CHALLENGE, NEGOTIATION, AND POWER: THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY AND ETHOS BY THREE AFRICAN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Research and scholarship over the last forty years in feminist studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies has documented multiple ways in which the values and perspectives of Anglo/Euro American males dominate American society. Patriarchal Euro-centric ideas dictate behavior and expectations in environments such as schools, religious dwellings, workplaces, and homes. Race, gender, and other socially constructed phenomena are used as indicators of identity, both self-representative and generalized. In response to this perception, this project focuses on the rhetorical effectiveness of otherwise marginalized voices in negating discriminatory attitudes. I study the rhetorical performances of three African American university presidents to consider power structures and relationships through the construction of identity, authority, and ethos.

I illustrate how these university presidents rhetorically engage their audiences and responsibilities as leaders and how those interactions shape their identity, authority, and ethos. As a participant-observer, I explore how these presidents negotiate their organizational cultures and their own individual professional circumstances.
Through ethnographic inquiry and case studies, I document the rhetorical performance of 1) an African American female university president at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), 2) an African American male university president at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), 3) and an African American male university president at an HBCU. An ethnographic approach to studying the participants' multiple rhetorical strategies in numerous professional and social contexts serve as the basis for determining how those strategies are instrumental in establishing status, identity, agency, authority, etc. and analyzing those practices to determine how they function in the management and negotiation of power through leadership. In each case I present data and findings related to the perspectives of the presidents. The cases constitute three separate lenses through which to examine how power is exhibited or enacted based on the dynamics of the participants and their institutions. Those lenses provide a perspective for analyzing a gendered-presidency, a racialized-presidency, and a neutralized-presidency, and thereby a mechanism for understanding how the participants' rhetorical performances as leaders in particular social, cultural, and professional environments influence their identities and ethos.
For my magnificent parents, Robert Sr. and Louise Martin
And especially to my little angel, Ja’Kquan R. Johnson
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Research and scholarship in feminist studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies has documented multiple ways in which the values and perspectives of Anglo/Euro American males dominate American society. For example, from a postcolonial perspective, researcher Bob Blauner asserts,

The United States was founded on the principle that it was and would be a white man’s country. Nowhere is this insistence expressed more clearly than in the hegemony of Western European values in the national consciousness and in the symbolic forms that have expressed this cultural hegemony—institutionalized rituals (such as the ceremonies of patriotism and holidays), written history, the curriculum of the schools, and today, the mass media. (32)

In his research, Blauner provides a strong emphasis on the ideologies of race and racism as they relate to the climate of the 1960s to the present. His research documents incidents of racial disparities and social conflicts over a period of forty years and it also presents a theoretical framework for the sociological philosophies about race within social institutions. For Blauner, a postcolonial
depiction of relationships between the majority (typically Whites) and minority (typically non-Whites) "involves the control and exploitation of the majority of a nation by a minority of outsiders, whereas in America the oppressed [B]lack population is a numerical minority and was, originally, the 'outside' group" (65). This type of control and exploitation is evident in many aspects of American life where traditionally the White Male view is privileged over the views of Others. This type of privileging contributes to the oppression of Others and is usually established in some form of power and authority that the majority group or its representatives have over the non-dominant group. Typically, the majority group exploits the non-dominant group and uses them and their resources to continue to perpetuate the hierarchical status quo to maintain this subordination. Often, too, the majority group (the oppressors) is able to place the blame for this type of subordination on the oppressed groups by claiming that they are somehow responsible for their own oppression. This type of blame serves as a medium to continue the oppression.

In addition, researcher Peter McLaren points out that, "Whiteness constitutes unmarked patriarchal, heterosexist, Euro-American practices that have negative effects on and consequences for those who do not participate in them" (67). There exists the phenomenon of White Male Privilege. Patriarchal Eurocentric ideas dictate behavior and expectations in environments such as schools, religious dwellings, workplaces, and homes. Much like the differences between mainstream customs and values versus non-mainstream customs and values on the
basis of race, there is a similar incongruity grounded in gender. Feminist research, while criticized for the limited attention that it has given to age, race, and class, focuses on the feminine-masculine dichotomy by examining relationships between men and women in different contexts. Thus, White American males forge the dominant discourse, and any mode of discourse that is not identical to or similar is viewed as problematic.

Since the composition of the different aspects of society (i.e., workplaces, family structures, within religious dwellings, and within schools and classrooms) is changing to include different roles that minority populations and women occupy, it is imperative to explore these experiences. To dismantle hegemonic standards that dominate research as well as dominate what is valued in societal structures and relationships, we need to include studies that focus on the positive aspects of non-dominant members of society, to include females and minority groups.

Christine James elaborates on the component of feminist research that explains the “hierarchical dualisms” between men and women. James explains that the privileged side of that dualism is the masculine side—reason—for men as compared to emotions or feelings for women. This dichotomy is scrutinized in the research and literature on feminist and masculine studies. In her article, “Feminism and Masculinity: Reconceptualizing the Dichotomy of Reason and Emotion,” James proposes “possibilities for new definitions of Man, as well as a vision of better interaction between the work of women and men in general” (184)
in order to eliminate the privileging of the masculine over the feminine perspective, both in research and in reality. Drawing on research in philosophy in early Greece, the Renaissance, and the present, James posits that the oppression of women is primarily linked to the established connection between masculinity and reason. Women's methods and techniques of negotiating, managing, leading, are not as privileged as men's ways of doing things. In sometimes going against the established dominant masculine norms, women's practices, as highlighted numerous times within the body of feminist research and masculine studies, are marked different.

To illustrate the impact for African American women, feminist researcher Brenda J. Allen explains that, "Proponents of feminist standpoint theory contend that we should solicit women's perspectives on social reality to construct knowledge and to critique dominant knowledge claims (which usually are based on White men's lives)" (576). Being black and female, African American women function as members of two oppressed groups. This idea is explored furthered by other feminist scholars like Yolanda T. Moses and Patricia Hill Collins.

Moses posits that, "At the intersection of race and gender stand women of color, torn by the lines of bias that currently divide white from nonwhite in our society, and male from female. The worlds these women negotiate demand different and often wrenching allegiances. As a result, women of color face significant obstacles to their full participation in and contribution to higher education" (1). To extend the focus on the oppressive nature of racism and
sexism in feminist studies, Collins explains that, “On certain dimensions, Black women may more closely resemble Black men; on others, white women; and on still others Black women may stand apart from both groups” (207). Feminist standpoint theory enjoins us to view women as ‘strangers’ or ‘outsiders’ whose experiences might provide insight that is invisible to ‘natives’ (usually White men) who are “too immersed within dominant institutions to detect the patterns and behaviors that comprise reality” (Hennesey qtd. in Allen 576).

This masculinist principle and Euro-centric standard excludes women in general, minority groups, and African American women and men specifically. Age, race, gender, and other socially constructed phenomena are used as indicators of identity, both self-representative and generalized.

Another area of scholarship that enhances the understanding of these issues is Cultural studies. Research in this area concentrates on the ways of life of individuals and of groups of people and communities. Cultural studies is an approach to research that is cross-disciplinary. While a definition of cultural studies varies from one researcher to the next and from one discipline to the next, one common factor as it relates to cultural studies, regardless of what discipline in which the definition is drawn, is that it deals with the study of people in cultures and within communities. In an edited collection entitled What is Cultural Studies? A Reader, John Storey includes multiple definitions from several researchers. Storey’s own definition of cultural studies states that “Ideology is without doubt the central concept in cultural studies. Because meaning is a social
production, culture is a major site of ideological struggle; a terrain of incorporation and resistance; one of the sites where hegemony is to be won or lost" (3-4). Within the text, Colin Sparks indicates that cultural studies is “a veritable rag-bag of ideas, methods and concerns from literary criticism, sociology, history, media studies, etc.” (14). Lawrence Grossberg indicates that “Cultural studies is concerned with describing and intervening in the ways ‘texts’ and ‘discourses’ (i.e., cultural practices) are produced within, inserted into, and operate in the everyday life of human beings and social formations, so as to reproduce, struggle against, and perhaps transform the existing structures of power” (184-85). All of the views converge in a significant way in framing this project.

**Description of the Project**

This project focuses on the rhetorical effectiveness of otherwise marginalized voices in negating discriminatory attitudes. The project’s contribution to rhetorical theory brings traditionally excluded voices into the scholastic and research conversations. It opens up an interrogative space for seeing more and better what is present in the literature regarding these muted and ignored voices. The project provides an example of analysis through socially constructed lens. I study the three rhetorical performances of these university presidents, one female and two males, to consider power relationships through the construction of identity and ethos. I illustrate how these university presidents
rhetorically engage their audiences and responsibilities as leaders and how those interactions shape their identity and ethos. I cite examples from within the various contexts in which they operate, and explore, as a participant-observer, how the presidents negotiate the organizational environment.

Through ethnographic inquiry and case studies, I document the rhetorical performance of 1) an African American female university president at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), 2) an African American male university president at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), 3) and an African American male university president at an HBCU. I use an ethnographic approach to study the participants’ rhetorical strategies in numerous professional and social contexts. This analysis serves as the basis for determining how those strategies are instrumental in establishing status, identity, agency, authority, etc. and how the presidents function in the management and negotiation of power as academic leaders. Each case constitutes a separate lens through which to examine how power is exhibited or enacted based on the dynamics of the participants and their institutions. Those lenses provide a perspective for analyzing a gendered-presidency, a racialized-presidency, and a neutralized-presidency.

In the first case, I explore identity and ethos from the perspective of Linda Barrett, an African American female, who occupies a role as president that has traditionally been occupied by an African American male. From that locus, the data reveal specific challenges that she faces based on the circumstances of her presidency as analyzed through three analytical categories—age, race, and gender.
The type of power that President Barrett has constructed comes from a combination of the challenges she faces and the negotiations she employs to eradicate or reduce those challenges. Although all three of the analytical categories indicate a source of challenges for President Barrett, gender rose as the predominant factor that caused challenges thus making it possible to study her presidency as a gendered presidency.

In the second case, I explore identity and ethos from the perspective of David Morgan, an African American male at a Predominantly White Institution who occupies a role that has traditionally been occupied by an older White male. Given that circumstance, the data reveal specific challenges that President Morgan faces, based also on age, gender, and race. Because President Morgan is much younger than the usual president and is African American instead of White, age and race emerge more predominately as the sources of the challenges he faces and the negotiations he uses to overcome the challenges. Being African American and in a predominantly White environment makes it possible to focus on President Morgan’s presidency as a racialized presidency with a subtext related to age and leadership style.

In the third case, I explore identity and ethos from the perspective of an African American male president at a Historically Black College/University who occupies a role that has traditionally always been occupied by an African American male. Given that circumstance, the data reveal a match between expectations for leadership and circumstances and thus indicate a neutralizing of
some of the challenges, particularly because of race, gender, and age that might otherwise emerge. In fact, the data suggest that within that organization, it is likely that President Griffin faces few or no challenges based on those factors because he possesses all of the characteristics typically shared by the person who occupies the presidency. The combination of the analytical categories thus permits us to see how President Griffin constructs and negotiates power from a perspective of authority rather than resistance.

The three cases are developed, therefore, around three analytical categories, age, race, and gender. These categories make clearer the distinctions between the presidential situations and permit me to identify four factors that create distinction. They are 1) the nature of the presidency as inherited from predecessors, 2) marital status, 3) length of presidency, and 4) professional background. Each factor holds a different level of significance within each of the three cases.

The analytical categories (i.e., age, race, and gender) relate to the expectations audiences have for the presidents given the array of specific presidential circumstances. The extent to which these expectations are noted, acknowledged, confirmed, or denied affects the intended and actual relationships between the presidents and their audiences. The significance of each analytical category shifts from one president to the next and in turn from one audience for that president to the next. These shifts affect the dynamics of the power relationships and the ways in which each president constructs ethos and identity.
To be noted is that this study suggests that the identities and ethos for the three participants are not constant. Instead, they change, as indicated by the interactions between factors, depending on audience and the rhetorical situation.

After a general review of the literature regarding challenges, negotiations, and power of African American university presidents at various institutions, I organize this study into three case studies. The first case study focuses on President Linda Barrett at Small Southeastern University. The second case study focuses on President David Morgan at Large Midwestern University. And the third case study focuses on President Paul Griffin at Small Midwestern University. I cite examples from my observations during research visits to each of the three institutions that substantiate their experiences based on the three analytical categories. I extract additional data from a range of interviews conducted during the site visits. I delineate each case of presidential leadership via an analysis of them as gendered, racialized, and neutralized and suggest that we have a new springboard for considering how their rhetorical performances as leaders in particular social, cultural, and professional environments influence their identities and ethos. Doing this study is important because it provides an opportunity to examine the way power is maintained through discursive practice and interaction with constituencies in a variety of cultural and political spheres for the three presidents.

This study adds specific information about the ways academic leaders construct knowledge and meaning within the cultures of their institutions and how
they share that knowledge and meaning within various rhetorical contexts. In examining presidential leadership through the analytical lenses of age, race, and gender, this study also contributes to scholarship across disciplinary boundaries such as in feminist studies and cultural studies, where there is a concern for issues of race and gender. This study looks directly at a very powerful position, a university presidency, but shows how the level of power and influence fluctuates depending on such variables as age, race, and gender.

Examining the individualized cultures of three presidents in conjunction with the culture of their institutions independently and within the larger society allows us to look at the ways in which the presidents' rhetorical performances and rhetorical decisions are influenced by the customs, behaviors, values of the culture in which they operate as leaders. Although my primary focus in this research project is on the experiences of the presidents, I have to explore the culture of the environments from which the data are collected and analyzed. This means including an analysis of other individuals who share space and have some type of relationships with the presidents.

**Terms of Engagement**

There are three core terms used throughout the dissertation that serve to organize an interrogation of the rhetorical practices of African Americans in academic leadership roles. **Challenge, negotiation, and power** are terms that work together in producing a comprehensive presentation of collected data.
“Challenge” in this project refers to any circumstances, characteristics, or difficulties observed as they relate to the presidents having to align or realign their processes of managing a situation or communicating with people. These challenges could in a slight or considerable way thwart the presidents’ plans and require them to re-examine their modus operandi. Challenges are identified for President Barrett from the literature regarding female university presidents in general and African American university presidents in particular. In addition, I present other challenges as well that emerged during my observations of President Barrett within her particular institutional setting. I examine these latter challenges in relation to how they affect Barrett’s rhetorical performance with specific audiences. Challenges for President Morgan are taken from the literature regarding African American university presidents at predominantly White institutions. In addition, with President Morgan as well, I identified particular challenges that emerged during my observations. Finally, for President Griffin challenges are documented from the literature regarding African American university presidents at HBCUs. I include this type of data to analyze his rhetorical performance as the chief leader of the institution in relation to other African American male presidents at HBCUs. These challenges allow me to contextualize his presidency historically within the presidencies of other African Americans at similar institutions. The challenges that are identified as they relate specifically to each of the three participants offer a more precise representation of
their university presidencies regarding their specific identities and the socially constructed ethos to negotiate particular situations as leaders.

"Negotiations" refer to the actual strategies that the participants use to interact with their various constituencies and to operate within their various rhetorical situations. These negotiations range from minor adjustments to major modifications depending on specific challenges that arise. What becomes evident is that each president employs different strategies for negotiating different situations. These strategies are determined by the presidents’ desired outcomes, and they are necessitated by situational circumstances, their identity as president for particular audiences, and the persona needed to negotiate the matters. Since the three participants have such different circumstances surrounding their presidencies, they all have to exercise diverse methods of negotiating situations. What may work for President Barrett as an African American female at an HBCU may not work for President Morgan as an African American male at a PWI. And what may work for President Griffin as an African American male president at an HBCU could very well be different and ineffective for President Barrett as a female at an HBCU. Thus, the presidents’ negotiations are dependent upon their individual identities and the ethos they construct to facilitate their multiple rhetorical situations.

Finally, "power" specifies the authority that the presidents possess and invoke to negotiate the environment rhetorically in operating well as university leaders. In some cases for the presidents, power is automatic and does not have to
be assigned. The status of being a university president carries automatic weight because it is such a powerful position. With Presidents Barrett, Morgan, and Griffin, power is displayed in many ways and in many situations. Each time power takes on a new face and is weighted differently. Within each of the three cases, the examples that are documented illustrate how the presidents are able to reach goals, how they are able to supervise their personnel, and how they are able to negotiate their various positions.

Using power as an operative term in this analysis helps us to see that it, too, is socially constructed. What is evident based on this type of analysis is that the presidents take on many different personae to successfully garner the authority that their presidencies require of them. These personae offer a distinctive way to understand identity and ethos for each of the three participants. Challenges, negotiations, and constructions of power serve as instruments for the conceptual framework of the project and create a picture of the presidents’ individual and collective complexities as leaders.

Another group of terms used in this project includes identity and ethos, which are also often used together. In many cases throughout the dissertation, I view identity as a component of ethos with identity being used to identify who the participants are and ethos being used to explain how they choose to do what they do in many different rhetorical situations. While in this view identity is more concrete and relates more to tangible characteristics (such as African American, male, female, university president, young, old, etc.), I view ethos as socially
constructed and variable within particular identified rhetorical situations. Ethos shapes the participants' rhetorical decisions and performances in given situations with their many constituencies.

A final group of terms, age, race, and gender, anchors the data and categorizes the participants by basic personal factors that function to situate them socially.

In this study, age, race, and gender are used as dynamic analytical categories that affect the rhetorical performance for these presidents. For the purpose of this research, I use gender much like Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet in an article where they explore the ways in which selected attributes are used to determine culture and behavior in various communities. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet explain how “no single attribute of a person, however complex a combination is considered, can completely determine how that person is socially categorized by herself or by others, and how she engages in social practice” (470). Like them, I use gender in the same ways that I use race and age, to explore how it influences the presidents' involvements in certain social and rhetorical contexts to study the extent to which it affects their identity and ethos as leaders and their construction and use of power. This project, using age, race, and gender as socially constructed phenomena, seeks to challenge the hierarchical structure that encourages and upholds the colonial status quo implemented over one hundred years ago, that has as its center a privileging of White male patriarchal dominance.
To provide a contextual basis for each of the presidencies, there are four sub-categories that specify the presidential circumstances for the three participants: inherited presidency, marital status, length of presidency, and professional background. These sub-sections provide a means for presenting the different challenges, negotiations, and types of power and leadership for the three participants. Inherited presidency is a sub-section that discusses the circumstances surrounding the type of presidency that each of the participants acquired when they were selected as the institutions' leaders. Marital status as a type of social prominence marker explores the effects of being married or not and how that influences rhetorical behavior and the social expectations for the participants. The length of the presidency is an account of the significance of the number of years each of the participants has been president and what that might mean in terms of types of interactions with their constituencies. Finally, professional background examines the participants' ascension to the presidency and how their employment background experience contributes to their existence as university presidents.

All of these terms address the construction of identity and ethos and the consequence(s) of power based on specific rhetorical situations and strategies. After the presidential circumstances are presented for the three participants, they are examined to reveal the diverse challenges, negotiations, and power through leadership that each of the presidents rhetorically employs voluntarily and involuntarily to succeed in their roles as leaders.
Research Questions

Although several secondary questions are answered throughout the dissertation, there are three central questions that guide the data. The questions that are fundamentally addressed within this project are:

- What does power look like in a university presidency when the space typically occupied by an African American male is occupied by an African American female?

- What does power look like in a university presidency when the space typically occupied by a White male is occupied by an African American male?

- What does power look like in a university presidency when the space typically occupied by an African American male is occupied by an African American male?

Examining the components of ethos and identity, rhetorical situations, and the rhetorical strategies for the three participants allows me to answer these questions. They provide a forum for discussing racial and gender hegemony based on the ways identities are constructed and grounded by social, cultural, ideological, societal, and institutional influences. These influences permit me to explore the extent to which the presidents form a sense of self through their relationships with others. The central research questions also demanded an investigation of the nature of the rhetorical situations that these presidents engage in daily at their
institutions. I studied the ways the presidents negotiate the rhetorical demands of dealing with multiple constituencies (i.e., students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, legislators, parents, boards of trustees, community leaders, politicians, benefactors, etc.) and multiple leadership roles. Clearly the social, political, professional, and cultural exigencies that drive the presidents’ rhetorical choices suggest that race, gender, and age matter.
CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation uses a qualitative approach through case study and ethnographic inquiry to collect, analyze, and categorize data and to account for the extent to which these data explain rhetorical performance. "Ethnographers," according to Stephen Doheny-Farina, "insist that their research be grounded as fully as possible in the empirical world. They stress the importance of closely observing the specific phenomena of the culture in which one is conducting research" (504). The inquiry methods that are used in this project to study the culture in which the participants are members include: discourse-based interviews, structured interviews, personal interviews, artifact collection, audiotaping, field notes, and direct observation. Using these methods of inquiry, I apply a "way of listing phenomena as well as indicating meaning(s) phenomena have within a particular social context—not only the events but the significance ascribed to those events, engaging in a research activity known as 'thick description'" (Geertz 17). Anthropologist Clifford Geertz further iterates that "thick description becomes the structure that allows the researcher to interpret the data (notes, transcripts, texts, photographs, etc.) and create some type of account
of the culture (a book, and article, a film) that honestly represents what that
culture is like and allows his or her readers to 'know about' the culture" (6).
While thick description is not the only part of ethnographic research used in this
project to understand the rhetorical nature of the participants, it is a large part of
how data are presented.

**Qualitative Research**

David Silverman contends that there are “four major methods used by
qualitative researchers: observation, analyzing texts and documents, interviews,
and recording and transcribing” (8-9), and case study and ethnography are two
forms that qualitative research often takes. There is no single approach a
researcher must use in order to do qualitative research, and no approach is
privileged over the other. Likely, though, when researchers decide to use
qualitative research methods, the level and modes of investigation usually depend
on the purpose of the research inquiry. Qualitative research “is multimethod in
focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This
means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting
to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring
to them” (Denzin and Lincoln 3). Silverman also explains that, “qualitative
research is an empirical, socially located phenomenon, defined by its own history,
not simply a residual grab-bag comprising all things that are ‘not quantitative’”
Although qualitative research is cross-disciplinary, its origin is mostly associated with the areas of anthropology and sociology.

Qualitative research uses many different investigative methods. Some research methods that fall under this umbrella are participant-observation, interviews (personal, discourse-based, structured, etc.), and artifact analysis. In order to determine what constitutes a case in this dissertation project, I draw on some of these methods to establish how African American university presidents use rhetorical power to function within a particular institutional culture. Through document and discourse analyses, on-site observation, and interviews, this project discusses and analyzes the consequences of the presidents’ cultural, institutional, and material exigencies. These methods also help to ascertain how all three of the presidents produce and maintain knowledge through rhetorical performance.

**Case Study**

Researcher Sharan Merriam identifies a qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (27). Merriam exclaims that, “the literature on case study methodology has expanded in the last few years, but it still lags behind other types. In fact, there is still much confusion as to what constitutes a case study, how it differs from other forms of qualitative research, and when it is most appropriate to use” (19). She also contends that case studies can be increasingly identified by their distinct characteristics:
**particularistic**—focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon,

**descriptive**—end product is a rich, ‘thick’ description of the description of the
phenomenon under study

**heuristic**—case studies illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study (29).

The cases in my dissertation are a combination of all three of these characteristics. They are particularistic in that I use data from specific meetings, encounters, and exchanges between the presidents and their constituencies to illustrate examples of their rhetorical performances. The cases are descriptive in that I present very explicit details about the encounters, ranging from who was present at particular meetings or instances, where individuals sat, what was said, the order in which those present spoke, the mode of address between the presidents and their audiences, etc. These descriptive details are necessary in order to present a comprehensive representation of the rhetorical event being discussed. The cases are heuristic because they underscore the nature of the rhetorical circumstances in ways conducive to understanding the presidents’ rhetorical choices.

The cases focus exclusively on how the presidents animate, enact, and complicate their designated roles as presidents and their contributions to internal and external communities. Through close examination of the rhetorical performances of the participants, I investigate relationships between the
presidents and their constituencies to explore how they shape their identity and
e ethos based on their situational circumstances as leaders of the institutions.

**Ethnographic Inquiry**

Many anthropologists and other social scientists like James Spradley, Clifford Geertz, Norman Denzin, and Yvonna Lincoln define ethnography as a research approach that studies culture. Often, a research project is considered to be an ethnography depending on the researcher’s role, the culture being studied, and the amount of time needed or used to study a particular culture. Stephen Doheny-Farina and Lee Odell inform us that, “ethnographers insist that their research be grounded as fully as possible in the empirical world. They stress the importance of closely observing the specific phenomena of the culture in which one is conducting research” (504). Clifford Geertz tells us that, “the basic unit of ethnographic inquiry is the question observation” (qtd in Spradley 73). By that he means that when researchers engage in an ethnographic approach to collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data, everything they do, see, record, or ignore holds significance and is shaped by initial or newly constructed research questions. Ethnographic researchers, according to Geertz, document their observations and their findings based on “descriptive questions” and “descriptive observations” in that when “ethnographers work with informants, they can ask descriptive questions to elicit the informant’s observations of social situations” (qtd in Spradley 76).
Geertz explains that although ethnography is comprised of many different research methods, what is more important when using this approach to research is ethnography itself and what materializes as a result of “thick description,” a term used to give readers and audiences a detailed representation of the culture or site being studied. Thick description allows researchers to highlight occurrences, facts, and observations and the meanings of those phenomena related to the culture being studied within a particular framework. “Behavior must be attended to with some exactness for it is through the flow of action—or more precisely, social action—that cultural forms find articulation” (Geertz 17). Ethnographers typically employ several methods that allow them to obtain as much knowledge or gather as much data about the culture or the participants being studied that become necessary to understand the culture or the participants.

Norman Denzin explains the multiple ways that triangulation is achieved when researchers use ethnographic inquiry as a research approach. Denzin lists three types of triangulation: theoretical, investigative, and methodological. In theoretical triangulation, “researchers examine data from different theoretical perspectives”; investigative triangulation allows researchers to “rely on a research term rather than on a single researcher”; and methodological triangulation uses a “variety of research methods to elicit data from a variety of sources” (301-313).

• I refer to my dissertation not as an ethnography but as case studies that use ethnographic inquiry, mainly because I am focusing primarily on the participants instead of focusing primarily on their culture, and also because of the limited time
spent at each of the three research sites. Ethnographers usually spend a minimum of six months studying an entire culture. Since I only spent four to six weeks studying the three participants in my project, this project qualifies more as case studies than ethnographies, but I do employ ethnographic research methods for data gathering, interpretation, and analysis.

**Methods for Collecting and Analyzing Data**

The case studies examine the participants in various social situations, based on but not limited to (1) participant observation, (2) discourse-based interviews, (3) personal interviews, and (4) artifact collection and analysis. The artifacts that were collected are written speeches, each president's inaugural address, letters, memoranda, presidential reports, presidential publications, electronic messages, and handwritten notes. These artifacts are included minimally throughout the dissertation. The dominant method that I use, however, is direct observations. These field experiences indicate the central importance of note taking. I recorded general responses from the presidents, spontaneous meetings, and details of others involved in the presidents' appointments and encounters. I took field notes during structured interviews.

**Personal Data**

I designed formal interviews to allow me to gather information about the participants' personal, educational, cultural, professional, and social backgrounds.
The questions also included questions about their perceptions of themselves as leaders and their perceptions of the role(s) that rhetorical performance plays in their ability to accomplish their professional and institutional goals. I asked them to articulate their leadership goals and what they consider to be the factors that enhance or obstruct their ability to accomplish those goals. My interest was to use this information to draw correlations, if warranted, between personal data and professional objectives.

**Audio Taped Conversations/Social Exchanges**

I audiotaped conversations of the participants with others in meetings and in professional exchanges as evidence of their rhetorical practices. These conversations were then transcribed and are used throughout the body of the dissertation.

**Observed Encounters**

I observed the participants' daily activities, particularly in meetings and with personal and social interactions. I took notes during the observations. These notes constituted the core of a daily journal in which I reflected on various questions and issues related to their rhetorical performances.
Interviews

This method was a major one for collecting data and eliciting responses. Education researcher Sharan Merriam defines an interview as "a conversation with a purpose to obtain a special kind of information" (71-72). And she goes on to say that researchers use interviews to "find out things we cannot directly observe (i.e., feelings, thoughts, and intentions) or behaviors that took place at some previous point in time, situations that preclude the presence of an observer" (71-72). I used three different kinds of interviews to gather data: discourse-based interviews, structured interviews, and personal interviews to gather the presidents' perspectives on their rhetorical activities.

Discourse-based Interviews

Based on my observations in meetings and my initial analysis of documents at each of the three universities, I composed questions for interviews during each visit that focused on the presidents' own views and understanding of the rhetorical choices that they employ in particular instances. My intent in these events was to explore the participants' tacit knowledge of their audiences and purposes. "In all forms of qualitative research, some and occasionally all of the data are collected through interviews. The most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another" (Merriam 71).
My purpose for including discourse-based interviews was to garner explicit information about the rhetorical choices these presidents made. With this type of interview, I wanted to ask each of the presidents specific questions about the histories surrounding the observations I made and have them explain the choices they made during meetings or during the daily routines in their office. Some of the instances in which I would ask questions were about telephone calls and their responses to particular questions posed by a member of their multiple audiences. There was no set pattern of how these questions would be presented or when they would be presented. Usually, I would wait until the presidents had a break in their schedules to actually sit and talk to me at length about what had occurred in a particular meeting with individuals or groups. I had a different arrangement with each of the three presidents for completing interviews. However, none of the three presidents allowed me to ask questions during any meetings. Because of that, I would write my observations and questions in my notes and ask the questions whenever time permitted.

The discourse-based questions varied from university to university and depended on the observations I made about all three of the presidents. So if the presidents had a break between meetings and if I sensed that they were willing to answer my questions I would ask them. Sometimes these interviews took place walking around campus, sitting in their offices, traveling in vehicles from one destination to another, or waiting between meetings. I recorded their answers in writing or on the audiotape recorder, or sometimes I would just commit them to
memory and include them in my notes at a later time. The method that I used depended on how I was able to record the responses at any given time. The questions covered numerous subject matters ranging from management styles to decision-making techniques to general ways of behaving in a professional environment.

Structured Interviews

In another set of interviews I asked the presidents detailed questions about specific aspects of their jobs as presidents of universities. I asked all three presidents primarily the same questions. The structured interviews always took place in the presidents' offices.

The presidents and I were always the only ones present for the interview. What distinguished the structured interviews from the discourse-based interviews were the questions themselves and when the presidents received the questions. Since I was asking all three presidents the same questions in the structured interviews, I already had a list with the prepared questions. I gave the presidents the questions in advance, usually a week before the actual interview in order to give them time to study the questions and think about their answers. This method contrasted greatly with the discourse-based interviews, which depended on daily scheduled activities and opportunities of the moment. The structured interviews were much more formal than the discourse-based interviews.
Personal Interviews

The final forms of interviews that I used were personal interviews. These interviews took place throughout my visit to Small Midwestern University, Large Midwestern University, and Small Southeastern University. Mostly, however, the personal interviews were conducted during the first week of my visit to each university. I chose to do the personal interviews so that I could get a sense of the presidents' personal background in order to construct better discourse-based interview questions and other useful questions as they were related to my project. The personal interviews allowed me to ask the presidents questions about their familial background, educational background, and employment background. The personal interviews also served as a kind of icebreaker for me and for them.

Artifacts Collected

"Artifacts" is used synonymously with "documents." While I certainly could not collect every document at each of the three research sites, I did collect quite a few. However, all of the documents that I collected are not used as part of the project analyses. From the list of artifacts, only the ones that address the three categories of analysis (age, race, and gender) are used. The purpose for collecting the documents was to garner a sense of the rhetorical choices that the participants apply in various situations. These documents offer a portrait of the participants as well as their audiences. The documents are analyzed to determine the role(s) of
social constructions in establishing professional identity and presidential authority.

**Audio Taping**

During the fieldwork observation period, I used a hand-held, voice-activated audio tape recorder as one of the means of collecting data. The recorder was voice activated and used micro-cassette tapes. With this device, I recorded casual conversations, office meetings and exchanges, and interviews with the president. At each site, however, I negotiated how audiotaping would be used and had different results.

At Small Midwestern University President Griffin allowed me to use the tape recorder at all of the meetings during the entire time of my visit. Thus I have personal conversations as well as university business meetings on tape. President Griffin said he felt totally at ease with allowing me to record meetings. He did not have any reservations but he did remind me to be careful with the tapes and make sure they were only used for the identified purposes. During meetings that he had with only one other person, he suggested that I ask permission to record the meeting. I did and no one refused to allow me to use the tape recorder. There was only one meeting where he did not allow me to use the tape recorder and that was at the off-campus executive committee board of trustees meeting. He said I was free to take notes but I could not use the tape recorder.
At Large Midwestern University President Morgan only allowed me to use the tape recorder during the one-on-one interviews that I conducted with him in his office. He explained that I might violate others’ privacy by recording the meetings. President Morgan said that he was fully aware of my research project and that he felt comfortable being recorded. However, he did not think it was a good idea to record others because they would have too many questions and concerns and I probably would not have enough time to answer their questions without interfering with the meetings’ objectives. So to avoid all of those hassles, he suggested that I only record our individual sessions.

At Small Southeastern University President Barrett did not allow me to use the tape recorder in any of the meetings or exchanges. She only allowed me to use it during our interview sessions. She, too, felt that it would violate others’ privacy and that some of the meetings dealt with very sensitive university matters or were sometimes quite personal. President Barrett explained that she trusted that I would use the material that I collected for research purposes only.

Field Notes

A “fieldwork journal” is an introspective record of the researcher’s experience in the field. It includes his or her fears, ideas, mistakes, confusion, and reactions to the experience and can include thoughts about the research methodology itself” (Gold 110). One of the major ways of collecting and retaining data was through field notes. I began taking notes long before I even
went to my first research site, recording my experiences in trying to secure participants for the research project. I had spoken to the prospective participants over the phone, corresponded with them via email, and faxed materials to them in order to see if they were willing to be participants in the study. I kept an account of the nature of my conversations with them.

At the research site, I took many notes on the spot. However, there were occasions when it was not appropriate for me to be taking notes. For instance, at the request of one president, I did not bring a pad and pencil to religious assemblies and ceremonies. At another site, there were many meetings over formal dinners, and I did not record observations during these events. During times like those, I recorded observations later, usually the same day. As soon as it was possible, I would get my note pad and make my entries. In my entries, as accurately as I could, I would write what I had witnessed, making note of what the president was doing, saying, and gesturing. I also took note of the amount of time that had passed during each encounter. Additionally, I would include several questions that I would want the president to answer during one of our interview sessions. The questions varied and depended on the type of information I was trying to collect.

Mostly, I made entries on a daily basis during meetings. Those meetings took place in a number of places. Sometimes they were held in the presidents' offices. Other times they were held at different places on the campuses, and sometimes there were meetings that were held off campus. I paid particular
attention to differences and similarities in sites and situations, noting the purpose of the meeting, the location of the meeting, and the people who attended the meeting. A lot of the questions for the personal, discourse-based, and structured interviews came from what I recorded in my field notes.

**Direct Observation**

Direct observation is a combination of all of the methods I employed to collect and analyze data. “Observation is a research tool when it 1) serves as a formulated research purpose, 2) is planned deliberately, 3) is recorded systematically, and 4) is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability” (Merriam 94-95). Discourse-based interviews, structured interviews, personal interviews, artifact collection, audiotapes, and field notes all fall under the category of direct observation. What this means is that I was present at the actual sites of inquiry observing first hand the engagements of the presidents and somehow recording the observation (either through memory, writing, or actual tape recordings). I witnessed for myself the rhetorical activities in which the presidents were involved for the four or six weeks that I was present on the three campuses. By directly observing the presidents on a daily basis in different rhetorical situations and by asking them about past activities during their tenure as a president, I was able to discover and perceive for myself certain questions to ask to expand on ideas. Through direct observation I was able to determine what
would constitute the three individual cases at SMU, LMU, and SSU with Presidents Griffin, Morgan, and Barrett respectively.

Being physically present at the three sites of inquiry permitted me to complete description and analyses of individual and multiple instances as they are perceived by both the presidents and me, as they are documented in the transcriptions and the interviews. Sharan Merriam notes that observations “take place in the natural field setting instead of a location designated for the purpose of interviewing; observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview. Interviews and conversations are often interwoven with observation” (94).

**Negotiating Participant-Observer Role**

Many times, others observed me taking notes. Sometimes I would deliberately stop writing on my notepad because it seemed to make some people uneasy. Every once in a while, someone would ask me, “Are you writing something about me?” Or “What are you writing now?” They would also make comments like “I guess I had better be careful because I don’t want to get caught saying the wrong thing.” These types of questions and comments made me a little uncomfortable at first because I really did not want to alienate anyone at any of the research sites. To add to that, I wanted to stress to them that my interest was solely in what the presidents were doing and saying and not so much in others’
activities. Given my research project, though, it was a bit difficult not to keep
notes of what others were doing. Frequently, I had to reassure people that I was
not trying to “catch” them doing anything. One of the main ways that I did that
was to stop writing. Whenever I would decide on my own to stop writing or
whenever it was inappropriate for me to do so, I would try not to let too much
time pass before I actually made my entries for that day. I managed to make
entries at least every few hours.

**Narrative of Gaining Access to the Communities and Identifying Participants**

When I decided that I wanted to study the rhetorical strategies of African
American university presidents, one of the first things that I had to decide was
how to gain access to these communities. After consulting with my dissertation
committee members, I concluded that it would probably be a good idea if I
contacted numerous presidents in order to ensure that I would have enough
participants to complete the study because “while the number of black faculty and
staff is small, black administrators are differentially an even smaller population in
higher education” (Hoskins v).

In my initial prospectus, I proposed to study six African American
University Presidents: two males at a Historically Black College or University
(HBCU), two females at an HBCU, one male at a Predominantly White Institution
(PWI), and one female at a PWI. After discussions with my committee, I agreed
that this number was too ambitious and lowered the number to three presidents: one male at an HBCU, one female at an HBCU, and one male at a PWI.

Because I was somewhat familiar with the culture of the black educational institution and associated with several, I was able to contact people through specific personal references. Since I attended a Historically Black College for my own undergraduate study, I was sure that I would be able to use my personal connections to get the presidents to agree to participate in the study.

My first step in the process of contacting potential participants was visiting the United Negro College Fund website (www.uncf.org). I wanted to make sure that I associated the correct names of the various presidents with the appropriate universities. After viewing the UNCF website, I compiled a list of all the presidents. Then I visited each of the chosen institutions’ websites to find out more information about each school and to read each of the presidents’ biographies to determine which ones were most conducive to what I wanted to do. Specifically I paid attention to the schools that had female presidents because I figured, and was proven right, that the female presidents would be the most difficult ones to get to participate in my research. There are not nearly as many female presidents as there are male presidents of predominantly white or predominantly black institutions. “Higher education is a pivotal institution in society and the consequences of women’s under representation in positions of authority have wider and more serious resonances for issues of equity, social justice, and participation in public life” (Morley and Val Walsh 3). Given that
information about the under-representation of female university presidents, I
concentrated specifically on trying to get the female presidents to agree to
participate in the project.

After gathering names and compiling the lists, locations, and other useful
information I contacted thirty-one presidents through electronic mail, telephone
conversations, and facsimiles. The e-mail messages, about a page in length,
included specific details about the project, information about me, reasons why I
chose to ask them to participate, and notices that I would be contacting them at a
later date via telephone to discuss the project in more detail. I included an
attachment of the dissertation prospectus also. I gave them ten days to review the
message and the prospectus and to respond to them. After the ten days had passed,
I contacted each of them by telephone. Either before or after each of the calls, I
faxed them an official copy of the letter and a copy of the prospectus on Ohio
State University letterhead.

I had hoped for a simple and orderly process, but that just did not happen.
There were many obstacles, most of which related directly to issues that
highlighted just how filled their schedules are and the difficulties of permitting me
to monopolize their time and attention.

Over the course of the two months I had left many messages and tried
various tactics to try to make contacts. In fact, I had left so many that it had
become a little difficult for me to keep up with all of the names and universities.
One day, out of the blue, one of the presidents returned my phone call. By the
end of the conversation, I was able to schedule a time to actually meet with him in his office. This president ultimately became the first participant to agree. After his interrogations of my interests, motives, and background, we agreed that I would visit his campus from July 26, 2000 to August 31, 2000.

With this success, I began to think about presidents whom I knew personally and that perhaps contacts from personal networks might work better than the more objective and formal approach that I had been using. I thought about a former employer whose husband was now president at a predominantly White university. I visited that university’s web site and confirmed that he was indeed the current president. When I contacted her, she was eager to help. I faxed her a copy of my proposal. Within thirty minutes, President Morgan called and left a message indicating his willingness to discuss the possibility of his participating. Through a follow-up call and several e-mail exchanges he agreed to participate. Through his secretary, we confirmed dates from September 11, 2000 to October 6, 2000.

With two male participants, I was concerned about having no female participants. I had identified a likely candidate, but I was frustrated by the difficulty in making direct contact and completing arrangements. Fortunately, my adviser knew this president and allowed me to use her name in the cover letter. Soon after that, the president’s assistant called me and said that the president had agreed to be a participant in my project. Ultimately, she agreed to allow me to visit the campus from October 23, 2000 to November 17, 2000.
As is common practice in social research, the presidents and I agreed that each of them would be given pseudonyms. The three presidents and I signed an official form detailing the regulations of their participation (see Appendix A). I guaranteed them anonymity. They are not identified by name, city, state, or university. The pseudonyms I use to identify the three universities are Small Midwestern University (SMU), Large Midwestern University (LMU), and Small Southeastern University (SSU). The pseudonyms for each of the three presidents are Dr. Linda Barrett (SSU), Dr. David Morgan (LMU), and Dr. Paul Griffin (SMU).

Participants

There are three participants in the study. The first participant is an African American female president of a coeducational, private, small, liberal arts HBCU located in the Southeastern United States. She is the twelfth president of the university and the first female. This HBCU has a population of about 1,500 students. She attended this university for her undergraduate work, a large, predominantly White institution for her Master’s Degree, and a majority HBCU for her doctoral degree.

The second participant is an African American male at a medium sized (almost 30,000 students) public, predominantly White university (PWI) located in the Midwestern United States. He is the sixth president of the university and the first African American. This president attended a predominantly White university
for his undergraduate and graduate work. I visited Large Midwestern University for four weeks, from early September 2000 to early October 2000.

The third participant is an African American male president at a small (about 1,100 students), private, historically black college or university (HBCU) in the Midwestern United States. He is the seventeenth president and has served thirteen years, thus making him the second longest reigning president in the university’s history. He attended an HBCU for his undergraduate work and a predominantly White university for graduate school. I visited Small Midwestern University’s (SMU) campus for six weeks, from late July 2000 to the end of August 2000. Because school was not in session, I extended this visit by two weeks in order to ensure that I had collected enough information and made sufficient observations.

I shadowed each of the three presidents for a minimum of four weeks in order to collect data across several rhetorical sites. I attended meetings and observed them in group and individual exchanges. These encounters permitted me to assess their rhetorical choices in specific contexts in order to identify factors that might affect their abilities to achieve their purposes and establish their desired agency and authority as leaders in their various work sites.

**Research Challenges and Concerns**

Trying to account for my presence with each of the presidents and all of their audiences was probably one of the most difficult challenges that I faced.
during my research. However, the presidents were very accommodating. They gave me access to very sensitive written materials; they allowed me to observe them in heated conversations. I was even permitted to witness unpleasant exchanges. Sometimes these exchanges were very awkward for me because I was not really sure how I should react or if I should react. Some of the other challenges include:

- determining which documents to ask permission to review and/or copy;
- figuring out a system to list the artifacts that I had collected;
- choosing a way to organize the documents that I had received;
- making the visits useful to my project;
- being accepted by others at the universities;
- knowing when or when not to intervene (when presidents would include me in the conversations);
- understanding the culture of the three sites;
- trying to remain unobtrusive;
- avoiding uncomfortable situations; and
- adapting to multiple situations.
While at each of the research sites, a lot of negotiation was required of me as a researcher. I had to devise many strategies to overcome the challenges I faced. While the strategies were not too demanding, they were necessary.

For example, often I would have to check with the presidents' assistants to receive copies of certain documents to review. The assistants were seemingly always busy and I really did not want to bother them any more than I had to. To conquer this research challenge, I would sometimes write my requests or send them via e-mail and tell them that whenever they had time to give the documents to me would be fine. I was able to conquer the challenge of recording and organizing collected documents by keeping them in separate piles and arranging them according to genre (i.e., letters, reports, speeches, etc.). In order to get others at the universities to accept me, I had as many conversations with them as I possibly could, especially regarding my purpose for being at their institution. As a participant-observer, I received my cues from the presidents about when to respond or react in certain situations. I spoke when spoken to in order to remain unobtrusive, to avoid uncomfortable situations, and to adapt to the different sites. Employing all of these different strategies allowed me to complete my research with little or no undesirable incidents at all three of the sites.

**Time Frame for the Field Study**

As described in chapter two, when I first contacted these presidents I basically asked for a month of their time. Each arrangement, however, resulted in
a different time frame, based on the particular preferences of each president, the
different ways in which the institution was able to be accommodating, and on
what was going on at each of the institutions at the time that I could arrange the visits.

For example, I visited SMU during the summer months (July 26 to August 31) and school was not in session until the last week of my visit. Because there were not a lot of activities going on, the president agreed to extend my observation period there by two weeks to ensure that I was able to collect enough useful data. This visit lasted six weeks instead of four weeks. President Griffin gave me full access to documents and allowed me to trail him to most of his meetings. The only meetings that I was not permitted to sit in on were the ones that were of a personal nature or usually involved only one person.

I visited LMU when the fall semester had just gotten underway (September 11 to October 6). Everything was quite busy during the four weeks of my visit. I collected many documents and observed almost everything that the president did while I was there. Since this visit was through my own personal contact, having worked in the past with President Morgan’s wife, I was able to observe him on and off campus. I spent some time with them in their home and at other social outings, so I was able to observe him in many roles outside of his office environment or the campus setting. He gave me full access and I trailed him to almost every meeting that he had during my visit. The meetings that I did not attend were ones of a personal nature for the other parties involved.
My visit to SSU was also four weeks (October 23 to November 17). I
visited SSU during Homecoming week, which is a huge event at HBCUs. I
observed the president in many exchanges with students, alumni, parents, and old
friends, since she is an alumna of the institution. President Barrett held most of
her meetings in her office. She also permitted me to sit in on most of the
meetings. The meetings that I was not allowed to observe, as was the case with
the other presidents, were ones that dealt with issues of a personal nature and
usually meetings with one individual.

**How I Position Myself as a Researcher**

One of the reasons that I became interested in studying African American
male and female university presidents on both predominantly black and
predominantly white institutions was to see how they negotiate the different
audiences and to study the extent to which their race, gender, age, and other social
constructions affect their daily responsibilities as university presidents. I also
wanted to compare their roles to see if authority matters in interactions and how
people negotiate their identities. Over the course of the research, I have learned
that race, age, and even gender all factor into how people perceive each other.
These interests have grown out of my own personal experiences. Similar to these
university presidents, most of my own academic experiences have involved some
type of negotiations, whether inside or outside of the classroom, as a student or
faculty member, or simply as someone interacting with other university officials.
I am driven by my own academic experiences over the past eleven years as an undergraduate student, graduate student, staff member, and faculty member at four distinct universities to identify the intricacies of being affiliated with academe. By studying the rhetorical performances of university presidents as academic leaders, perhaps I will better understand my own academic experiences as well as those of other individuals and groups associated with academe. The college presidency is a good level at which to study the purposes and functions of academic institutions and the roles of the different colleges, schools, and departments of given institutions. Certainly, the role of the president of a university influences or complicates the roles of other members of an institution.
CHAPTER 3

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENCY AS A GENDERED EXPERIENCE

The significance of an individual's professed nature or identity, whether it is self-perceived or perceived by others, has been a central concern of rhetorical theory from classical rhetoric to the present. We examine ethos and use the term to explore the extent to which identity and perception of character influence whether a person is accepted as a useful contributor to society or in any other role that he or she occupies. In this chapter, I present data that reveal the construction of identity and ethos of an African American female university president, President Linda Barrett. Based on the time spent at the research site studying the activities, exchanges, and texts of President Barrett, I conclude that she establishes ethos and identity through her distinct ways of interacting with her constituencies, producing self-representational texts, and modifying behavior when shifting between audiences. The ways that President Barrett negotiates the multiple rhetorical situations shape her identity and ethos, as evidenced by the data collected, observations made, and information gathered during general conversations and interviews.
This chapter is organized based on three points of focus: 1) a profile of Dr. Barrett and Small Southeastern University; 2) a review of scholarship related to female university presidents (African American and Others) and their challenges as presidents; 3) and an identification and explanation of the analytical categories (age, race, and gender) used to study the experiences and especially the rhetorical contexts of President Barrett. This information is necessary in order to contextualize the data and to understand the culture of the institution and similar institutions like Small Southeastern University. My goal, then, is to develop a portrait of the president and the university’s culture—a demonstration of behavior, expectations, and what it means to succeed or fail in this environment as president—by using leadership and rhetorical performance as socially situated phenomena.

This chapter is a case study of just one African American female university president, and it is not meant to be representative of any group of people or of all African American university presidents. It is, however, intended to raise questions and answers that can lead to further inquiry, greater discussions, and more in-depth research projects that offer insight into the presidencies of African American females collectively.

In this chapter, the data are presented from the point of view of an African American female president’s perspective at an HBCU who occupies a role that has been traditionally occupied by an African American male. The data reveal that the predominant analytical category by which the challenges for President
Barrett emerge is gender. With gender as the primary analytic category for this chapter, I pay particular attention to rhetorical situations and examine ways in which gender manifests itself. Therefore, this chapter’s primary purpose is to explore examples of the ways in which gender affects President Barrett’s construction of ethos and identity and the ways in which it is evident in how others perceive her as president. This chapter principally addresses the culture of the institution, the audiences in different rhetorical situations, and the apparent strategies used by President Barrett in constructing ethos and identity. I look at the relationships and interactions across multiple audiences, representations of herself and her institution to others, and her own reflections about self-image in the face of challenges.

**Profile of President Barrett and Small Southeastern University (SSU)**

President Linda Barrett of Small Southeastern University (SSU) is a divorced, 56-year-old African American female. Prior to becoming president at SSU, she was a tenured full professor at a majority institution where she was employed for twenty-two years. She was the first African American professor to be promoted and tenured at the majority institution. She is now a nationally and internationally known labor arbitrator and mediator. President Barrett began her career as a labor arbitrator and mediator and held several administrative posts at her former institution. She attended SSU, the institution of which she is now president, for undergraduate study; she attended a major research institution for a
Master's Degree; and she attended an HBCU for a doctoral degree. The presidency at SSU is her first. President Barrett is the twelfth president of Small Southeastern University and the first female. All of the presidents of SSU before her have been African American males.

Small Southeastern University, a historical black university, is over one hundred thirty years old. It is a private, four-year, co-educational, liberal arts institution with a close affiliation to the Presbyterian Church. At the time of my research visit, the student enrollment was just over 1,500 and was almost 100% African American. At Small Southeastern University, President Barrett has been successful in her post during her six years as president. Her success includes eradicating a deficit and increasing student enrollment. Additionally, she has restored the university constituencies' faith in the institution by avoiding public scandal and reassuring them of her ability as an effective leader.

My basic goal during the four weeks was to use the analytic categories in chapter one to observe her to gain a clearer sense of the nature of the challenges she faces and determine how these challenges helped to shape the sense of ethos and identity she conveys. Through my analysis, I determined that President Barrett does face many challenges, but gender surfaces in a predominant way among the others.
Female University Presidents and Their Challenges

The history of the university presidency for females is a long and multifaceted one. The very first female college president in the United States was Frances Elizabeth Willard, appointed in 1871 to Evanston College for Ladies, which was later named Northwestern University. Julia Sears followed in Willard’s footsteps by becoming president of Mankato Normal School in Mankato, Minnesota, which was later named Mankato State University. The very first African American female college president was Mary McLeod Bethune, who founded Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida in 1923, where she served as president until 1947. In 1998, Runae Edwards-Wilson identified 35 African American females who are or have been presidents of a college or university since 1984 (122-125). African American women university presidents comprise only 9 percent of the 12% of women who serve as chief executive officers of colleges and universities. Of the thirty-one African American presidents of predominantly white universities (PWIs), only eight are African American females.

From the appointment of the first female university president in 1871 to the present, women have faced many challenges as university presidents. One challenge that women face as university presidents is invisibility, even though the number of female university presidents is increasing. The percentage of female university presidents doubled from 9.5 percent in 1986 to 19 percent in 1998.
(Ross and Green 9). About 360 women now serve as chief executive officers of
the nations 3,323 regionally accredited colleges and universities and women make
up, as indicated above, only 12% of the presidents (Leatherman “College Hire
More” A19). For most of the current female university presidents, their existing
presidency is their first.

The increase of the number of female university presidents can be
attributed to an increase in certain types of institutions, not just one increase
generally. Female university presidents head mostly public institutions, typically
two-year colleges. This point is re-emphasized by Kathleen Manzo who points
out that “women are more likely to rise to top posts in the nation’s community
and technical colleges than at 4-year colleges” (12). In the U.S. there are several
different classifications of colleges and universities. They are public and private,
two-year and four-year, research and teaching, single-sex and coeducational.
Since women university presidents mostly lead public institutions, the
representation of them as leaders at the other types of institutions is minimal. All
categories of these schools have diverse populations, however, and by rules of
equity female leaders should be more highly represented. Unfortunately, equity
does not rule and there are few. Moreover, the ones that are presidents also
confront discrimination, sexism, and biased treatment. Kathleen Manzo also
explains

Difficulties due to “old-time” board members who were skeptical of a
woman’s ability to lead, the challenge of maintaining an intensive
professional schedule while juggling the demands of marriage and family,
and the problems they met with subordinates who expected them to be
kinder, gentler leaders. For women presidents, even those things that might be considered irrelevant or insignificant to leadership ability for men are apt to become important factors in others' perceptions of their effectiveness. (12)

Another challenge for female university presidents is that they usually lead institutions plagued by financial ruin or other undesirable histories. This fact alone complicates the possibility of success as a leader for these women. It can be argued that female university presidents are given these positions at financially unstable institutions so that the institution can have someone to blame if the women are not successful in improving the financial status of the institution. Courtney Leatherman reveals, “Some female presidents believe women are more likely to be funneled into the toughest presidential jobs—either because fewer men apply for them, or because women have fewer options than men. With limited opportunities, these observers say women are left with a difficult choice: take on the presidency at a troubled institution, or be offered none at all” (“Colleges Hire More” A19). Situations like these contribute to the reason why there are so few female university presidents. On the other hand, when women decide to accept positions at financially troubled institutions, they do so with open eyes. They are aware that a tough job lies ahead for them, but they accept the challenge and oftentimes conquer it and other challenges that exist within and around the institution.

Although data about the general success and longevity for women college presidents are scarce in the literature, the scholarship does address such issues regarding problems that challenge female university presidents’ identities. For
example, Rhetaugh Graves Dumas, in discussing the dilemmas of black females in leadership asserts that black women presidents often find themselves “caught between boss and subordinates, blacks and whites, men and women, units in the organization, between the organization and community in which it is located” (207). Dumas goes on to say that “sometimes [black women leaders] are unclear of who they are and what they are representing and find themselves trying to manage certain organizational boundaries without adequate authority hence without appropriate backing and support” (207).

Female university presidents also face challenges based upon their visible physical characteristics. Being female carries with it many social assumptions; these leaders, from the very beginning, have to prove their intellect and capabilities to their prospective constituencies in order to be taken seriously. Many times it is not the job itself that is so exigent as it is being a female occupying a role that is traditionally reserved for males.

In interviews with Judith Sturnick, several female university presidents consistently report that whatever leadership dilemmas they face are heightened by their gender. Vivian Blevins, Chancellor of St. Louis Community College, for example, says, “the willingness to stick one’s neck out is especially problematic for female presidents” (Sturnick 30). This uncertainty is especially important since current data indicate that the tenure of a female president is two years shorter than that of a male president.
Blevins also explains that women presidents often face harsher criticism and, therefore, must pick their battles more carefully (Sturnick 30).

Additionally, Vera King Farris, the first female African American president at Stockton State College, identifies two stumbling blocks that women as presidents face: physical appearance—because “the public often judges a woman’s ability to lead or make significant contributions based on her physical appearance; and on power plays—because “it is generally accepted that a male leader must be forceful, aggressive, and a tower of physical strength in the heat of tactical administrative battles. If a woman exhibits the same characteristics, she is frequently viewed as pushy, opinionated, and a witch” (Sturnick 31). With this possibility I posit that female university presidents are judged by different standards from the ones that are used to evaluate their male counterparts.

The gendered roles that society has assigned to women are the same roles that complicate the possibility for women to succeed and receive the respect to which they are entitled. So, when women decide to venture into areas or professions that are dominated by men, they are immediately faced with the obstacle of overcoming gender discrimination. A common challenge that has been cited in the critical literature by both males and females is for public colleges and universities to restructure resources and the uses of those resources to stabilize their financial base as state budgets fluctuate and state governments realize their priorities. Although this is a challenge for all presidents, for women
leaders, there is doubt about their ability to manage the financial resources of the institutions.

Dale Rogers Marshall, President of Wheaton College, “has also found that people have lower expectations of women’s leadership abilities. Yet, she enjoys making leaps that confound the skeptics and savors the freedom that comes with being the key decision-maker” (Sturnick 32). Lyall points out that women are accustomed to persisting in the face of skepticism (32). These women realize that they will have to overcome challenges and how they do that is equally as important as that they do it. These university presidents pay less attention to their critics and more attention to the tasks at hand because they refuse to contribute to their critics’ doubt about their abilities to lead based on the fact that they are women. Instead, female university presidents thrive by merely acknowledging that they are expected to fail when they are first slotted in their positions as leaders and remembering that, but their success comes into play by focusing on succeeding in the face of skepticism.

Another challenge that women may face as university presidents may result from differences in how they address and or negotiate situations. Elizabeth Zinser maintains that, whereas women leaders are more inclined to enjoy communication that is oriented to reaching agreements, men are inclined to enjoy communication that is oriented to winning arguments (Sturnick 30-31). She also notes that in some instances one style may be better than the other or in other cases both may be necessary. However, when men and women have to work
together for a common goal, a difference in communication style can raise challenges on the team.

University presidents do not work in isolation and they must be able to accommodate many different styles of communicating because they have so many different audiences. It should be expected that disagreeable situations sometimes will arise and must be addressed.

A challenge that is identified by Katharine C. Lyall, the President of the University of Wisconsin System, is to recruit and foster the next generation of the professorate. People decide to attend or accept employment at universities for many reasons, and one reason that has been cited is the type of leadership at the potential institution. As a society, we have not reached the point where race, gender, age, and other social factors are not used as criteria for deciding whether to become affiliated with a particular university. These social factors are ones that cannot be changed and do not want to be changed by the leader who possesses them.

As members of a small but growing cohort, female university presidents have the challenge of balancing their reactions to criticism and their responses to different forms of adversity. Patricia McGuire, President of Trinity College, says that female university presidents take themselves too seriously. She attempts to avoid that by including humor into her role as president of her alma mater. McGuire confronted a huge challenge as her institution was making a transformation from a traditional, four-year residential mostly White and Catholic
institution to a highly diverse population of many ages, races, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds. While McGuire saw this as a tremendous challenge, succeeding in the face of it was “exhilarating” (Sturnick 32).

Tessa Martinez Pollack, President of Glendale Community College, faces similar challenges to many African American female university presidents. Pollack is Mexican American and says, “I work hard to be faithful to my cultural values in ways that are non-imposing yet enable me to remain whole, authentic, and useful to my college and community as they approach an inevitably pluralistic future” (Sturnick 33). Being Mexican American, much like her African American counterparts, means she has had to face a second set of stereotypes, unlike her White female colleagues. In addition to her abilities being questioned on the basis of gender, she has the added burden of being questioned on the basis of race. Gender and race are two very concrete characteristics that cannot be camouflaged or ignored. They permeate every area of social and organizational culture.

Even though it is a commonly held belief that it is very difficult for a woman to lead a prestigious university, the number of female university presidents at Ivy League institutions has begun to rise. In 1994, Judith Rodin became the first female university president to lead an Ivy League institution when she became president at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2001, Shirley M. Tilghmann joined her by becoming president of Princeton University, and in 2001, Ruth J. Simmons, in becoming president of Brown University (Zernike 6.82), became the first African American woman to head an Ivy League
institution. Even though these are major accomplishments, these three Ivy League presidents prefer not to dwell on the fact that they are “firsts” and instead wish others would focus on other issues like their job performance and the successes of other female leaders. The challenge in this situation is for them to be regarded as serious, capable leaders and not as tokens. Rodin, Tilghmann, and Brown specifically indicated these concerns in the interview with Zernike.

Anytime there is a new leader of an institution, there is always the challenge of the unknown, especially when the leader is female and is the first female to head the institution. The expectations that she has for herself might be quite different from the expectations that the institution and its community might have of her as their chosen leader. If those two sets of expectations are too different, then problems might easily arise in the presidency. In almost every part of our society, still today, women’s abilities are questioned, even when they have successfully served in their positions.

In most cases where an African American female is president of a university or college, she is likely to be either the first woman in that position or the first African American, or more often, both. Being female and being the “first” type of new leader for the institution are challenges within themselves. There are many African American females who became the first female or the first African American to be president of a college or university. Women who were the first African American women appointed to their positions include:
Mable Parker McClean, president at Barber-Scotia College, appointed in 1974.


Barbara Hatton, president at South Carolina State College, appointed in 1994.

Dorothy Cowser Yancy, president at Johnson C. Smith University, appointed in 1994.

Marie V. McDemmond, president of a four-year state supported university in Virginia (Norfolk State University), appointed in 1997.

Marguerite Archie Hudson, president at Talladega College, appointed in 1998.

Trudie Kibbe Reed, president at Philander Smith College, appointed in 1999.

Dolores E. Cross, president at Morris Brown College, appointed in 1999.

Carolyn Reid-Wallace, president of Fisk University, appointed in 2001.

Yvonne Walker-Taylor, president at Wilberforce University, appointed in 1984.

Those women who were the first African Americans appointed to their posts include:
Reatha Clark King, president at Metropolitan State University, appointed in 1977.

Jewell Plummer Cobb, president of California State University at Fullerton, appointed in 1981.

Yvonne Kennedy, president at Bishop State Junior College, appointed in 1981.

Constance M. Carroll, president at Saddleback College, appointed in 1983.

Norma Jean Tucker, president of Merrit College, appointed in 1983.

Vera King Farris, president at Stockton State College, appointed in 1983.

Dolores M. Spikes, president of a Louisiana Public College or University, appointed in 1989.

In the beginning, middle, and end (in some cases) of their presidencies, these women have been interviewed about the dual burden of racism and sexism they have experienced as university presidents, especially being the first by their gender and race to serve as institutional leaders. For example, much like most African American women university presidents, Dr. Mable McClean of Barber Scotia College stresses that she wants to be remembered "as a woman who attacked and approached problems aggressively. Black women college presidents are determined to leave their mark on higher education. I never want to be
regarded as just a woman doing a job, but as a person doing a job, who just happens to be a woman” ("Black Women College Presidents" 109).

The composition of college and university campuses is changing in terms of race, socioeconomic backgrounds, gender, physical disabilities, academic preparation and so on. The number of female university presidents is also changing in reflection of those changes. However, a report on the increase in minority and women college and university presidents suggests “that revamped recruitment and selection process are needed if the leadership of higher education is to reflect the national population in the future” (Anonymous “Report Finds Increase” 22). Overall, sexism and racism remain as encumbrances that current African American female university presidents face. These challenges need to be addressed so that they can no longer impede the selection of African American females as university presidents and so that more of these women can become presidents of majority, public, co-educational institutions. African American university presidents have a lot to offer academe in terms of leadership ability, knowledge, experience, and a distinctive style of interacting with today’s students.

To summarize, being invisible, heading institutions at high financial risk, being judged by gender and race stereotypes, being negatively judged because of gendered leadership styles, and knowing when to adapt leadership styles are specific challenges that I have documented that female university presidents encounter. Additionally, recruiting and fostering the next generation of the
professoriate, restructuring resources and the use of them to stabilize their financial bases, and overcoming doubts about their abilities to lead educational institutions are other challenges inherent for female university presidents. Female university presidents also are challenged to balance their reactions to criticisms so that the criticisms do not intensify the challenges.

**Identification of Linda Barrett as an African American Female University President**

As a member of the small cohort of African American female university presidents, President Linda Barrett has faced these challenges and many more, including the challenges that exist in her own context. This chapter seeks to highlight some of those challenges through the lenses of the analytical categories presented in chapter two. If one were to take a closer look into university presidencies of African American females, as this study will examine President Barrett’s presidency, researchers can begin to document not just the general challenges of presidential leadership, but the specific challenges that a woman president can face within particular social, institutional, and organizational contexts.

In examining President Barrett within the context of and Small Southeastern University, I make no attempt to conclude that her experiences are representative for all African American female university presidents. On the contrary, I see this study as an attempt to initiate a more substantive conversation
about African American females in leadership positions in academe. Using presidential circumstances (inherited presidency, length of presidency, marital status, and professional background) as descriptive categories, and using age, race, and gender as analytical categories, President Barrett’s experiences as a female African American university president helps to clarify academic leadership as a gendered-experience.

**Descriptive Categories**

The descriptive categories used to study President Barrett’s presidency explain the context in which she operates. Data are extracted and analyzed to present the many dynamics that identify her as president. These factors contribute individually and collectively to an understanding of Barrett’s rhetorical environment as president. They are: the nature of the presidency that she inherited, her marital status, the length of her presidency, and her professional background. While these categories yield a wide range of descriptive data about Barrett and her context, they do not constitute an absolute identity. What they offer, however, is a more material way to investigate factors that influence Barrett’s formation of ethos and authority.

**Inherited Presidency**

The inherited presidency for Barrett includes information about her immediate predecessor and about the history of the types of presidents who have
served as institutional leader at Small Southeastern University. This type of information is essential because it provides a critical background that frames how that history influences President Barrett's role as chief officer at SSU.

President Barrett's predecessor at Small Southeastern University was an African American male who was publicly accused of mismanaging funds at SSU, engaging in an open extramarital affair, and losing the confidence of the university personnel. Consequently, not only did President Barrett face the challenge of being the first female president at the institution, she also faced the challenge of transforming a tarnished record of professional and personal behavior.

Developing and maintaining a professional ethos varies among university presidents and the success of doing so depends in part on the culture and environment of the institution. When President Barrett accepted this presidency, she inherited the burden of re-building faith and confidence. She had to ask herself: How can I demonstrate my ability as president without losing myself in the process? She had to gain the confidence of the Board of Trustees even after she became president; she had to assure the university personnel that she would not embarrass the institution by engaging in controversial personal activity; and she had to work steadfastly at restoring the university's image. President Barrett was aware of all of these situations before she agreed to accept the interim presidency and she explained that she had no problem in working to resolve these difficulties.
As "a proud alumna of the institution," which is how she classified herself, and at the time a trustee, she wanted "to see all of these problems dissipate just as everyone else wanted." In trying to establish her professional ethos as president by fixing these problems, she knew that another issue would materialize—her gender. In the event that she failed to reinstate the university's image, she knew that the first reason that would be cited would be the fact that she is a woman. Although she had a lot of support from most of the university's constituencies, she felt that some individuals and groups were expecting her to fail. She was aware of that but it did not bother her to the extent that it would prevent her from doing her job. She was able to get the institution back on the right track in the first two years of being president, by increasing student enrollment and eradicating the university's deficit. Small Southeastern University is no longer fraught with the problems her predecessor left behind, and the negative memories of her predecessor's behavior as president have faded.

Even though Barrett was able to transform the institution's negative image and re-build confidence among her constituencies, she has not been publicly credited with doing so, and she continues to face the usual challenges associated with being president of an HBCU. For Barrett, some of those challenges include fundraising, maintaining a working relationship with external audiences, balancing the university's budget, hiring qualified employees, and making sure the academic record for the university is exceptional.
The image of the university and the construction and maintenance of her own professional identity require constant effort. Often, she is charged with presenting herself as well as her institution in such a way that is satisfying to that particular audience at that particular moment. University presidents are and have to be very versatile and usually there is no single persona that they employ.

Marital Status

While marital status may seem like in an insignificant factor, it is important to know and understand how Barrett’s marital status affects her ability to function as university president. She is single, by way of divorce, and operates in a position where part of her identity is grounded in social expectations. Barrett’s marital status holds tremendous importance for some of her constituents, particularly ones that she interacts with in social settings, such as university or community sponsored dinner parties. This category demonstrates how her marital status acts as factor that poses challenges for her not necessarily directly related to her job responsibilities, but related to her identity as a chief representative of the institution who has many social obligations. The fact that she is not married can function as a lack of status.

Because she is single, people at the institution and people in the community often make comments to President Barrett about her marital status. For example, Barrett stated in one of our interviews that people are always inquiring about whether she is dating. These comments signal their traditional
expectations. Small Southeastern University is located in a city with a dominant church stronghold where marriage is strongly emphasized and encouraged. Older alumni, for example, are always asking her about dating and marriage. When other constituents approach her with questions regarding her marital status, their comments suggest that they would prefer that she be married. Because President Barrett inherited a presidency where her predecessor was involved in an open extra-marital affair, concern about impropriety looms even larger for an unmarried woman.

Marital status is an important factor also because of social obligations. Spouses help to carry the burdens of social obligations, attending events and participating actively in the social and political scene. The evidence of the importance of this role occurred early for Barrett. When she interviewed for the position, the Board of Trustees invited her adult daughter to the interview. One of her daughter’s roles was to ensure that if the president could not attend a social function because of other commitments, she would have someone who could go and represent the institution.

In negotiating this challenge, President Barrett hired a “Protocol Person” who does all of the planning for SSU’s social events sponsored by the president. More provocatively, however, she addresses people’s questions and concerns by reminding them that her personal life is off limits. This rhetorical act functioned early in her presidency not just to tell constituencies that her marital status is not
the business of the university or the community, but to establish directness as part of her ethos and authority.

Even though marriage complicates rather than enables presidential authority for Barrett, there are a couple of advantages for her not being married. The first is the traditional expectations of the spouse of a university president. These expectations are based on the assumption that the university president is male. The wife, or the first lady of the institution, is typically expected to take on a secondary and domestic role to serve the president as well as his constituents. In this case, since the university president is female, it is difficult to imagine that if she had a husband he would be willing to operate in this capacity. The second advantage, which complicates matters even further, is that university constituents frown on the spouse of the president having a life, which could include a non-academic job or a job at a different institution, outside of the university. The constituents expect that president’s spouse to serve only the institution. Given these circumstances, it is easier for Barrett to be un-married because she is able to avoid the problems of whether her husband would be willing to lose his own identity and take on the social obligations and domestic duties of being the president’s spouse. This scenario is highly doubtful and is likely to create more dilemmas related to gendered social roles.
Length of Presidency

During the time of my visit to Small Southeastern University, Barrett was beginning her sixth year as president. This section examines the length of her presidency as a characteristic that also influences the rhetorical nature of Barrett as a university president. This part of her identity is explored as a feature that shapes the type of power she has obtained and uses in her capacity as the institution’s leader. By combining this category with the others, I present examples and scenarios that illustrate the significance of how the length of her presidency emerges as part of her identity and ethos throughout the dissertation.

Professional Background

Finally, her professional background is discussed to reveal how Barrett interacts with one of her main constituents, the university faculty. I introduce details about the history of her employment and her professional affiliations. Mostly, this section includes data that show what type of relationship she is able to establish with the faculty and other members of the academic community. Since she is a retired tenured full professor, her ability to build relationships and communicate with faculty and the academic community at large is not as difficult as it might be if she did not have such a strong academic background.

College and university presidents of all races and both genders have various employment backgrounds before becoming president of an institution.
University presidents come mostly from academic backgrounds, but not exclusively. Some of them are chosen from the corporate industry. However, most Historically Black College and Universities have presidents who have academic backgrounds. The candidates have usually held teaching posts at other institutions or at the same institutions in which they become presidents. In addition, a high number of the presidents have usually held some type of deanship or vice presidency, typically in the academic affairs area.

Recently, there have been several studies that focus on African American college and university presidents and some specifically focus on the career patterns of these presidents. These projects have been both quantitative and qualitative in approach. Kevin Marbury’s 1992 dissertation entitled “African-American Senior Administrators of Colleges and Universities in American Higher Education: Identification of Characteristics in Their Career Progression” at the University of North Texas is a quantitative study that “identified and compared characteristics in the career progression of African-American college presidents of institutions in the continental United States.” Marbury uses a survey instrument from a population of seventy-three of 141 African American presidents to “indicate that there are common characteristics in the educational backgrounds” of these presidents with regard to “the types of institutions attended, the field of study of the doctoral degree, and the time in which they earned the master’s degree.” The common characteristics of the presidents in Marbury’s dissertation are:
Most of the African American college presidents earned a master’s degree 2 to 3 years after completion of the bachelor’s. There are significant relationships between the racial composition of the graduate school attended and age—presidents who were 60 to 64 years of age attended both black and white graduate schools in approximately equal numbers, while other age groups largely attended white graduate schools. Female presidents attended both black and white undergraduate colleges equally, while most males attended black institutions. All of the female presidents attended white graduate schools, while males attended both black and white graduate schools. There are similarities in the type of employing institution—most of the African American college presidents provide leadership to smaller 4-year public institutions. Another similarity is with the type of contract—almost half of the African American college presidents operate with a 12-month contract. There are also similarities in the salary they are paid—most of the African American college presidents received compensation in excess of $90,000. The findings of this study reveal that African American college presidents have much in common with each other when comparisons are made between their various subgroups. This homogeneity is manifested in the areas of personal characteristics, academic preparation and credentials, and professional organization involvement. Results of this study suggest that similarities exist between African American college presidents and their white colleagues as supported in previous research. (114-117)

These common characteristics suggest that there are several routes that current and past presidents have taken to assume the presidency. However, it also says that there is no single “right” way or path that a person should take when seeking a presidency. Finally, it says that although there are several similarities in college presidencies, there are also many differences. In addition to this, the type of career patterns that university presidents have affects how they are able to interact with and negotiate situations with the university’s constituents.

In a more gendered study, Pamela Telia Barber Freeman from the University of Oklahoma completed a dissertation entitled “Presidential Profiles in
Higher Education: Perspectives from African American Women” in 1993. Using quantitative and qualitative data, Freeman’s study “examined, analyzed, and theoretically integrated factors (i.e., institutional, structural, and psychological) that characterized African American women presidents in the academy to assist in the formulation of a theoretical framework” (xi). The study includes eighteen of the twenty-five African American females who were presidents at that time.

Freeman made the following findings:

After an extensive review of literature relative to African American women presidents in higher education, this researcher found no criteria to ascertain characteristics in the career advancements and mobility of African American presidents; therefore, the researcher designed her own research instrument. The development of the instrument encompassed consultation with African American women administrators and scholars skilled in creating questionnaires in higher education. As a result, the following categories were developed: background characteristics, economic data, gender and race, educational data, societal data, institutional data, and leadership styles and attitudes. These content areas examined psychological, structural, and institutional barriers...to determine the total number, percent, or frequency of each item. (81-82)

Similarly, in 1998, Delois Crawford’s dissertation (University of Rochester) entitled “African-American Women Administrators in Higher Education: Mentoring in Career Choice and Development,” is an ethnographic study, in which she “investigates the importance of mentoring in African American women’s selection of higher education as a career choice and in their development as professionals in that career (39).” Crawford uses “life-histories, interviews, feedback from respondents on researcher analyses, and researcher deliberation” (40) as her primary modes of investigation. Instead of focusing only
on African American female presidents, she includes female administrators who are deans, associate deans, assistant deans, vice presidents, executive vice presidents, associate vice presidents, assistants to the president, provosts, chancellors, and presidents. This research clarifies how mentoring impacts the career choice of African American women who become administrators in higher education and how their sociocultural and gender experiences define their career choice and development (Abstract—no page no.). Crawford drew these conclusions:

Mentoring in the traditional definition did not impact the career choices and development of women in this study since none of them experienced a process by which an individual of superior rank, special achievements and prestige instructed, counseled, guided, and facilitated their intellectual or career development. In addition, none of them were socialized by a senior member to the rules and culture of the academy. This researcher has shown that the lack of mentors for African American female administrators is not isolated to the respondents in this study. The guidance and direction provided by role models, mentors, or sponsors which determines an individual’s future career path and pattern is lacking for this population. Since these women have had no mentors, it is this researcher’s belief that their individual academic institutions have not capitalized on their talents. (121)

In “The Leadership Styles of African-American Female College Presidents at Four-Year Higher Education Institutions” (1998), Runae Edwards-Wilson uses a qualitative approach “based on the assessment of The Leadership Opinion Questionnaire, telephone interviews, biographical studies, content analysis, and institutional data” (5). She collected data from twenty-seven presidents to study higher education institutions, to plan leadership training and
evaluation programs, evaluate organization and governance in higher education and to teach minority and women’s studies. Edwards-Wilson concluded that

Women may take longer to become presidents than do their White male counterparts. Demographics also affect their presidencies. Most of the African American women in this study were presidents in areas predominantly populated by African Americans, Latinos, and women from areas of the country predominantly populated by minority group members. Some issues that concerned the respondents in higher education may be issues unique to their experiences as African American women, racism, sexism, and elitism. Although this study did not find a distinctive leadership style among African American women, the respondents talked about and wrote about displaying different leadership characteristics in different situations. But no one leadership style was used by this entire group of women at all times. (86-94)

More recently, in 1999, Thelma Bowles’s dissertation focused on “Socialization Factors and African American Women College Presidents.” Her purpose was to “identify common socialization factors in the early social development of African American females who became chief campus administrators” (vii). By focusing specifically on family, community, and education, Bowles uses two forms of questionnaires to gather information from the presidents. She uses a survey instrument and interview questions. This particular study includes African American female presidents from both two-year and four-year colleges or universities. Bowles also used biographical data obtained from the participants in her analyses. Based on that data, the following conclusions were reached:

For the family category of early socialization factors, no one factor was consistent for all five presidents studied (86). On reviewing the community category, common factors were found.
Communities of the presidents studied were found to have helped or at least not hindered these women in the development of their career goals (86). In the final category, education, early school influences and the presence of a positive mentor relationship were considered. Neither of these factors was found to be a strong positive factor for the five presidents. (86-87)

Finally, in 1999, V. Barbara Bush’s dissertation entitled “The Seventh Daughters: African American Women Presidents of Predominantly White Four-Year Colleges and Universities,” focuses on six case studies of African American women presidents of predominantly White institutions and one institution that became predominantly students of color within the last decade. Bush studied African American cultural characteristics and values, if any, these presidents exhibit in their roles and how their culture intersects with the organizational culture of the institutions they lead. She conducted interviews, observed the presidents on site, and analyzed documents.

In the case of President Barrett, she does not neatly fit into any of these scenarios. However, she is a president who comes from the academic ranks. While she was never a dean or a vice president, she was an administrator within the school where she worked before she came to Small Southeastern University. She is a tenured full professor and has taught at several institutions of higher learning, ranging from high school through college—both HBCUs and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). She also served as a trustee at Small Southeastern University before she was named interim president. Her professional experience also stretches beyond the reaches of academe into the corporate world where she served as a labor consultant for many years.
President Barrett has worked with all types of people, groups, and organizations. Her diverse professional experience has made it easier to navigate among the multiple constituencies as president. Most importantly, the fact that she was a faculty member before becoming president makes her job less complicated than if she had not been on faculty before becoming president. Most university presidents will agree that maintaining a good relationship with faculty at any institution is imperative because the faculty is one of the most important constituencies a university president will have to work with because "faculty is a group whose confidence must be forever sustained" (Freeland 22). Arguably, faculty members are a measure of the university's culture. It would seem, then, that it would be easier for President Barrett to understand and navigate the culture of an institution having been a faculty member for so long herself. Barrett maintains that, "faculty members are the core of the institution and if I can hire and retain productive faculty then my job as president is much less complicated." Thus, if President Barrett can avoid a mismatch between herself and the culture/core of the institution then she can avoid conflict and challenges on many other levels.

**Analytical Categories**

**Age**

At the time of my research, President Barrett was 56 years old and beginning her sixth year as president of Small Southeastern University. While
age as an analytical category does not affect her role as president as much as the other analytical categories, it does have somewhat of an impact on her rhetorical performance. Age as an analytical category, and as part of Barrett's identity, produced very little challenges for her. In fact, being 56 years olds contributed to her authority as president. As an older president, she was able to make decisions and engage in rhetorical situations in ways that were more productive than not. Her age, as a marker of substantial professional experience, helped her to effectively manage meetings, interact with people, and negotiate the different situations that arose from day to day.

As a middle-aged single woman, President Barrett's age also rises as a major part of her identity. Her age dictates how she is perceived by others, and it factors into the types of decisions she makes and the reaction to those decisions by her constituents. Age, in general, is an issue that influences her rhetorical choices.

Barrett is favorably perceived by her constituencies. They are inclined to trust her judgment, accept her decisions, and have faith in her abilities as an experienced 56-year-old professional. Being younger would, in like manner, reduce this inclination. For example, the students at Small Southeastern University appeared to accept her as a matriarchal leader. I observed her nurturing them, disciplining them, and guiding them in many of the same ways that mothers do. I observed in meetings that she conveyed a sense of herself as knowledgeable and thorough, and the people at the meetings seemed to accept
this leadership style. Finally, her professional track record, as symbolized by the physical reality of her age, was persuasive to her audiences. Everyone whom I observed in interactions with her seemed to have faith in her abilities, particularly external. Age as a part of her personal identity seemed to operate to good effects and offered no apparent challenges to her ability to function well as an academic leader.

President Barrett enacts her age by walking very fast from one destination to another. Everyone warned me that she would be difficult to keep up with and that I should be careful in the types of shoes that I wore if I planned to keep up with her without aching feet. President Barrett acknowledged that herself by saying, “Come on Miss Martin. You’re too young to walk so slow. Life is going to pass you by. I’m an old lady and I’m having to slow down for you.” Barrett also enacts her age by saying things like, “I’m 56 years old. I know what I am doing.” She made those types of declarations whenever she felt like her authority was being challenged or anytime anyone attempted to contradict her.

Race

Since the assumption is that African American presidents face additional challenges to those faced by non-African American university presidents, it is necessary to identify and analyze some of those challenges. The impact of race is one such challenge. In William B. Harvey’s collection of essays, Grass Roots and Glass Ceilings: African American Administrators in Predominantly White
*Colleges and Universities*, current and past presidents of predominantly white institutions share their experiences surrounding the ‘climbs’ to the college presidency. The most echoed challenge that the college and university presidents say that they have experienced is racism. Although President Barrett is not president of a Predominantly White College or University, she still views race as a challenge for her, particularly with her external audiences, who are mostly White.

In *Grass Roots and Glass Ceilings*, Reatha Clark King shares her experience of becoming president of Metropolitan State University of Minnesota in 1977. King explains the challenges brought by both race and gender in her being the first black woman president of a public university in Minnesota. One of the first things that she had to do was to make people feel comfortable working with her. She asserts that in order for her to be successful as a chief administrator in higher education as a black woman, she “need[ed] to have an uncommonly strong commitment to social change and determination to succeed in the job” (11) given the time of her reign as president in the late 1970s. King lists four sources of “strength and support” as she dealt with racism, discrimination, and bigotry in society and higher education: “fondness for my roots and the people who helped me overcome early obstacles in life; the encouragement and support I have received from my family and friends; my passionate pursuits of social justice for the disadvantaged; and my eagerness to contribute to the betterment of all people” (36).
As a female president of a predominantly white institution, Richard Stockton College, Vera Farris reaffirms the positions of other presidents of predominantly white institutions when she says "bigotry within American institutions of higher education often appears to reflect the state of bigotry in the nation" (67). Farris contends that, "the most useful posts in preparing me for a college presidency were the deanships and academic vice-presidencies that I held since these roles have the faculty as their primary constituency" (60). Farris goes on to say "in the case where the president combines more than one visibly observable physical characteristic which is associated with prejudice, sometimes it is difficult to determine accurately whether the motivation of a specific group’s action is racist, sexist, or some other 'ist'" (62).

The views of these presidents bring to the forefront the reality of what it means to be African American and become a college president at a predominantly White institution. While they are experiences filled with incidents and circumstances of racism, they offer encouragement and hope to others aspiring to reach that plateau. It is important to understand every aspect of the college presidency for African Americans at HBCUs and PWIs in order to build the availability of research on as many topics regarding the subject as possible. Through empirical evidence researchers can begin to ask questions and redirect the research in more practical and precise ways. The presidents have identified institutional racism, prejudice, bigotry, and sexism as elements worth scrutinizing in a critical interrogation of the presidential performance of African American
women and men. Regardless of their professional achievements, their success included the task of negotiating sexism, prejudice, bigotry, and racism. These factors significantly affect African Americans' ability to get things done as presidents, and they should be allotted critical attention in assessing performance. The phenomena that these presidents have identified indicate that institutional racism, prejudice, bigotry, and sexism are all elements worth further scrutiny.

Using race as an analytical category to understand President Barrett's development of a professional ethos and identity, I explore various rhetorical situations where the fact that she is African American held significance. I cite instances where her rhetorical decisions and strategies were influenced by race, either her own or her audiences' race. Race most often was a significant factor in influencing her leadership style and rhetorical choices when she dealt with her external constituencies. Since she is African American and is president of a historically black university, most of her internal constituencies are also African American. Race is certainly important internally. The impacts and consequences, however, are different and are evident in the way she represents herself with those audiences. During my observation period, her interaction with her external constituencies was limited and few, unlike that with her internal constituencies with whom she basically interacted on a daily basis. Although she had little contact with her external constituencies, when she did interact with them it was for very important reasons, rhetorical effectiveness was significant and the consequences of her interaction were of extreme importance.
Race presents challenges for President Barrett on a very small scale, particularly when she dealt with external audiences but not when she dealt with internal audiences. External audiences in this case are people who have no direct connection or close affiliation with Small Southeastern University. They are usually members of the community/city where SSU is located. They are not employees of the university, alumni, nor do they have family members or friends who attend or have attended Small Southeastern University. And most of all, external audiences usually consist of White members, but not exclusively. There are a few African American community members who are part of her external audiences. Internal audiences include people who do have a close connection and a direct affiliation with the university. The internal audiences are the university employees, university affiliates, students, alumni, and relatives and friends of the internal audiences. The internal audiences consist mostly of African American members, with a few exceptions. The internal audiences are the people with whom President Barrett has the most contact. Since she does not have as much contact with the external audiences as she does with the internal audiences, challenges existed on a small scale on the basis of race because the internal audiences were principally African American and they shared the same interests, cultures, expectations, and assumptions about the function of Small Southeastern University and her role as president.

In my interviews with President Barrett, I asked her about instances when race in her view created a challenge. She cited the instances below. All of them
happened before my research site visit to Small Southeastern University. The data come from personal interviews that I conducted with President Barrett.

These challenges stemmed in part from her participation as a protestor during the 1960s when she was a student at Small Southeastern University. President Barrett was very visible in student sit-ins, for example, and an active proponent for African American rights. Since her involvement in the Civil Rights Era was so visible, people in the community, who currently head major foundations and are capable of donating funds to Small Southeastern University, remember her from earlier days. Because of this reputation, some members of external audiences are not as responsive and welcoming when she approaches them for financial contributions and donations to the school because they view her as a threat.

President Barrett explains, "there is still some racial tension between the community and the university" (personal interview 10-24-00). She goes on further to assert that she makes it her business to always keep the university's best interest in mind and that determines the way that she will respond to those people. Instead of engaging them in a heated debate, she says, "I just give them the facts and nobody wants to be reminded of their own ignorance and prejudices" (personal interview 10-24-00). To her surprise, that strategy has worked in her favor since members of the external audiences have given the university substantial donations. President Barrett explained that this strategy is in both the university's favor and in the donors' favor because the university benefits from
the money and the donors feel better about themselves having given the money. Even though race and the legacies of social activism present challenges for President Barrett when dealing with her external constituencies, they do not prevent her from being a successful fundraiser with those audiences.

Another instance of race cited by President Barrett occurred in a radio interview that she did with a local popular morning show. A representative from the radio station contacted President Barrett and asked her if she would give them an interview regularly after she was chosen to be president. Being the first female president at SSU, the representative felt it would be useful for her to be (re)introduced to the community because she saw it as an opportunity for SSU to receive some much needed positive publicity. President Barrett agreed to the interview. The interview was structured in such a way that listeners would call into the radio show with questions. President Barrett said everything was going smoothly until someone, who identified himself as a concerned white male, called in and asked her to explain why society even needed Historically Black Colleges and Universities. President Barrett stated she was not happy about that question. Her response was “You don’t ask the president of Notre Dame or any other majority institution to justify their existence. Why do you expect that historically black colleges to have to do so?” She told me that she shocked the interviewer as well as his listeners when she went on a long spiel indicating that she would not answer that question and criticizing the caller for asking it. She said she was convinced that she left an unforgettable impression of the type of leader she
intended to be. From that point on, she indicates, "Everyone knows that I mean business and that I am serious about my job and I am truly dedicated to [SSU] and will not stand for unnecessary criticism" (personal interview 10-24-00).

President Barrett’s recollection about the radio interview is a reminder of the longstanding debate about the necessity for Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Since desegregation, there has been the question "Is there a continuing need for HBCUs?" Opponents of the existence of HBCUs contend that the institutions are racist and that they cannot best prepare students for life and success in a multicultural world. In noting that majority institutions are not called upon to substantiate their existence, many HBCU affiliates argue that

This is a continuation of the double standard [HBCUs] have endured since their inception 150 years ago. Whatever the circumstance, however, there’s no denying that HBCUs—always under-funded—have helped to create the Black middle class in this country, educating the majority of Black judges, doctors, dentists, teachers, social workers, and military officers. Institutions such as Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana are sending more African Americans to medical school than much larger and wealthier institutions. For 150 years, HBCUs have contended with under funding, limited resources, and public disdain, and yet they have still helped produce the largest U.S. Black Middle class ever. (LeBlanc 48-49)

President Barrett, like many other HBCU officials and alumni, maintains that Small Southeastern University and other HBCUs offer African American students an educational environment that is culturally rich and inviting, as compared with typical majority institutions. She further explains that students at HBCUs are not constantly required to prove that they are smart or questioned about their intellect.

As the university president of an HBCU and a graduate of the same institution,
she maintains that even when she does not want to, she knows that she has to frequently demonstrate to her external constituencies that money given to SSU is a valuable investment. The mere existence of the institution has always been questioned mostly on the basis of race and chiefly by her external White constituencies who have limited information about and interest in the survival of the institution. Others, however, maintain that “There has never been a greater need for historically Black colleges that continue to produce a disproportionate share of Black college graduates and that are today, as in the post-Civil War period when many of them were founded, on the front lines of the educational dilemma of America” (Anonymous, “New Black College Presidents,” 86).

Remembering that fundraising is the greatest challenge for all university presidents at any institution it is worthwhile to point out that private HBCUs like Small Southeastern University receive limited funding from the government. President Barrett said that presidents of public and state-supported institutions have it made easier than presidents like her at private historically black institutions (10-24-00). For public institutions “Revenue not produced from student tuition comes primarily from state appropriations and grants. States provide 40% of institutional revenues, the largest single revenue source. Federal grants, contracts, and appropriations, including Pell Grants, account for the second largest source of revenue, averaging 22% for all public HBCUs” (Sav 101). Private HBCUs depend on funds from the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), an organization that represents 39 institutions. Since the funding for
HBCUs is so limited, President Barrett has to communicate and interact with the external constituencies because the institution always needs all of the funds that it can secure through donations in order to continue to thrive.

A final illustration cited by Barrett in which race stimulated challenges with external communities is that when crowds of African Americans assemble in venues within the city, the fire and police departments have a habit of pulling the fire alarms so that the crowds will be dispersed. She explained that the community members are of the opinion that when large crowds of African Americans assemble for any type of institutional function, violence and unlawful behavior will prevail. President Barrett said that even though people from SSU have never engaged in unruly public behavior, when other institutions (mostly White because SSU is the only HBCU in the city) have functions within city venues the community feels confident that dispersing those crowds is not necessary.

Barrett also reported earlier instances, well before her coming to Small Southeastern University, of race provoking challenges with her external audiences: a) There was white flight when the first African American president came to SSU in 1891 because White people did not want to work for an African American man; b) An artist was hired to restore a photograph of a past president who had a very light complexion, but the artist decided to darken the complexion in the restored photograph; and c) One of the local foundations would not meet with her to discuss issues about the foundation because they automatically
assumed she wanted to talk about SSU, when actually she had another reason for wanting to meet with them.

To negotiate these race-related problems, President Barrett maintains directness when she communicates with the external audiences, ensures that she is knowledgeable about the issues, and is aware of the elements of the environments in which the institution operates. She steadfastly maintains her position as president and always successfully presents an image of SSU based on facts. Whenever racial tension arose with the external audiences and the university, President Barrett always approached the situation openly and directly. And when she does so, she makes sure she has all of the information that she needs to illustrate her points. She lets constituents know that she has an unquestionably strong commitment to SSU as well as to the community, but that she has no tolerance for ignorance and will very resolutely let them know her opinions about the situations.

President Barrett acknowledges that one of the main reasons why race is such a challenge for her as president is that she does not have access to the White community, thus making it difficult to remedy racial conflict that has been cultivated through history. She also points out that she has to constantly explain herself and SSU to her external audiences to get them the truth so that they could stop limiting their interaction with the institution based on historical inaccuracies. There are two very different cultures within the city: the culture of the institution and the culture of the community. Because these two cultures do not match, race
as a basis for challenge, varies as an internal and external factor and thereby constitutes something that demands constant work.

**Gender**

Aside from fundraising at SSU and the complication of this task with external audiences by race, the greatest challenge for President Barrett is negotiating gender. Unlike race, gender influences her role as president with all of her audiences. She recognizes that when a woman occupies a role traditionally occupied by a male, she has to protect her position and unfortunately work constantly to prove that she is capable and deserves the position. President Barrett approached that idea discreetly. She knows that she has to be aware of the male dominant Euro-centric view, but she also knows that she cannot let that scheme dictate her responsibility as an African American female leader. Her approach is both to ignore sexism to the extent that she can and simultaneously to be aware of it, so that she does not waste her time or the university’s. She asserts that there are discriminatory practices that restrict women’s access as chief executive officers at universities and colleges, and there are even more limited opportunities for African American women.

To negotiate the challenges of gender as president of SSU, Barrett uses several methods. One of the primary negotiations that I observed of President Barrett was the constant and deliberate reminder of her gender to others. For example, to emphasize her gender and to remind others of it, she always
feminized phrases to illustrate her point in meetings. Some of the phrases that she used are "The Lord being the Presbyterian She is," "Jesus being the wonderful savior that She is," "It's like being pregnant, eventually you have to have the baby," and "It takes less time to have triplets." These phrases indicate the confidence that she has in women's fundamental abilities and the efforts women put into their tasks. By referring to the Transcendent Being as a female, who in most all cases is masculinized, she gives authority, influence, and power to the likeness of women. In doing so, she grants herself more power as a woman in that particular setting by confidently calling attention to femininity. By using such catchy and gendered phrases as the aforementioned ones, chances are people will leave the meeting and comment about the phrases to other people. That way, it would become more popularly known on the campus and beyond that President Barrett has a self-appreciation and is attempting to instill an appreciation for women in others.

The phrases, "It's like being pregnant: eventually you have to have the baby," and "It takes less time to have triplets," refer to the type of labor that it typically associated with women—childbirth. She takes childbirth out of the delivery room and brings it into the boardroom indicating a woman's strength and endurance in both traditional and non-traditional roles. These phrases were often used to illustrate a point that was necessary in order to implement change or to initiate a conversation in a meeting. For example, she used "It's like being pregnant: eventually you have to have the baby," in a meeting with the
university's accountants. In this particular context, she used the phrase to say to the accountants that change was necessary in the ways that they were doing their job. The accountants were using an ineffective system and she was telling them that their procedures were not working and eventually they would cause more harm than good to themselves and to the university. The phrase was an admonishment and a suggestion.

President Barrett was telling the accountants that she was dissatisfied with their performance and was telling them in such a way that they could definitely remember by using the catchy phrase. It also meant that ultimately their errors in the way they were performing their jobs (the pregnancy) would result in severe consequence (the baby). I asked her why she always feminized phrases and she replied, “it is because most times women do not get the credit they deserve” (personal interview 10-26-00). Using this phrase was her way of crediting women and bestowing power upon them by her being in such a high position to do so. “As much as we don’t want to admit it,” she said, “whenever someone in a position of power says something it somehow is given more credence” (personal interview 10-26-00). There are not many venues for women to assert their own individual power and to confer power or at least confidence upon others. On the few occasions when women are in those positions, it is important that they spread that power and confidence on to others to make it easier for the next generation of leaders.
The first such incident happened at a meeting in her office with a middle-aged African American male Dean. He was summoned to discuss hiring a female as chair of a department that is usually led by males. President Barrett had already met with the candidate that she wanted to hire three days before the meeting with the Dean took place. The person that President Barrett wanted to put in that position is an African American female with an outstanding record of performance as a teacher and former administrator at SSU. In President Barrett’s opinion, the candidate demonstrated her abilities as a leader through her commitment and service through teaching and administration.

When President Barrett informed the Dean that she had asked the female candidate to serve as Chair of the Department, there was a sense of dissatisfaction and disagreement from him. He cautiously explained to President Barrett that he did not think the female candidate was the right person for job without knowing that the president had already offered the female candidate the job. He gave a list of reasons for why he thought a particular male candidate was better suited for the position. President Barrett allowed him to make his case and then informed him that she had selected the female candidate. The male candidate that the Dean wanted to put in that position did not have tenure, had not been employed at SSU very long, and was not liked much by his colleagues. The female candidate, on the other hand, had given tirelessly of her time and her talents as a professor and had also voluntarily assisted various administrative offices with accountant and other financial matters.
President Barrett was very stern in her decision and reminded the Dean of the failures of the male he was trying to put into a leadership position. The Dean tried unsuccessfully to persuade President Barrett to see his point, but ultimately agreed that her choice was the better choice.

After that meeting was over, President Barrett explained that other females on the campus had experienced problems with the Dean and his sexist behavior on other occasions. Before the Dean arrived at her office for this meeting, she had correctly predicted his response to her choice as Department Chair. She explained that as a woman in a leadership position she has to always be ready to explain her choices, decisions, and performance because there will always be someone who will try to challenge her. She also explained that that was part of the reason why she is so direct with people. She said,

Unlike a male, making a decision without justification is not enough. I have to be ready to explain my decisions at all times. Oftentimes people don’t ask for an explanation because they trust my judgment and my record speaks for itself. My greatest dissatisfaction with that is the same rule does not apply to men. (personal interview 10-26-00)

The other incident where gender raised challenges for President Barrett happened before she even got the job of president. She was a trustee of the university and was asked by the Board to apply for the job. Eventually she did and was offered the job as interim president and then president. However, the current chair of the Board also wanted to become president. Obviously, he did not get the job. President Barrett explained that she and others had observed the current Chair giving her a hard time. Her questioned her authority. He questioned
her abilities. He even went so far as to offer negative criticism regarding her performance in an attempt to have her removed as president. He based most of his criticism on the fact that she was a woman. He was not successful and was ultimately asked to resign his position as Chair of the Board.

At a meeting with alumni during Homecoming week (a huge event for HBCUs), he was present and was determined to catch President Barrett off guard by asking her questions about negative events that had occurred since she has been president. He was trying to get others to see how she was not qualified to be president. For each question that he asked, she was ready with a response. Her strategy for addressing him and his concerns was to invite him in as one who championed the very events that he was criticizing to make him feel like he had accomplished a lot while he was Chair of the Board all the while knowing that, in fact, she was the one who remedied the situation. She did that in a manner that was eloquent and inviting. In negotiating the exigencies of the occasion, she had again already predicted that he would attempt to disqualify her as president. Instead of getting upset or being bothered by his questions and his probe into her presidency, she smiled and very thoroughly addressed each of his questions without appearing offended or bothered. She was prepared. Her biggest and most successful negotiation in this situation was to foresee it and prepare for it. She refused to be caught off guard and made sure she had the correct information and had shared it with everyone who needed to have it—that included the alumni, the current Board Chair, and the senior administrators. In essence, she turned the
tables and he was the one who appeared unintelligent. I asked her about this incident once the meeting was over, and she just said that not only is she required to know what is going on at her institution at all times, she must also know what could happen before it does. She must be prepared for these types of challenges because this was the same man who wanted to be president of SSU himself. She told me that there are always people who try to get rid of a president, especially “a woman in a man’s position.”

In this example, President Barrett was willing to concede to the former chair, but in a way that did not require her to relinquish any power or authority or credibility.

**Ethos and Authority**

This section addresses issues that help determine the nature of the rhetorical situations that Barrett engages in as president at the university and how those situations help shape her identity and ethos. It explores the types of rhetorical strategies that the identified rhetorical situations demand of her. It goes on to examine ways that President Barrett negotiates the rhetorical demands of dealing with multiple audiences by studying the social, political, professional, and cultural exigencies that drive her rhetorical choices. President Barrett’s presidency helps to analyze the extent to which gender matters in rhetorical performance and explores what power looks like in the face of challenges for her as she constructs her identity.
One of the main objectives of this section is to provide a closer, more in-depth inquiry into the roles of African American women in academe and how they establish and maintain identity and ethos. While President Barrett is only a single person, including her in this research is at least a starting point of exploring the experiences of African American women and their roles as academic leaders. Specifically, President Barrett’s inclusion in this research serves as a challenge to traditional male dominant Euro-centric views.

The examples above demonstrate that President Barrett is skilled at carefully reading her audiences. She pays attention to small and large details, asks great questions when it is necessary, is extremely knowledgeable about matters that affect the institution, and shares information to keep the lines of communication open. According to her, a female leader has to be proactive as well as have an ability to predict how people will react and respond to her. She has to be able to read and understand people—get to know their personalities so she can negotiate any situation. President Barrett deals with multiple audiences and she has to be able to read them and adapt to them or demand that they adapt to her.

President Barrett projects a very strong, assertive, and unwavering personality. That personality is projected through the inflection of her voice when she expects particular behavior. President Barrett also dominates all of the meetings. She leaves little or no room for excuses when people neglect their duties, and she swiftly reprimands anyone who does as a means of encouraging
everyone to carry their own weight within the institution. She recognizes the significance of gender and its role in determining how others will perceive her. She asserts that men do not have to guard against women, but as a woman she has to always present and assert her authority in order to get things done and protect her position and her authority. President Barrett has constructed an identity where she actively works against being perceived as incapable of being an effective leader based on age, race, and gender. This project works against the idea that a female leader who is direct is not successful. President Barrett is extremely direct and she is that way deliberately. This style contributes to her success as president.

Some of the dynamics that shape her ethos and identity are the facts that she attended Small Southeastern University and is now president of the institution; she is now the leader of some of her own professors and friends from when she was a student, and that she is friends with some of the current students’ parents or relatives, and her secretary has been there for over forty years. Her relationship with alumni, parents, students, faculty, administrators, and staff at SSU influence and sometimes complicate her role as president. These interrelations of the people and the situations at Small Southeastern University require multiple negotiations.

There are many studies that focus on African American women as leaders from a comparative approach, mostly using race and gender. Patricia Parker presents research relative to African American women leaders as they compare to White males. Similarly, Robert Shuter and Lynn H. Turner present data that
compare African American women with European American women in the workplace. Shuter and Turner’s findings address how African American women and European American women perceive and approach workplace conflict. One of the patterns that emerges according to Shuter and Turner is that “European American women are seen by both [the] African American and European American respondents as more conflict avoidant as a group than are African American women” (88). Their data support the idea that African American females value directness in reducing conflict, whereas European American females may prefer less direct approaches to reducing conflict. These pronouncements alone indicate the significance and necessity of studying African American women leaders because their cultures, values, norms, and styles are vastly different from any other group, including White women.

Parker “challenge[s] the hegemonic discourses that limit African American women’s access to the meaning-making process in leadership theory by placing Black women at the center of analysis” (45). Similarly, my project uses an African American female university president as the focal point of this chapter for analysis. In doing so, I seek to subvert hegemonic ideologies that have dominated the literature. Much like the participant in this study, I raise the question: What is wrong with women being in charge? As we begin to understand the participant, her experiences, and the organizational culture of the university we determine that the answer to that question is, “Nothing.”
In my interviews with President Barrett, she acknowledged the negative connotations that are typically associated with African American women leaders, particularly in academe. She stated that she was aware that these negative connotations of African American women traditionally stem from the perspectives of White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant males. She knows that these ideas are grounded in patriarchal discourse. She also recognizes that when these same attributes are associated with males, especially White males, they are done so positively and are viewed as indicators of success. To be noted, however, as evidenced by her rhetorical performances, President Barrett is successfully and deliberately employing effective strategies and facing multiple presidential challenges with confidence and style.
CHAPTER 4

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENCY AS A RACIALIZED EXPERIENCE

This chapter examines the presidency of David Morgan, a 44-year-old male, from the framework of a young African American male occupying a role that has been traditionally occupied by an older White male. The chapter presents (1) a profile of Dr. Morgan as the first African American male president of Large Midwestern University; (2) a literature review of African American university presidents at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and their challenges as presidents; (3) and an analysis of the analytical categories (age, race, and gender) as they relate to President Morgan.

As an African American university president at a PWI, he is confronted by additional challenges. This chapter underscores some of those challenges by identifying his presidential circumstances (inherited presidency, marital status, length of presidency, professional background, and CCSYSTEM) and examining age, race, and gender as tools of analysis. The fact that he is African American and is occupying a role that traditionally has been occupied by a White male is the foundation for these challenges. Exploring Dr. Morgan’s presidency in specific
detail permits me to document the challenges that he faces and examine the atmosphere in which he executes his duties and responsibilities.

This chapter studies President Morgan in order to clarify what it means to navigate discourse communities for African Americans in leadership positions in academe as people who are not considered to be part of the dominant discourse community. Using presidential circumstances descriptive categories that explain the rhetorical context, and age, race, and gender as analytical categories, President Morgan’s experience as an African American university president at a predominantly White institution focuses on the university presidency as a racialized-experience.

**Profile of President Morgan and Large Midwestern University (LMU)**

President Morgan is the sixth president of Large Midwestern University and the first African American. All of the presidents of LMU before him have been White males. His educational background is in political science, speech, adult education, and adult higher education. He received a Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral Degree from the university where he was employed for over 15 years, prior to becoming president at LMU. Over the course of his career, President Morgan held several academic posts at different academic institutions. He was the Executive Vice Chancellor at a majority institution. At that same institution he held deanships within the Division of Student Affairs, the university overall, and in the College of Arts and Sciences. In this same University System,
earlier in his career, he also held vice presidencies. At a different institution, he served as an Executive Director of that State's Higher Education Coordinating Board. His presidency at LMU is his first. Although he has extensive experiences in higher education administration, President Morgan has never been a faculty member at any institution of higher education.

Large Midwestern University, a public, co-educational, comprehensive institution, is almost 100 years old. At the time of my research visit, the student enrollment was almost 30,000 students. At Large Midwestern University, President Morgan has been successful in his post, but during the four weeks that I observed him I noticed that he faced many challenges as president and many of those challenges were especially exacerbated by his race and age.

**African American University Presidents at PWIs and their Challenges**

Today, as in the past, one will not find a large number of African American university presidents at Predominantly White Institutions. The largest number of African American university presidents is located at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In 1998, Karin Chenoweth reported that there were 105 African American presidents at Predominantly White Institutions, and four of them were about to retire (20). Two years prior to that, in 1996, she reported that there were 113 African American university president at PWIs (Chenoweth 20). In 2000, the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* identified thirty-one African Americans who serve as presidents of predominantly white four-year institutions.
("African American Presidents of White Colleges and Universities" 95). These data confirm that the number of African American university presidents at PWIs is declining. Of the almost 3,323 institutions of higher learning in the United States, only 200 are headed by African Americans. There are 1,600 private PWIs and only two of them have been headed by African Americans.

Daniel A. Payne was the first Black college president in America. He was president of Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Ohio from 1863-1876. Mary McLeod Bethune was the first African American female college president; she was founder and president of Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida from 1923-1947. The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* reports that Patrick F. Healy, "a light-skinned Negro," served as president of Georgetown University from 1873-1882 even though Georgetown did not admit African American students until the 1950s ("African American Presidents of White Colleges and Universities" 94). Clifton Wharton, Jr., was the first African American to be president of a Research I institution when he became president of Michigan State University in 1970 ("Reflections of a Trail Blazer" 14).

In 1987, Charlie Nelms was named Chancellor of Indiana University East. Nelms cites racism as the main problem that he faced as Chancellor of a predominantly white institution. "Racism is not only alive and well in American institutions of higher education, but it is flourishing! Unfortunately, since much of the racism in academe is not of the vicious and blatant variety, it is often not recognized, let alone challenged by people of goodwill" (Nelms 52). According
to Nelms, "the most important thing that the higher education community can do to reduce racism in the larger society is to get its own house in order" (53).

Research on African American university presidents cites many reasons why there are so few African American presidents at Predominantly White Institutions. Most of the reasons are grounded in racist thinking. Since the beginning of our country's history, African Americans in the United States have been relegated to a much lower status than White Americans. Once African Americans were allowed to participate in higher education, no one could even imagine them serving as educational leaders, particularly at PWIs, but also in a lot of cases at HBCUs. Since the most echoed challenge of a college or university president is to raise funds for the institution's continual existence, to many it would seem inconceivable that an African American would be chosen to head a PWI because of the necessity of interacting with and getting donations from wealthy White organizations and benefactors.

The doors to the traditional sources of funds for colleges may not always be open to a black person. Some foundation heads and business executives feel diminished personally when asked to receive a black president of a college or university instead of a white man who is chairman of the institution's board of trustees. For this and other reasons, college trustees may be reluctant to send out a black college president on a major fundraising assignment. Also, many white alumni, who often tend to be racial conservatives, may decide to forgo making a major gift or their annual donations if a black person is named to head their alma mater. ("African American Presidents of White Colleges," 95)

When African Americans are chosen as presidents of PWIs, they confront even more than the typical challenges of fundraising. They have to operate in the face
of racist attitudes of many of the institution’s constituents. With such persistent obstacles, many African Americans choose to seek presidencies in much friendlier environments, at HBCUs for instance, where racist beliefs are not so paramount. On the other hand, some African Americans apparently pursue the challenge so that they can work against this overall idea. They are willing to take a chance to prove how successful they can be in order to defy the racist notion that African Americans are incapable of triumph. President Morgan demonstrates that he is in this latter category.

Another source of the difficulty for an African American president at a predominantly white institution is in the relationship a university president has to maintain with the university’s faculty. Faculty members are one of the dominant constituencies of any institution and a university president must maintain a working relationship with them. An obvious point is that faculty at PWIs are like their institutions more generally, predominantly White. “Despite generally liberal views, White faculty members do not rally to the idea of having to respect or obey the authority of a black president (“African American Presidents of White Colleges and Universities” 95). African American university presidents at PWIs almost always have to sustain the confidence of the university faculty (Die 34) and providentially they are ultimately responsible for reducing racial tension, even when they are the victims.

Students at a university are another primary constituency for university presidents. Many potential students use different criteria when deciding which
university to attend. "College trustees believe that somehow a college's
selectivity and prestige among potential student applicants will be diminished if
the trustees were to choose a black person as president of their institution. Many
white students are less than enthusiastic about attending a college headed by a
black person" ("African American Presidents of White Colleges and Universities"
95). African American university presidents are again faced with racist
challenges.

Regardless of the race of presidents of any college or university, they
invariably face many challenges as leader of the institution. Issues of money are
cited over and over again as the dominant challenge for a university president,
regardless of race. However, financial concerns are not the only challenges for
university presidents. For example, in an interview, Robert H. Atwell, a
university president, says that the three leading challenges facing college
presidents today are "the combination of rising expectations and diminishing
resources, college prices, and accountability" ("Inside the College Presidency" 7).
And since the university presidency is such a high profile position university
presidents get the blame for the shortcomings at an institution as well as credit for
the success at an institution (McLaughlin 14). There are other challenges, such as
multiculturalism in the curriculum and campus safety (Toch 82), that university
presidents must address. In addition to these challenges, university presidents
must also "manage and address change, reassert academic leadership, and balance
an institution's many and varied constituencies" (Penney 20). University
presidents must avoid any type of scandal because they are at the center of everyone's focus. They are also required to make quick and wise decisions in very little time—and to do so with high levels of personal and professional integrity.

Identification of Morgan as an African American University President at a PWI

As an African American president at a Predominantly White Institution, Dr. David Morgan faces the cited challenges (racist thinking; restricted and limited participation of African Americans in higher education; fundraising as more of a challenge for African Americans than for Others; faculty, alumni, and students who exhibit racist attitudes; reluctance of White constituencies giving African Americans a chance as leaders; unwillingness to respect or obey African Americans as leaders; and typical job related trials) in addition to others.

As an African American university president at a predominantly White institution, President Morgan tells me that he is "aware of the racist thinking that possibly surrounds his presidency." One example of racist thinking occurred at the beginning of his presidency. At that time, a number of White employees (faculty, staff, administrators, etc.) either left the institution and accepted a job somewhere else or retired when he first became president of Large Midwestern University. When I asked him why he thought this exodus occurred, he explained that he later found out that it was due in part to his being selected as president, but
not in all cases. Some of the people left to pursue other options and had already planned to leave before the presidency was filled. He further explained that he believes that racist thinking will always be prevalent but he will not let that limit his career choices by allowing it to occupy too much of his mental processes. But President Morgan also knows that he cannot afford not to think about the consequences of racist thinking and how that might affect him as a person and his position as president. Similar to President Barrett’s view of sexist thinking, President Morgan must always be aware that that type of thinking exists, even though he cannot permit himself to be consumed by it. Giving racism too much of a place in his thinking, rather than maintaining this precarious balance, would adversely affect his abilities as the chief academic official.

**Descriptive Categories**

As in case one, President Linda Barrett, I have identified five sub-categories of the presidential circumstances (the inherited presidency, marital status, length of presidency, and professional background). I have added one sub-category (CCSYSTEM) that is site specific to President Morgan. This contextual information aids in understanding President Morgan’s ethos, authority, and rhetorical performance as president.

As with the Barrett case, these five presidential circumstances distinguish important components of President Morgan’s identity and ethos and serve as a basis for this analysis. These five sub-categories provide significant information
that chronicle the milieu of his presidential circumstances. Using the data that I
gathered, these five elements surface as the central features that are the most
useful components of this president's identity and ethos.

**Inherited Presidency**

President Morgan is the first African American president at LMU. According to conversations that I had with numerous university officials, President Morgan succeeds a president who used a somewhat domineering leadership style while he was president. President Morgan's predecessor is a White male and this section explores the type of leadership style that President Morgan uses in comparison to the leadership style that his predecessor used. This comparison offers insight into why President Morgan might not be able to successfully use a domineering leadership approach. Explaining the significance of his selection as the first African American president at this institution emphasizes how that selection affects President Morgan as president of a large, public institution.

When Dr. Morgan became president of Large Midwestern University, he inherited a presidency that had been occupied by someone with whom most of the university affiliates were dissatisfied because of his "semi-dictatorial" leadership style, which is the way many of the constituents of LMU described it in my interviews with them. Additionally, Dr. Morgan became the first African American to serve as president of the institution. Since becoming president, Dr.
Morgan has had to establish effective ways of communicating and interacting with all of his constituencies. As a result, the inherited presidency does not create any additional challenges for President Morgan. His greatest challenge in this regard is to avoid using a dictatorial leadership style. President Morgan has successfully negotiated that challenge by using a democratic leadership style with all of his audiences, except when circumstances require a leadership style adjustment.

Most of the time, President Morgan uses a democratic approach when dealing with people. In this approach, he is an attentive listener, an articulate speaker, and an informed expert. In my observations of him this democratic style was illustrated in the fact that he met with people, allowed them to voice their opinions and to ask questions when it was necessary. This approach contrasted, according to constituents whom I interviewed, with President Morgan’s predecessor, who did not meet with people often and who typically did most of the talking, giving orders instead of listening and collaborating with people. These constituents conclude that although the predecessor was deemed a successful president in terms of university goals and his own professional goals, his leadership style was not embraced by many in the university community.

President Morgan’s more democratic leadership style worked in his favor with faculty and staff. In interviews, they voiced their approval of the distinctions between the two styles on many occasions as a welcomed change. In my interviews with Dr. Morgan, he indicated that he is aware that if he is to be
successful as president he must address his constituencies’ needs by engaging that type of leadership style. Because he recognizes these needs as an appreciation for a more open communication environment, he meets frequently with individuals and organizations within the university to keep the lines of communication open. Doing so reduces the number of challenges he might face in other areas of his presidency. As long as the people at the university feel they are at least being heard, they receive some sort of satisfaction.

Opting to use a democratic leadership style as opposed to a dictatorial leadership style is one of the rhetorical choices that guides President Morgan’s successful interactions with his various audiences. As a young African American male occupying a role that is traditionally occupied by an older white male, President Morgan must always be aware of the types of things he can effectively employ as president. While the dictatorial leadership style was tolerated when the predecessor was president, constituent attitudes suggest that Dr. Morgan might not have been selected as president if he had exhibited this type of leadership style.

**Marital Status**

President Morgan is married. Much of his time is spent in social settings as part of his job as president and his marital status emerges as a major part of his identity. Many of his constituencies interact with him in social environments when conducting business related to the university. This sub-category highlights
some of those instances and illustrates the significance of marital status and how it factors into his identity as president. Marital status does not create any additional challenges for President Morgan because he is married, which is the normal expectation associated with being a university president.

As a married university president, Dr. Morgan does not encounter as many challenges as he would if he were not married. Marital status is used to study the identity and ethos of President Morgan to explain how it does not create any additional challenges for him but how it does influence his rhetorical performance. In this category, marital status proves to be beneficial to Morgan’s success. Since many of his decisions are addressed and some are finalized in social environments, it works to President Morgan’s advantage that he has a wife to accompany him at various social functions and to host others.

There are many expectations of the president’s spouse, and the majority of them have to do with hosting certain events and socializing with important university affiliates as important university business is discussed. For example, there is a sort of “open house” party that is held annually where the university community is invited into the home of the president and his wife. This is a fundraising event for the university. It is a successful event hosted by the president’s wife. It gives the people in the community a chance to socialize with the president and have a small picture into his life as a family man.

In addition to this event, President Morgan also holds many important meetings at breakfast appointments, lunch conferences, and dinner parties. Often,
depending on the guests, his spouse is invited to attend these meetings if the
guests’ spouses will be in attendance. Being a married president allows him to
navigate social environments much more smoothly than if he did not have a
spouse. Although marital status is not a major part of his identity, his spouse is an
asset for him in relating to constituents, representing the university, and being
another conduit for connection and communication. Since being married is a
normal expectation of being president of a university, one challenge for President
Morgan is met.

Mrs. Morgan, although she negotiates the expectations of being the
president’s spouse well, she explained to me that it sometimes can be too
overwhelming. Mrs. Morgan explained, “when [David] and I first came to LMU,
I was enrolled in a graduate program at the university. Since I am the first lady, I
was expected to host many, many social functions, especially at the beginning of
his presidency. I was willing to do so, but I ended having to put my graduate
plans on hold to accommodate my husband. That’s why I have always
encouraged you to get your education so that you won’t have to be in the shadows
of a man” (personal conversation).

During my site visit, one major social event was held at President and
Mrs. Morgan’s home. In preparation for this fundraising event, Mrs. Morgan
cleaned her home from top to bottom. I helped her. I asked her why she did that,
and she explained many university affiliates expect a tour of the home during that
social event. Mrs. Morgan is convinced that they expect the tour so that they can
inspect the way the Morgan’s live and see how clean (or not) the house is. She changed all of the bed clothes, mopped all of the floors, and rearranged rooms to make sure the home met with the university affiliates’ satisfaction.

The first lady said, “the worst part about all of this is the fact that my family and I have little or no privacy during events like these. And it’s not politically correct to refuse to open my home to the university family, even though I wish I could refuse.” Mrs. Morgan is willing to accept her role as the president’s spouse, but she is not happy about it. She went on to tell me that the role of spouse is so demanding that she thinks it should be a paid position.

President Morgan says he “is fortunate to have a wife who is publicly willing to serve primarily as first lady without publicly complaining about it.” Because of her willingness, marital status poses little problems for him.

Length of Presidency

The third sub-category that is used to examine the context of Morgan’s presidency is the length of his presidency. When I visited Large Midwestern University Morgan was starting his third year as president. This sub-category examines the length of presidency as another characteristic that influences the rhetorical nature of Morgan as university president. This part of his identity illustrates the extent to which he has been able to obtain and use authority.

President Morgan had a lot to accomplish in a small amount of time in order to make a smooth transition into his new post as president. His biggest
challenge, perhaps, is understanding the culture of the institution and adjusting so that his ideas, plans, and goals for the institution do not conflict with his own personal goals and objectives. Typically, the culture of the institution must match the culture of the individual in order to avoid conflict and in order to reduce the number of challenges either one would face. Because this is not entirely the case with President Morgan, as a newly hired president, he had to have extensive knowledge about LMU and its mission in order to be considered a serious candidate for the job and in order to establish ways to show how he would be a good choice as president. The fact that he was offered the job and accepted it suggests that he succeeded in convincing his potential employers that, despite differences in his ancestry, he was a premium match for LMU.

At the time of my site visit to LMU, President Morgan was beginning his third year as president. This is his first presidency. Being a newcomer to the institution and to the role of president constituted President Morgan’s major challenge in this area. Having crossed the first hurdle of being a match with this institution, other challenges related to being a newcomer to the institution were also evident. Debra Blum suggests that “New CEOs who may come to their jobs with energy and vision often find themselves facing huge problems setting priorities, managing time, and forging friendships, as they try to please a variety of constituents” (A13). Some of the challenges President Morgan faced as the newly hired president were (1) establishing and achieving goals as president, (2) proving to his constituents that he was capable of achieving those goals, and (3)
establishing new friendships, partnerships, and relationships to reduce the level of stress, tension, and possible failure as president.

In his quest to become president, Dr. Morgan obtained a level of familiarity about the university that held him high above the other candidates during the presidential search. In addition to that, he used the information that he obtained about the university and proved to the search committee that his academic experience and other professional experience would permit him to uphold and improve the status of the university. More importantly, it was a challenge for President Morgan to even devise goals as president because he could not have known the specific expectations of the Board of Trustees, the university faculty, state legislators among many other of the university's constituencies. The ultimate challenge, then, was to carefully convey his goals to an institution and its constituents without knowing specifically what they would expect of the newly hired president. According to President Morgan, the university shared some of their expectations, but he had to prudently dictate his goals and objectives and supplement them with results.

Once he was the chosen candidate, another challenge was to begin showing results based on what he had identified as his goals and objectives. As the newly hired president, he was under the watchful eye of everyone. If he failed everyone would know; but if he succeeded, everyone would know that, too.

Fortunately for President Morgan, he succeeded. He reached all of his identified goals and others that he did not mention in the interviews. The challenge was not
whether he would accomplish his goals. The challenge for him in all of this was to be successful while simultaneously familiarizing himself with a brand new culture and to represent himself in such a way as to garner the support and confidence of his newly acquired constituencies.

In order to prove to his constituents that he was capable of the job, he had to execute his plans to satisfy the university’s expectations. For example, he projected that he would increase the student enrollment by a certain number within a certain number of years. Since he had identified that as one of his goals, he absolutely could not fail. Fortunately, Morgan reached his projected goal three years ahead of time, thus reducing the level of stress in achieving that goal. No matter how confident President Morgan was in his ability, the challenge was to prove his ability to others. Conquering this challenge came in the form of achieving identified goals early in his presidency.

Being president of a university means collaborating with several individuals and groups of people. President Morgan could not achieve his goal without collaboration. He could not succeed in isolation. The easiest way to get his job done was to establish good relationships, friendships, and partnerships with his various constituencies. He had to determine ways to build useful working relationships with many people since being the head of an institution does not automatically guarantee that people will like or respect one. He had to present himself in such a way that would make it easier to begin forging partnerships that would prove useful in producing a constructive work
environment. Further, because each group had different expectations and different ways of doing things he also had to determine ways to negotiate between constituencies.

In his first three years as the university’s leader, President Morgan did not have the luxury of just trusting others. Trust was something he had to acquire through the way he presented himself. The way the university constituents would come to view President Morgan was through the way he presented himself from the very beginning. Everything that he did or did not do would contribute to his identity. President Morgan understood this and worked to favorably construct an image that would at least make his job no more complicated than a university presidency already is.

As president, his conduct, decisions, and approaches to doing things were representative of the institution as well as of himself. Being president entails putting on so many different faces. President Morgan was aware of that fact and knew that there would be many aspects of his ethos and that it would change from one setting to the next. Nonetheless, he did portray an overall ethos of a knowledgeable, versatile, capable, and clever president. “Challenges”, he says, “are a huge part of my job. Quite frankly, that’s what the job is all about. What works best for me is that I like people and I understand people.” President Morgan accepted that as president he had to interact with many different people and adjust his personality accordingly.
Professional Background

Finally, professional background as a sub-category discloses how President Morgan constructs relationships with the university faculty. This sub-category gives a more indepth account of the different administrative posts he held prior to becoming president. President Morgan has never been a faculty member at any institution and his professional background or career pattern influences how he communicates with various audiences. Additionally, looking at his administrative experience shows the methods he employs to function with academic representatives. Because he has never been a faculty member but has to deal with the faculty for many reasons, he has determined ways to effectively connect with them. To avoid additional challenges that his professional background might create for him, President Morgan has to develop ways to relate to the academic constituencies because of his limited academic background.

While each of the participants in this study followed a fairly typical academic route to the presidency, university presidents nowadays are not selected exclusively from the academic arena. Sometimes they are chosen from the business or corporate world. This is happening more frequently than it ever has in the past. “The job of running a college or university actually began changing after World War II, and by the end of the ‘50s the Golden Age of the college presidency already was a memory. The contemplative, tweedy, pipe-smoking president—a dean of deans—was obsolete” (Hahn A64). Presently, there is no single arena from which university presidents are chosen. Their professional
backgrounds vary. There is still a high number of presidents who have academic backgrounds, but not all of them come from such backgrounds. For instance,

As academic expertise loses its importance, search committees are also turning to what are “euphemistically” called “non-traditional” candidates—i.e., candidates without scholarly credentials. In a 1996 report, the Association of Governing Boards of universities and colleges, the top organization of presidents and trustees, urged trustees to “look beyond the ivy walls to consider leaders whose different kind of experience fits the particular needs of the institution. This means hiring politicians (Senator David Boren and Governors Lamar Alexander and Tom Kean are or were college presidents) and businessmen (Bank of America vice president Peter McPherson, construction company executive Dick Spangler, and holding-company executive Barry Munitz, to name a few). Only 57% of presidents hold a PhD and 11% have no degree higher than an MA. (Greenberg 18)

The background of the presidents usually determines which or what type of university will consider them as their leader. Also, the type of leader chosen at an institution will most likely be based on the needs of the institution at the time of hire. The different types of institutions, teaching, research, doctorate granting, etc. are also a factor when determining what type of candidate will be best matched as president, and, of course, university presidents are chosen based on how their own agendas coincide with the core missions of the institutions they are seeking to manage.

Although historically the composition of college and university campuses has changed a lot since the beginning of the American college presidency in 1640 when Henry Dunster was selected as the president of Harvard College (Wessel and Keim 211), the basic route to the leadership of them, however, has not. Wessel and Keim state that during the early years of the college presidency, “the
typical American college president entered his/her academic career as a teacher, student, or minister, becoming a member of the college or university faculty. At some point the faculty member assumed administrative duties as department chair, institute director or dean; he/she was promoted to academic vice president, and then to president” (211). This route is still a dominant one for contemporary leadership, even though there is more variation even inside the academic arena.

President Morgan’s career path illustrates one such variation. He has never been a faculty member at any institution. He has not even ever taught a class before on the post-secondary level. His employment history has been strictly in higher education administration. All of the jobs he held before becoming president of LMU were administrative. He held directorships, deanships, vice presidencies, and vice-chancellorships at various institutions. The professional background of any university president affects how they are perceived by one of their main constituencies—the university faculty. This is especially important when determining whether the university president has ever served as a faculty member at any institution. “No longer plucked from the faculty’s ranks, presidents are likely to have abandoned research at a young age for the managerial fast track, switching from one school to another like journeymen basketball coaches” (Greenberg 18). While this idea does not necessarily apply to President Morgan, he has had to work extra hard in securing the faculty’s support of him as president. University presidents must work hard to
avoid a “no-confidence” vote from their faculty because receiving such a criticism
and often does result in their demise as presidents.

The professional background of university presidents greatly affects the
type of relationship they are able to build and maintain with university faculty, a
very important constituency for any university presidency. University faculty
typically accept a university president who has been chosen from within the ranks
of academe, as opposed to one from the corporate or business world or from
within administrative ranks. However, President Morgan, having been selected
from the administrative ranks, successfully negotiated his position, particularly
with the university faculty, and thus the challenges based on this descriptive
category are reduced. These challenges are reduced for Morgan because he met
frequently with the university faculty, as is evidenced in the examples that follow,
and kept the lines of communication open. These rhetorical strategies are part of
his democratic leadership style.

President Morgan, like most other university presidents, includes faculty
in many of his decisions and communicates and interacts with them on a regular
basis. Whereas determining the most important constituency varies from one
institution to the other, it is safe to deduce that the university faculty is an
extremely important constituency for any university and for any university
president. University faculty must be given a voice, and Courtney Leatherman
emphasizes that “Presidents must resist academia’s insatiable appetite for the kind
of excessive consultation that can bring the institution to a stand still….Presidents
must define clearly the areas where faculty members should have the strongest
voice in decisions, such as the curriculum, as distinct from matters where their
opinion should be merely advisory, such as the budget, and from those where they
should play no role at all" ("Strengthen the Power of a College President" A43).

As a way to communicate and interact with his university faculty and
maintain a good working relationship with them, President Morgan meets
frequently with two faculty groups at Large Midwestern University. One group is
the faculty representatives of LMU’s American Association of University
Professors (AAUP) Executive Committee. This group is the faculty Union. The
second group is the Faculty Senate Executive Board.

President Morgan meets with them once a month for ninety minutes to
discuss faculty issues and concerns, and to keep the lines of communication open
between him and the faculty. This AAUP Executive Committee consists of
fifteen faculty members in various departments, schools, and colleges throughout
the university. The meeting with the AAUP Executive Committee that I observed
was a dinner meeting. The president appears to have a good working relationship
with the faculty. The members of the AAUP Executive Committee thanked
President Morgan for agreeing to meet with them and for doing so on a regular
basis. In his inaugural address, in contrast with his predecessor, President
Morgan had pledged to meet with the AAUP representatives monthly. They were
very pleased that he kept his word. The regularity of these meetings has helped to
establish a favorable impression with the faculty. Further, President Morgan
reported that he met with this group over dinner instead of meeting with them in a regular conference room or some other typical meeting place for two reasons: one is so that the meeting can be less formal; and two so that he can show his appreciation of them by sharing a meal with them. He said meeting this way provides a more relaxed atmosphere, even when the subjects they will discuss are somewhat intense. At this particular meeting they discussed issues of the increased student population and how that will affect teaching; parking; and the role of faculty in developing and teaching off-campus programs, among other issues and concerns. The purpose of the meeting was to inform President Morgan about their views, so no decisions were made regarding any matter.

The Faculty Senate Executive Board meeting that I observed was also an informative meeting. This board consists of seven faculty representatives from throughout the college. The provost facilitates this meeting, but President Morgan always attends as another means of interacting with the faculty and showing his interest regarding their concerns. This group meets monthly as well. The meeting is also ninety minutes and it took place during the afternoon in the president’s conference room. There didn’t seem to be a significant difference to me between this group and the AAUP committee. This group discussed some of the same issues as the other group but included other topics as well. They talked about having enough faculty to teach the increased number of students enrolled at the university. They discussed issues of remediation, recruiting, and retention. They also discussed the quality of student life on campus and how to make the
university more student-friendly. The subject of the distribution of the Board of Trustees meeting minutes to the faculty arose. And President Morgan had the secretary of the Board come in and address that question. The people at this meeting were administrators and faculty.

One of the significant differences between this meeting and the one with the AAUP committee is that the faculty senate seemed to be compiling information to give to the provost for review in making policy changes. So, it seemed to be a bit more formal than the AAUP committee meeting because it took place in the conference room and they compiled information for further consideration.

President Morgan meets with faculty representatives for two reasons. One is to have important conversations with the faculty directly and to hear their concerns so that he can know if they are satisfied and dissatisfied with their activity and responsibility on campus. The other is to gather specific information from the meetings to perhaps implement new policy or policy changes. Interacting with the faculty frequently instead of only when something is wrong is a positive strategy for President Morgan. Showing concern for the faculty and their roles in the institutional structure helps to promote a productive relationship between him and the faculty.

By choosing to meet with the faculty voluntarily President Morgan can avoid the conflict and demise to which many other university presidents have fallen victim. For example, the presidents of Ferris State University, West Texas
State University, Portland State University, Northwest Missouri State University, University of Montevallo, and Temple University all had presidents at one point or another who received a “no-confidence” vote and were forced to resign as president (Mooney A13). A “no-confidence” vote is the faculty’s way of publicizing their disapproval of the university president at their respective institutions. Typically the vote simply means “The president and the faculty simply had different ideas about what the priorities of the university should be, and they failed to communicate those ideas to one another effectively” (Mooney A1). In some cases faculty do not have the power or the privilege to voice their opinions in such a way, but in the cases where they do have the power and the privilege, they do exercise them. And that can prove fatal to the reign of any university president. President Morgan explained to me that he is aware of this possibility and by meeting with the faculty and establishing a relationship with them, he will potentially avoid such criticism because he communicates and interacts with his faculty on a scheduled basis.

CCSYSTEM

CCSYSTEM is the pseudonym given to LMU’s new compensation classification system for its employees and was a site specific challenge for President Morgan. At the time of my site visit to LMU, and in the majority of the observations, President Morgan spent an abundance of his time addressing this issue. This pay system was a tremendous change for LMU that was instituted by
the university in order to comply with federal labor regulations. With this new system, some of the university’s employees’ compensation changed from salaried to hourly, and in a few other instances from hourly to salary. In all there were seventy-six changes in compensation across the university. Seventy-four employees went from salaried to hourly pay and only two employees went from hourly pay to salaried pay. These 74 employees saw this change as a demotion. This change mostly affected mid-level management and some staff personnel. Many of the university’s employees were upset with this change, and I observed President Morgan addressing this issue in many different meeting with many different constituencies during the time that I was there. Out of all of the other daily challenges that President Morgan faced and all of his other duties as president, addressing this issue with his different constituencies was clearly the most exigent, and it provided the most consistent opportunities for observing him.

CCSYSTEM was a very new idea and the only people familiar with every aspect of it were the senior administrators. Apparently, faculty and other mid-level administrators and staff had obtained bits and pieces of information regarding the change and were disconcerted with what they had discovered. The CCSYSTEM issue had not been discussed with any other group on campus, but somehow people began to find out about the change. Since many people found out about this major change through the rumor mill, there was a lot of miscommunication and misinformation between and among groups and individuals. Keeping in mind that the president is the one who typically gets both
the credit and the blame for what happens at his institution, a lot of these
constituencies were contacting him with several questions and concerns. He was
the person with whom most people were upset.

The very first occasion that I witnessed a full discussion of CCSYSTEM
was during a meeting with the vice president of information technology and the
president. They discussed several issues, but foremost among them was
CCSYSTEM. The vice president had two concerns regarding CCSYSTEM: the
employees in her division had low morale because of how CCSYSTEM affected
them. As a direct result of CCSYSTEM the employees experienced expanded
duties with no additional compensation. Only 10% of the information technology
employees received raises—the other 90% did not get anything; the rumor at the
university was that the IT division “made it big.” Another rumor indicated that
the president allowed immediate supervisors to determine compensation for their
respective divisions. The employees in the information technology division
believed the vice president had the power to do increase their pay but instead
opted not to do so. The vice president wanted additional pay increases for her
employees, but the president did not approve them because it have would been
classified as supplemental pay. Nonetheless, President Morgan did not want to
lose the employees. Given this situation, he was charged with determining a way
to satisfy the employees to the extent that his power would allow him. The
situation with the information technology employees was representative of many
other situations regarding CCSYSTEM across the university.
Another instance where President Morgan had to devise useful strategies for dealing with the negativity and reluctance surrounding the compensation classification system occurred during a meeting with the vice president of human resources. President Morgan's administrative experience, managerial skills, ability to interact with people, and ability to negotiate situations with hostile audiences were required in order to resolve this matter. The vice president for human resources explained to him that there was a problem resulting from the newly classified hourly paid employees. Until CCSYSTEM was instituted, employees worked more than forty hours in order to complete their tasks. With this new change the Department of Labor dictates that if people work over 40 hours per week they must be paid time and a half for each additional hour or the university could not demand that they work. The university did not have to pay the employees any additional money before they were classified as hourly employees. LMU would also lose money if they had to pay employees for so much overtime because so many employees worked beyond the forty hours often in order to get all of their work done. The alternative was to give the employees time off but that would cause many divisions to fall short of getting things done. The employees themselves were not the ones asking for additional compensation for overtime and I am not even sure if the employees were aware of this part of the law governing overtime.

The employees were disenchanted and concerned because they felt that the university did not appreciate them as employees. Many of them had worked at
the university for a very long time and had demonstrated an indisputable commitment to the university. Although the pay was the same regardless of whether the classification was hourly or salaried, the employees who went from salaried to hourly felt demoted and de-valued. The president had to work hard to restore their interest and commitment to the university and to reassure them that the only change was on paper and nothing else. He had to communicate this to the employees in addition to rectifying all of the false information that had flowed around the campus. One way that he did this was by requiring the human resources officers to produce a full report detailing every aspect of CCSYSTEM and to distribute the report to the senior administrators for review. After revisions were made to the report it could be disseminated throughout the campus to reduce or eliminate the misinformation and the miscommunication.

Discussions regarding CCSYSTEM consumed a lot of President Morgan’s time. This was one of the most important challenges that he encountered while I was visiting the campus. He had to address CCSYSTEM issues at almost every meeting because the majority of the people at the university were concerned about how this change directly affected them. A most notable instance of an intense meeting with university personnel was during a meeting with the Administrative Professional Association (APA) Executive Board. This group consists of five mid-level managers from across the university. These individuals supervised the areas where most of the employees went from salaried to hourly pay.
This meeting was somewhat hostile between the president and the APA executive board because they felt that information regarding CCSYSTEM had not been shared with them and that the information that they did receive was inaccurate. As a result, when the supervisors explained CCSYSTEM to their workers, they were inadvertently giving their employees misinformation. During this rather antagonistic meeting the president did a lot more listening than talking. Listening is one of the ways he deals with hostile audiences. When he did respond to the APA board’s questions or comments, he only offered facts, never an opinion. He did such a good job of dealing with the issues that by the time the meeting was over the APA board thanked him for meeting with them and addressing the issue directly with them. He gave them an outlet to express their concerns and to receive accurate information, which is exactly what they wanted. The APA board was tired of being blamed for the misinformation to the employees because they were only communicating what had been communicated to them. The APA board gave him a letter detailing their specific concerns and he took that letter back to the senior staff meeting to get the matters resolved once and for all. By assembling the different groups together President Morgan was able to identify everyone’s concerns, gather information, ask and answer the right questions, and mandate a document be compiled that would specifically answer all questions so that everyone can have the same information. By doing so, misinformation and miscommunication would be eliminated and the university would move beyond problems with CCSYSTEM.
Age

The average age for college and university presidents has increased over the years. When college presidents were surveyed in 1990, the average president was found to be 54 years old, male, white, and Protestant. The only difference when they were surveyed in 1995 was the age, which had moved up to 56 years old (Mercer A49). The recent edition of The College President: 2000 Edition has found that the average age for a college president in 1998 was 57.6 (Ross and Green 9). President Morgan was 44 years old at the time of my visit to Large Midwestern University. He became president of LMU in 1998 when the average age was 57.6. He is 13 years younger than the average college or university president. In addition to race, he faced challenges because of young age but on a much smaller scale.

Age is another factor that affects an individual’s ethos and authority. President Morgan, however, seemed to ignore the fact that he was much younger than the average president. In interviews with President Morgan, he said he does not make it out to be a big deal, nor should others, although he did mention how people react to him when they find out his age: they are usually very surprised. Some have reservations about his ability because he is so young. They begin to question his level of experience and expertise. Questioning his level of experience and expertise became a factor only after he was hired according to him. No one mentioned it during the interviewing process. His extensive administrative experience far outweighed any concern for his youthfulness. But
when he became president, people who did not have as much information about
him were a bit shocked once they saw him and realized that he did not appear to
be very old. He explained that his prior experience, knowledge base, and level of
expertise in higher education superseded any questions or concerns about age.
Many people who were part of one or some his constituencies seemed to be much
older than he is.

When I asked him if his age has raised any concerns for him he said that
people probably do have some concerns, but he felt confident that no one would
say anything to him about it. The extent of the comments comes usually in the
form of a joke or a mild statement, for example, “I can’t believe how young you
are.” President Morgan explained that the comments did not bother him. He did
reveal that if he were Caucasian his age wouldn’t matter anyway. Never. He said
that is because if one is Caucasian and young, being of a young age is viewed as
natural and the way it needs to be. In the broader context, he knows that no one
would be remotely concerned about age if he were White. So, by contrast, as a
young African American male, he knows that people may have concerns. Morgan
explained that if they do not have concerns about race and age, then it would just
be something else. President Morgan points out that “Everything we say, do, or
are shapes our identity.” It is just that in this case, the prevailing characteristics
happen to be race and age for President Morgan. At LMU, he does not fit the
traditional image of academic leader. He is male, but he is not in his late 50s, and
he is not White.
President Morgan enacted his age also by walking fast. Much like my visit to Small Southeastern University, people at Large Midwestern University told me on the first day of my site visit that I would need roller skates to keep up with President Morgan because he walks so fast. They were definitely correct. He walked so fast that it was almost impossible for me to talk to him and walk with him at the same time. When he noticed that it was hard for me to keep up, he would ask, “Are you okay, Pamela?” with a smile on his face indicating that he had no intention of slowing down and wanted to let me know that I should do what I could to keep up. He consistently walked fast throughout the course of my visit to LMU.

Race

As an African American operating in a predominantly White environment as its leader and chief decision-maker, President Morgan is a prime example of how race constitutes a challenge. Race is a frequent descriptor used to assert identity, both by the individual being described and the person describing the individual. Race is much more complex than a mere description; it is a social construct and a factor in political oppression. Race critic Bob Blauner defines racism as

A propensity to categorize people who are culturally different in terms of noncultural traits, for example, skin color, hair, structure of the face and eye. Obviously the human failing of imputing social significance to these differences—a failing Western Europeans have had to an extreme—underlies the fatefulness of race in recent history. By its very logic racial thinking emphasizes
the variations between groups rather than the things they have in common. Further, it tends either to ignore the existence of culture or social heritage or, more often, to minimize its importance in accounting for real differences. Since virtually every nation, tribe, ritual, art, philosophy or world view—rather than in terms of “blood,” racism as a view of reality violates the autonomy and self-determination of peoples. It rejects their own definition of themselves and substitutes one based on the framework of the oppressor. (82-83)

Racism affects our everyday way of life. Race is a feature that determines whether one will be accepted, how one will be judged, how one will be represented, and how one represents him/herself. To add to that, race is a basis that has prevented many people, usually minorities, from reaching their highest potential. In the case of President Morgan, he is successful in spite of race, even though his success has not been without the challenge of racism.

What was very obvious to me once I met President Morgan was that there were very few African Americans present at Large Midwestern University. Although he, like many or all other university presidents, has multiple audiences, almost none of his were African American during the four weeks that I observed him. Not only did he stand out as the president on the campus, he also stood out as an African American with all of his audiences and constituencies. They are overwhelmingly White. He is African American.

When I specifically asked President Morgan if race was a challenge for him at LMU as president, he responded, “There’s no way of really knowing that. Does race matter? Sure it does. I mean, I think race matters in virtually everything, and I think it’s a huge factor; I mean it’s a huge factor. But it’s
difficult to know and measure the impact associated with that” (Personal Interview 9-28-00). While there have not been any blatant challenges in which race was a factor for President Morgan, he acknowledged that race matters in every aspect of any situation for anyone. He further explained that his audiences have been predominantly White throughout his educational and professional career.

He attended a majority institution for his own education and was employed at that same institution for the first thirteen years following completion of all three of his degrees. So as a student and as a professional, he has encountered mostly White audiences. Given these circumstances, I think it is probably difficulty for President Morgan to consider race a challenge because he has grown accustomed to associating with these audiences. Furthermore, in his prior institutions, since he was there for so many years, he was better known with his audiences and did not encounter the same level of challenges that an African American who was “new” to that environment, as he is new at LMU, would encounter. He was insulated, to some extent, from the effects of race. Race exists as a challenge in part because one racial group is not familiar with “Others.” In President Morgan’s case, I think his audiences in his previous work environments had a bit more familiarity with him than someone who would have come from a different background with less experience of interacting with predominantly White audiences. Being familiar with, to the extent that he is, and accustomed to
White audiences, President Morgan is possibly used to the challenges and does not identify them as such anymore.

However, I did detect race as a factor that influenced his rhetorical behavior and his rhetorical choices as an African American in a predominantly White environment. For instance, one night I went to a home volleyball game at LMU with President Morgan and his wife. He had explained to me that his job is a twenty-four hour a day seven days a week job. I knew then that he would be “working” at the volleyball game. Most of the attendees of the game were White. I counted the number of African Americans at the game and it was fewer than twenty. The gymnasium was almost totally full, too.

President Morgan began going around the gymnasium speaking to people—students, visitors, and employees, among others. So he never really sat with us. The president’s wife and I sat with one of her friends, her friend’s son, and her friend’s husband—all of whom are African American. Then eventually, the new head basketball coach and his wife joined us. They, too, are African American. Then occasionally, some of the basketball players would come by and speak to the coach and join us momentarily. They were African American also. In all, there were seven African Americans congregated into one section of the gymnasium. When the game was almost over President Morgan joined us, but he only stayed with us briefly before he left to go home. I wondered whether he left because he did not want to be accused of excluding anyone by sitting with so many African Americans. I asked him about that in an interview later. He told
me that his leaving "had nothing to do with race. I think I was tired that evening. I mean I just left because I wasn't watching the game anyway" (Personal interview 9-28-00). I still wonder whether, perhaps on a subconscious level, President Morgan was trying to prevent rumors and accusations about him socializing with too many African Americans by excusing himself from this African American group. It is reasonable to suggest that such careful behavior is necessary to satisfy his majority constituencies. Attaching himself to predominantly African American groups in public might seem threatening to the White status quo of a predominantly White campus, and no one can easily imagine that more likely than not, many associated with LMU might want to preserve the image of the university leadership as a "White" image.

To probe further the question of how he navigates between his predominantly White audiences and African American groups (like church groups for example) I asked President Morgan if there ever comes a time when he feels uncomfortable associating with a predominantly African American group. His response was

No, not at all. I mean, I'm black. There's no awkwardness associated with that or there's no awkwardness as far as I'm concerned. You know, being around other African Americans, professionally, or as friends. And most, well most of my closest friends are African American. At the same time, I don't want to get caught up in anything focused on ethnicity because that could be a bad situation. So I try to avoid situations that will get me into a very awkward circumstance potentially. (Personal Interview 9-28-00)
His response did not include any direct comment about how he thought his White constituents would feel about his associations with African Americans. He emphasized that he himself would not feel awkward, but he indicated care in the relationship not to get himself into a “very awkward situation potentially.” This caution indicates that race is a factor in his interactions with others, including his social interactions with African Americans.

President Morgan’s extensive response indicates that he is aware of how race factors into almost every aspect of academe. But even as the leader of the institution, his own personal choices and the level of interaction with minority groups have an effect on his presidency as an African American in a role traditionally occupied by a White American. In a broader personal and institutional perspective he further iterates,

I mean, I think that we have a responsibility as an institution, but I think institutions generally have this responsibility of making sure that we have people of color in virtually every aspect of the organization as opposed to just one aspect. And what happens a lot of times at predominantly white institutions is that there is the general sentiment that as long as you have an Office of Minority Affairs or whatever it’s called, that’s one contribution to that particular segment, and I think it’s important to have people of color in virtually every aspect of the university. That requires huge cultural change, a whole cultural transformation; diversity and difference are fundamental to the academy, and they should be fundamental to this university, and we consider that. And I’m trying to get others to consider that as well because it’s the right thing to do. Not through the promulgation of policy necessarily. No, that’s not the solution. But just simply impressing upon people that having individuals who look different, may have a different perspective, will help in terms of the accomplishments of that particular office and also the accomplishments of the university. (Personal interview 9-28-00)
Although President Morgan is part of an environment with few African Americans, he recognizes the need for maintaining a diverse environment. He believes that an institution works better when it includes people of different ethnic groups, ages, and abilities because it provides a range of perspectives that might help the institution progress. President Morgan believes that it is not enough to have a single office committed to minorities; he advocates for more than that. There need to be minorities operating in every aspect of the university.

One thing that President Morgan did in his first year as president was to require LMU to observe the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. Before he became president, the university did not observe the holiday. He said that the holiday is a “national holiday, a state holiday. It was no reason why it shouldn’t be a university holiday” (Personal Interview 9-28-00). With that, he changed the policy and the university started to observe the holiday. I asked him what was the general reaction to his decision to make that change and he said that if anyone had a problem with his decision no one let him know about it. This suggests that as president and leader of the institution and as the one who implemented this change, if people in the university community were dissatisfied with this change then he is not aware of it and does not expect to be made aware of it. Also, he explained that just as there are some things that he opposes but strategically chooses not to say anything about, it is a conscious choice that others make on the same level. President Morgan also viewed that silence as a privilege of power in the presidency—being protected by opposition from others in many cases.
Morgan's presidential identity—an African American young male in a predominantly White environment—is a significant part of his ethos. Who he is determines his modus operandi, affects the reasoning behind it, and greatly influences the outcome of any rhetorical situation with his diverse constituencies. Ethos for him, then, focuses centrally on how he chooses to do what he chooses to do and why. In almost every situation that I observed while at Large Midwestern University, I determined that his behavior and approaches to a situation were determined by his audiences and the circumstance of the required interaction or meeting. Often, too, the active or inactive participation of the members of the audience or the constituency contributed to his rhetorical approaches. This was particularly true when African Americans were a part of the audience or the constituency.

There were a number of meetings that I observed during my four weeks at LMU where some African Americans other than President Morgan were present. One meeting in particular was the senior staff meeting. That meeting took place once per week. I had the chance to observe that meeting three times. The senior staff meeting consisted of all of the senior level administrators, sixteen total, who report directly to President Morgan; four are African American and all four of them sat right next to each other. During the meeting, each of the administrators is required to brief President Morgan and the others present on what is happening in each of their divisions. Also at the senior staff meeting, other discussions regarding university matters transpire. I observed that of the four African
American administrators, only one of them spoke regularly during the meetings. The other three spoke only when they were directly called upon to do so. I did not get a chance to ask them individually why they chose not to speak at the meetings during the discussions. But given the fact that the senior staff members were discussing serious university matters, I had expected that everyone would contribute to the conversation. Mostly, the white male administrators dominated the meetings; the White women in attendance were equally as silent as the African Americans at the meeting. The issues that were being discussed were the revision of the university's mission, the university transitioning to become more student-centered, and building a national and regional presence. These were subjects that all of the administrators should have been discussing, but the African American administrators generally did not partake in the discussion. This occurred in all three of the weekly senior staff meetings that I observed. Perhaps it was individual choices not to participate; it could have even been cultural choices. It could have reasonably been personality differences. However, it also could have been that they felt that their voices would not have been heard anyway by a predominantly White group, which is often the case for non-dominant groups. In this particular case, the non-dominant group happened to be the four African American administrators.

There was another meeting where I observed African Americans being mostly silent. That meeting was the President's Cabinet Meeting. There was a total of six African Americans at this meeting, including President Morgan. The
other 30 attendees were White. This meeting consisted of all of the senior administrators in addition to different deans, vice presidents, and directors of other programs. The structure of this meeting was the same as it was for the senior staff meeting. Everyone would assemble and brief the president on their respective areas. The meetings were mostly informative. This meeting takes place once per month. President Morgan sets his meetings up like that so that he can be kept abreast of the university’s activities on all levels. The meetings lasted for one hour and the president called on each person individually to speak for about a minute or so. The African American attendees only spoke again when they were called on. Most of the other people at the meeting spoke more than once and had dialogue with others at various times throughout the meeting.

There were hardly any African Americans as part of President Morgan’s constituencies. I attended a Board of Trustees meeting with him while I was there. The Board consists of eight trustees, although LMU currently had only seven, and they are all appointed by the Governor of the state. In addition to the trustees who were present, there were seventeen observers (people who are affiliated with the university in some way). None of these people were African American. President Morgan was the only African American present at the meeting. At this meeting, I noticed that President Morgan did not do much talking. At all of the other meetings that I attended with him he was the one who facilitated the meetings, but the Chairman of the Board of Trustees facilitated this meeting, as is appropriate.
To me, this was a recognition of a shift of power for the purpose of this meeting. Since President Morgan reports to the Board of Trustees, by not dominating the meeting as he normally does in every other meeting that I observed, he recognized that his role as an attendee of this meeting needed to change. Instead of being a vocal leader and facilitator, he acted more as a listener and disseminator of information when called upon. The Board of Trustees is the chief governing body for the institution and the board is the supervisor of the president. His approach for this meeting was to speak when spoken to and answer questions posed to him by the board members as they related to the operation of the institution.

This change in setting is an indication that the main part of President Morgan's identity that he negotiated in this instance was his role as president. Being African American or being young held little significance in his rhetorical performance at the board meeting. The changes that he made and approaches that he used at this meeting were a direct result of the fact that he is president of the institution and there is a particular protocol that must be followed. His conduct for this meeting was predetermined by the code of behavior mandated by the customs of the board meetings in general.

The meeting that I attended was an abbreviated board meeting and lasted for only twenty-eight minutes. The normally scheduled time was ninety minutes. The Board is scheduled to meet six to eight times a year. President Morgan made no comments, asked no questions, and had no motions at this meeting. The only
time that he spoke was when one of the trustees asked him a question. I later found out that the meetings typically run that way and that no one usually speaks unless they have something to add to the agenda established prior to the meeting. So, in this case, there was nothing unusual about the only African American at the meeting not speaking.

Much like most university leaders, President Morgan spent most of his time in meetings. During the entire time that I observed him, most of the observations occurred in the context of some type of meeting. Of all of the meetings, only the senior staff meetings and the president’s cabinet meeting had African Americans in attendance. Most of the meetings that he held were with internal constituencies, someone on the campus or directly affiliated with university. Sometimes I observed meetings with one person, but never with an African American. The many group meetings that he had were not with African Americans. The times that he met with students, they were always non-African American groups. Many of his meetings were held over lunch or dinner and those meetings had no African Americans either. There was a dinner meeting with the Deans of the schools and colleges, a lunch meeting with the Administrative Professional/Staff Association Executive Board, a Booster Club Meeting (away from the campus in a neighboring city), a meeting with the Faculty Senate Executive Board, and the Faculty Union Representatives (AAUP) meeting and none of those meetings were attended by African Americans. The meetings were almost always predominantly White.
The racial composition of President Morgan's audiences shows how increasingly visible his own race becomes in interacting with the various groups and individuals. It also shows how Morgan's ability to culturally identify with these groups and individuals is compromised. These audiences are mostly White and, because of the minimal interaction on the part of the constituencies at LMU with an African American university leader, his being African American acts as a barrier. While President Morgan is able to maintain successful professional relationships with these constituencies, it is more difficult to cross racial boundaries to maintain personal relationships.

In addition to this challenge, President Morgan told me that, "African Americans at the university and those that he knew prior to becoming president all remind him that his job as president has a social responsibility which includes making the university more diverse." This social responsibility acts as an additional burden that is assigned to him as much for his race (if not more so) as for his position of leadership. He said that they remind him that because he is African American it is even more crucial that he bring more African Americans to the institutions in different roles as students, teachers, staff, and administrators. While this is something that Morgan includes in his goals as president, he explained that he understands that he has to be careful not to disrupt the predominantly White status quo that is in place to the extent that it may cause more harm than good.
I asked President Morgan how he negotiates his identity with each of his
different audiences and his response was:

Let's talk about demographics. The audiences are generally
gerubber, average age 55, 56, predominantly Caucasian. There
are very, very few African Americans or people of color
unless it's a function only for African Americans or
exclusively for African Americans. For instance, I've
given a talk at the annual Martin Luther King types of
activities and functions, which February is a really busy
month for me because everyone wants me to talk about
these things in part because I'm the president here, but also
because I'm African American as well. Most of my
audiences are predominantly White though. (Personal
Interview 9-28-00)

Basically, the only time race comes up as an issue that he has to specifically
address is on the occasion of an ethnic holiday. All of the other times, he deals
with mostly White audiences. With those audiences I asked what type of
behavioral and communicative changes he makes to negotiate between the
audiences. He explained, "I think we have to modify our communication styles
based on the audiences we're talking to. I think we have to somewhat use a
language that they are accustomed to. We have to be sensitive to the issues that
they may have. I mean, when I'm talking to parents, then it's a little bit different
than talking to the Board of Trustees and it's even more different than talking to
members of the faculty, etc. I try to modify my behavior in different ways"
(Personal interview 9-28-00). I asked if he modified his behavior when he
addressed African American audiences and his response was that his behavior
was about the same as it was with his White audiences. He did nothing
differently and if he did it was because of the nature of the situation instead of the racial composition of the audience.

Finally, I wanted to know in light of his race in the context of a PWI why he sought this presidency instead of choosing an HBCU. He said that he did not think he would be chosen as president of an HBCU. When I asked him why he thought that he would not be able to secure a presidency at an HBCU he said that it was because of “an unspoken rule that one has to graduate from an HBCU to get a presidency at an HBCU, almost a profile. And I think a lot of it has to do with sort of selling out or this perception that one sells out going to a predominantly White institution” (Personal Interview 9-28-00). He did not agree with that perception.

While President Morgan did not experience any specific job challenges on the basis of race as it relates directly to performing his duties as president, race was definitely a factor that affected his presidency as an African American in a predominantly White environment. He said that being the first African American at this particular predominantly White environment was probably something everyone else had to get used to, but it was something he was already accustomed to. Perhaps his extensive past experiences as an academic administrator in a predominantly White environment contribute to his success as the president and his insouciance regarding the racial composition of this predominantly White environment might work to his advantage. Choosing to ignore race as a challenge may be an option for President Morgan and a strategy he uses to function
successfully as president, but ignoring race as a challenge may not be an option for others in similar situations. It is necessary to explore the extent to which race acts as both a positive and a negative in given situations in order to further understand it as a concept and to take action.

**Gender**

Being an African American male occupying a position that has been traditionally occupied by a White male does not create many challenges for President Morgan at Large Midwestern University. All of the presidents before him at LMU were males. In fact, being male and president at LMU makes his presidency less complicated, in part because the constituents and audiences of the university are accustomed to having a male as president. Being an effective and efficient leader and successfully negotiating his role as leader in this predominantly White environment almost makes gender a non-issue. Of the three analytical categories—age, race, and gender—his identity as an African American instead of as a male at a predominantly White university rises as the most significant issue that affects his leadership style. While President Morgan employs a democratic leadership style, especially compared to his predecessor, his rhetorical choices and techniques are mostly in line with the types of management styles typically shared by males.

According to Gary N. Powell, a management scholar,

Most studies of gender differences in management or leadership behavior have examined two aspects of leadership style. The first, called *task style*, refers to the extent to which the manager initiates work activity, organizes it, and defines the way work is to be done.
The second, called *interpersonal style*, refers to the extent to which the manager engages in activities that tend to the morale and welfare at the people in the work setting. (300)

Powell further addresses a third type of leadership style called “democratic leadership” where the leaders permit their constituents to involve themselves in decision-making. A final leadership style that Powell focuses on is “autocratic leadership” which is the direct opposite of democratic leadership because it does not encourage collaboration and participation. In this piece Powell’s aim is to answer the question “Do female and male managers differ?” The overall evidence in his research says that “they differ in some ways and at some times, but, for the most part, they do not differ” (301).

In an article focusing on gender differences between men and women leaders, Judy B. Rosener explains that “In the context of American management, the one best model has traditionally been the command-and-control model. Organizations using this model are hierarchical and have clear lines of authority. Decisions are made from the top down and it is assumed that those at the top know best” (294). Rosener further declares that, “American institutions tend to look alike. The have similar structures and practices and similar kinds of leaders. Typically American executives are White, male, heterosexual, and married with children” (294). Rosener does not suggest that the command-and-control model is the one best model for leadership and management. Instead, she argues that it is only one of several different models that is used in different American organizations. She compares the command-and-control model to the interactive
leadership model that she has written about which includes a collaborative management style (typically employed by female managers).

Rosener’s two primary conclusions are that in the paradox of gender in leadership and management, “when attributes or behaviors associated with women are considered negative or of little value, gender is seen as relevant. When attributes or behaviors associated with women are considered positive or valuable, gender is seen as irrelevant” (296). Because the command-and-control leadership style has been replaced and substituted in many organizations by more collaborative leadership strategies such as ‘consensus building, power sharing, and comfort with ambiguity,’ they were considered signs of weakness, and gender was the explanation (296). These were the same characteristics that were and are used to disqualify women for leadership positions. But when the change was made and the command-and-control leadership model was replaced with other models, these same characteristics were viewed as positive and effective. Then people started to view them as gender neutral instead of associated with being female. As Rosener points out, now many male institutional leaders are being trained to be interactive leaders, while women are still being penalized (“hitting the glass ceiling”) because they already “are” interactive leaders (297).

As President of Large Midwestern University, David Morgan’s leadership style as an African American male operating in a predominantly White environment, requires concrete expectations and acceptable behavior within the parameters of the position. Based on the definitions and explanations of the
command-and-control leadership model and on the interactive leadership model, it is clear that Morgan operates more from the position of an interactive leader. He collaborates frequently with his audiences and constituencies. Morgan does not engage in a gendered leadership model. Instead he employs strategies from multiple leadership models, which all lead again to his democratic leadership style.

There are eight principles that Morgan explained that exemplify his leadership style.

1) Every college or university exists as a unique organizational culture
2) Leadership in an academic culture requires putting people first
3) Leadership in an academic culture requires connecting with people
4) Introducing innovation and change involves changing values and beliefs
5) Building strong academic cultures requires enhancing diversity
6) Effective socialization involves linking new members to institutional change and commitment
7) Understanding organizations as cultures means viewing them beyond their physical boundaries
8) Leadership in academic culture involves practicing effective cultural strategies

In interviews with Morgan he explained how he must know and understand his constituencies. He achieves this understanding through his interaction and collaboration with them. He has become socialized into his role as president.
That socialization includes a combination of his abilities to lead, his own individualized culture and expectations within the culture, and expectations of those by whom he was hired and those with whom he works. President Morgan uses multiple leadership styles that have been identified in the literature. But, for the most part, his overall leadership can be characterized as democratic because his audiences and constituents have active roles, contributions, and responsibilities in the decisions that are made at LMU. This type of leadership style is mostly used by President Morgan in daily meetings and exchanges with his various audiences. These meetings are the essence of his overall responsibilities as president.

**Ethos and Authority**

Simply meeting with the various constituencies is one negotiating strategy President Morgan uses to minimize frustration and to do his job as president. Preventing and reducing dissatisfaction among his constituencies is something that is germane if President Morgan is to maintain a positive identity and continue to shape an ethos that is acceptable to his various audiences. As a young African American male occupying a role that has traditionally been occupied by an older White male, this identity requires him to always be able to negotiate his audiences and the situations that arise. Race, gender, and age are social constructs that affect his ability to maintain relationships and to negotiate those relationships in useful ways. As a result of his race, gender, and age his audiences have different
expectations of him as the president, as an African American, as a male, and as a younger person. These components of his identity coupled with his abilities and his successes and failures are what mostly determine the types of relationships he will maintain with his audiences.

The expectations from President Morgan’s audiences change constantly and depend on what is emphasized in given rhetorical situations. His leadership ability is characterized through his interaction with his audiences. He said that sometimes, “as with any situation, what works as useful methods of communicating with one group or individual may not necessarily work with another group or individual so being able to read and understand my audiences becomes critically important” (Personal interview 9-28-00). Thus, based on these comments, it is reasonable to assume that he consciously and deliberately uses a range of rhetorical practices. These rhetorical practices shift from one scene to the next depending on the audience and the purpose of the interaction and he uses them to work through situations. While identity is more tangible than ethos for President Morgan, he negotiates them in the same ways by choosing to emphasize certain aspects of them when it becomes necessary to correspond with his leadership style. His identity and his leadership style, then, are components of ethos for him and they are invoked to guide his rhetorical practices.

Through explorations of the analytical and descriptive categories for President Morgan—race, age, gender and inherited presidency, marital status, length of presidency, professional background, and CCSYSTEM—I conclude that
President Morgan's identity is also not fixed. Identity is not a single thing and it is not a constant thing. It is, however, something that he has to constantly work toward as president. Everything that he is and everything that he does contributes to his identity and ethos. Much like the other participants in this dissertation, he fits into Sharon Crowley's models of situated and invented ethos. He has characteristics that put him into certain categories automatically, but he also has qualities that he assumes in order to project a certain image for a particular rhetorical situation. As president, his identity and ethos encompass many different facets. Some of these facets are constant and noticeable, while others are deliberate and superimposed to emit another temporary image that is suited for any given circumstance in order to achieve desired results.

As an African American operating in a predominantly White environment President Morgan has to accommodate his audiences. In these instances his individual cultural identity is sometimes secondary to his immediate audiences in many different instances. As a young person, he has to make necessary adjustments in the way that he presents himself to audiences typically accustomed to dealing with someone older as president. As a virtual newcomer to the position, he has to assert his identity in many ways that will prove to his audiences that he should be taken seriously. He also has to show that his professional background will not interfere with him dealing with the university faculty in ways that are fair and productive. Through it all, he must show that a combination of his situated ethos (the definite parts, i.e., African American, male,
university president, and younger than the usual occupant of the presidency) and invented ethos (the indefinite parts, i.e., negotiator, leader, listener, manager, facilitator, etc.) work together in ways that allow him to conquer such job related challenges as CCSYSTEM. The power that he constructs as a result of all of these personae is useful in President Morgan’s ability to present himself well and to perform successfully.
CHAPTER 5

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENCY AS A NEUTRALIZED EXPERIENCE

In this case, age, race, and gender can be viewed as symbols of privilege instead of as indicators of challenges. Unlike the two other cases, this chapter presents data that illustrate a presidency where the university president is more closely matched with university expectations. The descriptive and analytical categories—presidential circumstances, age, race, and gender—do not work against Dr. Paul Griffin as president. In fact, they work to demonstrate how these categories contribute to his success as president with few challenges. Unlike in the other two case studies, being African American, male, and within the typical age range facilitates rather than conflicts with his constructions of ethos and authority. His expectations as president, the institution’s expectations, and the constituents’ expectations correspond with one another because the role of president is customarily occupied by an older African American male. As such, Dr. Griffin’s presidential circumstances, age, race, and gender as descriptive and analytical categories demonstrate the importance of congruence in establishing
identity and ethos and the power that emerges. Thus the challenges he might face in these areas as president are minimal, or in some cases nonexistent.

The data that I collected allow me to conclude that in this case, when an African American male occupies a role that is traditionally occupied by an African American male, the challenges he will face as part of his persona are limited and few, unlike that of the other two participants in this dissertation. President Griffin does not experience cultural isolation or gender inequity, and positive effects of his identity and ethos are affirmed in most of his settings. Neither race, gender, nor age caused difficulty for him in his role as president.

President Griffin mostly interacted with like audiences (e.g., African American and male) and his behavior as president almost never changed with his audiences. There was no change in his behavior for two reasons: the first is that he has concretely established a relationship with these audiences because he meets with and interacts with them regularly as required for the smooth and successful operation of the institution; and the second is he has been president for thirteen years and he established his ways of doing things in such a way that if it becomes necessary others modify their behavior so that no modification is required on his part.

On a couple of occasions, he slightly modified his performance, but overall his rhetorical behavior was consistent throughout the six-week observation period. These occasions include meetings and programs where parents and outside people were present. The slight modification became necessary because
while he has a particular way of interacting with parents and outsiders, he cannot maintain a consistent type of behavior with parents because of the circumstances of their meetings and because each parent is different. When he interacted with audiences other than the typical internal African American audiences at the university, he did not modify his behavior because during the thirteen years that he has been president, he has obviously figured out their expectations of him and lived up to those expectations. Most of his audiences are predominantly male audiences, so gender did not incite any challenges. Additionally, Small Midwestern University has only had one female university president, President Griffin's predecessor who was president for four years. Consequently, most of the constituents affiliated with the university are accustomed to dealing with a male president because all of the presidents in the history of the university have been African American and male. Since the male president is the norm, the gender of the president was not a major concern because President Griffin fits the profile.

Moreover, his age (68 years old) did not cause any challenges because he is older than the average age for a university president, which is 57 years old. Since he has been president for thirteen years, his knowledge and experience over this period work as advantages instead of disadvantages. His age grants him more freedom to make decisions, unlike it would if he were substantially younger than the average age. In interviews with his constituents, they told me that they trust
his judgment as well as his abilities as their leader, based in part because they
deem him mature and wise.

Because President Griffin is so familiar with his audiences, he knows how
to interact with them effectively. Most of the audiences in which I observed him
interact consisted of people he meets with frequently, thereby providing him the
opportunity to study them and determine what methods work most effectively in
achieving results. For example, the executive cabinet meets once weekly. It is a
group of individuals that President Griffin has an abundance of interaction with
because they, as vice presidents, report directly to him. Additionally, the campus
is quite small and intimate and almost everyone on the campus is familiar with
personalities and individual preferences. The president is included in this group.
He explained that part of his job is “to know the people with whom I work on
many different levels. I have to know what drives them as well as what annoys
them. I need to know what gets their motors running” (personal interview 8-28-
00).

His identity and ethos have been effectively established over the period of
his thirteen years as president. Essentially, identity and ethos for him are fixed,
and they are consistent because his experience and tenure as president have
allowed him to successfully establish them. Being an African American male and
in a position typically inhabited by an African American male and having been
president for thirteen years allow him to sustain an identity and create an ethos
that necessitates change in behavior and methods on the part of his audiences
more so than on the president's part. Thus is due to the automatic power that accompanies a presidency.

In order to explore the rhetorical nature of the presidency for Dr. Paul Griffin, this chapter offers (1) a profile of Dr. Griffin and Small Midwestern University; (2) a literature review for African American male university presidents at HBCUs and the historical challenges of the existence of HBCUs; (3) and an analysis of observations made and data collected during my six-week research site visit that helps to shape President Griffin' ethos and identity as an African American male university president at SMU.

**Profile of President Griffin and Small Midwestern University (SMU)**

President Paul Griffin of Small Midwestern University (SMU) is a married, 68-year-old, African American male president of an HBCU. Prior to becoming president at SMU, he held several administrative posts at various institutions. He has never been a full-time faculty member at any institution of higher education, although he does have some teaching experience on the collegiate level. President Griffin is the seventeenth president of SMU and has been president for thirteen years, making him the second longest reigning president in the university's history. This is his first university presidency. He attended an HBCU for his undergraduate study and a predominantly White institution for his graduate study. All of the presidents at SMU before him have
been African American males, with the exception of his predecessor, who was an African American female.

Small Midwestern University is among the oldest HBCUs in the United States. This HBCU is a private, four-year, co-educational, liberal arts institution with a close church affiliation. The student enrollment is just over 1,200, including both traditional (18-24 year olds) and nontraditional students (over the age of thirty-five). The student body is almost 100% African American, but it includes international students (African) and a few White students who are mostly nontraditional students.

**African American University Male Presidents at HBCUs and Their Challenges**

Before understanding the significance of the presidency at an HBCU and the challenges that the leaders of them confront, it is important to recognize the history of the institutions themselves. The histories of Historically Black Colleges and Universities are deeply rooted into the overall educational system of this country. They play vital roles in the educational histories of African Americans and their roles in establishing African Americans as educational leaders.

The National Center for Educational Statistics defines HBCUs as "institutions established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans" (Hoffman, Snyder, and Sonnenberg vii).
Researchers Roebuck and Murty report that, “During the interval from 1865 to 1890, more than two hundred black private institutions were founded in the South with the help of northern churches and missionary groups (the American Missionary Association, as well as Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists) and the Freedmen’s Bureau” (25). “With the passage of enabling legislation (second Morrill Act, 1890), these colleges and universities were established to provide training to African Americans in the fields of agriculture, home economics, the mechanical arts, and other useful professions,” (Christy and Williamson xiii), specifically the public HBCUs. Public Historically Black Colleges and Universities were authorized under the first Morrill Act of 1862, but the Morrill Act of 1890 was designated particularly to support African American Land Grant institutions.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities “encompass a wide variety of institution types including public and private; single-sex and co-ed; 2-year and 4-year colleges, research universities, professional schools, as well as small liberal arts colleges” (Hoffman, Snyder, and Sonnenberg 1). “Most of the black colleges founded under the aegis of private auspices either began as high schools or included in their offerings high school level courses and only slowly evolved to college status” (Whiting 19). The purposes of HBCUs are manifold. Even in the mid-19th and early twentieth centuries, there were debates about the education of African Americans.

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Traditionally, the position of president at an HBCU has been held by African American males. However, there are a few exceptions. These institutions were founded by and large after the Civil War as an effort to educate the newly freed slaves. At the inception of the founding of a few of the institutions, they were headed by White males, or in some cases by White females. The White founders were hesitant to relinquish control of the institutions to African Americans. In fact, Fisk University did not appoint its first African American president until 1949. Spelman College did not appoint its first African American president until 1953. Morehouse College, Xavier University of New Orleans, Paine College, and did not appoint their first African American president until 1906, 1968, and 1971 respectively. There was a rise in the number of African American university presidents at HBCUs after the Great Depression when financial assistance for the institutions diminished. The commonly held belief by Whites was that if the institutions failed, and they were more likely to do so during this era, the excuse could be that the presidents were incompetent. During this time many White males who held the posts as university presidents vacated them allegedly so that they would not be blamed in case the institutions were financially unsuccessful. There are some instances of African American females heading the institutions, particularly if they were the ones who founded them. I was not able to find any cases where an HBCU was headed by a White woman, except at Spelman College, which historically was headed by five White women.
Today, there are 105 remaining historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the United States, most of which have an African American president. The thirty-nine privately controlled HBCUs that comprise the United Negro College Fund Association all have African American presidents. In 1998, the *Journal of Black Issues in Higher Education* reported that there were 130 African American presidents of both Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) (18-19). Of the 130 total presidents, 110 were males (81%) and 20 were females (19%).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have rich and complex histories. Their creation, existence, modifications, and current status have sustained an abundance of criticism and discouragement. Still today, the 105 HBCUs that are still thriving are doing so because of commitment and leadership on behalf of their institutional supporters and leaders. The presidents of these institutions have to especially maintain a high level of dedication to these institutions as they continue to exist to provide educational training to a majority African American student population. The distinctive experiences of the presidents of these historical establishments have an equally compelling history.

The challenges for a president of an HBCU are not exclusive to males, but since the majority of the presidents are males, I cite the challenges as reflective of them. Since HBCUs are so overwhelmingly entrenched by the founding principles of their histories, many of their present goals and responsibilities
develop from their past. It is generally presumed that the greatest challenges for African American HBCU presidents today is to determine ways to

Replicate the genius of great Black college presidents [from the past] like Benjamin E. Mays of Morehouse College, Mary McLeod Bethune of Bethune-Cookman College, and Mordecai Johnson of Howard University, who changed the meaning of American education by turning out great students like Martin Luther King, Jr., Marian Wright Edelman, and Thurgood Marshall, who changed the meaning of life. From this standpoint, the task of [current] presidents, is not to do what White colleges do but to do what White colleges have never done and will never do, which is to reclaim and renew Black students and turn out graduates with character and technical skills dedicated to the ancient trilogy of Black colleges—service, struggle, and excellence. (Anonymous, "New Black College Presidents," 86).

As leaders of these institutions, HBCU presidents have to determine ways to advance the success of the institutions and the constituents of the institutions without compromising the integrity of the institutions’ past. HBCUs have always been faced with hardships, often because of financial instability. These institutions have also always had to contend with negativity surrounding their existence.

As suggested in case study one (President Linda Barrett), there are opponents of HBCUs who maintain that the mere existence of institutions that serve mostly a single race promotes segregationist ideals. These are the same people who believe that HBCUs should not receive any governmental funds in support of the institution. Also, many people, mostly ones with no direct contact or affiliation with these schools, assert that the students who attend and graduate from these schools are not successful in society at large.

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Unlike in the past, there are not many cases where institutions feel the need to boast of the successes of its graduate or its constituents because there are so many cases to celebrate. The presidents of these institutions have to ascertain ways to archive and preserve the history of the institutions, communicate that important history to potential applicants, employees, and benefactors, and ensure that the students and the university affiliates leave the school prepared for a successful life in an aggressive society. They have to establish ways to encourage outsiders to believe in the unyielding stability of their institutions. Presidents of majority institutions have to tackle similar things but not for the same reasons.

Most of the time when majority institutions publicize their success or status, they do so in hopes of securing funds and donations. HBCUs do so to secure funds and donations, too, but they also do so to put themselves in a position to encourage prospective students, to sustain current students, and to employ distinguished scholars and researchers. This is a continuous, yet necessary, battle that HBCU leaders have had to fight from the early stages of their existence.

In an interview with Julianne Basinger, William R. Harvey, president at Hampton University, accepts these challenges. He says that “one reason why [he] came to a black institution is to make a difference, and part of that is sending leaders out to other institutions” (A42). Under his leadership, several administrators at Hampton University moved on to become presidents at various other institutions. In keeping with the spirit of the founding principles of HBCUs,
Harvey posits that he tries to provide his administrators with the skills and experience necessary to make them viable candidates for university presidencies. The essence of being at an HBCU is imparting wisdom from one person to the next, within and outside of the academic arena.

Since the race and gender of university presidents for HBCUs are primarily African American and male, many of the problems or challenges associated with their jobs as leaders are not negatively influenced by these identity characteristics. Race and gender do not exacerbate the regular challenges that accompany university presidencies for African American males at HBCUs. Thus the challenges that surface for President Griffin generally stem from specific incidents unique to him at Small Midwestern University and are mostly directly job related, like balancing the budget and raising funds to keep the institution functioning successfully. In fact, this chapter illustrates how the descriptive and analytical categories make his job as president less complicated, particularly with internal university constituents, than President Barrett at Small Southeastern University and President Morgan at Large Midwestern University.

**Identification of Griffin as an African American University President at an HBCU**

President Paul Griffin negotiates the responsibilities of his job quite well as is evidenced by his interactions with his constituencies. As the leader of the institution, he has the challenge of managing all of the institution’s constituencies.
He has to manage the daily operations of the institution effectively, recruit and maintain knowledgeable and experienced faculty and administrators in order to advance the goals of the institutions, and make sure that the students are provided for in a nurturing environment in order for them to be academically successful and productive and to ensure that they receive social and cultural support that empower them.

Alfred Tatum states that “cultural emasculation and gender isolation experienced by the African American male in academic settings drive him away from academics to social outlets where his identity is affirmed. African American males are dismissed in classrooms that render them powerless in a society where power is the great political equalizer” (62). These challenges are intensified when African American males find themselves in leadership positions in academe, especially at predominantly White institutions. Leading, attending, or being a part of an HBCU allows African Americans to be connected to their African American identity.

During the six weeks that I visited Small Midwestern University, I observed the ways that President Griffin negotiated his various audiences. President Griffin told me on a number of occasions that he prefers stress-free work environments, which is why he laughs and jokes a lot. He prefers humor and less seriousness unless serious behavior is absolutely necessary. He also mentioned, however, that there are times when humor and jokes are not appropriate, such as at weekly cabinet meetings with all of his vice presidents, at
board of trustees meetings, or when individuals come into his office with complaints or other problems. He maintained that daily activities usually do not require such serious behavior. These types of meetings are examples of modified rhetorical performance on the part of Dr. Griffin.

In his interactions with his audiences, President Griffin employed many different strategies to negotiate the rhetorical situations while simultaneously radiating a single persona throughout. Using President Griffin’s age, race, and gender, I examine certain rhetorical situations with the purpose of exploring the negotiations he utilizes to construct identity and ethos as an African American male at a Historically Black University.

**Descriptive Categories**

It is beneficial and necessary to know the circumstances surrounding the presidency for the third and final participant in the dissertation, Dr. Paul Griffin, in order to determine the approaches the president uses to manage the institution and how he engages the rhetorical situations that he encounters everyday. As in the first two cases, the sub-categories of presidential circumstances for Dr. Griffin include the inherited presidency, marital status, the length of his presidency, and his professional background. These elements help to frame the data for this case and establish a definite representation of President Griffin. Highlighting these particular aspects of him as an individual in relation to his job and the institution provides a context for understanding the dynamics of his presidency. All of these
sub-categories work together to present the more personal aspects of the participant and how they work to promote his identity and ethos.

These sub-categories comprise the presidential circumstances, which indicate the strategies by which President Griffin’s has formed identity and ethos and garnered authority. Presenting data based on these categories personalizes President Griffin and allow me to present instances and circumstances that exemplify the importance of these categories in relation to how they materialize as part of his identity and ethos. All of these descriptive categories work together to promote President Griffin as a successful president with few challenges.

**Inherited Presidency**

The first sub-category is the inherited presidency for Griffin. Data in this group incorporates information about the instability of the institution when he became president, about the immediate president that he succeeded, and about the history of the types of presidents who have served as institutional leaders at Small Midwestern University.

When President Griffin became president of Small Midwestern University, he inherited a rather tumultuous presidency. In this new position, he inherited a presidency that was, in his own words, “fraught with financial instability.” SMU was in the midst of a financial crisis when he was nominated and selected to become president. The student enrollment had plummeted and there was quite a bit of uneasiness surrounding the future of the institution. The
university was in such dire financial instability that there were deliberations to
decide if SMU would remain a four-year institution, if it should change to a two-
year institution, or if it should close altogether. Many affiliates of the university
had lost faith in the university presidency.

However, even though he inherited this type of presidency it did not
present any ongoing challenges for his presidency. Instead, he was successful in
alleviating all of the problems associated with the newly acquired position, which
serves as a positive supplement to President Griffin’s identity and ethos. Every
rhetorical strategy, decision, or activity that he successfully engaged in further
complimented his ability as president. Since President Griffin was aware of the
type of presidency he accepted, his aim was to remedy all of the problems
associated with the university. He really did not have anything to lose by taking
on this challenge, even if in the end he was unsuccessful.

In addition to the funding problems of the institution, President Griffin
succeeded the first and only female president at the institution. Not only was his
predecessor the only female president in the history of the institution, she was also
the daughter of one of the former presidents of SMU. The culture and climate of
the institution and the fact that he succeeded a female president produced several
challenges that he would have to conquer. Also, the majority of the presidents
before President Griffin and his predecessor were extraordinary leaders with their
own legacies of great leadership that he would have to continue and maintain.
The challenges for him were to alleviate the financial problems of the institution
and stabilize it, restore faith in the university’s presidency for the constituents as leader, and to preserve the accomplishments of all of the male presidents before him.

There are some examples of President Griffin negotiating his identity and ethos by working to address the financial stability of the institution that I observed during my visit to SMU. On several occasions he engaged in conversations, exchanges, and meetings with university personnel regarding financial matters, mostly in meetings. In these meetings it was evident that the components of his identity and ethos did not create any challenges for him because of the smooth progression of the meetings and the relaxed nature in which he facilitated the meetings. It seemed that the challenge of remedying the financial damage that SMU experienced was overcome. President Griffin was knowledgeable, articulate, and very relaxed when he discussed major issues like fundraising and financial matters. His identity and ethos as president are so protected that he could discuss such serious matters as the financial status of the institution in very relaxed ways. He was able to do so because of the success of his moving the university out of financial instability since being president. Since the university was no longer facing inordinate funding difficulty, President Griffin’s approach to tackling those issues was very informal.

One instance where President Griffin discussed the financial affairs of the university was in a meeting held with the University Campaign Attorney, a person who serves as an adviser to the president regarding the legal matters of fund
raising. The two of them meet throughout the academic year as is necessary to
sort out many details. President Griffin did not make any type of particular
preparations for this meeting and appeared very comfortable. The University
Attorney was a middle-aged White man from another Midwestern state. This
particular meeting lasted thirty-four minutes (from 3:05 p.m. to 3:39 p.m.). The
purpose of the meeting was to discuss the progress of a major campaign effort,
raising $21 million. The tone of the meeting was casual and informal for both
men. Neither of the men took any notes, nor was there a written agenda for the
meeting.

An enormous part of President Griffin’s identity and his ethos is to
maintain a personality that advocates for a very stress-free environment. He
strongly believes that people work better and more efficiently when they are not
under a lot of stress. In an effort to sustain a comfortable environment, President
Griffin engages in a lot of teasing and small talk before discussing the business at
hand at any meeting. Additionally, President Griffin referred to the Attorney by
his first name, but the Attorney referred to the president as President Griffin. The
president told me that he is not really concerned by what name his constituents
use to refer to him, but generally everyone called him either President Griffin or
Dr. Griffin. This name reference is another example of President Griffin’s
attempt to maintain informal exchanges, even when the purpose of the exchange
is extremely important to the management of the university. Throughout this
meeting, the president was the one asking the most questions and making the most
suggestions. Both men shared information with each other regarding the campaign fundraising. However, it was President Griffin who made the decisions regarding the next step of the campaign process. President Griffin used information and suggestions that he received from the Attorney in order to make productive decisions in what he saw as the best interest of the university.

He has clearly established himself as a successful president because no one or nothing challenges him. The meeting ended in the same way that it began, with humor and jokes and unrelated casual conversation. President Griffin used memory as a rhetorical strategy because he rarely wrote anything. After the meeting was over, President Griffin did not make any notes or anything regarding what had transpired. He moved on to the next activity on his schedule for that day.

Another instance where President Griffin successfully negotiated his identity and ethos as president occurred in an Alumni Association Workshop. At this workshop, he employed many of the same strategies that I observed him using in meetings at his office. The alumni are a very different audience from the people he collaborates with on a daily basis in his office. This is a group of people who must be appeased. They must also be satisfied with the president’s performance as the university’s chief leader. President Griffin is aware of the importance of maintaining a professional and amiable relationship with this particular constituency. The consequences of damaging that relationship can lead to a disastrous presidency. Because of the type of presidency that he inherited,
President Griffin must work to show that he is capable of financially securing the institution and making sure the university projects a positive image. His comfort level and success as president were evident in this meeting, too.

This Workshop is part of the annual Alumni Conference held at the University each year. This particular Workshop lasted for two hours. The 2000 Alumni Conference is a three-day event held on campus, in the community, and in a neighboring city. The purpose of the conference is to reunite and reacquaint the alumni with the university and with each other in order to update them on what is happening at the university and what is needed from them to ensure Small Midwestern University is thriving.

The sessions at the Workshop were much more formal than the meetings that I observed in the president’s office as were evidenced by the president’s style of dress. From day-to-day, the president wore slacks and a button down dress shirt. However, during the alumni conference, he wore a suit and tie. Although, he still teased and joked a lot at this Workshop, like he did when he was in his office, he modified his responses to the alumni to reflect a more serious tone because they were asking very important and serious questions.

Some of the other rhetorical strategies that he used while addressing the alumni are speaking to the audience instead of reading to them from a script, not using any written notes, addressing a number of important issues, maintaining eye contact throughout his presentation, and using humor and jokes during his remarks. All of these strategies seemed to go over well with the alumni. During
the meeting, the president did not write anything at all. Again, he relied on memory and pure knowledge as the meeting progressed to comprehend people and to guide his behavior. He explained to me that he usually handles the majority of the university business orally and without taking notes. This is done in part to build the alumni’s confidence in him as their leader and to project an image that demonstrates his ability to efficiently lead the institution in the direction preferred by the alumni.

President Griffin was the one who actually facilitated the alumni conference debriefing session. The purpose of this meeting was to update the alumni about the state of the university and to give them an opportunity to ask questions. The meeting had a very serious, yet friendly tone. The room was set up with an eight-member panel at the front and about 100 chairs for the audience of guests and alumni. President Griffin welcomed everyone to the session and began his address. The panel consisted of four of the university’s vice presidents and one other administrative representative. President Griffin gave each of the five panelists eight minutes to give their individual presentations to the alumni after he gave his. He spoke for thirty-five minutes, mostly bragging about the success of the university over the past year. Everyone referred to President Griffin as President or Doctor Griffin. When he introduced each of the panelists he referred to them more formally this time as Mr., Mrs., or Doctor. This meeting was designed to be informative. No decisions were made.
The type of presidency that Dr. Griffin inherited influenced his rhetorical performance in every aspect of his presidency. The extent to which the audiences' expectations are noted, acknowledged, confirmed, or denied affect the intended and the actual relationships that President Griffin might have or establish with such individuals as the University Attorney and the University Alumni. These constituents expect him to be able to effectively meet their expectations. He has to always negotiate parts of his identity to accommodate his audiences and to generally get things done as president. Having inherited a tumultuous presidency laid the foundation for much possibility and lessened the prospect of failure.

**Marital Status**

The next sub-category of presidential circumstances is marital status. President Griffin is married. Marital status is an important descriptive category because it contributes to an understanding of how it coincides with President Griffin's responsibilities in social atmospheres as university president and as a major part of his identity. Ninety percent of all university presidents are married, and this fact is truer for male presidents than it is for female presidents. There are certain social expectations for university presidents and oftentimes spouses are a key part of the equation. There is an assumed, unspoken expectation that university presidents be married. This sub-category explains how marital status
acts as catalyst that also minimizes the possibility of challenges for him as president since he is married.

The fact that President Griffin is married helps to shape his identity and ethos by giving him more influence and trustworthiness because being married is another significant aspect of the typical profile for university presidents. The university constituents are more inclined to be willing to listen to President Griffin, work with him, and oblige him because his traditional marriage allows him to function in many of the ways that he is expected to perform. His audiences expect him to be married and be able to host social functions and to represent the university with his wife accompanying him and being visible to the constituents and their spouses.

His marital status does not generate any challenges for him as president because he fits the profile of the typical university president. Most of the university presidents at all institutions, large and small, public and private, HBCU and PWI are married. Although 83.8% of all university presidents were married (Ross and Green 13), only 19.3% of the female presidents are married (13). There are many expectations of the presidents in social settings, and their spouses play an integral role in the business that gets done at social gatherings. Fundraising is indisputably the more arduous task for all university presidents, and a lot of the fundraising for the institution takes place in social atmospheres. Many of the prospective pecuniary supporters of the institution interact with university representatives at social gatherings where they might bring their own
spouses along. It is understood that the presidents' spouses are expected to entertain the spouses of potential donors and sponsors that keep the institutions afloat.

Finally, since Small Midwestern University maintains such a close and direct relationship with its sponsoring church, it is equally important that the university president be married. The expectation of the church for the president dictates that they nominate and select a president who meets the basic criterion of having a spouse. The history of the selection of the university president at SMU has been rooted in the fact that the chosen president should have a spouse and a close affiliation with the sponsoring church to continue the traditions of the founding principles of the university.

President Griffin's marital status gives him authority as president. Because he is married, his constituents are likely to have more confidence in his ability than if he were not married. Marital status serves as a kind of higher social and professional eminence. In the case of the university presidency, it is preferable that the occupant is married. President Griffin's wife is expected to host a number of social events and to attend various other social events with him. Oftentimes the president associates with heads of state, top governmental officials, neighboring university representatives, and many other powerful and influential people. Most of these types of people also have spouses and the president is expected to have a spouse as well.
President Griffin's wife is a retired educator, well known for her contributions to secondary education. Since she is called upon to perform many duties as the first lady of Small Midwestern University, she is totally dedicated to doing so. In fact, while I was visiting Small Southeastern University, I found out that Mrs. Griffin goes on shopping trips to New York City for female university presidents and for the wives of male university presidents at HBCUs. I observed her hosting several social gatherings during the six weeks that I visited SMU. While I did not have the opportunity to speak with her directly, from the outward appearance she did not seem to mind her role at all. This is evident also by the fact that she voluntarily shops for other wives and other female university presidents.

**Length of Presidency**

President Griffin was beginning his thirteenth year as president at Small Midwestern University during the time of my research visit to institution. He has almost twice as many years of experience as president as Dr. Barrett and four times as much experience as president as Dr. Morgan. The extended length of Dr. Griffin's presidency is presented as yet another positive characteristic that influences the rhetorical nature him as president. This part of his identity is explored as a feature that amplifies the power he has acquired over the years.

Because Dr. Griffin has been president for an extended period of time, he has a record of success that at this point permits him to be creative and flexible in
his role as leader with fewer challenges than a newly elected president. During
the time that I visited Small Midwestern University and collected data, President
Griffin was entering his thirteenth year as president, making him the second
longest reigning president in the university’s history. He does not face the same
challenges that a newly elected president might face. Lasting as long as he has as
president indicates that he has demonstrated his skills as leader to the satisfaction
of his constituencies as evidenced by success in sustaining interactions and
relationships with them.

A particular occasion where President Griffin demonstrated his rhetorical
effectiveness as a long-reigning president was at a meeting with the Campaign
Steering Committee. In this meeting, he asserted his authority, articulately
presented his ideas and suggestions, listened attentively, demonstrated his
knowledge regarding institutional objectives, and made useful suggestions.

This was a two-hour meeting; it began at 10:00 a.m. and ended at 12:00
p.m. The main purpose of this meeting was for the committee to select someone
as Honorary Chair of the Capital Campaign Committee who was quite capable of
raising the needed funds for the continued success of the university. President
Griffin emphasized that the person selected as Honorary Chair should be
extremely persuasive with the exceptional ability to raise money toward the
campaign. Other purposes included working out the details of the committee and
other fundraising efforts. There were ten people physically present at this
meeting. Three people were present via a teleconference, one male and two
females. The other seven were actually in the conference room, one African American female, two African American males, one White female, and three White males. One of the males on the phone was the Chair of the Board of Trustees of SMU. Apparently everyone physically present at the meeting were familiar enough with the people and their voices on the phone because when people spoke at this meeting, they did not identify themselves to the people on the phone.

The Vice President for University Development facilitated the meeting. Since he is the administrator most familiar with the monies related to the fundraising efforts, he would be the appropriate person to be in charge of this meeting. And he did most of the talking. However, President Griffin sat at the head of the table. One indication that this was a very serious and important meeting was that President Griffin dressed in a suit and tie for this meeting. Although his authority as president was evident, he only spoke intermittently during the meeting for periods ranging from less than a minute to about four minutes on the various topics that were brought up.

During this meeting the president did a lot of speaking and listening. He appeared to rely heavily on memory and knowledge for his contributions to the discussions. Throughout the discussions President Griffin made reference to past incidents and sufficiently supported his ideas and suggestions with evidence of success of past experiences with the choices made regarding selecting an Honorary Chair for the Capital Campaign Committee. On one occasion, the
University Attorney attempted to interrupt the president when he was speaking, but the president overrode him and finished his statement. President Griffin held his position steadfastly. Everyone referred to each other using their first names except when they referred to the president. He was the only person at the meeting who was addressed by a title.

The way that President Griffin demonstrates his authority is through mild suggestions. For example, at this meeting, he said to the Vice President, “it’s hard to hire people, pay people, and convince them to stay employed in the field of University Development. But we are going to do it though, aren’t we [Leslie]?” Then he folded his arm and clucked. The only time that I witnessed him become slightly forceful was when he was being interrupted while he was talking. Otherwise, he spoke placidly and he smiled a lot.

Another situation where I observed President Griffin asserting his authority as a securely established president happened at a meeting with the president’s Executive Cabinet. This meeting was held in the president’s office in the private conference room. It was a two-hour meeting that started at 10:30 a.m. and ended at 12:30 p.m. There were six senior administrators that made up the university’s Executive Cabinet: President of the University, Vice President for Institutional Development, The Executive Assistant to the President, Vice President of Fiscal and Administrative Affairs, Vice President of Information Technology, and the Vice President of Continuing Education and Academic Affairs. This group meets once a week in the president’s private conference
room. The purpose of these meetings is to de-brief the president on the activities from their perspective areas. Specifically this meeting focused on each of the senior administrators explaining how their offices dealt with the quality of student life at SMU and to explain their development as it related to the capital campaign. President Griffin was the facilitator of this meeting. The meeting was relaxed and informal, even though they were discussing some very important university business. The Vice President of Continuing Education and Academic Affairs was not present at this particular meeting. All of the members of the Executive Cabinet were males. President Griffin sat at the head of the conference table for this meeting, as he did with all meetings that I observed.

At this point of my observation period, classes were not in session and President Griffin did not wear a suit and tie. Instead, he was dressed in slacks and a button-up Small Midwestern University short-sleeved shirt. The other men at the meetings wore suits. President Griffin was the only person to speak for the first eight minutes of the meeting. In this meeting everyone referred to each other by their first names, except when they referred to the president. Laughter was a big part of this meeting.

Whenever anyone disagreed with the president during the meeting, they referred to him as “Mr. President,” recognition of his authority over theirs. After the president finished speaking he was followed by each of the senior administrators in the order that they were presented on the written agenda. Obviously, the president retained information very well. Having a high level of
knowledge of all of the senior administrators' areas was perceptibly evident. No
one interrupted the president when he spoke.

Although President Griffin has established many friendships with
university personnel, he does not allow that friendship to invade the professional
relationships that are necessary to effectively manage the institution. And
although he uses humor, jokes, and laughter as rhetorical strategies in meetings,
his authority as president is still evident. And although his executive cabinet only
consists of males, the length of his presidency allows his decisions to go
unquestioned and to remain acceptable. While it is indisputable that President
Griffin prefers to maintain a stress-free work environment, this approach seems to
work in his favor as president.

I do not think a newly elected president would be able to institute these
types of approaches successfully. Because President Griffin has been president
for thirteen years, he is able to institute these types of approaches successfully. I
would speculate, though, that he has not always been able to do so. I am certain
that he had to work, probably a number of years, to establish these types of
relationships where his preferred method of interacting is effective.

Professional Background

Finally, as a university president, Morgan's professional background or
career pattern is a vital part of his ascension to the presidency. It is an integral
factor that determines the manner in which President Griffin works together with
the university faculty. This section includes details about the history of his academic service and his professional memberships. Additionally, this subcategory includes information that shows the kind of relationships he institutes with the faculty and other members of the institution's communities. Although he has never been a full-time faculty member on the collegiate level, he is still able to develop effective relationships and successfully connect with faculty and other spheres of the academic community.

As a president who has an abundance of experience from within the academic administrative ranks, President Griffin was nominated and selected as president of SMU. Although Dr. Griffin has an extensive academic administrative professional background in lieu of an extensive teaching or research background, he is still very successful as president and at this point in his career faces few challenges as a result of his professional background.

To illustrate the significance of negotiating useful relationships with the university faculty, in spite of the fact that President Griffin was selected from the administrative ranks instead of the academic ranks, I cite several examples of his interaction with the faculty. One such example of President Griffin interacting with the faculty occurred during the Fall Semester Faculty Institute. President Griffin, as head of the university, had to address the faculty to discuss matters as they related to the upcoming academic year. He wanted to make sure that the faculty members were prepared to have a successful year.
The Faculty Institute is a mandatory meeting for all full-time university faculty. It is a multi-day event. The institute is held in the weeks prior to the start of the academic year each year. The Vice President of Academic Affairs is typically in charge of this institute since the faculty report directly to him. However, it is essential that the president of the university address the faculty, also. When I observed this event, the president addressed the faculty for 30 minutes. There were about 100 people in attendance. The audience was very diverse and consisted of males and females of many ethnicities, national and international, but was predominantly African American. Their ages varied too, young, middle-aged, and old. The audience was very attentive during his address.

He reminded them of activities that happened the last academic year; apprised them of what had been happening at SMU during the summer; and explained what his expectations were as they related to the faculty for the upcoming year. He usually emphasized a lot of the same issues to different audiences. After President Griffin was done speaking, other senior level administrators addressed the same audience. President Griffin left shortly after he concluded his address.

One other meeting that details President Griffin’s interaction with an important constituency is a Cabinet Meeting with the Executive Cabinet and the University Directors. Participants of this meeting were the senior administrators and the University Directors (i.e., Director of Admissions, Director of Student Activities, Director of Student Life, University Registrar, etc.) who report directly
to them. This two-hour breakfast meeting was held in the faculty dining room. In all, there were twenty people present.

This was a very informal meeting and was facilitated by President Griffin. He stood at the front of the room and addressed the audience. President Griffin sat at the front of the room, and each time he spoke, he would stand. After a few introductory remarks President Griffin called on each person to present his or her report. The purpose of this meeting was to make sure every office was prepared to accommodate the new and returning students who would be on campus one week from the date of the meeting. No one used notes. When each person rose to give his or her presentation, they just stood up from where they were sitting. There was no written agenda for this meeting. The meeting did not follow a particular order of format. The president basically called on each person and they were expected to give a report. Other subjects that were covered included the quality of student life, recruitment and retention, and first-year orientation.

In an attempt in making sure he was visible and reassuring, President Griffin spoke again after each director's presentations. Before asking the next person to stand and give a report and to show that he was paying attention to what they said, he summarized all of the reports that each person gave by highlighting the main points. After each person was given the opportunity to speak and everyone else given the chance to ask questions, the meeting ended. President Griffin adjourned the meeting on a positive note by saying, “And so I’m going to end this meeting by saying, hey, the best is yet to come. And I want to wish each
and every one of you a very, very successful academic year. And we’re going to be meeting again next month” (Tape 10, 8-14-00). This positive statement was a necessary rhetorical effort in order for the president to maintain a satisfactory relationship with these constituencies.

Analytical Categories

Age

President Griffin’s age is also a major part of his ethos and identity. Age dictates, in part, how people will respond to him in various settings. Age also is a determinant of the type of power and authority he is able to maintain. This section reveals how the fact that he is an older gentleman contributes positively to his influence within the institution.

As a person who has held his position for 13 years, President Griffin is older than the average university president. He was 55, in the average range, when he was first hired. Thirteen years later, he is approaching retirement. At the time of my research he was 68 years old. Being older than the average age for president in an institution that embraces traditional social values can be an asset contributing to his power and status based on the constituents associating age with
experience. The fact that he is older actually provides him with more respect, authority, and power than if he were younger. Experience generates in this environment confidence and people trust his judgment and his leadership abilities because he has proven himself to be capable of efficient leadership. Such status helps him to get things done. Two audiences where these positive effects are illustrated in his rhetorical performance are students and parents. The type and extent of his interaction with them depends on the type of relationship that he is trying to and needs to establish as president.

Whereas Presidents Barrett and Morgan enact age by walking fast, President Griffin, as an older man, enacts age by walking slowly to his destinations and taking his time in meetings. His leadership approaches and rhetorical performance seem much less urgent than the other two participants.

For example, at the beginning of the fall semester, President Griffin attended a Parent/New Student Orientation program where he addressed the first-year students and their parents and relatives, returning students, faculty, administrators, and university affiliates. This was one of the few occasions that I observed President Griffin interacting with students. I had observed him interact with university personnel, community members, alumni, and even a few parents up until this point, but never with students. In part, this lack of opportunity was due to school not officially being in session during most of the observation period. School began four weeks into my visit, and the orientation session was a specific moment when I was finally able to see this type of interaction.
This assembly was held in the gymnasium on SMU’s campus. There were about 250 students, parents, and others in the audience. The program lasted just over an hour. It was held on a Sunday afternoon at 1:30. That was the day when parents, relatives, or friends brought new students to the campus to begin their matriculation. When I arrived on campus that day, the president was standing in the crowd talking to students and parents. Students, like everyone else I had met at the university, seemed to like President Griffin very much, and since he was beginning his thirteenth year as president at Small Midwestern University, I can only assume that his performances on these occasions were very successful.

In his sixteen-minute address, President Griffin spoke without using any notes. Others on the panel included the Student Government Association President, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Director of Admissions, Vice President of Financial and Administrative Affairs, University Reverend, Dean of Students, and the Director of Health Services. Each of those persons addressed the audience. The Director of Admissions presided over this meeting. The purpose of this assembly program was to welcome the new and incoming students to the campus and to the university and to enlighten them on ways of having a successful matriculation. One primary goal of the event, and especially President Griffin, was to meet and greet campus personnel and to inform the students, and particularly the parents, of how supportive the institution would be for the students. President Griffin began his speech by saying:

On behalf of our faculty, staff, and board of trustees, and the entire [Small Midwestern University] family, I’ll just tell you how
grateful we are that you selected SMU as the place to deposit your son, daughter, niece, nephew, granddaughter, grandson, or whatever to us over the next four years. Let me simply begin by saying we will guarantee that we will help your loved one explore all of the offices that are possibly available to young people in America and indeed in the world in the next four years. My purpose here is twofold: simply to say welcome to each and every one of you in here and to introduce a few thoughts that I want to share with you first from the President’s perspective after having had this very same role that you are going through right now. (8-20-00, Tape 13)

The president then highlighted a few points, talked about each one of them briefly, and conveyed his delight that they were there. The parents and the students seemed very excited about the upcoming year. There was a lot of laughter and excited conversation. President Griffin mostly stressed to the students the type of behavior and commitment that would be necessary to ensure success.

Before the program began, President Griffin met with as many parents and students as he possibly could, introducing himself and talking to them about life as a student as SMU. During the Parent/New Student Orientation, President Griffin, used his age rhetorically to convey an image of a concerned father instead of coming off as the chief university official. He welcomed the students and reassured their parents that their children could be well taken care of while attending SMU. Although a younger president could have conveyed the same message, parents seemed comfortable knowing that they were leaving their children at a university where there was an older more experienced president. His low-stress, soothing, and paternal disposition seemed to comfort the parents and
reassure the students. Since SMU is located in a small tight knit community environment, President Griffin’s experience as president is well known and publicized throughout the community.

The advantage of being an older president in this situation was that he was able to use this personal characteristic to generate trust. The students were more likely to believe that he would live up to his promises because he has proven that he is committed to the students by his relationships with the current and returning students. Parents are more likely to believe in him and his promises because they can relate to him in a lot of ways and because his track record speaks for itself. They see similarities in President Griffin with their own personalities and expectations as parents. They were more likely to believe that he would live up to his words and promises because of his extensive experience as president and because of his sincerity and commitment in nurturing the students. Age gives President Griffin a mechanism for constructing power to establish and maintain necessary and positive relationships with two very important constituencies—parents and students.

**Race**

Being an African American male president at a Historically Black College or University reduces the problems caused by race for President Griffin at SMU with his internal audiences and is at a minimum for him and the university with his external audiences. The majority of the internal audiences are African
American, though not exclusively. So with the intra-racial composition of the audiences, race is less likely to create challenges. Some of the external audiences at SMU are inter-racial and in some cases predominantly White. President Griffin negotiates both of these audiences effectively and race emerges as a central factor that determines the success of the interactions with the audiences.

Throughout the history of Small Midwestern University the presidency has always been occupied by an African American male. The only exception is that the very first president of SMU was a White male. Given this fact, most of the university constituencies are accustomed to dealing with an African American male as president of the university. The fact that President Griffin is African American adds power to his role as president because his identity fits the norms and expectations of that position.

The history of African Americans as university presidents has not always been without racism looming as a major problem. Although Small Midwestern University is not located in the deep south, as an HBCU, the history of its university presidents is similar to the history of southern university presidents in that they all faced crucial difficulties in negotiating their ideologies, the universities’ ideologies, and societal attitudes of the time. From the middle of the nineteenth century onward, most of the college and university presidents were specifically chosen by the White individuals and organizations that funded and sponsored many of the institutions.
When the African American leaders were chosen by these White groups to lead an institution, they were aware that they were expected to advance particular ideologies. These ideologies almost always consisted of racial boundaries for the leaders, the institutions themselves, as well as the students. The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* also notes, “The presidents of the black colleges who were African American were well versed in the etiquette of Southern Jim Crow. Particularly, they were cooperative in adopting an academic curriculum that was designed to maintain White supremacy and assure the continuing inferior status of black people. Black college presidents were expected to go about their business training black teachers and clergy, and to stay out of politics and the affairs of Whites” (“The Black College President Who Refused to Toady to Birmingham’s ‘Big Mules’” 62).

During the Reconstruction Era, many African American university presidents were strictly controlled by White affiliates of HBCUs who wanted to ensure that White citizenship was not interrupted by the aspirations of African Americans. As long as the university presidents made sure no one (African Americans) at the university attempted to step out of their place as second-class citizens, African Americans and Whites could coexist. The difficulty in managing all of these positions were that the presidents were so tightly controlled by the Whites that it was complicated to assert their own authority within their own race and impossible to assert any type of power outside of their race. Since
the HBCUs relied so heavily on the financial support from Whites to keep their
doors open, it was hard to try to resist their control.

Novelist Ralph Ellison offers a detailed description of the attitude of the
fictional African American university president, Dr. Bledsoe, in his book *Invisible
Man*. The fictional president shares insight that reflects the dilemmas of African
American university presidents at that time:

I’se big and black and I say “Yes, suh” as loudly as any burrhead
when it’s convenient, but I’m still the king down here. I don’t care
how much it appears otherwise. Power doesn’t have to show off.
Power is confident, self-assuring, self-starting and self-stopping,
self-warming, and self-justifying. When you have it, you know it.
Let the Negroes snicker and the crackers laugh! Those are the
facts, son. The only ones I ever pretend to please are big White
folk, and even those I control more than they control me. This is a
power set-up, son, and I’m at the controls. (142)

This is an explanation that Dr. Bledsoe is giving to a student at The College (a
fictional HBCU in the text) who is being expelled from school because he takes a
White benefactor to distasteful places predominantly inhabited by the lower class
citizenry of African Americans. The purpose of the passage is for the president
(Dr. Bledsoe) to explain how even though he has to pretend to approve of the
expected behavior that the White benefactors have of him, he admits that the
performance is a means to an end. Unfortunately, sometimes African American
presidents have to behave in certain ways, ignore some things, and tolerate others
just to advance the success of the institutions and in some cases, their own
personal and professional agendas.
However, as time passed there were some African American presidents who refused to accept racial inferiority. Lucius Holsey Pitts of Miles College in Birmingham, Alabama, is one example of an African American university president who refused to accommodate racial powerlessness. Many presidents before him and many presidents after him worked against this model of compliance. In some cases the resistance to racial dominance was subtle, and in many other cases more noticeable and forceful pursuits of opposition were performed.

Even though race has always risen as a problem between and among different ethnicities, sometimes it materializes as a problem within races. A recent example of race as a problem between minority groups is the internal dispute that occurred at a public HBCU, Virginia State University. African American and foreign-born African faculty members are in disagreement regarding certain practices at the institution. In essence, “African-born faculty members claim discriminatory policies favoring African American professors. In turn, African American professors say that the administration acts unfairly in its dealings with them” (“The Destructive Faculty Feud at Virginia State University 79). Additionally, the foreign-born professors allege that Virginia State University’s president, Eddie N. Moore, Jr., “tried to divert their federal research grants to African American faculty” (79). There are a number of lawsuits and quite a bit of dissatisfaction among the professors and the university administration. Whenever people experience a sense of a loss of control, in this
case, academic control, problems always arise and it appears that race is at the root of the problems. University presidents are the ones whom everyone expects to eliminate the problem of racism, even though in many cases they are the victims of racism—sometimes merely from just being in the position.

Although President Griffin reigns at a time when racial tensions between and among different ethnic groups have been abolished to a practical extent in most cases, race still looms as a concern for himself and the advancement and success of the university. While President Griffin is not faced with blatant racist thinking and racist beliefs, as an African American in a leadership position he must always be able to negotiate the possibility of racism and consider how it might affect the survival of Small Midwestern University.

There are a few historical examples of African American university presidents being dismissed as leaders because of their personal beliefs and ways of negotiating those beliefs. For instance, in the early part of the 20th century E. L. Blackshear, president of Prairie View College of Texas, was dismissed for being on the wrong side of the temperance question. Griffin DeSaille Tucker, president of Florida Colored Normal School, was fired for appointing too many northern teachers who, allegedly, sneered at 'southern institutions' and instilled in their students contempt for the 'agricultural and industrial life of the race.' And finally, Richard R. Wright, longtime president of Georgia State Industrial College in Savannah, was told to stop teaching Latin (Journal of Blacks in Higher
President Griffin knows that he is in a precarious position as an African American university president because there are so many audiences and constituents that must be satisfied. And his decisions, political beliefs, and ways of managing every situation at SMU is critical to his identity and ethos as president. While I do not think that in this day and age he would be relieved of his duties as president if he taught Latin, it remains reasonable to assume that some of the constituencies might not offer their support to the institution if the university’s ideologies conflicted with their own individual ideologies. President Griffin is aware that he must negotiate the needs of the institution with his own principles, his constituents’ expectations, and the university’s standards. He recognizes that race is a dynamic that must always be measured in any rhetorical situation and that his rhetorical effectiveness is critical.

Gender

Being a male president who occupies a role that is traditionally occupied by a male serves as an attribute that decreases challenges for President Griffin at Small Midwestern University. This attribute is affirmed by his modus operandi as president. As a male president, I observed him managing situations, saying things, and making decisions about things in ways that would be problematic for a female. President Griffin used a lot of humor, laughter, and jokes when he
interacted with his audiences. Gender is a principal recognizable characteristic of his identity and ethos and the rhetorical nature of his presidency. Much power is associated with him simply based on the fact that he is male.

Dr. Griffin employed many strategies that indicate his gender is a catalyst of privilege. Often he used humor when interacting with people. He explained that sometimes he "has a propensity to get ridiculous at times" and that often there is an abundance of laughter in meetings and exchanges with his constituents. President Griffin teases a lot and he says he does so to promote a stress-free environment. In other cases he explains that sometimes the job can become so tense that he needs to relax in order to deal with the situations and he does so by telling jokes or doing something funny to relieve his mind before addressing that situation. As a male, he can more easily get away with using humor and telling jokes than could a female. If a female president were to employ such a strategy, she probably would not be taken seriously, especially if she did it often. Many of her constituencies would likely have a problem with that and would expect her to behave differently—even if using humor and jokes was harmless. As a male president, privileges are afforded to Dr. Griffin, particularly since he has been president for thirteen years. That is another reason why he can use such rhetorical strategies as laughter and can deliberately, actively, and constantly promote a stress-free work environment. If anyone was bothered by his strategy it was not revealed. Perhaps that was because he is the president, after all, and no one wants to have an awkward relationship with the boss—particularly in such an intimate
work environment. The general consensus at SMU is that humor, jokes, and laughter are okay and they all seem to work well in their environment.

Regardless of the types of rhetorical strategies he uses, Dr. Griffin is securely established in his position as president. The only challenges that he faces as president are the ones specifically related to the job itself, like fundraising. Judging from his audiences and their interactions with him, President Griffin does not encounter any discriminatory elements such as ageism, racism, or sexism. He is not faced with additional challenges on the basis of race; only rarely is that an issue and is always resolved. He does not encounter any challenges on the bases of his presidential circumstances, and those circumstances seem to work in his favor. And gender does not cause any additional challenges for him. His age seems to work more favorably for him than against him in forming and building relationships with his constituents.

**Ethos and Authority**

Keeping the lines of communication open and interacting with the university constituencies are essential to a president’s success. President Griffin said that, “successfully managing the university is not a singular effort” (personal interview 8-28-00). He said as president, “I know that I must communicate with as many university affiliates as necessary in order to promote achievement within and outside of the university” (personal interview 8-28-00). He further explained that he welcomes the opportunities each time they arise. President Griffin has

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clearly been accepted by the university family as a great leader for Small Midwestern University as affirmed by his past academic administrative experience at other institutions of higher learning. The extent of his professional background provides him with the experience vital to his authority and ethos as a valuable leader.

President Griffin is very well respected by students, staff, administrators, faculty, alumni, legislators, trustees, and community members. Being male, people are less inclined to second guess him or undermine his authority. He does not have to constantly work to maintain his professional and personal ethos and authority because over the thirteen years that he has been president he has successfully proven himself and his capabilities whereas now he can relax. This relaxation is evident in his everyday behavior and rhetorical performance as president. He has a calm demeanor and he works quietly yet efficiently to attain personal and university goals.
CHAPTER 6

MEANING-MAKING

The information in this final chapter includes 1) a summary of the three cases, 2) cross-case analyses that identify findings and conclusions, and 3) implications for further research. The summary contains data that recapitulate main ideas of the three cases and the organization of those ideas. The cross-case analyses classify the data using the three analytical categories (age, race, and gender) and present the findings and conclusions that encapsulate all of the main ideas and illustrate the significance of those ideas in relation to the study. And the implications for further research identify topics and schemes that were raised but not fully developed in this project.

Summary

This project is guided by three main research questions:

- What happens at a university when a female occupies a role as president that is typically occupied by a male?
• What happens at a university when a young African American male occupies a position as president that is typically occupied by an older White male?

• What happens at a university when a person’s age, race, and gender match the age, race, and gender of the person who customarily occupies the presidency?

Anchoring the data using these three central questions allows me to study the three participants based on gender, race, and the neutralizing of these factors.

**Cross-Case Analyses**

As a woman inhabiting a role conventionally inhabited by a male, President Linda Barrett and her rhetorical experiences allow me to study a university presidency as a gendered experience. As an African American operating in a role customarily operated by a White male, President David Morgan and his rhetorical performances allow me to study a university presidency as a racialized experience. As an African American male occupying a role traditionally occupied by an African American male, President Paul Griffin and his rhetorical effectiveness allow me to study a university presidency as a neutral experience. Age, race, and gender are social constructs used to determine whether they adversely affect the participants’ responsibilities as leaders. Using these socially situated phenomena, a picture of their identity and ethos as African American university presidents is created. Furthermore, a close examination of
the three participants helps in understanding the type of power that emerges as a result of their individual and collective experiences as presidents.

This study is designed to study the rhetorical practices and the rhetorical events that create challenges, necessitate negotiations, and generate power for these participants after they have been selected as presidents, not before they became presidents. They are all powerful in their own individual ways and that power structure changes from one setting and from one constituency to another. Race, gender, age did not prevent them from becoming president, but they do surface as barriers or challenges in completing individual tasks as presidents.

In terms of presidential circumstances, I used the same ones to study both Barrett and Griffin since they are both presidents at an HBCU. The data that I collected and the observations that I made also dictated that these sub-categories would be most effective in illustrating Barrett’s and Griffin’s ethos and identity. With Morgan I included CCSYSTEM as a presidential circumstance because it was a significant part of his rhetorical performance. Age warranted its own analytical category for President Morgan because of its rhetorical significance to his identity. Gender is not used as an analytical category for President Morgan because all of the presidents at Large Midwestern University have been males. Therefore, gender did not rise as an important rhetorical determinant of Morgan’s identity and ethos.

For President Barrett the inherited presidency created substantial challenges for her because her predecessor left behind a tainted presidency.
President Barrett was charged with improving Small Southeastern University’s image, while simultaneously avoiding criticism. Inherited presidency for President Morgan did not create any challenges because his predecessor’s leadership style was labeled dictatorial and was disapproved by the majority of Large Midwestern University’s constituencies. Since President Morgan possesses a democratic leadership style, he was embraced by the constituents. President Griffin succeeded the only female president in the history of Small Midwestern University. Since the governance of SMU typically prefers a male as president, he was easily accepted by the university personnel because he is male and was replacing a female, representing a return to the status quo.

Marital status created challenges for President Barrett because she is a divorcée. Keeping in mind that her predecessor was involved in an open scandalous extramarital affair and the institution is located in a city with a Christian stronghold, being married is a major part of the identity of the university president at SSU. Because she is not married, President Barrett had to always find ways to negotiate her position. Presidents Morgan and Griffin are both married and were not confronted with any challenges on the basis of marital status.

President Barrett was beginning her sixth year as president when I conducted research; President Morgan his third year; President Griffin his thirteenth year. Barrett did not face any challenges on the basis of the length of presidency. She had spent a year as interim president and was eventually selected
as president. President Morgan did face challenges as a third-year president. The challenge was again to prove himself as a capable president. So far he has been successful. President Griffin did not face any challenges on the basis of the length of his presidency since he has been president for thirteen years.

Being a full professor and coming from the academic ranks, President Barrett’s professional background did not cause any challenges for her with the university faculty. As a former faculty member herself, she probably has a good idea of the expectations of the faculty at the university and can negotiate those expectations successfully. President Morgan’s professional background is in academic administration. But because he is accustomed to dealing with mostly White audiences, his professional background creates minimal challenges for him as president. To negotiate those challenges, he meets frequently with the faculty and their representatives and keeps the lines of communication open between them. President Griffin did not face any challenges based on his professional background because of his familiarity with the expectations of the university faculty at the HBCU. His professional background is also in academic administration.

The additional presidential circumstance for President Morgan was CCSYSTEM, a new compensation system that was being implemented. I include this as a circumstance because it took up so much of President Morgan’s time and was such a crucial concern for almost everyone at LMU. This compensation system created many challenges for President Morgan because it brought about a
great deal of dissatisfaction and anger among the people who were affected by the change. Also, a lot of the facts surrounding the new system were miscommunicated and misconstrued. President Morgan was faced with the challenge of eliminating these problems. He did so by meeting frequently with the university personnel and working steadfastly to disseminate accurate information to everyone who needed it.

The first analytical category for the participants is age. As a 56-year-old, President Barrett did not encounter any challenges on the basis of her age. As a 68-year-old President Griffin did not encounter any challenges on the basis of his age. In fact, being older afforded them extra authority as president. They were least likely to be challenged by their audiences because of their age and professional experience. President Morgan did face a few minor challenges because he is only 44 years old, 13 years younger than the average age for a university president. Although they were not costly challenges, he was faced with having to prove himself and his abilities as a younger president and gain the faith and respect of his audiences.

Race as an analytical category for President Barrett created challenges mostly with her external audiences. Those audiences include people with no direct affiliation to SSU, but who are potential financial donors to the institutions. Most of the people in the external audiences are White. Because of the climate of the race relations between the community and the university, race did create some challenges for President Barrett. Being the first African American president at
this public institution (LMU), President Morgan had to deal with race on many levels. Although he did not encounter any direct problems associated with race, he does have to be race conscious. He also had to ensure his cultural identity is affirmed in ways other than just by other African Americans because most of his audiences are predominantly White. Race did not cause any challenges for President Griffin because he operates with mostly African American audiences. With the audiences that are composed of Whites, he has successfully established relationships with them over the past thirteen years where race would not be an adverse issue.

President Barrett was faced with many challenges on the basis of gender as a female occupying a male’s role. Gender did not emerge as an issue for President Morgan or President Griffin.

Identity is not fixed for any of the three participants. Because President Barrett is located at an HBCU her cultural identity is affirmed but not her gender identity because she is occupying a role that is traditionally reserved for an African American male. To partially negotiate this problem she surrounds herself with female-dominant audiences. She also maintains an authoritative leadership style. Because President Morgan is located at a PWI, his cultural identity is not affirmed and gender identity not a real issue. He partially negotiates this problem by surrounding himself with racially and gender diverse audiences. President Morgan uses a very democratic leadership style. Since President Griffin is located at an HBCU, his cultural identity is affirmed and gender identity is not a
real issue but works as a positive feature. Griffin surrounds himself with male-dominant audiences. President Griffin tries to maintain his democratic leadership style.

Other Constructions of Ethos and Authority

While the dissertation does not focus on the role of writing in constructions of ethos for these presidents, the written documents and artifacts that I collected during my research site visits are significant in understanding how writing or communication functions as part of the presidents' identities and construction of ethos. All are successful communicators based on different sets of criteria and their individual social, professional, and cultural circumstances. To explore the presidents' professional identities and ethos more fully, this section examines just one genre, electronic mail. Presidents Barrett, Morgan, and Griffin differ in their use of this medium, especially as it functions as a mechanism for communicating with their constituencies.

Electronic Mail

President Barrett relies heavily on electronic mail in her daily operations as the chief leader, especially for internal communication. She uses electronic mail to schedule meetings, "put out fires," (personal interview) answer questions, and to communicate with students. After receiving a copy of an electronic message that she composed, I observed that it was typed in all capital letters. I
asked her if she was familiar with electronic mail netiquette that stipulates that when one types messages in all capital letters it is considered rude. She responded,

I don’t care about that. As long as I am able to send my message and receive a response then it works for me. Besides, people know when they receive a message from me without having to see my name because I always type in all capital letters. I don’t have the best vision and I don’t plan to strain my eyes to satisfy some rule that I don’t know its origin. And if it’s a problem, no one has ever mentioned it to me. (Personal Interview 10-30-00)

In her usual direct style, President Barrett made it clear that she makes her own rules about the way she communicates through email. The rhetorical significance in this example is that an important part of Barrett’s ethos emerges. The part that emerges is her unwillingness to follow rules that do not make sense to her and that adversely affect her style of communicating. Instead, she operates under her own rule by continuing to type email messages in all capital letters, until someone complains.

However, even then I am not convinced that she would change her style to accommodate this perspective because she is more comfortable and satisfied using her chosen style. President Barrett also mentioned that she “receives many electronic messages that are typed in all capital letters and she has absolutely no problem with that.”

Electronic communication is a major part of President Barrett’s job. As soon as she gets settled into her office each day, one of the first things that she does is to check her electronic mail. She conducts a lot of business via the
computer. Throughout the day she sends and receives important messages related to university business. Her internal audiences, especially, are aware that one sure way to contact her is through electronic mail, and they do so very often.

It was during the first week of my research site visit to Small Southeastern University that President Barrett mentioned that her mail system was not working. Getting that situation remedied was her top priority that day. Immediately she called the computer technician and demanded that he do whatever he needed to in order to get her electronic mail working properly because she was essentially “paralyzed” without it. Fortunately, President Barrett was only without email for a couple of hours. Barrett views email as a convenience, a quick and easy way to conduct business.

Ironically, one of the trademarks of her presidency was her making Small Southeastern University the first Historically Black College or University to become a laptop university. So computer technology is a high priority for her as well as for the students at SSU.

The use of electronic mail for President Morgan at Large Midwestern University was slightly different from that of President Barrett, yet it was an equally important rhetorical tool to his job. President Morgan was so busy with office meetings, phone calls, and making appearances at different on campus and off campus functions and programs that it is was just not possible to check email regularly throughout the day. From the beginning of his work day to the end of it,
his time was totally occupied. Although my primary way of contacting him initially to ask him to be a participant in my research project was via email, during the four weeks that I observed him, it was evident that I was fortunate to have gotten such a quick response from him since he rarely had time during the course of the day to check email.

On one occasion, I had the opportunity to ask him specifically about the role of electronic mail use in his job as president. He explained,

Because I am so busy with so many other things, I mostly check email at night, usually after 10:00 p.m. Being president is a 24-hour a day 7-days a week job. However, my cut off point is 10pm, except in cases of emergencies. People will call me as late as I will permit, so everyone knows that I prefer not be bothered when I am home with my family. I am more than just a president. I am a husband and a father. To me, there is no real reason why anyone would need to contact me after 10pm unless it is an extreme emergency. That really hasn’t been a problem, but most times I am busy until well after 10pm. People these days rely heavily on email and what’s so demanding to me is that they expect instantaneous responses. I haven’t really figured out a way to manage the high volume of email in which I am inundated, but it’s something I plan to work on to better allocate my time to my responsibilities. Sometimes, however, it’s quite frankly easier to do email instead of meeting with people. The benefit of using email is that I am able to get a lot of work done. And sometimes I am even able to stay in touch with friends and family, so it’s not always work related. (Personal Interview 9-28-00)

Based on this response, using email functions as a method of completing tasks, giving assignments, communicating information, acknowledging people, and exchanging ideas. Additionally, it functions as an outlet for President Morgan, a way to breathe freely and to get work done in a more relaxing way. Because he is a new and young president, (beginning his third year), he is of the
technological era that places a heavy emphasis on the use of electronic communication. He adapts to this part of his leadership quite easily and effectively, though not all of the time willingly.

In contrast, President Paul Griffin at Small Midwestern University has been president much longer (thirteen years) and is much older than both Presidents Barrett and Morgan. President Griffin is not so quick to use email or any form of technological communication, with the telephone being the one exception. While visiting SMU, I found out that President Griffin rarely uses email. I also never even witnessed him turn on or use the computer in his office. He does have an email account and many others at the university do use email as a primary means of communicating and getting work done. However, President Griffin does not. Instead of checking his own email, he has his email messages printed out once weekly and brought to him to review them. Then, he sets time aside to respond to the messages; usually he will respond by telephone, and sometimes by letter or memorandum. It all depends on the nature of the communication. Sometimes the messages are for informational purposes only.

President Griffin explains that sometimes he gets so many messages that they take up an entire ream of paper when they are printed. I also asked him how he viewed attachments or files that may accompany an email message and he said, “I plan to improve my computer literacy skills someday, but the current approach works for him.” He went on to say, “People who really need to contact me know that the best way to do so is by phone and not through email.” Ironically, even
though he told me that he does not know how to type, he strongly emphasizes and encourages students’ use and familiarity with technology and electronic communication.

Although technology and electronic communication are not his forte, he has been successful as president, as demonstrated by the fact that he has maintained high academic standards for the students, secured the single most highest donation by one person ($2 million) in the university’s history, increased student enrollment and financial stability. Of the three presidents, his ways of managing the institution are more traditional and some might argue technologically obsolete. Nevertheless, he has made rhetorical decisions that have worked in the university’s favor. His approach to using technology himself to advance the goals of the institution, or his lack thereof, is indicative of his age, a marker of his identity, and a lens for seeing how, as an older president, traditional practices (memo writing, phone calls) remain an important part of his construction of ethos.

President Griffin has been president twice as long as Barrett and four times as long as Morgan. Thus, his experience and his training permit him to take non-conventional approaches to leadership. That coupled with his age and gender highlight a major part of his identity and ethos—that of a successful non-traditional leader who makes decisions based on his own experiences, training, and expertise with little or no influence for more modern ways of engaging texts and audiences.
Successful Communicators

Presidents Barrett, Morgan, and Griffin are all successful communicators, an essential requirement for being a university president. Barrett’s success as a communicator is evident in the way that she carefully reads her audiences, manages situations, is consistent with her leadership style, and confidently uses power and authority. Specific achievements during her tenure as president include turning the university into a laptop university, conducting several successful fundraising campaigns, hiring qualified employees, increasing student enrollment, raising funds to purchase a $250,000 bronze mascot for the university, building a new stadium and fieldhouse, and increasing the university’s endowment.

When I asked her about her leadership style and the rhetorical choices she makes in managing the institution and its assets, she told me that she has to be all things to many people because “people are prepared to cut off my knees and yours.” Barrett explained that while she has a lot of support from many people, there are some who are “waiting in the wings for me to fail.” She further stated that she has to constantly watch “what she says and to whom she says it. It’s an interesting job.”

Another indication of her success as a communicator and as president is reflected in the fact that she knows a lot of historical facts and data about the university and many, many important people associated it with the university. Barrett maintains that it is mandatory to know these things. “People always try to
put you on the spot. And the worst thing that can happen is to be caught off guard and unprepared to deal with people whether you want to or not.”

In addition to these things, President Barrett is very talkative, open, direct, honest, and forthcoming with necessary and useful information. She believes that when people feel like you are being honest with them they are more inclined to work with you. Very often you’ll get what you want out of the conversation, whether its agreement, support, or money. I believe in communicating with people. Sometimes they don’t want to hear what I have to say, but if they need to hear it I don’t have a problem telling them. Many people claim they hate being the bearer of bad news, but if you don’t tell your folks that they need to know to it becomes increasingly difficult or unrealistic to expect them to address a situation. (Personal Interview 8-30-60)

As a successful communicator, she prefers to put things in writing; that way it’s more official. She contends, “Verbal and oral ideas aren’t enough. I can’t take them to a meeting or get them acted upon by anyone. It’s useless. I prefer writing or having things put in writing.”

President Morgan is equally as successful as Barrett in both similar and different ways. His success as a communicator is based on the ways he gathers facts, shares information, disseminates ideas, collaborates with others, manages his time, and meets frequently with his constituencies. Additionally, President Morgan is very personable and approachable. He takes very serious, yet diplomatic approaches in dealing with people. An important marker of his success as a communicator is the opinion of others at the university. Several of his constituents, ranging from students to upper level administrators, consistently made positive comments about him, particularly about his leadership style and his
ability to communicate so well with people. Other features of his success include his promptness in responding to his audiences and his open and charismatic style in facilitating meetings. He is efficient and organized.

Before attending any meeting, President Morgan makes sure he has all the facts he will need in order to cover the meeting. He spends enough time preparing for meetings so that he can radiate confidence and knowledge. Morgan educates himself on many topics and on almost everything that happens at LMU. He says, “I have to know a little bit about a lot of things, people, and situations if I am to be successful. I take my work very serious. You may have noticed that I am a stickler for time.” These characteristics allow him to lead by example because he says he expects nothing less than this from everyone else. These qualities are all part of his identity and ethos as a young African American male leader in a predominantly White environment.

In his frequent meetings with his constituencies, Morgan indicates that he tries to keep meetings to 60 minutes or less, all because people are very busy. It’s appropriate to have a really limited time frame upon which business can be done, especially in a larger group setting. But I try to have a realistic time frame upon which we can get work done and conduct it. And I usually start on time, and I’ll also end on time. I tend to be very much to the point. I try not to be short or terse but rather distinctive in terms of what we need to do (Personal Interview 9-28-00).

To negotiate the needs of his constituencies and to be an effective leader,

President Morgan enacts all of the aforementioned rhetorical tools.
To further illustrate aspects of his professional identity and ethos that make him a successful communicator and rhetor, I turn to his perspectives about himself as a leader. In sharing information, collaborating with others, and disseminating ideas, Morgan says about his presidency,

Yeah well it’s been almost three years now. I’ve completed two full years, and I’m beginning my third year here. This is pretty much all I know. I mean, all I know is higher education, and so that’s something that I am keenly interested in and familiar with. And I also like people, too. So, it is really important just in terms of communication strategy to know about individuals and their work. I’m not a big individual in terms of the personal aspects associated with individuals work with me, but, in terms of understanding, level, scope, extent of responsibilities, and duties within the university, it’s really important for me to do that. So I spent a lot of time, in advance of coming here, getting to know individuals, getting to know personalities, and getting to know work responsibilities. (Personal Interview 9-28-00)

Part of being a successful communicator is to communicate and interact with all audiences. One audience that I did not observe President Morgan interacting much was with students. When I asked him how often he meets with students or student organizations he explained:

I established the student advisory council. Approximately 30 students are appointed to meet with me on a regular basis. I also meet with the residence hall association and really any other student groups that are interested in meeting with me. To the extent that my schedule will permit, anyone can call and get an appointment with me—including students. However, if students see me on campus, they’ll probably ask me something, and I’ll respond at that point in time. Or they may see me at some type of social function and that’s fine, too. But as a routine way of doing business, I would prefer that people meet with me on a scheduled appointment basis because I am better able to respond to their issues and concerns. (Personal Interview 9-19-00)
Communicating in direct and personal ways with a number of constituencies and preparing thoroughly for meetings are two practices by which President Morgan achieves success as a leader.

President Griffin is a successful communicator, also. His success is defined by the strategies he uses to manage situations and by his ability to make audiences feel welcomed in ways that work in his favor and in the university’s favor. Griffin tries to always maintain a positive demeanor and a stress-free environment in forming and building relationships. He thinks people are more productive that way. My first official interview with him serves as a prime example of President Griffin using laughter and humor as part of his professional identity and ethos. For example, when I asked him too many questions and framed them in the form of just one question, instead of him being bothered by that, he simply chuckled and asked, “You want to break all that down? I’m just a little country boy from Alabama.” We laughed it off and proceeded with the interview. The significance of that rhetorical moment is that it illustrates his preference for informality as opposed to formality in getting a task done—in this case the interview—instead of taking oneself too serious. President Griffin even joked about the possibility of changing his mind about participating in my research project, in addition to joking about not answering any of my interview questions.

When I asked Griffin about his self-perception as a leader, he said,

Mine is a simple formula. I think you have to have a certain amount of diplomacy. You have to be, I think, a good listener.
And I think, at the same time, you have to be able to think pretty quickly on your feet. And other than that, I think you just have to be yourself to a great extent. I think there are multiple—you have to have multiple constructs for particular audiences and so forth. And I think the circumstances dictate the types of interactions you have. (Personal Interview 8-28-00)

To explore the extent to which he negotiates his identity and ethos when he does deal with different audiences, Griffin explained that he has to have an “attitude of approachability.” He says he “tries not to be an intimidating type of figure.” President Griffin further explains that he thinks there are “certain situations, with students particularly, and with faculty and staff to a lesser degree where folks seem to be in awe of authority. And I try to remove any blocks like that” (Personal Interview 8-18-00).

Based on his own admission, President Griffin enacts a type of leadership and communication approach where he attempts to de-center his authority as president in order to lead and communicate effectively. To balance the authority even more, he works against the possibility of having power simply due to his gender. In addition he credits the women in his life for much of his success: “My mom and my wife and my daughter have done a good job on me. They have me well-trained.” There are several aspects that President Griffin identified as some of his daily responsibilities as leader of an institution:

Day to day operations involve a number of things. You have mail to respond to; you have telephone messages to respond to. You have people to meet with; you have little crises that you may have to attend to; you have to continuously orchestrate a systematic pursuit of the university’s overall goals and objectives. There are many acts of diplomacy that you may have to engage in—drop-in
persons that you may have. You may have alumnus or alumnae who just happens to be in the area and wants to drop by. You may have a parent who may want to drop in just to say hello, and for the good of the institution, these are things that you find yourself compelled at least to command some attention to. (Personal Interview 8-28-00)

In addition to these diplomatic and political engagements, President Griffin identifies more challenging aspects of his job. He says, “The most challenging aspect is really acquiring sufficient resources. Next to that, another great challenge is educating young men and women to become effective and useful citizens in a democratic society.”

**Conclusion**

Although I collected numerous written documents and artifacts at each of the three research sites, a thorough textual analysis did not become a primary focus in this dissertation. I collected many documents: inaugural addresses, state of the university addresses, commencement addresses, special program addresses, several speeches, letters, and memoranda from all three of them. Such documents can be used to go beyond the general analysis of identity and ethos to explore the extent to which writing participates in this process. What this project does focus on is an analysis of age, race, and gender for the three participants in three different cultures and workplace environments, surrounded by very diverse circumstances.
Implications for Further Research

At this point in academe, we now have a group of successful African Americans who constitute a cohort of leaders from whom we can gather data and document performance, instead of operating based more on stereotypes and assumptions. This project was designed to add to this larger documentation project. It serves as an example of critical inquiry and analyses through socially constructed lenses—gender, race, and age. Examining such components in terms of identity and ethos construction situates the project in rhetorical studies. Ultimately, however, many questions are answered, but many more are raised. It brings to the forefront an opportunity for other researchers to continue the investigation and rhetorical performances of African Americans as effective rhetors.

The data in this dissertation speak to issues grounded by age, race, and gender. There are other characteristics that can highlight the experiences of African American university presidents (e.g., type of institution, location of institution). Also, there are questions that this project does not address. For example, what would identity and ethos look like for an African American female president at a PWI? Do rhetorical practices vary at different times of the academic year for a university president? What happens if an African American male educated at a PWI become president of an HBCU? What are the implications of marital status between men and women university presidents? How does institutional type affect challenges (i.e., public v. private, men v.
women, religious v. state, HBCU v. PWI)? What did President Griffin’s presidency look like in the first three years? What does presidential leadership look like longitudinally? Does a longitudinal trajectory vary by gender, race, age, or other factors? These questions and others can be raised and explored to study more fully the complexity of identity, authority, and ethos for African Americans in academe, especially those who are in leadership positions.

Despite the limits for this project that were set by the focus and the analytical approach, there are some implications that should be highlighted:

A) What were the advantages that accrued in this analysis because of the particular methods that I chose—case study approach and qualitative data collection strategies?

B) Why does raising such questions matter?

C) What advice do I offer to researchers who are studying rhetorical practices in institutional settings?

In social science research and as field researchers, scholars must establish or already have some type of relationship or connection to the community in which they propose to study. Sometimes that might mean shifting their roles as they enter and study in an identified community. Researchers are also sometimes required to participate on some level as a new member in the culture that they are studying. Although social researchers are conducting their studies with the hopes of gaining information about a particular culture or its members, they also have to share information about themselves as part of a requirement of the research
process. The sharing of information is critical in order for the researchers to establish rapport with the people or communities that they study.

As an African American researcher studying other African Americans for the purpose of creating and sharing knowledge, I was at an advantage because of my race. I was able to establish good relationships with my participants, and being African American made that task easier because, on some level, I was a member of their community already. The African American participants, arguably, were less hesitant to share information with me and invite me into their space on such intimate levels because of my race. As a scholar engaging in qualitative research studying the implications of social constructions such as age, race, and gender, it was imperative that I gain access to the community that I proposed to study and work to achieve my set goals. Hence, I began this project knowing that the specific boundaries that my own racial status would create were few.

The advantage for choosing the case study and qualitative research approach is that researchers get to know their participants on deeper levels because they work so closely with the participants in their natural settings. Researchers who engage in qualitative research work closely with their participants and most of the data and knowledge comes primarily from the participants themselves or from what the participants allow the researcher access. Stephen Doheny-Farina declares, "It is the research subjects who are familiar with the shared meanings that exist in a culture; it is they who will guide the researcher’s behavior and interpretations—for example, by identifying new sources of information or
alerting the researcher to an upcoming event that might have more significance than the researcher had realized” (507).

Conducting interviews, doing direct observations, and recording field notes are qualitative methods of collecting data that give field researchers tremendous access to multiple potential outlets that yield possibilities extensive knowledge-making by describing, organizing, and interpreting cultures.

For researchers who are studying rhetorical practices in institutional settings, I offer the following advice. Devise as many strategies as possible to collect data. Institute useful ways to catalog that data as they relate to your stated research objectives. Understand as fully as possible what counts as evidence from the setting you are studying. Understand that selecting an institutional setting in which you are able to collect the data is critical and the selection process will be affected by your own individual identity that may or may not work as a barrier. Make sure a qualitative approach is the most beneficial approach to the type of scholarship you wish to share with audiences. Present your results in a fair way.

With regard to the ongoing need to document the participation of African Americans in leadership roles, there is still a lot to know about leadership in academe. Researchers can design projects that include more perspectives than just the White male European modes of thinking and leading. Thus emphasizing the larger question of African Americans as professionals in the workplace generally.
APPENDIX A

Informed Consent for Participation in Social Research

I consent to participate in a dissertation project on the communication and literate practices of African-American college and university presidents.

The researcher, Pamela L. Martin, has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Further, I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me.

I have been assured that strict confidentiality will be maintained in all uses of material collected. Audio taped interviews will be transcribed by the researcher or by a typist who will also be committed to confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be provided for my name in all interviews and writing samples. In any situation in which the researcher may use my material, she will not reveal my name, names of people affiliated with me, or the name of my college, university, or city.

I understand that in addition to the dissertation itself, the researcher may use some of the material collected from me for journal articles or conference
presentations and may also write a book based on the dissertation. If, in these projects, the researcher wishes to use any materials in any way not consistent with what is stated above, she will ask me for additional *written* consent.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form, and I agree to participate in this study under the conditions stated above. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: ___________ Signed: __________________________________________

(Participant)

Signed: __________________________________________

(Researcher)
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Dissertation

* What are some of your written practices?

* How much of your own writing do you do? Secretary? Work-Study Students? Others?

* Do you use electronic mail? If so, for what purposes? How often? What types of subject lines do you use? How long or brief are your messages? Are you subscribed to any listserv groups?

* How much do you correspond internally (memos)? Externally (letters)?

* Normally, what is the tone of your correspondence?

* How do you deal with hostile audiences? Orally? In writing?

* What are the most challenging communication practices that you face?

* How comfortable are you with having to write memos, letters, etc.?

* How do you rate the significance of writing related to your job in accomplishing your professional goals?

* Please discuss your learning process of writing and communicating. Who were your mentors, if you had any? What challenges do you face when writing? What is easy for you when writing? What are your apprehensions, reservations, or concerns about writing or communicating (via email, telephone, writing, conversations, presentations, giving orders, receiving or responding to orders, etc.)?

* When was the last time you were enrolled in a writing course? Read a business communication text? Taught a business writing course or observed one?

* What type of criticism do you receive regarding your communication practices? How do you respond to that criticism?
* Do you approach communication differently depending on your audience? Please explain or give examples.

* Are you comfortable with your communication abilities? Please explain. What would you change? Why? How?

* Discuss your strengths and weaknesses in communication.

* Do you employ particular strategies in oral presentations? What are they? How did you learn them?

* How do you proofread documents? What are common errors or patterns of poor writing that you have observed about your own communication practices? Ones that others have observed?

* Are there differences in reactions from people requesting materials and information who receive them and those who are denied requests?

* Do you think writing is critical in helping you or your college/university attain objectives? Where does writing fit in?

* What eccentricities do you have about your own writing? others’ writing?

* How often does your job require collaborative work?

* What is your definition of teamwork and where does it fit into your area of responsibility? How do you facilitate group learning?

* Do you consider writing to be stressful? Other aspects of your job? How do you manage stress?

* How long have you been President of this college or university? How did you manage to get this job? Explain your employment history?

* Can you talk about your communication and work relationships with your supervisor, colleagues, and subordinates?

* Please explain the educational history of your parents and siblings. Do you have children? And if so, what do you teach your own children about literacy?

Note: Other questions may arise as a result of these interview questions.
Interview Questions for President Morgan at
Large Midwestern University

Observations from Meetings
What is the normal way that you conduct meetings?

What is the purpose of your Senior Staff meetings?

In the senior staff meeting on Monday, September 18, 2000, I noticed that there were eight females and eight males. Is that an intentional structure on your behalf, or did it just happen that way?

What is the purpose of the Board of Trustees meetings?

At the President’s Cabinet Meeting on Thursday, September 14, 2000, did you use notes during the meeting?

How are you able to recall so much information about various divisions and aspects of the university?

What is the purpose of the AAUP meeting? How often do you meet with them?

In the meetings that I’ve observed, everyone refers to each other using first names. Is there ever a time when exchanges are more formal?

What are the different campus organizations or groups that you meet with regularly and how did you decide how often you would meet with them?

Writing and the Chron Files
The correspondence that is in the Chron files, did you write all of the letters, notes, or memos? If not, who composes them for you or how does that process work?

Are there certain letters, notes, or memos that you will write yourself?

Are there any specific characteristics of writing that you exercise when composing documents? If so, what are they and for what documents?

For what purposes do you use handwritten notes? Internal or external communication or both?
On occasions, I’ve noticed typed letters with a small handwritten note. Why do you do that?

Sometimes you sign your whole name, and sometimes you only sign your first name. How do you determine when to use what signature?

Do you respond to all correspondence that comes into your office?

Are there any letters that you just refuse to respond to?

How do you decide the length and breadth of your correspondence? Will you give me an example please?

Why do you always use full block-style when writing letters? Do you ever use modified block style?

How do you decide when to write a letter versus when to write a memorandum?

What types of matters/subjects usually require a written response?

What are the most difficult documents to write? Easiest?

In my observations, I’ve noticed that during your first quarter as president, the documents that you wrote were relatively brief. During your second year the documents grew in length. However, during the last quarter of the second year, they were shortened again. Why is that?

Does the recipient of the written document or the purpose of the document influence the length or breadth of your response?

Why do you use “best wishes and warmest regards” or some variation of it in most of your closing statements?

Do you ever receive any criticism regarding your writing? If so, by whom?

Why are your handwritten notes usually one or two sentences? Do you always sign them using only your first name?

Can you recall specific documents that you write to maintain good relationships with university affiliates—to include parents, students, community members, alumni, etc.?
In your written correspondence, how do you decide whether to address a person by his/her first name only or by a title and their surname?

Do YOU sign all of the written documents or do you use a stamp or designate someone else to sign your name?

What percentage of your time is spent writing? Speaking? Socializing for business purposes?

**Speeches**
Do you write all of your speeches?

When delivering the speeches, do you read from them verbatim, improvise, or use notes?

On what occasions do you engage in extemporaneous speaking?

Do situations arise that require impromptu speaking? What are those situations?

Do you use humor in your speeches? Anecdotes?

What is the tone of your speeches and writing typically?

Are there particular characteristics unique to your style of communicating in writing and in speaking?

Do you ever use speeches from one event at a different event? Do you use excerpts from speeches in creating new ones?

**Audiences**
What are the different audiences that you deal with on a daily basis?

How do you negotiate your identity and authority with the different audiences? Give examples.

How do you deal with hostile audiences?

What types of working relationships do you strive to maintain with your audiences?
Interacting
How much of your time is spent socializing or interacting with others outside of the office as part of your job? Tell me about those situations. How comfortable are you in those situations? Do you see that as a major part of your job?

When we walked to the student services building one afternoon, I noticed that you spoke to everyone that you saw. Do you always do that?

Do you ever just sit down at say, athletic events, and wait for people to come and say hello to you instead of making your way around the room or the auditorium?

How often do you interact with students?

Community Involvement
With what additional community groups or organizations are you affiliated?

What is your level of community involvement?

Are you frequently in touch with public officials? If so, why or why not and what’s normally your purpose for contacting them?

Why do you send birthday greetings to people? Who are those people?

Race
Why did you seek presidency at a majority university as opposed to an HBCU?

Have you had any racial problems as a direct result of becoming president of WMU?

Are you satisfied with the number of African Americans employees and students at the university? What is that number?

Does race ever factor into your decision-making or behavior as president?

Has anyone (non-black) ever shared any racial jokes with you? If so, did you take offense to any of them? How did you/would you handle a situation as such?

Were you well received by the university and its extensions? Can you cite any instances where an individual, organization, or group was dissatisfied with the decision to hire you as president? Any initial shock?
Was the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday not officially observed before you took over? What was the general reaction to that idea?

**Personal/Miscellaneous**
What are the most challenging aspects of being a university president?

How did you become president of this university? How was the interviewing process?

What are your professional plans afterwards?

How would you define your leadership style?

Is there ever a need for you to forcefully assert your authority?

On the American Council for Education website (www.acenet.edu), there is a profile of university presidents. In that profile, it says “the average age of presidents increased from 52.3 years in 1986 to 57.6 years in 1998.” It also says “new presidents in 1998 were older at the time of hire than those who were hired five or more years ago. The average age of new presidents was 55.1 years.” Has your age raised any concerns for anyone else or any problems for you since you are much younger than the average age?

Have you ever been a professor on the collegiate level?

How did you become literate? What is your literate history?
APPENDIX C

Transcription Agreement Form

June 28, 2001

This document is written as a contractual agreement between Pamela L. Martin, researcher, and [insert name], transcriber.

The undersigned agrees to transcribe sixteen 60-minute tapes at a rate of $12.00 per hour with three hours designated to complete each tape. The tapes will be given to the transcriber on April 30, 2001, and the expected completion date for the transcription is June 30, 2001. The total monetary agreement is for $576.00. The amount will be paid once all of the tapes have been satisfactorily transcribed and the pages, the diskette(s), and the mini cassette tapes are given to the researcher.

The transcriber agrees to transcribe every word from each of the tapes onto paper from a word processor or word processing program. The transcriber further agrees not to discuss the contents of the tapes with anyone, nor will she share information with anyone other than the researcher as anonymity and confidentiality have been granted to the participants in the research project. The transcriber accepts full responsibility for the preservation of the mini-cassette tapes.
The researcher agrees to pay the transcriber in full once the transcriptions are completed according the written agreement.

Signed by ______________________ Date __________________

Pamela L. Martin, Researcher

Signed by ______________________ Date __________________

[insert name], Transcriber

Witness ______________________ Date __________________

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