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter features narratives of eight college presidents who identified as African American/Black, who occupied the chief executive position of a HWLAC, and were interviewed for the purpose of this study. The two women who participated in the research study are reflective of the small number of women who hold the office of president (or chancellor) at colleges and universities. Those leaders are President Byron Armstrong, President Auguste St. Greene, President Sidney Gilchrist, President Errol Seavers, Dr. Reece Asher, Dr. Celestine Wright, President Rick Story, and President Kristina Martell (all pseudonyms). After all of the individual narratives are presented, I offer analysis on themes I identified across all of the narratives.

President Byron Armstrong

President Armstrong was the first president to agree to an interview. Due to his proximity in location, he opted to participate in the interview process via phone. He is a new college president, having been appointed to the position within the last calendar year; however, his roots run deep within the academy. President Armstrong served as a department chair for more than ten years prior to moving into a deanship of a business school.

President Byron Armstrong is the 20th president of Shades College, a small, historically white, liberal arts college in the Northwestern United States. President Armstrong is the first African American college president to serve in the role in the history of the institution. President Armstrong was employed as an organizational management consultant before moving into the

academy. Prior to his appointment as president of Shades College, President Armstrong was the dean of the business school of a similarly-sized liberal arts college.

On Pathways to the Presidency

President Armstrong was not sure if he wanted to seek a college presidency prior to his appointment at Shades College, rather he chose to hone his skills as a college dean rather than actively place himself on the job market. “I tend to find that those who seek out positions of leadership and responsibility, more often than not, may not be best suited for the position. I tend to serve where I am called upon to serve.” Focusing on his development as a dean, President Armstrong amassed a support system among his peers and superiors that encouraged him to field offers from search consultants looking for capable leaders for presidential openings.

President Armstrong insisted that the attainment of a doctoral degree prepares future instructors and administrators for the higher education marketplace. He explained:

> Educational experiences prepare you to work at institutions and so, the fact that I have a doctoral degree allowed me to be a professor no matter where I chose to be a professor at as well as my research allowed me to be a professor wherever I chose to be a professor at.

President Armstrong holds degrees in the social sciences, including a doctorate in management science. He served as a department chair at Quantum University, a private, liberal arts college in the Eastern United States, before becoming dean of the business school. President Armstrong noted that the rigors of the academy served as a proving ground prior to transitioning into the administrative ranks. Juggling a demanding class schedule and developing noteworthy research helps to develop the management skills necessary to spearhead a department/unit.

President Armstrong may not have been actively searching for a presidential appointment, but there were colleagues and supporters that expected him to become a president

at some point in his career. Because of his willingness to wait on the right opportunity, he described his ascension to the presidency as a "natural progression," moving from positions as an industry professional to a professor to a college dean to the president of Shades College. Armstrong spent more than 17 years at one institution prior to becoming president demonstrating his prowess for leadership, strengthened by his educational background in the social sciences. He explained:

> And so coming from that type of background and actually having a record of doing something at a previous institution where we managed to increase enrollment by 77%. We managed to have the most diverse faculty at the institution, making things happen there; and working to show that I had a record of working with faculty to engage in innovative curriculum made it an appealing aspect for others to seek you out.

His standout accomplishments did not go unnoticed. The president of his prior institution, Quantum University, supported President Armstrong's growth as an administrator by encouraging participation in professional development events and conferences for burgeoning higher education leaders. Those experiences allowed him to strengthen his brand as an expert in the field as well as exposure to individuals who could provide reference to his accomplishments. Despite the lack of diversity in the Shades College's community and the community-at-large, President Armstrong believes that being selected as the first African American president of the college was (and is) well-received.

Experiences as a College President

At the time of the interview, President Armstrong was still navigating the first year of his presidency at Shades College. Drawing on his industry and educational background, his description of his time as president can be likened to that of a management consultant. "You have

to manage it, and try to understand it, but you also have to try and move it forward in a positive direction," he said. His introduction to the college was not without its challenges, so the majority of his time has been spent with becoming acquainted with the institution's board members, faculty, staff, and student leaders. He had little time for leisurely strolls to enjoy the campus or the accomplishment of being appointed president, but rather spends a considerable about of time networking and building relationships with constituents. President Armstrong acknowledged that he is still enjoying the initial stages of his presidency, noting, "it's been rather amazing when I go someplace and somebody will announce that I'm there because they are happy to see me."

President Armstrong cites the biggest challenge in the onset of his administration is the understanding that "all the cultural nuances that are around interaction with the various groupings here," specifically those associated with the "oriented process" of the faculty and administration. The "oriented process," he described, was "the understanding of how faculty see themselves or how administrators see themselves." I believe this concept might be similar or the same as describing individuals who are process oriented, meaning they follow a certain set of rules to achieve a desired outcome. He believed that understanding this process would be key to determining if adjustments are needed to create a more collaborative work environment between the two factions. On the other end of the spectrum, President Armstrong noted that the acquisition of a new satellite campus for Shades College's nursing program was one of his crowning achievements, followed by concerted efforts to engage students and faculty as much as possible to assure them that Shades College will continue to move in a positive direction as a collaborative force**.**

Being an African American/Black College President at a HWLAC

Considering the small number of African American/Black college presidents at HWLACs, President Armstrong understands that his appointment comes with a level of scrutiny and responsibility as the first in the history of Shades College. He recognized that his appointment calls on him to be a "role model" to future leaders of color, and as a "first" in a number of his professional accomplishments, he welcomes the task. He warned that being the "first" leaves little room for error, noting, "It is significant to be the first. You can't be the last though." In other words, his tenure as president at Shades College would be closely watched by his constituents to determine if the appointment of an African American/Black president would be a viable option should the institution be in need of another leader in the future.

President Armstrong acknowledged that a strong sense of self, along with familial support, drives how he measured his performance as a college president. He relished opportunities where he stood out amongst the crowd, citing his experiences as one of a handful of African Americans in his educational and military programs. He is not swayed by public opinion, and he considers his race/ethnicity an advantage rather than a burden. He was selected to lead, and despite having to navigate racial disparities within the institution, his main goal is to lead the college to prosperous outcomes. In order to achieve this goal, President Armstrong understands that every member of the Shades College campus community is vital to its success, from the Board of Trustees to the hourly labor staff. President Armstrong shared,

> I think there is a high degree of compassion from coming from a lower socioeconomic status as a Black person that allows me to have a great deal of empathy and compassion for those who help support the mission of a college and that's beyond faculty. So, I get

> along with the groundskeeper, the janitorial staff, and the people who are working in the kitchen because those are my family members back home.

President Armstrong explained that treating all campus constituents with respect no matter what position they occupy keeps him grounded and is a testament to lessons he learned about humility and leadership.

When navigating racial politics, President Armstrong referred back to the progressiveness of the regions political and moral leanings, noting that the opinions and actions of Black people and white people are less about race and more about "political philosophy or experiences which are something that come because…not of ethnicity but because it's just different." For example, he recently invited gubernatorial candidates to the campus to engage the voting public and only the Republican candidate made an appearance. President Armstrong noted that the progressive supporters were less than happy because they assumed that it was a ploy to advance a conservative agenda on campus. The Democratic candidate, who represented a number of minority identities, simply failed to show. The president refuted these claims, explaining that it was his job to "advance the interests of the institution not the interests of a particular group."

President Armstrong twice mentioned that he views his race as an advantage in his presidency. Because of the importance placed on diversity in today's higher education landscape, he credits his race for opening doors into conversations and opportunities that might have eluded him were he not Black/African American. The one example that he mentioned was advertently left out to maintain anonymity; however, he did count his supporters as not only alumni bases that predate the desegregation of American education, but also influential community members who can improve local relationships.

President Armstrong still finds himself in awe of his appointment as the president to Shades College. “I struggle sometimes because I don’t know how I got to be in this position but I’m going to do the best job possible.” As a member of a very elite group of leaders in higher education, he recognizes that it is important for him to be the best representation of the institution rather than just be the best representation of a group of people who make up a segment of the overall population.

President Auguste St. Greene

I conducted my interview with President Auguste St. Greene via phone because this format was most conducive to his schedule. After a very distinguished career as a scholar practitioner and a federal policy expert, President Greene was selected to lead Seaworth College, a private HWLAC, located in the northeastern United States.

On Pathways to the Presidency

President Greene admitted that seeking a college presidency was not something he aspired to do, but believed that the pathway to the presidency was about the timing of opportunities as they presented themselves. His approach was methodical, based on what aligned with his interests. Eventually, he would become the provost at Naharis University, at which point, he began to contemplate what presidential opportunities were available for someone with his experience. The liberal arts curriculum appealed to him most, although his own education and experiences had been in larger, research institutions. He explained that “a liberal arts college president was exciting because it gave me the opportunity to scale at the college and the mission to be engaged intellectually with faculty, students and staff, as well as have the leadership opportunities that I also find rewarding.” Because the nature of the liberal arts curriculum is “training for leadership,” President Green valued the opportunity for all campus constituents to

be influential in the growth of the institution through scholarly discourse and learning (Lind, 2006, p. 52).

President Greene's journey to education might not have started in a liberal arts setting, however, he described his undergraduate experience as something of a more exploratory venture, changing his major a number of times before settling on social policy. He recalled beginning his undergraduate path as a journalism major before switching to engineering. He finally switched his major to a policy-related feel after he returned to school after a brief hiatus. President Greene offered that the unique selling proposition of a liberal arts education is the ability of students to engage as many concepts as possible to find the best fit. He further explained:

> I think that my own trajectory experience in undergraduate tells me that, um, you know, we don't necessarily know all the options when you start, you know, I say know yourself when you start. And so the value of liberal arts as rather than putting people to say from day one, what are you gonna major in and what are you doing 30 years from now is really pushing them to say, this is the time in which you should explore it and find out what path best align with your interests.

President Greene counted his middle-class upbringing as the catalyst for his pursuing educational and career experiences at predominantly white institutions. As one of few Black families in his neighborhood, Greene's socialization with other, white children led to him feeling more comfortable in situations where he is one of the only person of color. Admittedly, he "defaulted" to schools that exhibited similar traits because those were environments where he felt most comfortable navigating. He mentioned that in his presidential pursuit there were other opportunities available, including some that would take him out of his comfort zone. He shared, "I guess I did look at historically Black colleges and universities when I was, uh, thinking about

this transition. Um, and uh, you know, it just wasn't the right fit." Considering his career record of accomplishment, pursuing a presidency was a forgone conclusion amongst family and supporters; and had he chosen to pursue an appointment at a HBCU, he believed he would have had to justify his stance to go against the grain of his perceived trajectory.

Experiences as a College President

President Greene described accepting the Seaworth College presidency as both an exciting time and a time of discovery. Admittedly, he was unsure about Seaworth prior to his hiring, and Seaworth had not been his only suitor at the time of the search. It happened that he took a trip to the Seaworth campus where he was able to see the promising opportunity firsthand. More than two months had passed since the search firm had contacted him; and when he finally received an on campus interview, it was only a short time before he had two offers to become president. President Greene found himself in a good position to negotiate, yet he had a much stronger sentiment towards Seaworth College; and while the other institution had a much higher institutional profile, Seaworth College was his choice.

President Green also discussed the importance of institutional fit when ascending to the position of president, "The key is not just the school…it's like a marriage," said President Greene. He explained, "It's not just the two parties. It's really the fit." Initially, he was uncertain about Seaworth College and hesitant about how the school's reputation would hold up to that of institutions where he had previously been employed. These fears dissipated for him when he recognized it was a good fit. Although he did not elaborate on specifics of the first year of his presidency, he acknowledged that he has grown more confident in his abilities as a president.

President Greene counts financial stability and an apathy to change as his biggest challenges as president of Seaworth College. He explained, "Our aspirations outstrip our

resources." Seaworth College did not have a large endowment like the president's previous institutions and as a small liberal arts college, revenue generating activities and cost-cutting measures have to be considered when making fiscal decisions that affect the college. President Greene noted that colleges "can be poor if you make one million dollars a year and spend too much."

In addition, President Greene believes that the Seaworth College community should get "comfortable while being uncomfortable." A hallmark of the president's inaugural address, President Greene encouraged the campus community to seek wisdom by engaging in activities that are beyond their comfort zones. Some examples of those activities might include taking courses that are divergent from the student's prescribed course of study but of interest to the student; engaging in local and national political forums to share ideas; participating in cultural activity of another racial/ethnic group that is different from the student's group of origin. This process of engagement is what President Greene affectionately likes to call the "Seaworth College Challenge."

President Greene counts "The Seaworth College Challenge" as one of his most successful initiatives to date. As previously indicated, the initiative calls on members of the college community to expand their learning through engagement in activities they may not normally participate. The president decided to make himself the first participant in the challenge to encourage others to follow suit. For example, President Greene described his challenge activities:

> I basically said I'm Black; I'm a sociologist; and I was in the Obama administration. And so I like political podcasts, which shouldn't be surprised to know that they tend to be left of center political podcasts. So I'm going to add a right of center political podcast to my regular playlist, listens every week and then write about online posts about what I hear

> my podcast left, right, and center. And the second thing is I'm going to take up yoga and write about that.

Recognizing he serves a student population that is more technologically savvy than any generation before it, he urges his students (and others who choose to participate) to cultivate a supportive community though hash tagging their commitment to the cause and posting their journey on line via social media. I could sense that this was a real source of pride for him, creating a movement that the community could embrace; and in keeping with the spirit of a liberal arts education, he had inspired students to seek their own understandings of concepts they were unfamiliar. As he described it:

> What we're trying to do is to normalize getting out of your comfort zone so that everyone sort of talking about what they're doing and catches the bug. And if I described it, once you're comfortable offending your own sensibilities, then you're gonna be more comfortable offending what you think others might find normative. Um, not to offend them, but in pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. But that's what I think is fun.

Some of the examples provided by President Greene were taking yoga classes and adding political podcasts with right-of-center ideas. Other examples might include talking to strangers, eating at new restaurants or visiting unfamiliar neighborhoods. In order to maintain the anonymity of President Greene, no social media posts are included in this study.

Being an African American/Black College President at a Historically White Liberal Arts College

President Greene is comfortable being the leader of Seaworth College despite the lack of diversity throughout the campus. “I've spent almost my entire life in settings where there aren't that many Black people,” he said. “So it's just here we go again, not shocking in that sense. Um,

I mean, I knew I was the first Black president here. We've been around [over 200 years], but I didn't fully appreciate the impact." Though he had been in leadership positions prior to his appointment as president, the magnitude of his selection as the first Black president, and one of a handful of African American/Black college presidents at liberal arts colleges, had not dawned on him until he was introduced to the campus community.

The dramatic scene when he was announced as the new president of Seaworth College was what he recalled the reason why this occasion was so special. His reveal was met with cheers of excitement and tears of joy. He further explained, "And later somebody told me that the students of color who were sitting next to them…they heard them saying 'He looks like me' or 'He could be us.'" The reception he received made it clear to him that his appointment was going to create change in the fabric of the institution, but it would also be met with similar levels of uncertainty because this was uncharted territory for the campus and the local community. At his press conference following his appointment, he recalled being asked by a reporter about his feelings being named the first Black president at Seaworth College. I could sense he was annoyed by the question and, he too, mentioned that he was surprised that it was the reporter's first question about his presidency. Having struggled on whether to broach the topic in his inaugural address, he chose to only mention his race once. Though he did not elaborate further, I believe that it was President Greene's intention to not make his selection about race at Seaworth, but he would have rather talked about his visions for the college.

President Greene understands that his race is a factor in how his leadership is viewed within the Seaworth College community. When asked about his thoughts on diversity hiring at the executive level, he noted that he has been intentional on being inclusive in the hiring process. Part of that intentionality was convening an academic symposium during his inauguration

activities to discuss ideas surrounding “constructive engagement and the power of diversity in groups.” Additionally, President Greene urged search committees to be aware of the talent pool as well as the effort to market diversity for senior administrative positions. That did not mean, however, that he would not be selective in whom he brought onto his cabinet. “So I wouldn't say that it's not that I come and say, all right, well now we've got to hire a whole bunch of Blacks, Latinos, and Asians cause I'm here,” he said, “But that's certainly putting a strong emphasis on if we're hiring folks (who) don't have the diversity, we better be sure that, you know, that's really the best person we could get.”

President Green also shared how he believes he is perceived by his Black and white constituents, specifically faculty, staff, and students. He noted that his comfort level with being in less diverse environments is critical to him being able to understand the dynamics of leading a HWLAC. What is also important to note is that President Greene was a member of a predominantly white fraternity during his college years, however, those experiences made him no less of a Black man than any other. He just understood that the duality of his identity made him more cognizant of how individuals should be engaged to promote diversity and inclusion. He said:

> They assume I'm just going to just be like the redneck white guy, maybe more so, and I'm very comfortable engaging in that, but then I use that familiarity to then push people to talk about or address issues that they might not otherwise. So in that sense, I think it's maybe the best of both worlds that if I weren't as comfortable culturally with the majority of the population here, it would probably be harder for me to connect with them. But at the same time, if I didn't have, if I weren't a person of color and have those experiences, I

> would probably be less effective and less inclined to use that familiarity to advance a range of these issues.

President Greene understands that his position as president elicits conversation more directed towards diversity. That positive influence aligned well with his own ideas of diversity and inclusion at Seaworth. On the other hand, he mentioned that his ability to navigate both white and Black professional spaces has caused some uneasy moments and strife among colleagues. One of those events included President Greene being referred to as "Obama" by an alumnus in a group conversation; the president was not amused by his comment. In another instance, President Greene mentioned being referred to as an "Uncle Tom" in front of students from department leaders who were opposed to his reorganization of an African American Studies unit at a previous institution. He explained, "And that was a time…that's the most I can think up or I'm aware of as (the) most overt experience where I felt like, wow, this is really happening because of my race in a negative way." Rather than be embarrassed, President Greene indicated that he felt more confident that he was making the right decision to modernize the curriculum and instruction of the department.

"I truly believe that (college) is a critical time in people's development, who go through the approach to go to college, where most of us, this will be the most diverse setting we're ever going to be in is college," said President Greene. The president believes that his position as a leader comes with a strong responsibility to help students become better citizens by encouraging diverse experiences. He views the wisdom gained from those experiences will help guide those students in making decisions pertaining to their personal and professional lives. He is confident that initiatives such as the "Seaworth College Challenge" will discourage a monolithic approach to socialization and encourage cultural tolerance.

President Sidney Gilchrist

President Sidney Gilchrist is a seasoned executive in higher education leadership, with more than 14 years of experience as the president of two liberal arts colleges. In addition to his leadership prowess, President Gilchrist is a highly accomplished scholar, with a number of degrees and academic credentials to his name—which he credits to his lifelong love for the arts.

President Sidney Gilchrist is the 10th president of Winterfell University, a private HWLAC located in the Southeastern region of the United States. Previously, President Gilchrist served as president of Stark College for a period of ten years, where he spearheaded a major fundraising campaign of more than $100+ million dollars and increased the institutions diversity and academic profiles exponentially. An accomplished musician, President Gilchrist melded his love of classical music into his educational pursuits including a doctorate in a musical field. He is recognized as a leader in higher education, championing the liberal arts agenda through his service on a number of professional and civic boards.

Pathways to the Presidency

President Gilchrist counted his love of music, and exposure to a collegial atmosphere at an early age, as what sparked an interest in a possible career in higher education, specifically as a professor of music. He explained:

> That was an experience I had at the age of 15, being identified by my musical talent at Banks University. And, certainly at the age of 15, going into Banks, I studied every Saturday and eventually realizing that a life working in a university or college teaching, um, students, uh, as my professor was, was it was something that I should take seriously and consider it.

Pursuing a college presidency had yet to be desired as President Gilchrist foresaw his path as a professor of music leading to a department chairmanship or deanship in a college of music. It was his talent for faculty governance that the provost of Clegane University, where he was employed as a professor, gave President Gilchrist his opportunity at an administrative position as an associate vice chancellor in academic affairs. He remained in the position on an interim basis for a year, but had become enamored in his role as an administrator enough that he sought to continue the endeavor at another institution with a singular focus on the arts, Gullah School of the Arts.

President Gilchrist was optimistic for his tenure at Gullah, even entertaining future overtures of a presidential appointment when the time came. Unfortunately, his appointment as the vice president of academic affairs at Gullah was short lived, a result of what President Gilchrist described as a mutinous-like plot by members of the institution's board to remove the sitting president and replace him with President Gilchrist as the interim/acting president. The fallout strained several relationships between President Gilchrist and his colleagues; the president of Gullah refused to speak with his chief academic officer (President Gilchrist); and President Gilchrist, ultimately, left Gullah for another position at Lerner University some four years later.

Leading a HWLAC was not a strange concept to President Gilchrist. When asked about his preparedness to lead such institutions, he replied, "I have, with the exception of three years in junior high school, have always gone to predominantly white schools." As early as elementary school and well throughout his undergraduate and graduate programs, President Gilchrist took advantage of student leadership opportunities. Additionally, that pursuit of knowledge followed

him into his professional life. He immersed himself in a number of professional development activities that exposed him to a diverse group of burgeoning thought leaders in higher education.

Mentorship has had a profound influence on President Gilchrist's pursuit of a college presidency at liberal arts colleges. He described his "a ha" moment as a lunch meeting with a white colleague, Dr. Jed Tinch, who himself had been an interim president at Lerner University and two other large, predominantly white, public research institutions. A learned musician and scholar in his own right, Dr. Tinch, saw the makings of a president in President Gilchrist, and inquired about his interests in the presidency and at what type of institution. President Gilchrist recalled being taken aback by the question as he had not put much thought into what type of institution but was sure that he would pursue a presidency. He explained, "So I responded to him that probably wasn't interested in being president of his place as large as the University of Dem Thrones, which at that time had about 50,000 students, but probably a small liberal arts college." That lunch led him to a bookstore where he purchased a book titled "Colleges that Change Lives." Inside he found institutions, 40 to be exact, that fit the description of his ideal of a mission driven workplace. As a result, he realized that a number of those institutions had few Black leaders in their history, if ever. He would likely be the first, and as he put it, "If I were to be a president, that's the kind of place that I've wanted to be a president at." Without prompt, he frankly mentioned that he had not considered HBCUs after receiving advice from two former mentors, and HBCU graduates, about their experiences as administrators. He recalled that one of the men recognized that his ability to work at an HBCU for less than average wages was due to him amassing wealth earlier in his professional life. President Gilchrist agreed that he told his wife, an HBCU alumna, that he would follow suit and take less money if he ever came into similar wealth.

President Gilchrist's pursuit of a presidency was well received by his family and colleagues alike. Dr. Tinch, whom President Gilchrist credited as his mentor, began nominating him for presidential appointments. In addition to his nominations, Dr. Tinch began coaching President Gilchrist on the intricacies of the search process. He himself a nominee and finalist of up to eight searches for the top position, former Dr. Tinch provided President Gilchrist with important pieces of information to determine his readiness for the search process including how to prepare for other nominations in the event he was not successful in other searches. He also counted other former presidents and widows of former presidents as his support system throughout the process.

Experiences as a College President

President Gilchrist described the search process associated with his first presidency as much longer than his second stint. The Stark College search lasted well over several months, even reaching into another calendar year.

> At Stark, I had my first interview the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Then they brought me back in December with my wife and we had a secret visit to the campus. They brought me back. This was 2003. Then in 2004, they brought me back again in January and I met on the campus with half of the committee and I met with the other half of the committee. Then I came back in February. They have two finalists. So we had an on campus interview for a day and a half, and then it was kind of middle January when I got the call. I got to February and I'm offered the position. Uh, and by the time I had my contract, it was about another month later.

His second presidential search was much smoother.

> I was actually a little shocked, in the sense that I had…oh, I had an interview on a Monday where they divided the search committee into two different groups and the next day the search consultant called me to find out how the experience had been. She told me I had been the unanimous choice of the committee. That was a little surprising to me. And so that was on January the sixth. By the end of the month, I had my contract.

As a seasoned president, President Gilchrist took a methodical approach to learning the terrain at Winterfell. “I made a commitment to meet with every department and every division in the university. And it took me actually a year and a few months to get to everyone.” He described this process as “a listening tour,” where he gauged the climate of the institution by initiating his own Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis. He did not further elaborate what he did with the notes from his interviews, but it could be safe to say that he used those points as a means of building a rapport with the campus units and prioritizing his first year in office.

Leaders will often face challenges just as they will achieve success as they progress in their role. President Gilchrist named the Board of Trustees as his biggest challenge. According to President Gilchrist, “I think it's…it's primarily the… I think it's primarily the Wall Street kind of attitude that, you know, ‘I've done it. You know I've run a big business so you know I can run higher education. Right?’” As a seasoned educator and president who has spearheaded campaigns to expand the reach of services and programs provided by his respective institutions, he likened his role as president to a teacher attempting to educate singular-focused board members that there is more to leading than the bottom line. The differences in the demographic makeup of the boards at Stark and Winterfell, respectively, provided insight as to why his board experiences vary.

The Stark College board was the more diverse of the two, mostly female. “So we had about four African Americans on the board and one person who was Hispanic,” he said. On the other hand, Winterfell’s board was what he described as “very transactional oriented” and consisted of members who were “predominantly male…predominantly white…predominantly Wall Street…business oriented…very few females.” While he has only been at Winterfell about half the amount of time he served as president at Stark College, he was fond of his time at Stark College and his abilities to lead fundraising campaigns and building projects. In addition to raising more than $100 million dollars, he oversaw the erection of a $50 million science center—during the height of the economic crisis of 2008.

It was not until 2014 that President Gilchrist decided that he needed to take some time away from the helm of Stark College to reevaluate his career trajectory. After establishing Stark College as one of the premier liberal arts colleges in the United States, he took a sabbatical. Even when he had no desire to return to the executive’s chair right away, he had amassed a reputation that preceded him enough to be contacted for several openings as a president or leader at other institutions. “In June of 2014, a month before I was supposed to step down, a search consultant friend called me. She said ‘a musical company is looking for a president. Your daughter lives nearby. You know the chairman of the search committee. This is the perfect job for you.’” Though he took the interview, he realized that if, and when, he returned to the presidency, the institution would have to possess the characteristics that he believed could change lives just as he had done when he first set out to become a college president.

Being a African American/Black College President at a Historically White Liberal Arts College

"I guess my feelings about being a president on a predominantly white college and institutions are not much different from my feelings about just being a Black man in America," said President Gilchrist. He described the environment of a white liberal arts college as a constant proving ground. Black men must develop a sense of confidence and perseverance amidst the misunderstanding of the Black man's place in society. He also advised that being a Black president at a historically white institution requires a level of toughness to take on racial aggression while making decisions that influence both the institution and their personal lives. President Gilchrist acknowledged that his upbringing, including enrollment in predominantly white schools, helped him tackle issues with race and ethnicity throughout his career.

President Gilchrist has not been shy about his approach to diversity and inclusion. As an African American president at a HWLAC in the southeastern United States, he understood that others might not share in his passion for championing an agenda that alters the culture and perception of the institution. "I had been criticized by some board members that I talked too much about diversity and inclusion and probably some of the vice presidents as well. They won't say that to my face, but I'm sure that that's the way they feel," he said. Yet, that has not stopped his quest for progress; and even now, members of his administrative cabinet are being more deliberate about sharing how important diversity is to Winterfell's future.

> Inclusion is a real, is a real issue and in higher education. So if we don't have people to champion those types of issues, it will become more common place where people who exhibit certain characteristics or subscribe to a certain type of belief system will be shut out. Well, I mean, I will say we're making some progress with our board. At the last

> board meeting, we had a presentation by the provost on the approach that we're taking towards diversity and inclusion, which is the approach that having an educational institution in which a student can live and learn and play with people who are different from him or from her is educationally beneficial to them because you make better decisions.

President Gilchrist believes that, overall, his work at Winterfell has helped create a more inclusive environment. He believes that his naysayers are small in number, but even some of those include faculty and students of color. “I think the big difference would be the fact that probably faculty and staff and students of color understand why and appreciate my talking about diversity and inclusion as much as I do.” Their white counterparts, however, may not be as understanding of his desire to create a more diverse environment. “I think that the whites, on the other hand, at times, think that we spend too much time on that. There are more important things.”

President Gilchrist understands that as one of the few, sitting, African American college presidents at a non-minority serving institutions, he is a role model. He and his wife actively work with students of color to encourage high achievement. Admittedly, he favors his time with Black students, especially Black males, because there are a lack of mentors of the same race who are available to support them.

> I'm in a position that people are looking up to me; and so therefore, it's one of the reasons why my wife and I mentor a group of students. And I give, you know, my Black male students a lot of special attention because I'm trying to pay it forward. I'm trying to do for them what has been done for me and most of the mentoring in my life has come from, not men of color, but white men.

He acknowledged that mentoring becomes essential as the academy gets older and that succession planning keeps future administrators of color from being completely shut out from opportunities for leadership.

As the interview concluded, President. Gilchrist spoke fondly of his time at Winterfell and the community's reception to he and his family. For instance, he is often greeted by supporters of the institution on his occasional grocery run while his wife has been lauded for her community engagement and received appointments to civic-minded boards per the governor of the state. Even with his successful integration into a very Southern community with strong ties to the American Civil War, President Gilchrist has understood that being a Black man in a very public position can be a lightning rod for some. He reminisced on a moment from his childhood where he encountered his first taste of racism at eight years old.

> From a young age, I was, we were taught by my father that while we can…my father taught this to me or made the statement to us, after my brothers and me after we had, after I had my first encounter with racism. We didn't have a car and the bus driver did something and it was really, very racist. So my father called him on it. My father said, "you know…you need to realize that not everyone in the country (I was about eight years old at the time) particularly white people are not going to necessarily appreciate your blackness but the one thing you always have to keep in mind is that you have as much right to prosperity and doing well in this country as anybody else, especially those who are white, as long as you're willing to work hard for it."

His father's words are a mantra that he continues to live by. He credited his race as a source of pride and refused to let others define him based on their own misconceptions.

President Errol Seavers

President Errol Seavers participated in the research study by phone due to his distance in location. President Seavers is the 12th president of Hobbs and Shaw College, a private HWLAC in the Northeast corridor of the United States. President Seavers also holds the distinction of being appointed the 1st African American president in the history of Hobbs and Shaw. Armed with a law degree and a MBA, President Seavers would be considered as a non-traditional college president based on the description outline in the literature review, having spent a considerable amount of his professional career as a consultant and executive of a number of entrepreneurial ventures. In addition to his professional pursuits, President Seavers serves as a life member of his undergraduate's Board of Trustees as well as a number of civic and business-focused organizations within the community.

On Pathways to the Presidency

President Seavers credited his board service at his undergraduate alma mater, Arby College, as the one of the key factors in his ascension to the presidency at Hobbs and Shaw. "I served on the board for um, some 35 years. First as a term trustee for two terms, a lasting, a combination of 12 years…and since then as a life trustee." Second, President Seavers began considering a presidency when two of his board mates, who also happened to have served as college presidents, began encouraging him to consider a move into higher education leadership. With his long-standing service in governance, and a successful business acumen, seeking a college presidency did not seem out of the realm of possibility. "So that puts the idea into thinking and the more I thought about it, the more interested I became." Add in his background in consulting, with experience serving liberal arts colleges and universities, President Seavers

believes that he has been able to adequately develop “quite a clear understanding of academic culture.”

While exploring his options, President Seavers mentioned that his experiences and education were more suitable for a liberal arts college environment. “I have limited experience overseeing graduate professional schools or a major research university and much more experience in the context of a liberal arts college,” he said. President Seavers was open to leading any institution that fit the general criteria of a liberal arts college, regardless of racial or ethnic demographic. His work, however, might have indicated to his peers that his skills might be best served at institutions similar to those he had previously served. “I didn't set out to be, particularly at a predominantly white one, but that's where I wound up.” Nevertheless, family and colleagues greeted the appointment to the presidency at Hobbs and Shaw with delight. Hobbs and Shaw College, he described, felt like the place where he could be the most effective and make a difference in the lives of students.

Experiences of a College President

President Seavers was delighted to be selected as the president of Hobbs and Shaw College. Admittedly, President Seavers was actively pursuing a presidential appointment. Part of that could be attributed to his status of not being beholden to the same obligations of that of a sitting administrator at an institution who has to decide whether their search for advancement should be open to public opinion or shrouded in secrecy (similar to the experience President Gilchrist and his appointment at Stark College). “When I saw opportunities open up that I thought my background and experience and could be of interest, I expressed that interest to the search firm typically who's leading the searches as I did in this case.” He expressed interest in at least seven presidential searches prior to his selection at Hobbs and Shaw. He acknowledged that

part of that wait could have been attributed to being labeled as a “nontraditional candidate.” His experience as a board member was important; however, the current research supports that the vast majority of sitting college presidents have doctoral degrees along with a documented record of accomplishment of leadership within the academy, making him a non-traditional candidate for a college presidency. Because he did not possess those experiences, he felt that he had to be more direct in his approach to securing a presidency rather than rely on search firms or nominations from his contemporaries. He noted that his presidential supporters were essential to him continuing his search. “They said to me ‘well you're right, you are a nontraditional candidate but as nontraditional candidates go, I would rate you a very, very high and strong candidate.’” His previous record of accomplishment in the higher education space, albeit nontraditional, could be the right fit for an institution looking to diversify its leadership. The search committee for Hobbs and Shaw agreed.

President Seavers, too, embarked on a “listening tour” in his first year as the President of Hobbs and Shaw College. “The first year was one of discovery, but one of action as well. I spent a considerable amount of time listening to various constituencies, alumni, trustees, faculty, students, staff, and really learning the culture of the organization.” His findings revealed a number of concerns that spoke to his business background, identifying a number of institutional investments that were not producing a positive return. This is where his business background proved to be an asset as he began to mold the institution’s operational practices. Because he was used to a quicker operational pace from the business world, there were growing pains initially, largely because institutions of higher education are adverse to sudden change.

> It became clear early on that my operational pace was much, much faster than the institution was accustomed to with my predecessor, the prior president. So, I learned

> quite quickly that the pace that I was pushing things forward, and including my own pace for meetings, and trying to get things done was the faster and more ambitious than the institution was accustomed to.

The reception, he explained, has been mixed. “Everybody's got an opinion and some of them, the thing is, are quite positive and some of those opinions are negative.” With a portion of the staff being from the local community, the lack of diversity in the region can be a contributing factor to the adverseness to change, especially with a Black man being at the helm. “This is an area of the country where, where I haven't lived a very long other than being in this position and it, I think, has more incidents of racisms than some of the other areas I've lived.” Optimistically, he believes that it may be negative opinions may be attributed to the resistance to the pace and types of change happening at Hobbs and Shaw rather than it being made a racial issue. He did temper his optimism, however, with the understanding that the color of his skin can be controversial. “I think the color of my skin can be a lightning rod for some people and their reaction to that change or their reaction to me.” The lack of diversity in the area attests to the unfamiliarity of the largely white community to not only People of Color, but People of Color in positions of influence.

The biggest challenge that President Seavers faces at Hobbs and Shaw College is the resistance to change. He cites the reliability on a stable working environment being crucial to the workforce becoming stagnant and comfortable with the status quo, even if the institution is not progressing. He described the liberal arts college space as “a sector of the economy that I think has drawn people over time who are comfortable with stability. I'm talking as the staff, as a staff level now, but I think it's also true with faculty.” In order for Hobbs and Shaw to be a leader in the field, President Seavers consistently encourages his faculty and staff to be more open to

change and quicker to respond to the changing landscape of higher education, drawing on his entrepreneurial skills to get results.

On the other hand, the diversification of the institution's workforce is what he calls his greatest success to date. He has filled his administrative cabinet with quality individuals capable of keeping up with his pace in addition to his direct involvement with the tenure screening process with members of the faculty.

Being an African American/Black College President at a Historically White Liberal Arts College

As an African American/Black college president at a HWLAC, with no connection to the academy, President Seavers is an anomaly and he knows it.

> First of all, it's rare and highly unusual. And so you're not sure if of how people are reacting to you and what the nature of that reaction is. You've got a predominantly white alumni base, donor base, faculty, staff, students, and some of those people. I mean, we all have, we all have unconscious bias and some, some people have conscious bias. The bias is usually not in my favor here. So it's also complicated because there is some degree of an expectation on the part of African American members of the community, particularly students, that you are going to be the black president, the president that advances the interests of black people on campus.

There is a "tug of war," he says, where he finds himself in the middle of being the president of an institution and being an ideal representative of his own race.

> There's a concern one always has to face is will one lose one's legitimacy in the eyes of the predominantly white composition of the people who make up the institution, if one, if sees or is seen to be advancing the interests of African Americans students or faculty or

> staff at the expense of white members of the culture. At the same time, there are historic injustices in every institution. So one walks this line, or at least I find myself walking the line where, I'm very conscious of the need for justice and equity across the institution, particularly for those who have been underrepresented or underprivileged within the culture of the organization.

President Seavers likened the need to maintain a level of legitimacy among his constituents to the Obama presidency, a Black man being promoted to the highest level of office and being burdened with unrealistic expectations as a champion for the race. Yet, he realizes that he is in a very special position and the eyes of the African American community are affixed on him because of the rarity of his position.

> Nonetheless, certainly emotionally you know you certainly can understand why the hopes and aspirations of Black people in America…a hundreds of years of slavery, Jim Crow, and all of that…we've not arrived in that way. So it is a tough position to be in where there's such a hope and aspiration on the part of those who have not seen their college led by someone who looks like them, to finally have someone they hope that that's going to lead to a total transformation of the culture.

President Seavers foresees a "tsunami," as he calls it, which will drastically change the college-going population, especially at predominantly white institutions. White students are soon to become the minority, even at predominantly white schools; and as a leader of such, President Seavers has recognized that its institutional workforce must follow suit.

The consistent message in President Seavers' approach to leadership at a historically white, liberal arts college is that he has seen how this type of leadership can be groomed, or doomed, from his service on his alma mater's Board of Trustees. He understands what to look for

in such a leader and is confident that his previous experience has prepared him for that. Speaking on his Arby College board experience, President Seavers explains:

> I think [serving as a Board of Trustees member] has prepared me because of the extended exposure to faculty and students and senior staff that it has afforded me a variety of contexts, both in terms of academic affairs, Student Affairs, administrative affairs, budget and finance issues et cetera. So, I've become well exposed to every area of the college experience before taking the position, which was critical because I come from a nontraditional track.

That service, he believes, helps him circumvent the stigma and naiveté attributed to nontraditional presidents who have little to no experience with all of the intricacies of running a college.

When approached about the impact of his race/ethnicity on his administration as well as his connection with the Hobbs and Shaw community, he referred to his success in hiring a diverse staff to help him lead the college, not only in color but also in "different experience levels, perspectives, skills, abilities, talents." He realizes, however, that he cannot please everyone because beneath the expectations of the president to lead the institution to prominence, there are the secondary expectations from the various constituency groups. The reception from those groups are a mixed bag. Using the Black faculty and students as an example:

> There are some Black faculty here who would want me to be more aggressive in advancing the interests of Black faculty and Black students and Black programs et cetera. And then there are some who think I'm doing a fantastic, fantastic job. So, and that's the case for Black students as well. There's some Black students and Black students… they are not all the same

That is not to say that other groups do not have their own opinions about how he should govern the institution. He chose to highlight that particular group of students because their opinions have been amplified because they are in the minority.

President Seavers is hardly ignorant to the bias surrounding his appointment to the presidency at Hobbs and Shaw College. While the racism is not overt, he understands that the college draws its working population from a majority white workforce, and that biases can be connected to individuals regardless of education or levels of wealth. With such a successful educational and professional background, President Seavers should hardly be judged by his ability to lead on race or merit, yet he posits those biases are not thoughts of rational people. “In fact, a lot of bias is not rational. It's emotional,” he says. “It's how one was raised, you know, so…and of course, you know, the fact that I have the educational background I have could put in some people's mind, being entirely truthful, attributed to affirmative action and not to my merits.” President Seavers’ response is a prime example of how symbolic racism exhibits itself within and outside the Hobbs and Shaw community (Kinder & Sears, 1981).

President Seavers was surprised to learn that approximately 17% of the country’s college presidents are persons of color. His estimation was about half of that number, and maybe even a less at liberal arts colleges. He did mention, however, that he was grateful for the opportunity to make a difference at an institution like Hobbs and Shaw. President Seavers also mentioned that he feels that there is a responsibility on his part to help increase the level of diversity in higher education leadership.

> That's one of the reasons why I took this interview…since you are an African American trying to make your way in higher education and advance yourself and trying to get your

Ed.D. degree completed. And so I thought I can be helpful to you and doing this interview…and hopefully through you to be helpful to others.

Dr. Reese Asher

Dr. Reece Asher was the interviewed for the research study. An engineer at his core, Dr. Asher has had a storied career as a scientist, educator, and an administrator. He holds the distinction of having served as the chancellor of Wick University, a mid-Atlantic, large research institution, and subsequently, serving as president of Westeros College, a small, private HWLAC on the West Coast. Dr. Asher is an accomplished author and editor, mainly in the areas of engineering and technology, been commended for a number of awards in the engineering and sciences fields, and been appointed to the leadership of a number of major science foundations. Since stepping down from the presidency of Westeros College in the late 1990s, Dr. Asher has been a professor at Dorne University, a predominantly white, research institution on the West Coast.

On Pathways to the Presidency

Dr. Asher's approach to the college presidency takes on a happenstance tone when asked what led him to the chief executive position at Wick University (and later, Westeros College). "Ah, nothing really led me to want to be a college president," he said. It sort of happened without my really setting a course to do so." His path had been rooted in engineering, working as a civilian employee in the government, and later as an academic on the West Coast, until he was called upon to lead a large government agency. He reiterated, "It happened, sort of without being a design on my part, but events just worked out so it led me in that direction."

The height of the Civil Rights Movement was the backdrop for Dr. Asher's professional career, and so most of his colleagues in the government were white. As a result, he began to

understand the nuances of working in an environment where he was often the minority. He had become accustomed to these environments during such a volatile period so it became second nature to him. He credited those environments to helping him navigate academia, including his presidencies. He explained, “So when ultimately I ended up residing over an intuition, which was predominantly white, um, it was not at all discomforting for me because I was very familiar with such an environment.”

Even though he had not set out to be a college president, ironically, his work in the government may have laid the foundation for his move into the chancellor’s office at Wick University. “It was very common for directors of the Dragon Foundation to end up as a president of a college or university,” he said. “So when I did resign from the Dragon Foundation, it was for the purpose of becoming chancellor of Wick University, which is not in a liberal arts college, but instead is a major research university or a large research university.” As his time began to wind down as chancellor, he was contacted by Westeros College regarding their presidential vacancy. In addition to the appeal of the institution’s location, connected to his time as a graduate student, he also found appeal in leading an institution whose focus was on their undergraduate population. “And I was particularly interested in the undergraduate education because I believe that the underrepresented minorities and other marginalized students need a strong undergraduate foundation if, in fact, they are, ultimately, going to be successful.” His familial and professional support systems encouraged him to move forward in his interests in Westeros because they believed he would be good at the job based on his successful stints at previous positions of leadership.

Dr. Reese mentioned that he had not intentionally sought out the presidency at Westeros College. He did not apply for the position and was hesitant to leave his position at Wick

University. Westeros College was making a very deliberate move to diversify its institution. “There was no application process,” he said. “The faculty and students were looking for leadership to make the institution more diverse.” The scenario was perfect for the type of impact that Dr. Reese was trying to make in higher education. The ideals of both sides lined up perfectly, signified by a “commitment to the idea of multiculturalism and diversity.” His selection as the President of Westeros came soon after.

Experiences as a College President

Dr. Reese considered his appointment to the presidency at Westeros College as an opportunity to be a major champion for diversity. His mission: Diversify a predominantly, white liberal arts college while maintaining the same institutional profile that made it one of the most selective institutions in the country. “I believe very strongly that quality and equality, uh, go hand in hand and that there was no reason to believe that you can't have excellence and equity at the same time.” It was no coincidence that Westeros was named, and remains to this day, one of the most diverse institutions in America.

A supportive Board of Trustees has been a hallmark of the college presidency of the participants. Dr. Reese and the chair of the Board of Trustees quickly agreed on beginning the strategic planning process to initiate the president’s dream of a diverse, and inclusive, Westeros College. The plan was aptly titled “Of Excellence and Equity,” and as a testament to his ideal of equity, Dr. Reese enlisted the assistance of a number of constituents to create buy-in for his plan. “That first year, I assembled a group of people: faculty, alumni, trustees, students, friends of the institution, community leaders, and we worked to develop a strategic plan which I presented to the trustees at the end of the first year in which they adopted.” That also serves as a point of pride that can be attributed to the legacy that Dr. Reese left behind. According to Dr. Reese, “It's a

strategic plan, which even today, 30 years later, is still the basis for what Westeros College is doing, even though I'm no longer there." The affinity for that close, personal connection with Westeros College, and the local community, is one of the reasons that Dr. Reese has such a fond memory of his time there, opposed to Wick University, where he was the figurehead of a much larger operation that relied on vice chancellors to address the day-to-day operations.

Upon his arrival to Westeros, Dr. Reese described the alumni base as "almost totally white." He recalls that his biggest challenge at Westeros was the chance to change the antiquated opinions of the base concerning the diversification of the institution.

> There was, there was a lot of…I wouldn't call it resistance so much as it was reluctance on the part of older alumni, and some trustees, to accept the fact that we needed to recognize a more multicultural environment than it had been, during the time when they were students at Westeros.

The process of diversifying Westeros was met with tremendous support from faculty and students, the same group that had been supportive of hiring Reese. On the other hand, Reese was a bit less vocal about his accomplishments, humbly referring to Westeros College being named one of the most diverse colleges in America during his time.

Being an African American/Black College President at a Historically White Liberal Arts College

Dr. Reese takes pride in having been one of few African American presidents to lead a selective HWLAC. As he indicated earlier in the interview, there was an established level of comfortability in that space because he had become accustomed to being outnumbered in his professional endeavors by his white counterparts. "I just was very happy to, uh, be able to be in

an environment where I felt I had an opportunity to be successful," he said. "And, I was there for 11 years and that was a highlight of my professional career."

As I dug deeper into these interviews, it became more important to ask participants about the correlation between their presidency and the idea of the "Obama Effect." The significance of Dr. Reese's presidency and President Obama's election as the first African American/Black president of the United States has parallels. It was a rare occasion, and with that distinction, we recognize that there are some expectations that come with such an appointment. "My principal concern was to make certain that the Black students at the campus, um, that they had support at the top," he said. "I also felt that I could be a role model, not just for the Black students, but look for the white students, as well, because so many of them had never been in an environment where, um, a Black person was in a position of responsibility." While his mission may have been to create a place where marginalized students felt comfortable and were encouraged to achieve their highest heights, he wanted the white students to feel just as empowered because they were being educated in an environment where they could attest that their president was competent regardless of race or ethnicity. Dr. Reese believed that he was more than capable of leading different demographics.

Dr. Reese acknowledged that his engineering background remained at the core of his work as a college president. After all, before he became a college administrator, he had risen to the top of his profession in government to lead the Dragon Foundation, an organization that championed STEM-related advancements. "I'm convinced that engineering education, um, prepares you for, doing a number of things because in engineering education teaches you to be a problem solver." He recalled that his own personal experiences of navigating, and thriving in,

segregated environments were a catalyst for him being intentional about his desire to be inclusive. He explained:

> Well, I think I was much more sensitive to the need for, for inclusion…I think having grown up in a segregated environment, I knew what it meant to not be…not feel included. So there was no question, but what my, my racial background had an influence on the fact that I made more of an effort to include people of all backgrounds, races and different genders, sexual orientations and so forth.

He believed the Westeros College community was accepting of his leadership of the institution: "I had both Black students and white students who, who I was very close to and I feel we had established friendships with." That was not to say that he did not have his skeptics from white students and faculty. Dr. Reese recounted some alumni and trustee opposition to his administration, skeptical of his abilities to lead the college. "I had reports of people who were meeting and sharing their views with others about the fact that they didn't like the idea of that some of the things that I was trying to accomplish." Dr. Reese dismissed their reluctance to address the matter with him face to face, but he knew the whispers were there.

As Dr. Reese recalled his time at Westeros, he hoped that his legacy left others with a positive outlook on diversity in higher education leadership. "I hope that I convinced, um, people that an African American could be a good president," he said. Even with the number of persons of color serving as college presidents reaching 17%, he acknowledges that the need for diversity is still a pressing issue in higher education, especially at the faculty and administrative levels. In order for higher education to meet the needs of a rapidly diversifying society, Dr. Reese stressed:

> It's important that institutions broaden their search to include people who have historically been underrepresented in positions of leadership in higher education, at the

faculty level and then the administration level. And that we need to encourage more persons from underrepresented minority backgrounds, particularly African Americans. We need to encourage more to consider taking on leadership positions at the highest level.

Dr. Celestine Wright

Dr. Celestine Wright was the sixth participant interviewed for the research study and one of the two in-person interviews I was able to secure out of the eight research participants. An accomplished educator, award-winning author, and noted college president, Dr. Wright remains a relevant leader in higher education long after she left the presidency. She served as interim president of High Sparrow College, a HWLAC for women in the Eastern United States, for less than a year prior to transitioning to a long-standing presidency at a HBCU. Currently, she serves on a number of nonprofit boards, a Board of Trustees member at High SparrowWaif College, and travels the country as one of the most sought after experts on race.

Pathways to the Presidency

Dr. Wright had no desire to become a college president. She began her professional career after having achieved a Ph.D. in the social sciences. “I did work as a clinician doing psychotherapy with college students and um, for a short time, had a private practice working with children and families,” she said. “But early in my tenure, I had the opportunity to do…early in my career, I had the opportunity to teach and enjoyed college teaching and got very…I got to…to be honest, I became more interested in college teaching then in doing therapy.” She tried to manage a dual career schedule for a time, however, the lure of teaching and learning shifted her focus. Her career started on the West Coast, but it was a move east where she would have the opportunity to make a larger impact, and ultimately, hone her presidential skills.

After gaining tenure during her brief stint at a Littlefinger State College, a public, co-ed institution, Dr. Wright accepted an associate professorship at High Sparrow College, just a short drive away from Littlefinger. As her profile began to rise so did the need for a new challenge in the academy. She was enjoying the benefits of tenured professorship while establishing herself as a scholar in her field and being a wife and mother. That enthusiasm for change was met with apprehension. “I was living, we were living in the northeast, which is where I'm from originally. My husband had a job also in academia and he was tenured at Littlefinger State College,” she explained. “And so for lots of reasons, I wasn't eager to move geographically, but I was looking for a new challenge.” By this time, she had rotated into the chairperson of her department (a customary practice at High Sparrow College) and had, reluctantly, developed a successful track record that others had taken notice of her administrative prowess. “I really had no interest in administration, but there I was, I was doing, you know, people thought I was doing a good job as chair, she said. “And so my colleague in my department said, ‘you know, I think you should be the dean.’” She continued to decline the notion, not fully realizing that the deanship would allow her the level of academic control and administrative freedom she had come to enjoy. At the request of a few respected colleagues, she began to consider the deanship at High Sparrow College as a viable option. “If you are the dean, you could put the ideas about higher education that you’ve been writing about into practice,” said a colleague who encouraged her to apply for the position. “Then, the whole campus would be your personal laboratory.” As intriguing as that idea was, Dr. Wright would still have to consider the impact such an ambitious move would be on her family. The deanship would require a considerable amount of her time, on top of her acclaims an author as it began to pick up after a well-received book. She recalled a conversation

she had with another colleague that was not a High Sparrow College employee that helped her decide to apply for the deanship:

> You know, you are in 1997, I was 47. No, that's, let's see…43. I was 43 years old. In 1997, I was 43 and my friend said 'In seven years you'll be 50; and in seven years, your youngest son will be out of high school and you'll be able to do whatever you want. It might be a good idea for you to just test this out and see if you like college administration because you know, in a few years, if you want to move, go somewhere else, take on another role. You'll have that knowledge about yourself.

Dr. Wright did not go into specific details about her deanship, however, she described her time as the dean as an "interesting job, much more interesting that I had imagined." She flourished in her role and was pleased with the team assembled to carry out her directives; however, other parties began to notice her success and, soon thereafter, she was being approached about submitting her name for presidential searches. Similar to her move into the administrative ranks, she, initially, had no interest in becoming a college president.

During her time as dean, Dr. Wright became inundated with nominations for a number of openings. None had interested her, mainly because of the location of the institution; however, although reluctant to entertain her nomination to presidential searches, a High Sparrow College trustee gave her some sound advice. "I think you'd make a great college president and if I were you, if you have any interest, you should at least once apply for a position just to see what the process is like," said the trustee. They explained, "Because even if you don't want the job or get the job, you will learn a lot just from going through the presidential search process." Eventually, she received a nomination that peaked her interest, one that combined both her affinity for a liberal arts education and a location preference. She was found to be the desired candidate;

however, she sensed some hastiness in the search committee's request for an acceptance. She was fortunate enough to have three female college presidents as colleagues to call on for advice: Presidents Tyrell, Greyjoy, and Bolton. This was a huge step in her career, one that she was not going to take lightly as challenges involving accommodations for her family would determine how she would proceed. All three women believed that she was ready for a presidency, but all believed that this opportunity was not the right one for a number of reasons. First, President Tyrell thought that the job would take away more time from her family, including her two sons, one of whom had just started high school and the other a freshman in college. Next, President Greyjoy believed that the opportunity, simply, was not the best opportunity available. She suggested Dr. Wright seek additional responsibilities from High Sparrow College's president to help better prepare her for opportunities down the road. Finally, President Bolton, who was the President of High Sparrow College, wanted her to stay because she was a valued member of the High Sparrow College community and, unbeknownst to Dr. Wright, the president was scheduled to go on a six-month sabbatical in the spring of the following school year. President Bolton suggested that Dr. Wright remain at High Sparrow as the dean until she took her sabbatical and Wright would serve as interim president in her absence. Dr. Wright explained how this arrangement was the best possible scenario to balance her professional and personal life:

> I said "well that's a great opportunity because that solves a number of problems." You know, it gives me something new to do but it lets me test out whether I would enjoy being a college president without having to move or disrupt my family. So she's going to go away for six months. I get to try it out for six months; and you know, if I like it, great. I know that when she comes back, I'll go back to being dean, which is a job I'm enjoying. So, you know, there's no risk here.

Dr. Wright withdrew her name from the search and began preparations to take over the reins of High Sparrow College.

Experiences as a College President

Dr. Wright's experience as a college president at a HWLAC varies from most of the participants in this study because she was only the president of High Sparrow College for a short time. She would be contacted and, eventually, accept another presidential appointment where she went on to lead for over a decade, but for the purpose of this study (and to further protect her anonymity, I will focus on her experiences at High Sparrow College). Dr. Wright recalled some sound advice that she received from a High Sparrow College trustee prior to the beginning of President Bolton's sabbatical. "I know you're just going to be in this role for six months, but if I were you, I would think about…you know, it's not going to happen until next year, but I would spend some time thinking about how you want to use that time so that you really gained something from it. That it's not just, you know, babysitting the office. You know, something that is meaningful to you that you can do."

She took this message to heart; one of Dr. Wright's most successful initiatives while president at High Sparrow College was a presidential conference that sought to cultivate wisdom among the participants to address issues in ethics in higher education leadership. The Enron scandal had dominated the news cycle for some time, and Dr. Wright thought this to be the perfect backdrop for this conference. "One of the questions I asked myself when all that stuff was happening was like: Where did those people go to school," she said. "Like, you know, how come they don't have any ethical fiber?" As leaders of the future of the country, the conference allowed presidents to share in the knowledge on how to effectively lead the student populations of the time and how to inspire morality in leadership.

Another success, and what Dr. Wright also insinuated was her biggest challenge, was solving relationship problems within High Sparrow College. A heated battle between the president of High Sparrow and the president of the alumni association, that had become personal, was now the problem of Dr. Wright as the interim president. The feud had become public and intense enough that President Bolton foresaw that only legal proceedings would end this calamity; however, President Bolton saw an opportunity for Dr. Wright to expand her problem-solving skills by asking her to settle the dispute as the acting president. To Dr. Wright's pleasure, the incoming president of the alumni association was a Black woman.

> We had six months to do it, but the new president of the alumnae association, conveniently, the newly elected president of the alumni association was a Black woman. And of course I was a Black woman. While the conflict was still there, there was some natural affinity, so we got to know each other and used my skills as a therapist to try to navigate this fight. It was like a family fight and I was trained as a family therapist.

It was evident in her demeanor that she was most comfortable in this role, designing a ten-point conflict resolution plan between she and the new alumnae president. First, she established a common ground other than their racial background. That commonality was their love and appreciation for High Sparrow College. Second, the "physical stability is important to the administration of the college," said Dr. Wright. Dr. Wright did not go any further into the other eight points, however, she mentioned that the feud was related to the fiscal stewardship as it pertained to the college and the alumnae association. After some negotiations, the sides were able to find an agreeable compromise, just as Dr. Wright's time as president was coming to a close.

Being an African American/Black College President at a Historically White Liberal Arts College

Dr. Wright described High Sparrow College as a “pretty progressive place.” She was one of two Black women in her department at High Sparrow, a slightly different arrangement from her employment as a professor at Littlefinger State College. There, she and her husband had helped the number of Black faculty increase by 100%; and yet, she still remained the only Black female faculty member. It was at High Sparrow where she felt valued, developing collegial relationships with members of the faculty and administration, noting that after her arrival, the institution had made considerable efforts to bring in a more diverse workforce. “So this is to say High Sparrow had been very intentionally working on diversifying its faculty,” she said. “And, you know, while it's certainly got more diverse, even as an after, you know, while I was there, it got increasingly more diverse, I didn't feel quite the token I had been at the previous institution.” She failed to recall any acts of racial profiling or targeting while at High Sparrow and believed that her overall experience was positive.

Race seemed not to factor in as much with Dr. Wright and her reception as the interim president at High Sparrow College. She had been a faculty member and respected dean of the institution; however, as she transitioned into the interim president role, she recollects that the hardest part of being the interim president was shoring up relationships with members of the faculty. Dr. Wright describes the transition as “a little weird for everybody.” There are obvious cultural differences between members of faculty and the administration; and as the chief executive of the college, presiding over faculty members who were formerly your peers, she settled on the social capital she had built over more than a decade with them to navigate the temporary appointment.

Dr. Wright's presidential body of work at High Sparrow College was no less important than the president who served before her, however, what made her a most effective negotiator and problem solver was her roots in psychotherapy. In addition to her research and teaching experience, she also got the opportunity to serve as a senior student affairs officer prior to becoming the dean. That opportunity to get to see the successes and shortcomings of the institution from a programming and services perspective were "a good combination of skills to have success as the dean," she described. For example, a coalition of students led a protest that occupied the administration building in order to negotiate more affinity housing for their increasingly diverse population in addition to financial aid policies. President Bolton had only been at High Sparrow briefly at the time of the protest, however, she was not a proponent of increasing affinity housing under as she believed there was sufficient space already on campus. Dr. Wright disagreed, and felt the president was not thinking of the situation from a psychological perspective. She explained, "It wasn't just students of color. It was a coalition of white and students of color protesting several things that they thought were core to their experience at the college." With both sides at an impasse, members of the faculty sought out Dr. Wright to mediate the situation. Their rationale, she recalled, was a testament to the work that she had been doing her entire career. She said:

> Some of the faculty of color felt like somebody needs to help her dig herself out of this hole she's digging herself in and they came to me and said "'You should do it. Why me? Because you are tenured and you're a full professor, you got nothing to lose. And so and so, and you're a psychologist and you know about this stuff and you write about it and you ought to go help her out.'"

She was able to help negotiate a peaceful solution, with concessions on both sides; and, it was only a year later that she became Dean of the College. She was sure that her ability to resolve conflict was a catalyst in that decision. Peer support and collaboration were the other reasons she believed she was promoted to Dean.

When Dr. Wright, finally, became a full-time president, she acknowledged that she was in the role she was supposed to be in at that particular point in time. “And so when I became president, it was really out of a sense of calling, you know, it wasn't out of like ambition achieved,” she said. “It was sort of like, okay, this is what I'm supposed to do now. You know, I want to do it as well as I can and I felt happy that I was doing what I felt was what I was being called to do to do. You know what I mean?” Even when she was named acting president of High Sparrow College, there had been no grand scheme to move into the presidency. She bided her time at each juncture of her career, serving where she had been called to serve, and being the best version of herself for the sake of the institution. She had the distinction of being the first African American/Black president of High Sparrow College and she wears that distinction with pride.

President Rick Story

President Rick Story was interviewed for the research study. It is commonplace for a college president to be an accomplished scholar or administrator, but President Story’s resume conveys a very impressive career. Scholar-athlete, military service member, and seasoned administrator, President Story has been recognized as a highly effective leader within the higher education field. Most importantly, President Story has been the chief executive of an institution of higher education twice over. First, he presided over Tyrion College, a small, private HWLAC in the southern United States. Recently, he was named president of Whitewalker University, a

moderate research activity-classified institution located in the northeastern region of the United States.

Pathways to the Presidency

President Story described his ascension to the presidency at Tyrion College, and later Whitewalker University, as a "natural extension" of his need to serve his community and country. "I wanted to help young people and seeing their hopes and dreams and aspirations," he said. "I started off as a military officer and ended up in corporate America. I ran a couple of nonprofits, but I always came back to the idea of service."

When asked about how his educational and professional experiences prepared him for a presidency, President Story began with an introspective look at his life and accomplishments. So often, he was one of few, if not the only, African American in his classes or programs. "I graduated from a high school that had 1,300 African Americans…1,300 people in my graduating class," he said. "1,300 in high school, that is; and I had 22 African Americans." Even more so, the lack of diversity in his professional experiences magnified his achievements as an African American. "Then go on to the service academy. We had about 1,986 graduates. I graduated 13th in my class and the highest ranking African American." President Story referenced the concept of the "duality of the American Negro," developed by African American scholar W.E.B. DuBois. Actually, the correct term is called *double consciousness,* the measure of oneself through the lens of the dominant group (Black, 2007). DuBois posited that the American Negro's (now African Americans) experience is "spent negotiating and enduring the conflicts between who one is as a person and how one struggles to live with the misrepresentations of the outside world" (Black, 2007, p. 394). President Story's understanding of double consciousness has evolved over time helping him navigate a number of majority white spaces like the military and the University of

Bron, where he was the only African American executive. “I just spent a lot of time around white people and I learned how to be comfortable in my own authentic self around them while letting them be comfortable around me because we spend a lot of time making sure the white people over comfortable with us so we can do what we want to do.” Those interactions would serve him in his future endeavors as a college president.

President Story recalled an encounter with noted African American scholar Dr. Jackson Russell at a European conference; this encounter set in motion his motivation to pursue opportunities where there was a lack of diversity. An audience member asked Dr. Russell why he chose to pursue his research interests at predominantly white, well-resourced institutions as opposed to doing the same work at HBCUs. President Story recalled Dr. Russell’s response:

> Well, you know, you're going to have brilliant African American scholars at Lannister all the time…It's just the way the numbers worked out that you’re going to have fewer at a place like Dragonglass. I think I can have a greater impact (at Dragonglass).

Those opportunities to have a greater impact came during his vice presidency at the University of Bron, when search consultants and committees began pursuing him for open presidential appointments. The openings ran the gamut of the higher education spectrum, ranging from HBCUs to state universities to liberal arts colleges. Despite the affinity for HBCUS (of whom both his parents were graduates), President Story deliberately sought were he could have a greater impact akin to the thoughts of Dr. Russell. He explained:

> It’s not going to be a ton of people that follow this track; and if I do it, I think I can be more of a pioneer/trailblazer and allow other people to come behind me as opposed to going to an HBCU. Although my parents were HBCU grads…they both went to

> Mormont…I'm a big fan of them…I just felt like I could create a better…be more of a pioneer and create more opportunities for people who look like me by taking this job.

The choice to accept the presidency at Tyrion College may not have been a surprise to supporters in his immediate circle; however, the reception from others in his social groups was complicated. As a member of a professional fraternity, President Story has engaged in conversations about higher education where he had been mistaken as a HBCU president or a president of a more high profile institution rather than being the president of a predominantly white institution like Tyrion College based on the assumptions of the accolades he had accumulated as a Black leader.

> I have to kind of explain them…that they'll assume that I'm at an HBCU because Tyrion and Lannister are good schools, but they are not as known as a, you know, Dragonglass or Night King or Varys or University of Bron…University of The Hound. Sometimes, white people think I'm talking about Baelish. They'll think I'm at an HBCU.

He does not count it as negative that they are not as familiar with the institutions that he has presided over. He just chalks it up to people being more familiar with schools that have a stronger academic profile in their circles of influence.

President Story's resume spoke volumes to the search committee at Tyrion College about his accomplishments in industry and in higher education; however, it was his connection to Baratheon College, whose student body demographic and institutional mission bore similar resemblance to that of Tyrion, which he believed helped him obtain his position at the time of this study. In addition to having familial ties to Baratheon College, he also served on an advisory board so his familiarity with their brand of education appealed to their senses.

Experiences as a College President

President Story likened his search experience, and subsequent appointment to the presidency at Tyrion College, to that of selecting the pope: “A lot of mystery…magic behind closed doors…then they pop some smoke and tell you you’re the pope…So you never quite know until you know.” He acknowledged that this was his first attempt at securing a presidency and that success on his first try was rare in relation to the overall landscape of presidential searches. Just as notable as his selection was the notability of the type of institution that he would be presiding over: A mission driven, private HWLAC in the Southeastern United States. “I was the only Black [person] serving, leading a private university below the Mason Dixon line for a good while…. definitely for liberal arts colleges, but even in bigger schools.”

Tyrion College was in a dire financial situation prior to the arrival of President Story. His appointment to the presidency had just preceded the financial crisis of 2009 and both his endowment and enrollment totals were tanking. He recalled, “Endowment dropped by a half and our enrollment was down by like 25, 30%.” President Story saw these issues not so much a deterrent but, rather, they were challenges that he had been selected to help the college overcome. Given the presumption of systemic racism in higher education, President Story knew his work would be highly scrutinized as first of his race to lead Tyrion. He described the beginning as “treacherous” as is with most financial crises in higher education, yet, he was able to lead the institution back to good financial standing. He explained, “I was able draw upon all my experiences in life: military, corporate, nonprofit, government to be an effective president…” Weathering those storms would serve him equally as well as the president of Whitewalker University; and while he may have more resources at his disposal, some of the same challenges

are magnified to a larger degree. He did admit, however, that the process is easier the second time around. He reflected:

> You just understand that, you know, ebbs and flows of the job, how to maintain your composure, your political capital, your social capital, your energy…It's a lot better and a lot easier the second time around even when the times are tough.

Financial troubles aside, President Story did not consider the financial challenges of Tyrion College as his most daunting challenge while serving as president. It was actually navigating the old, Southern politics of the region Tyrion is located. No matter the accolades, he was still an African American male serving a Southern conservative community; and while the nation has become more progressive, he still had to learn the unspoken rules of his base. He explained, "Although I tried to be very, very moderate and how I dealt with it…plus the South…you being from Louisiana…there's all sorts of codes in the South that are just different than other places." President Story had mastered the art of "code switching which favored his interests at Tyrion but also placated a predominantly, Southern, white alumni base by failing to acknowledge systemic racism within the campus and surrounding communities. President Story's code switching presented him with the opportunity to display his authentic self without offending the white alumni and student populations of Tyrion College (Carter, 2008). In addition to, the code switching reinforced a sense of interest convergence in President Story's selection as president as the institution achieves some magnitude of diversity while but has a leader who does not create unnecessary friction in the natural, political order.

Additionally, there was racial incident on the campus of Tyrion College during the second presidential term of former president Barak Obama. The little description he chose to provide of the event sounded serious, but President Story divulged that he had to expend some social capital

to help manage the situation. Again, here comes the notion of the "duality of the American Negro" as he mentioned earlier. Long-standing, Southern ideologies on race and politics shape how President Story's views on how his success as a leader in higher education would be judged. He explained: "You've gotta be learning about three or four things simultaneously to do your job as president…how to be the president of Tyrion College…how to be in the South and be a Black president at a predominantly white institution…" It is safe to say that President Story was able to navigate those identities successfully, or successful enough, to warrant being named president at Whitewalker University, another historically white institution with a larger academic profile.

President Story briefly mentioned what he believed he was able to successfully accomplish during his presidency at Tyrion College. He thought his presidency ushered in a more inclusive campus environment where students could pursue their education as their fully authentic selves. In spite of the conservative roots of the community, Tyrion leadership encouraged students to be more tolerant of each other's respective differences, a testament to their motto. He counts an encounter with a student, a gay student, who had experienced personal strife that prompted a withdrawal from school, as a testament to this change in favor of inclusivity. "Dr. Story, this place is better," as he recalled the student's words. "It's just more open and more accepting of me as a human being and I really appreciate you."

Being an African American/Black College President at a Historically White Liberal Arts College

President Story likens his first presidential post at Tyrion College to that of former president Barack Obama when he was elected as the first African American president of the United States as:

> When you first come in, you think about race for the first 10 seconds when you sit at your desk and you kind of reflect on your life and your journey and then your first appointment hits…and then all hell breaks loose and you don't have time to think about [race] seriously.

President Story tackled his appointment at a whirlwind pace to preside over business meetings, meet constituents, or just learn the lay of the campus. He continued noting that the more seasoned you become as a president those moments become nostalgic; and thereafter, the amount of effort to remain president becomes all about the work you have to do to positively impact the institution.

President Story's mission to serve as a champion of diversity and inclusion in spaces where there have not historically been persons of color is important to him, yet it is that same mission that brings about assumptions that are automatically attributed to him because he is an African American. He explained, "You try to be aware and you find yourself getting called in for an interview…You know, it's like an African American on a predominantly white faculty. They get on every committee that has to do with diversity. Everything!" Because he was an African American in the South, in a very conservative region of the country, and the president of a HWLAC, he understands that he did not have the luxury that others may have to be as overt with their opinions on race. He reflected:

> This was more of an issue when I was in the South. But if you come across as being, you know, Black Panther…Malcolm X…you know, Chuck D, and you were completely into the agenda of African Americans, you can have some people that look at you and say, "Hmm, I thought that he was the president of the entire university, not just the Black people."

President Story's narrative clearly articulates that it is a very fine line to walk for an African American president in this type of environment. On one hand, the position requires a high level of service to the institution, regardless of who the student body, board members, faculty, or staff are. On the other hand, neglecting the people who you racially identify with causes a strife that brings into question the legitimacy of the president's contribution to the progression of African American people. Satisfying all sides is just as much a full-time job as actually running the institution. "So you're…you know…you're not in any way turning in your Black card and not abdicating your responsibilities as a senior Black leader in the community now your campus, but you're just aware of that," he said. "And if you under do it…You're like…people go, 'well, why do you, why are you doing this job?'"

As an African American college president at a HWLAC, President Story understands that visibility of People of Color in executive positions helps create other opportunities for administrators of color to succeed. He does caution, however, that the politics of running such an institution are not in favor of African American presidents or administrators. A former football player, President Story suggests playing the political game is similar to evoking the "Rooney Rule" that was adopted by the National Football League. Briefly explained, the "Rooney Rule" is a policy developed by the National Football League that mandated teams interview minority candidates for head coaching and senior management positions (Baker & Cangemi, 2016). The individuals wielding the political power (i.e., Board of Trustees) indicate that they would like to see diversity within the presidential cabinet and encourage hiring the best in their fields; however, there is an unspoken notion that the president be mindful not to show favoritism in hiring from one specific racial group, mainly his own. President Story believes, however, "it is easier to be more woke and more progressive with racial inclusiveness, especially in your hiring

practices in administration as a white, older gentleman at a predominantly white school than it is to be an African American, a younger African American." He also added "Because if you do it as an old, white guy, nobody is going to be like 'Wow, he's so progressive, but if you do it as a Black guy, they'll be "Wow, he's going to hire all of his friends. So that's, that's something you just deal with." President Story's experience illustrates how white senior administrators can be can be allies in the diversification of higher education, using their racial privilege to encourage diversity hiring and development practices.

President Story perceives that his race is pretty well-received by students and administrators regardless of their race or ethnicity. He did not recall any overt displays of nonsupport. For the most part, they are proud to be associated with his administration; however, he believes acceptance by white people on campus varies with seniority. The faculty tend not to be as easy to please. He recalled, "Sometimes faculty members are not enamored with a president…They don't [care] what color they are." He noted that his nontraditional background, probably, causes more of an issue than his race. After all, President Story had not risen to the chief executive position through the academy. He was a veteran turned nonprofit executive before he was assumed the role of associate vice president at the University of Bron.

One point of contention revealed in the interview was an interaction between President Story and his Board of Trustees over a hiring decision. As the story went, he was set to hire an African American administrator and a member of the board questioned the need to have another African American executive not holding the office of president. "Do you think you can have two African Americans on the leadership team," he recalled the board member saying. Not one to mince words, he described the opinion as "antebellum" and hypothesized that some of his angst toward their thinking was due to him being more reliant on the board for personnel decisions.

He mentioned that he was able to learn from his mistake as he grew into his presidency, but the deference to the advice of the board stifled other personnel decisions earlier in his tenure.

President Story viewed his presidencies as having a dual purpose. First, it showed administrators (and people) of color that there are minorities who can achieve a presidential appointment at some of the best, and historically white, institutions in the country. Second, his administrations are to be a show of competency on behalf of presidents and administrators of color to the still, overwhelmingly white academy. "It's also important for white people to see that African Americans can do this," he said. "We just don't have to just run…I mean running HBCUs is great, but we don't have to just run HBCUs. We can do this as well so I think it's just a real honor."

President Kristina Martell

President Kristina Martell was the final research participant for the study. She currently serves as the president of Drogo College, located in the eastern region of the United States. A lifelong scientist, President Martell is the only president in this study to have obtained an undergraduate degree from an HBCU before going on to obtain a doctoral degree from a large, predominantly white, public research institution. Unfortunately, President Martell's interview was not able to be digitally recorded due to file corruption on the device used to record the other interviews. However, since President Martell was one of only two women in the study, I felt it was important to include as much of her story as I could recall from my field notes. From what I recall during the in-person interview with President Martell, she had not been actively seeking a presidency. When the opportunity to lead Drogo College became available, she applied at the behest of colleagues who thought she had the makings of a capable president. She also counted her family as avid supporters of her pursuit of the presidency, and later, suggested that the impact

of the college presidency on family life would be an interesting research topic. President Martell was very cognizant of the role that race plays in higher education leadership; and with her being both a woman and a member of a minority group, she understood that her leadership would be scrutinized even more at a historically white, liberal arts college because she was a "double minority."

Themes Across Participant Narratives

The research participants all shared a number of characteristics that made them ideal for this study, specifically, their race, degree credentials, and an appointment to the position of president (and some on more than one occasion). In addition to those characteristics, several themes connecting these presidents became clear: Connection to the Academy; Challenges of Being the First One; Sense of Responsibility.

Enter the President: Connection to the Academy

First, the majority of the participants in the study, six of the eight, were tenured professors. Presidents Armstrong, Greene, Gilchrist, Asher, Wright, and Martell effectively used their terminal degrees to enhance their teaching, learning, and leadership experiences and worked their way into administrative positions that led to their respective presidencies. Of the participants, all but President Gilchrist, obtained a terminal degree in the sciences: three from social sciences (Armstrong, Greene, and Wright) and two from the physical sciences/STEM field (Asher and Martell). Additionally, because of the arduous process of gaining tenure and promotion, in addition to advancement through their respective departments, the path to the presidency was not a forethought in their plans as members of the academy. For instance, President Armstrong had not initially considered a presidential appointment, yet he excelled at every opportunity he was afforded. President Gilchrist had set his sights on a department

chairmanship; Dr. Wright was comfortable being a college dean; Dr. Asher counted his rise to the presidency as happenstance; President Martell was a first-time applicant interested in a better understanding of the search process; President Greene was not actively seeking but open to opportunities to expand his leadership. Each of these pathways follows what has been described as the traditional track to the American college presidency, however, it could also be inferred that tempering their professional aspirations could be a result of their experiences with racism as they progressed in their careers. For example, President Martell received some less than encouraging words from a faculty member/administrator about her ability to succeed in the academy because she was both a Black person and a woman. Black faculty and administrators in higher education, and Black women in particular, are not only underrepresented but racism in the academy negatively impacted their earning potential, career promotion, and professional development opportunities (Henry & Glenn, 2009).

Presidents Seavers and Story were a bit more opportunistic in their rise to the presidencies. Not to be taken as any less qualified than their academic peers, both presidents took a more nontraditional approach to the chief executive position at their respective intuitions. Because they had not had the typical experience in the academy, their leadership capabilities in other areas made them attractive candidates for liberal arts schools that they both indicated were in dire financial straits. As previously mentioned, President Seavers has a business background, with experience in nonprofit and higher education consulting and experience as a CEO of a large startup company. Not to mention, President Seavers had more than a decade of experience in board leadership at his undergraduate alma mater. President Story, too, had corporate business and nonprofit experience prior to moving into higher education.

Tug of War: Challenges of Being the First of Their Race

All of the presidents have had the distinction of being the first African American/Black leader at their respective institutions. Because of that status, they each noted that there is an air of scrutiny because their appointments were a challenge to a status quo that remains for most liberal arts colleges in the United States some one hundred plus years later. As mentioned in the literature review, the standard profile for an American college president remains a white, older male (60s) with a doctorate and multiple years of experience as a college president (American Council on Education, 2017).

Even though two presidents had been named to their posts prior to the election of former President Barack Obama, most agreed that their appointments presented hope for diversity in leadership while also experiencing challenges to legitimacy as a leader. President Seavers called it a "tug of war" between being a representative of one's race while serving the interests of all constituents. President Greene added that the challenge African American/Black presidents face exist on two extremes. He explained this concept when referencing his initial thoughts of being named president of Seaworth:

> You're presented with the challenge of what do you do with this? Um, you know, do you want one extreme just you sort of completely ignore the fact that you're a Black president? And that's the first. And the other extreme is if this is gonna be all you talk about? You're going to be a Black president in all contexts.

President Story stresses that race is only a microcosm of the work that the president is about to undertake because the workload of a president is so strenuous, however, leaning too far to one spectrum of a racial agenda could be detrimental to the perception of the president's initiatives. It can be concluded, and is supported by President Seavers' experience, that the majority of the

institutional workforce is white, including the Board of Trustees. In order for the presidents achieve any measure of success, they may have to temper inclinations towards their stances on racial disparities in so that their white colleagues will feel comfortable with them being in a position of such power.

Building as We Climb: A Sense of Service & Responsibility

The final theme I identified across the participants' responses is that they felt a sense of service in their call to the presidency and a sense of responsibility to be a role model to students of color. This sense of responsibility was also described as being intentional in promoting diversity. President Armstrong acknowledged the responsibility he feels to "clear a path for others." President Armstrong explained:

> I struggle sometimes because I don't know how I got to be in this position but I'm going to do the best job possible. I'm very conscious of what it means to students here, what it means to my family, the community, and the nation as a whole that I am in this role. I try to take on that responsibility with the proper attitude of service and gracefulness. I don't know where this is going to go from here but I know that there are a few of us out there trying to make a difference. So whether it's me here, the president at Winterfell University or the president of Podrick College. There are a few. The president of the University of Hodor. The president of the College of the Vale…who are trying to do the best job we can. And our job isn't to be the best Black president, but to be the best president that college ever had and that's what I keep in the back of my mind.

President Gilchrist, and his wife, actively mentored students of color as a means to pay his professional success forward. President Seavers noted that he hopes his participation in this research study helps add to the conversation that there should be more diversity in leadership

roles in higher education. President Story saw his presidencies as a testament to what leaders of color can do when given the opportunity. He explained, “We don’t have to just run HBCUs,” he said. “We can do this as well.” As they continue to serve as presidents of their respective institutions, African American/Black college presidents should remain mindful that their example has the ability to influence more students and administrators of color to aspire to the presidency.

Conclusion

The research participants were gracious in sharing their stories about their experiences as presidents at HWLACs. Throughout each narrative, participants recalled their rise to the presidency, providing detail that would be beneficial to aspiring African American/Black college administrators who wish to be college presidents. Because each had achieved the role of president at colleges with a history of and serving predominantly white student populations, it was imperative that the participants speak about how race has influenced their path. The major themes that arose from the interviews the influence of the participants’ connections to the academy (or professoriate), navigating a “tug of war” between identities as the college president and the “Black” president, and being a role model for future administrators of color to follow.

The traditional pathway to the American college presidency, through the professoriate and into the senior administrative ranks, remains the most viable option to reach the chief executive position of a college (no matter the race or ethnicity). For those presidents who gained experience outside of the classroom, or traditional pathway, it was important that they exhibited senior level leadership experience in higher education to warrant consideration. Their experiences rising through the ranks to the position of the president inform a multitude of audiences about how race still influences access to opportunities in higher education and how African American/Black administrators are perceived. Though their successes and challenges

varied, each of the participants have a strong understanding of the importance of their work to both the legacy of the institution and to advancing the agenda of diversity in higher education leadership. In Chapter 5, there will be further discussion on the research questions that guided the research topic and conclusions based on the research study along with implications for practice and future recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY, AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

This qualitative study explored the career pathways of African American/Black presidents at HWLACs and their experiences with race. The study sought to investigate the role race played in their pursuit of the presidency as well as their experiences with race while serving as President at a HWLAC. In chapter five, I discuss the findings from the interviews based on the experiences of eight African American/Black college presidents who lead, or have led, HWLACs. I also discuss implications, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Traditional vs. Nontraditional Pathways to the Presidency

The traditional pathway through the academy, promotion through an academic faculty position into an administrative position, remains the most common method to achieve a presidential appointment at any institution (American Council on Education, 2017). These findings and the extant literature suggest that the most important criteria are that the administrator achieves a terminal degree, which would include a doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D.) or professional degrees such as a medical degree (M.D.) or juris doctor (J.D.). Second, the traditional career pathway typically includes advancement from a faculty position (tenured) to department administrator to senior-level administrative positions such as a dean or the chief academic officer (i.e. provost) before being selected as a college president. It was revealed in the

participant narratives, however, that the traditional career pathway did not have to be followed exactly to those specifications before being named the president of an institution. All eight of the research participants achieved doctoral degrees prior to becoming college presidents. Seven of the eight participants achieved doctoral degrees in the natural or social sciences while one lone participant achieved a juris doctor. Six of the eight participants in this study became presidents via the traditional career pathway: earned Doctor of Philosophy degrees, achieved tenured professorships, and later, became senior administrators before their selection as president at their respective institutions. Most of the participants indicated that they had not planned to pursue a college presidency, but that their appointment was a result of movements into key administrative or leadership positions that warranted their candidacy. Only two of the participants (Greene and Gilchrist) reached the position of chief academic officer, or CAO, which had been identified as the senior-most promotion prior to a presidential appointment because of the multitude of managerial duties assigned to that position (Mech, 1997). Three of the participants reached the level of dean prior to their appointment; however, Dr. Wright was given the opportunity to serve as interim president prior to her permanent appointment at another institution.

The nontraditional career pathway to the presidency manifests itself in a number of ways. Acquiring a terminal degree is still applicable; yet, nontraditional candidates include "non-academic higher education professionals" and "leaders from outside academia—who often bring valuable, distinct skill sets from corporate, government, and nonprofit experiences" (Aspen Institute, 2017, p. 24). Those leadership experiences vary from senior enrollment services positions to student affairs leadership positions to Fortune 500 CEOs to politicians to military leaders.

Two of the research participants fit the criteria of nontraditional candidates. President Story earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree; however, his professional background highlights experiences as a nonprofit executive and non-academic, senior campus administrator (American Council on Education, 2017). Because of his high academic achievements and leadership capabilities, he has been named a college/university president twice, moving up in institutional prestige. President Seavers' integration into higher education had nothing to do with holding an academic position or serving as a student affairs administrator. He had a juris doctorate to go along with his experience as an entrepreneur and business consultant. His higher education leadership experience, however, derived from his service as a member of the Board of Trustees at his undergraduate alma mater. Presidents may be leaders of the institution; however, further review of the interviews indicate how important the synergy of the relationship between the president and the Board of Trustees is in regards to running the college. Boards of Trustees are responsible for the welfare of the institution, including the selection of the president and setting institutional goals (Aspen Institute, 2017). They also have considerable access to networks and capital that can increase the capacity for institutions to grow in a positive way (Aspen Institute, 2017; Woollen, 2016).

Presidential Experiences

Each of the participants in the research study possessed a myriad of skills that made them ideal for the presidential post at their respective institutions. All had doctoral degrees and six of the eight participants were tenured professors, giving them experience in the delivery and management of information. President Story's experiences as a military leader as well as his work in senior leadership at the University of Bron gave him the human resources experience to become president at two institutions with two varying academic profiles. Drs. Asher and Wright,

along with President Story, developed and nurtured relationships that positively influenced their administrations. Dr. Asher won over a largely white, older alumni base to support diversity initiatives that resulted in a number of accolades for their diversity and inclusion efforts. Dr. Wright settled student and alumni disputes using her conflict management skills from her days as a mental health professional. President Story helped institutionalize an inclusive culture that one student, who identified as a gay male, was able to persist through graduation. President Seavers, using his entrepreneurial and consultant background, identified operational processes at Hobbs and Shaw College that had been failing the institution and instituted new policies to increase efficiency. Each of these skills and accomplishments aligns with the four-part, comprehensive leadership model laid out by Mohnot (Mohnot & Shaw, 2017). Each sector emphasizes key areas of competency that denotes a successful leader in higher education: classroom instruction, human resources, stakeholder engagement, and policy improvement (Mohnot & Shaw, 2017). These accomplishments were a result of technical and soft skills that had been developed over time with each career promotion.

Just as the participants experienced successes in creating diverse and rewarding opportunities on their campuses, they also faced challenges that tested their leadership mettle. There were a variety of issues across the board, but in reviewing Pierce's (2011) five presidential pitfalls, the most common points of concern were the presidents' views of the college's operations and the abilities of presidents to communicate to their constituents. The three presidents emphasized management as a concern, speaking about college as a business; and each of them had a background in business as a corporate executive or business consultant. According to Turner, Norwood, and Noe (2013):

> Academic administrators oversee a variety of processes requiring them to be knowledgeable about strategic planning and marketing, risk management, financial management, human resources, personnel development, unit evaluation, and legal matters. While these may not be areas with which all academic professionals are familiar, taking steps to learn about the business aspects of an institution will give any individual an excellent advantage (p. 33).

Equally as challenging was the presidents' ability to communicate their visions, and their direction for the institution, to their campus constituents, especially members of the Board of Trustees or the faculty. Trustees and the faculty represent a power dynamic that can influence the presidential agenda in a positive way or a negative way. Trustees, as an organization, are responsible for the overall management of the institution, including the appointment and oversight of the president (Aspen Institute, 2017). The faculty has the ability to influence the academic agenda of the institution through instruction and their research prowess. In order to balance these power bases, presidents must develop social and emotional learning skills that are "essential to administrative effectiveness" (Turner et al., 2013, p. 31). An example of administrative effectiveness during Dr. Wright's tenure as interim president at High Sparrow College, negotiating a peaceful solution to a disagreement over fiscal management with the leadership of the alumni board. Dr. Wright also employed both her skills as an administrator and former mental health professional to establish a connection with the woman that highlighted the commonalities between them: They were both Black women who had a fondness and love for High Sparrow College. In another example, that same penchant for collegiality helped her negotiate a truce between then-President Bolton and members of the High Sparrow student body regarding student rights and privileges on campus. She was highly respected by her peers, who

urged her to get involved and the students for her work in diversity so. Not to mention, she was a tenured professor at the time so her job was secure regardless of her involvement. A year later, she was named Dean of the College.

That is not to say that presidents do not have their challenges with these groups. President Gilchrist candidly cited his board's "Wall Street" approach to college operations as his most challenging task. Dr. Asher mentioned that convincing a majority white alumni base that diversity was critical to the mission of his institution was his biggest challenge. Even Dr. Wright considered navigating identities as acting president and college dean as her most challenging duties, facing opposition from begrudging faculty who questioned her loyalty.

Influences of Race

Racism today is more subtle than it was 60 years ago (Parsons & Plakhotnic, 2006). The literature identifies a number of racist ideologies that might be more palatable to individuals who believe People of Color to be inferior (Bobo et al., 1997; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Clair & Denis, 2015; Kinder & Sears, 1981; Marks, 2015). The research participants in the present study recalled displays of *new racism*, unfair opinions and treatment aimed at the participants, throughout their careers and in their experiences as president; and while their selections may have exhibited a willingness of the institutions to be more diverse and inclusive, old habits die hard (Clair & Denis, 2015).

The backdrop of the participants' career experiences has been their perseverance through institutional racism. The presidents in this study cited significant experience with navigating predominantly white environments, especially in their pathway to the college presidency. Historically, white liberal arts colleges were rooted in educating the white elite of colonial America. As a result, historical worldviews of European dominance established the terms of

engagement in which society subscribes to (Domhoff, 2000; Gusa, 2010). As African American/Black administrators and faculty seek to advance in these white spaces, understanding the delicate balance of race relations can influence measures of success in their careers. Even with attempts to create more diverse environments, diversity among members of key decision-making bodies at institutions of higher education is sorely lacking. Those Persons of Color chosen to be among these groups are accustomed to socializing with the white elite and must operate within the constructs of the groups to maintain power (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996; Zweigenhaft & Domhoff, 2006).

Most of the participants came of age around the time of the Civil Rights movement when overt racist behavior towards African American/Black people had reached its peak. Additionally, the participants had been conditioned early on with the integration of classrooms, extracurriculars, and neighborhoods, often being the only one (or one of a few) who was African American/Black. President Martell recalled feeling like a "double minority" during her graduate work at a large, predominantly white research institution, being told by an administrator that her success rate as a Black woman academic would be meager. She was accomplished enough to be selected as a president on her first choice. President Armstrong's cites participation in an academic development program aimed at doctoral program completion and minority faculty prepared him to work at any institution, including historically, white liberal arts colleges. President Greene even joined a predominantly white fraternity as an undergraduate student. These experiences, and others, were few of many that set the stage for their academic careers in schools where they were underrepresented.

When asked about how they were received once they had been selected as presidents of their respective institutions, the consensus was that the campus communities, their family, and

other supporters were happy for their appointments. Some of the participants lauded their institutions for being progressive environments, but it had not been lost upon them that their constituents would scrutinize their leadership as their appointment placed all parties in uncharted territories.

The addition of an African American/Black president signified that the institutions and their governing bodies were willing to move away from institutional racism by promoting diversity, however, the transition to a more equitable campus environment may give way to a less obvious form of discrimination. Bonilla-Silva divided colorblind racism into four frameworks that "can be utilized for interpreting and analyzing the discourse of color-blind racism as a dominant racial ideology" (Martinez, 2009, p. 588). As it pertains to the research study, abstract liberalism best describes the campus' environments prior to the hiring of the participants. Historically, these institutions had not made diversity in the administration, or the student body, a priority. Now, after the enactments of desegregation, affirmative action, and other policies that promote equal opportunity for education and employment, institutions have explained the lack of color in their campus communities is because of personal choice and not institutional or personal practices (Martinez, 2009). President Greene posited that the lack of diversity at Seaworth College does influence the applicant pool, including senior leadership positions; however, he asks that his search committee make concerted efforts to be cognizant of the importance of a diverse leadership environment. President Greene explained:

> So I wouldn't say that it's not that I come and say, all right, well now we've got to hire a whole bunch of Blacks, Latinos, and Asians cause I'm here. But that's certainly putting a strong emphasis on if we're hiring folks (who) don't have the diversity, we better be sure that, you know, that's really the best person we could get.

In the case of President Story, one board member questioned the validity of his decision to attempt to hire another African American administrator to his senior team. “Do you think you can have two African Americans on the leadership team,” President Story recalled. The decision to identify the administrator as the prime candidate was not one brought on by affirmative action policy, which abstract liberalism opposes, however questioning the president’s decision infers that the board member might be “ignoring the severe underrepresentation of People of Color” at the institution (Martinez, 2009, p. 588).

Explaining the participants’ encounters with race as leaders of historically white liberal arts colleges can be likened to the election of former President Barack Obama. Rivera and Plant (2016) posit that it is a widely held notion that President Obama “is a single role model powerful enough to positively influence fellow African Americans and intergroup relations in general” (pg. 496). On one end of the spectrum, President Obama represents success at some of the highest levels of education and career attainment, a beacon to African Americans (Rivera & Plant, 2016). On the other end, President Obama is the antithesis of racial stereotypes attributed to minority groups, especially African Americans, with the potential to change the lens through which they are viewed as a racial group (Columb & Plant, 2016; Rivera & Plant, 2016). Participants in this study acknowledged a similar feeling, an “Obama effect” of their own, in correlation to being the first of their race to be selected to the position. Similar to Obama, the participants were highly polished leaders within the higher education sphere, most of whom had the backing of connected, white colleagues and familiarity with the white, liberal arts college environment. By learning the rules of engagement, even those that would require them to balance their connection to their cultural roots with the commitment to leading a HWLAC, the presidents positioned themselves as viable candidates that would exemplify an institution’s commitment to

diversity to its varied constituents as well as its peers in higher education. The selection of the participants to their respective presidencies achieved an agenda that, in effect, absolved white trustees of biases toward diversity while promoting somewhat of an inclusive environment to current and prospective students (Delgado, 2015). Their selection also created an emotional experience for its students, faculty, staff, and administrators of color as progress in the struggle for inclusion. President Greene's recalling of his unveiling to the public elicited tears from students of color that were reminiscent of the front pages of national newspapers in 2008 when President Obama was elected and his supporters were seen shedding tears of adulation and promise. As important as their selection may have been to the institutional culture, there was little opportunity to rest on the achievement of their historic appointment. President Story referenced President Obama's resolve saying:

> When you first come in, you think about, you think about race for the first 10 seconds when you sit at your desk and you kind of reflect on your life and your journey. Then your first appointment hits, TJ, and then all hell breaks loose and you don't have time to think about [race] seriously.

The concept of interest convergence may also be helpful in understanding these participants' narratives. The selection of the participants to their respective presidencies achieved an agenda that, in effect, absolved white trustees of biases toward diversity while promoting somewhat of an inclusive environment to current and prospective students (Delgado, 2015). Their credentials, however, could not shield them from suggestions and overtures that they need not be too radical in their approaches to leadership because their influence over the campus community had its limits.

Appointing an African American president, or chief executive, at a historically white liberal arts college is a bold move to create inclusive environments for underrepresented populations. Research participants indicated the importance of institutionalizing diversity on their campuses, however, there would be pushback from board members and alumni about the school becoming too diverse too quick (Kezar, 2007). Dr. Asher recalled:

> My biggest challenge was convincing alumni who had been at the institution when it was almost totally white…convincing them that the institution would be better if it became more diverse and that the quality would not suffer, but in fact, quality was improved.

President Gilchrist added:

> You know, basically, I am not going to allow the fact that some people look at me and see a Black man and that, then, equates to whatever you want to fill in the blank. That is not going to be an impediment for me in my life in any way, shape, or form. No, that's not it. I'm acutely aware of that. I'm a Black man and I'm very proud of it. Some people here…I'm sure they will tell you that I talked too much about diversity, mainly more about inclusion and thriving in diversity. But that's the way I view myself. That's my worldview.

President Story also chimed in:

> This was more of an issue when I was in the South. But if you come across as being, you know, Black Panther…Malcolm X…you know, Chuck D, and you were completely into the agenda of African Americans, you can have some people that look at you and say, 'Hmm, I thought that he was the president of the entire university, not just the Black people.

Kezar's (2007) work notes that leaders must mobilize, implement, and institutionalize diversity in order for it to become a common practice within their institutional culture. To mobilize the campus community, presidents Armstrong, Seavers and Gilchrist went on "listening tours" to identify areas of need in operational processes, talent development, and resource availability. President Greene implemented a social media campaign to force the campus community, including himself, to step outside their comfort zones and experience diversity of thought and action in new ways. Although he had not specified what policies had been put into place, Dr. Asher's institutionalization of diversity initiatives at Westeros College garnered the institution the title of being "Most Diverse College" in the country for several years.

Implications for Practice

Several recommendations for practice were revealed because of this research study. First, white presidents, institutional leaders, and decision makers must be implicit in diversifying the landscape of higher education leadership. It is essential to the success of the college president to develop relationships with key constituencies within the campus and local communities to achieve success (Wilson & Meyer, 2013). Through the acquisition of social capital, white college presidents should eagerly share their vision for their respective institutions. Should diversity be important to that vision, the president can draw upon that support to carry out that vision (Kezar & Eckel, 2008). To carry out that vision, white college presidents can be more vocal about recommendations to add distinguished People of Color to the Board of Trustees when there are openings for membership. It might also be advantageous for those individuals to have a varied educational and professional experiences. As President Gilchrist described his challenges with a board that was more corporate and business-oriented, diversity of color and thought would shake up how the board views the institutional landscape. Additionally, search firms, who are often

tasked with recruiting and recommending candidates for senior-level positions including president, should be specific about their diversity practices when searching for candidates as well. In a study exploring the connection between search firms and leadership preparations, consultants acknowledge that there should be minority consultants involved in the solicitation and screening processes for executive leadership (McDade, et al., 2009).

Mentorship is important to increasing diversity in higher education leadership. Developing mentoring relationships help increase chances of success by the individual through formal or informal advising (Holmes, 2004; Lee, 1999). The concept of mentorship played a considerable role in the experiences that led to President Gilchrist securing a presidency. President Gilchrist identified key relationships established during his career that either helped secure nominations for presidential appointments or, at least, exposed him to opportunities that provided skills essential to leadership positions. He recalled how much of an asset one of his mentors, Dr. Jed Tinch was in helping him begin the process of thinking about pursuing a college presidency. It is important to note that Tinch, an older white male, had been a former two-time president himself. Not only did Dr. Tinch believe President Gilchrist had the capabilities to lead a college but he had also garnered the social capital to solicit outside support for Gilchrist's pursuit among colleagues and search committees alike. President Gilchrist has since paid that assistance forward with mentoring students of color along with his wife. This type of engagement is critical on campuses such as President Gilchrist's and the other current presidents in the study as the lack of African American administrators and faculty is problematic to students seeking mentoring relationships at predominantly white institutions (Lee, 1999).

The lack of African Americans who possess the credentials to pursue a presidential appointment is problematic enough, and those who have achieved those feats still have issues

with access due to the few programs existing that focus on developing African American college presidents at any type of institution. Even the programs that are available, ambitious administrators (and students) must deal with growing competition in the application pool and the steep registration fees to afford the skill-building programs and "strong professional support network" with presidents, provosts, or other higher-level administrators that can influence their careers (Holmes, 2004, p. 31). Examples include the Higher Education Leadership Foundation (H.E.L.F.), a cohort-based leadership program focusing on higher education leadership at HBCUs that costs upwards of $1,000 to participate. The Council on Independent Colleges has a similar program for mid-level administrators, vice presidents, and provosts for $2,200 - $2,650. One of the most expensive is the American Council on Education's fellowship program that costs upwards of $16,000+ dollars for a yearlong, immersive experience that places individuals at host institutions. For administrators and students of color who aspire to be a college or university president, there must be a concerted effort to seek out mentorship opportunities that would not be a financial burden to themselves or the institution they are connected to.

Some recommendations for practice that are cost-effective would be finding local networking and volunteer opportunities within the university community that connect students/administrators of color with senior leaders. Additionally, doctoral programs should support experiential learning opportunities for students to work directly with executive leadership as a means to develop mentorship opportunities. For example, the University of Georgia's Executive the doctoral program in Student Affairs Leadership requires students to complete an internship with a seasoned leader in a student affairs functional area. Students are required find an internship location where the supervising administrator has a terminal degree and considerable experience by which they can learn from and develop proper mentor/mentee

relationships necessary to promote career mobility. Finally, college departments should allocate funds in their yearly budgets to assist in defraying costs for the aforementioned programs or similar programs.

An additional recommendation is for institutions to promote the pursuit of an earned doctorate or terminal degree among higher education administrators who aspire to executive leadership positions. Because of the paltry number of African American/Black students achieving doctoral degrees, the number of African American/Black administrators who ascend into the presidential pipeline for any college will remain small (Holmes, 2004). Seven of the participants in the study earned a doctorate in their respective fields and one participant received both a law degree and MBA from a prestigious institution. As President Armstrong indicated, the terminal degree, in his case, a Ph.D., certifies that an individual has the intellectual wherewithal to grasp concepts of their discipline and conduct research. Those attributes are the basic building blocks of a traditional, entry-level faculty position. For African American student affairs professionals, or those in other administrative areas, matriculating through a terminal degree program that is practitioner-based, such as an Ed.D., can help prepare them for leadership success at their respective institutions. Ed.D. programs have been found to have a larger, more specialized curriculum that address areas such as campus environments and budgeting in administration (Eddy & Rao, 2009). One example of promoting doctoral degree completion is institutions and their departments developing diversity recruitment programming around nontraditional learners of color (employees) to return to get their degree. Components of that program could include a cohort support model, access to senior-level mentoring, and institutional funds to support professional development. By removing barriers to access and inclusion to services that encourage degree completion and career development, aspiring leaders of color can

gain the necessary skills (both soft and technical) to warrant a promotion or support for promotion.

Recommendations for Further Study

These findings also suggest multiple avenues for future research on the pathways and career experiences of African American/Black college presidents at HWLACs. First, a future study might seek to understand how African American/Black college presidents who served as presidents at minority-serving institutions, can present themselves as viable candidates to lead HWLACs. Minority-serving institutions such as historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) often mirror a number of the same characteristics as HWLACs: small student population, curriculum, modest endowment, and financial capabilities. Research supports that previous experience as a president is a desirable trait for American college presidents and doctoral matriculation through predominantly white institutions are common among HBCU college presidents (American Council on Education, 2017; Gasman & Freeman, 2014). Although she had not been a president prior, President Martell could be an example of a president with an HBCU background (and degree) coupled with a doctorate from a large, predominantly white research institution. Similarly, Presidents Gilchrist and Story were tapped to lead well-resourced institutions with larger financial means and majority white student populations after having led smaller [white] institutions with HBCU-sized endowments. Considering the number of sitting presidents at HBCUs who possess similar credentials, it would be beneficial for future studies to identify how the candidacy of HBCU presidents could help the diversification of the presidential pipeline at white, liberal arts colleges.

HBCUs were designed to create opportunities for higher education for freed slaves and people of color, most after the end of the Civil War. To this day, at least 90 HBCUs remain to

educate the descendants of these individuals; and on a number of fronts, their existence still provides opportunities for People of Color to tackle institutional racism that was developed more than a century ago. Since their inception, HBCUs have been labeled as inferior institutions, largely because of the population of students whom they service, meager enrollment numbers, and the level of support they receive in comparison to predominantly white institutions (Waymer & Street, 2016). To put the deficit in support between HBCUs and predominantly white institutions in perspective, the average predominantly white institution's endowment is less than 20 percent lower than private HBCUs combined (Drezner & Gupta, 2012; Wingerd, 1993). Coincidentally, one of the hallmarks of HBCUs has been the ability of these institutions to create successful student outcomes with less than a fraction of the resources of peer institutions with predominantly white student populations. According to the United Negro College Fund (2018), more than 20 percent of bachelor's degrees awarded in the STEM disciplines are conferred at HBCUs in addition to serving as conduits to their graduates achieving graduate and professional degrees.

Presidents who participated in this study can attest to having more resources available at their institution than a number of HBCUs. That is not to say that current presidents at HWLACs, or other predominantly white institutions, can learn from their HBCU counterparts. Chen, Ingram, and Davis (2014) recommended four strategies to increase student satisfaction at both predominantly white institutions as well as HBCUs, however, I believe that the main strategy that can also be applied to administrators, staff, and faculty members of color at these institutions is creating a supportive environment that promotes collegiality amongst peers. One of the constants of an HBCU experience is that HBCUs do a good job of affirming Black identities so that there is more of a focus on academic, personal, and professional development (Chen et al.,

2014). Even with the lack of resources, administrators, staff, and faculty of color, a positive working environment supports collegiality among colleagues in addition to endearing support of the administration. If HWLACs are intentional about creating these spaces for individuals of color, they could certainly leverage the satisfaction associated with this new environment to increase recruiting on both the student and administration/faculty levels.

Second, future research might look into the role that gender and family play in career mobility in higher education, particularly at the executive level. Dr. Wright spent a considerable part of her interview talking about how her role as a professor, then a presidential candidate, affected her role as a mother and wife. On more than one occasion, Dr. Wright had to consider accommodations for both her husband and sons when deciding to pursue a deanship as well as a permanent placement at a southern liberal arts college. Aside from a less than favorable location for a few positions, she had not wanted to leave her job at High Sparrow College because she had to consider her husband's career as a professor as well as her son's matriculation as a freshman into high school. Upon her presidential appointment, she had to consider her husband's retirement benefits and the same son graduating from high school rather than relocate to another school. With her family's approval to occupy residency in two states, and the agreement that her husband and son would move to be with her after the son's last two years of high school, she accepted the presidency at her husband's suggestion. This particular narrative is so compelling because all of the presidents who participated in the study were married; however, the other participants seemed to gloss over their family's response to their career mobility. Future research should consider the ways in which presidents of different genders may consider the role of the family in their career decisions toward the presidency. This study could contribute to the literature pertaining to the lack of African-American/Black women who are college presidents,

although, slightly outnumbering African American/Black males in doctoral degree completion (United States Census Bureau, 2018).

Conclusions

Several factors contribute to the lack of African American/Black presidents in higher education. Historically, People of Color lag behind whites in not only degree attainment, but also access to educational experiences, networks, and employment opportunities (Aspire, 2017; Holmes, 2004; NCES, 2016). Even more so, those who are able to persist to gain credentials that warrant leadership positions in higher education have been stifled by "new racisms" that control who gets access to the presidential pipeline (Clair & Denis, 2015). To combat those instances of discrimination, the interviews revealed that engaging in cross-racial mentorship would be beneficial in helping secure job promotions, including presidential nominations and recommendations.

The participants exhibited a variety of experiences; and even with the similarities in student demographics, characteristics such as the institution's location and financial stability influenced what they have been able to accomplish as well as challenges they have faced as presidents. Participants articulated the importance of their professional growth throughout their careers. Consisting mostly of academicians, the traditional pathway through the faculty remains a critical proving ground for future presidents. Those without the faculty experience seem to have been no less prepared but were more inclined to look at the institution from a business perspective. Additionally, the amount of time they have served as president of their respective institution influences what those experiences were. For instance, one participant only served as president for six months (in an interim role), so her accomplishments in that amount of time

would not mirror that of a president who served at least a year in the position. Coincidentally, one of the presidents who has only had 13 months on the job was able to secure a new campus. The interim president went on to serve as president at another institution and her ability to raise the institutional profile through her fundraising efforts were well chronicled.

African American/Black presidents at HWLACs are becoming more commonplace, moderately outpacing the number of those who are employed at other four-year colleges with similar racial demographics. The research participants are all highly decorated and experienced leaders in their respective fields, but also have familiarity with predominantly white environments that help them navigate the politics of their polarizing status. Unfortunately, they are tasked with not only leading their respective institutions into financial prosperity and increasing their institutional profile, but they also bear the (indirect) responsibility of being a model representative for their race.

These narratives of African American/Black college presidents offer advice and provide support for future African American leaders in higher education who can learn from their experiences. This study is important because the first-hand account of each of the participants is necessary to the overall study of diversity in higher education leadership, specifically at HWLACs. On one hand, the participants were well equipped with an understanding of the cultural norms of these spaces to lead them. Adversely, the willingness to become more diverse did not make navigating white spaces in US higher education in the 21st century any less difficult, as even the chief executive still has to contend with institutional practices that only less than 70 years ago kept them from being students let alone leaders at these institutions. In all, I believe this study has three main audiences and takeaways. First, this study is for future college presidents in that the stories encourage persistence through the doctoral degree and career

mobility. Second, this study is for campus stakeholders at HWLACs to consider how their institutional culture influences diversity in higher education leadership. Finally, this study is for current presidents of color to consider the importance of role models/mentors in their own careers and the influence they wield in giving back to those who will follow them.

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Appendix A

Recruitment E-mail

August 8, 2018

Dear (insert name):

My name is Thelbert W. Snowden, Jr. and I am a doctoral candidate in the University of Georgia's Student Affairs Leadership program. I am conducting research to explore the career pathways and experiences with race of African American/Black presidents at historically white liberal arts colleges (HWLACs). As a student of color who aspires to be a future college/university president, I would like to invite President (Insert Name Here) to participate in this study to aid in my research.

As a consenting participant, President (Name) will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview lasting about 45-60 minutes. There is no risk affiliated with this study and the researcher will take steps to ensure participants' anonymity is protected. A pseudonym will be assigned to President (Name) as well as to the name of the institution to help protect anonymity. Only I, and my faculty advisor, Dr. Georgianna Martin, will have access to identifiable information associated with this research. Upon completion of the project, documents will be securely locked away for a period of 3 years. I hope the results of this study will inform audiences how race continues to influences the experiences and development of African American/Black presidents at historically white liberal arts institutions.

If President (Name) is available and willing to participate, please email me at thelbert@uga.edu or call me at (706) 254-8530 so that we can schedule a time that is appropriate for the President's schedule.

Thank you for your time.

Best Regards,

Thelbert W. Snowden, Jr.
Doctoral Candidate
University of Georgia

Appendix B

Informed Consent

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
CONSENT FORM
"You Want to be The First, But You Don't Want to be The Last": Career Pathways and Experiences of African American/Black Presidents at Historically White Liberal Arts Colleges (HWLACs)

Researcher's Statement
I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Thelbert W. Snowden, Jr.
College of Education – Student Affairs Leadership
thelbert@uga.edu
(706) 254-8530

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to explore the career pathways of African American college presidents at historically white liberal arts colleges (HWLACs) in the United States. In addition to exploring educational and occupational pursuits that led to their presidential appointment, this study will also investigate the role race has played in influencing their decision to pursue a presidency and their current experiences with race as the president of a historically white liberal arts college (HWLAC). You have been identified as a potential candidate to participate in this study because I believe you meet the study criteria of (a) identifying racially as African American and/or Black and (b) currently serving as a college president at a HWLAC.

Study Procedures
If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately 45-60 minutes. You will be asked questions pertaining to your educational background and career experience as an African-American/Black college president at a historically white liberal arts college (HWLAC). Additionally, you will be asked about your experiences with race in your rise to the presidency as well as the impact race has on your

current position as president. Data revealed in the interview will be audio recorded to ensure your views are accurately represented in the study.

Risks and discomforts
The only real risk is the emotional risk inherent in self-reflection on career experiences and experiences with race. As such, you may experience anxiety, discomfort, or negative emotions when responding to interview questions

If you experience a negative reaction, you may choose to skip the question, to withdraw from the study, or you may contact my faculty advisor or the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, especially if your discomfort continues after the study. See the contact information on the page below.

If you choose to participate in this study, you are encouraged to keep your participation in this study and your responses confidential. The researcher will maintain your anonymity throughout the study, and will destroy the records of your participation three years after the study is complete.

Benefits
There are no foreseen direct benefits to you regarding participation in this study beyond the knowledge that you are assisting in furthering the conversation related to the research topic. You are also a key participant in assisting the researcher in completing the doctoral degree requirements. There is no compensation associated with participation in this study.

Incentives for participation
There are no incentives associated with participation in this study.

Audio/Video Recording
An audio recording of the interview is needed for the purpose of transcription. This is essential to the completion of the study so that the participant's views and experiences can be accurately reported.

Privacy
Every attempt to protect your anonymity will be made for the purpose of this study. Any reference to you will be by pseudonym, including any direct quotes from your responses. This document and any notes or recordings that might personally identify you as a participant in this study will be kept in a locked place that only the researcher will have access to. Only the researcher and the faculty advisor might know who has participated in this study. Three years after the completion of this research study all personally identifying information will be destroyed.

Taking part is voluntary
Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Thelbert W. Snowden, Jr, a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at thelbert@uga.edu or at (706) 254-8530. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Hello! My name is Thelbert W. Snowden, Jr. and I am a doctoral candidate in the Student Affairs Leadership Program at the University of Georgia. You have been chosen to participate in this doctoral research as it pertains to the career pathways and experiences of African American/Black college presidents at historically white liberal arts colleges. Thank you for the opportunity to sit down and have a conversation about your experiences as a college president. In addition to your career path and experiences, I would like to explore how you feel your race has influenced those experiences. I would like this interview to be as comfortable as possible or you and advise you to share what you feel is relevant to the literature that will be collected for this interview.

With your consent, you are acknowledging that you have read the rights and privileges afforded to you, as the research participant, and you are fully aware of what you have agreed to participate in. Every precaution will be taken to protect your anonymity and the only possible, foreseen risk is one associated with recalling personal and career events that might seem uncomfortable. The interview is and 100% voluntary. You are encouraged to ask questions about your participation and are welcome to cease participation at anytime.

If you will allow, this interview will be recorded for data collection and transcription purposes. It is my intent that all of your answers be accurately captured and correctly recorded so that your feelings about your experiences are properly represented. Additionally, recording the

conversation allows me to devote a level of attention to our interaction befitting of a qualitative research interview. This interview is designed to last approximately 45-60 minutes.

(Read abridged consent form that outlines):

Purpose of the Study
Study Procedures
Risks and discomforts
Benefits
Incentives for participation
Audio/Video Recording
Privacy/Confidentiality

This interview is designed to explore the career pathway and experiences of African American presidents at historically white liberal arts colleges (HWLACs). This is a semi-structured interview in which you will be asked to share your experiences up to, and through, your presidential appointment. Because this is a personal venture, there are no right or wrong answers as what you choose to share is about your experiences. Please feel free to speak openly, and candidly as possible, as it will aid in developing future research, and leaders, in our profession.

Educational **&** Career Experiences

1. What led you to want to be a college president?
2. How have your educational and career experiences prepared you to work at a historically white liberal arts college (HWLAC)?
3. What motivated you to seek a college presidency at HWLAC?
4. Tell me about the reception you got when you told your family/colleagues/etc. about your ambition to pursue a college presidency at a HWLAC.
5. What led you to apply to (insert school) for the position of president?

Experiences as a college president

1. What was your reaction to being selected as president at your current institution?
2. Describe the first year of your presidency at your current institution.
    a. If the participant was a president prior to their current appointment, say:

       I recall reading that you were a president prior to this appointment. How does this term as president compare to your term as a president at your previous institution?
3. What has been your biggest challenge at ABC College?
4. Describe your greatest success as a president of an HWLAC.

Being a African American/Black president at a HWLC

1. Describe your feelings on being an African American/black college president at a HWLAC.
2. Can you think of anything in your educational or career background that would have prepared you to take on the role of a president at a HWLAC?
3. How has your racial/ethnic background influenced how you have shaped your administration?
4. How do you think opinions about your presidency from students, administrators, and faculty of color at your institution differ from white students, administrators, and faculty?
5. Tell me about an experience when you thought your skin color influenced the outcome of a project or career advancement during your presidency.
6. Given that Presidents of Color make up only about 17% of the total number of American college presidents, what does it mean to you to be a college president today?