

Leadership Styles of Presidents of Historically Black Colleges and Universities

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The survival of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as a distinctive sector of American higher education may not be assured. HBCUs depend on leaders who endeavor to navigate the labyrinth of institutional transformation in an environment of rapid change. Espoused leadership styles of HBCU presidents are delineated and considered in terms of sector-specific and environmental demands and expectations.

Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), products of a segregated past, face an uncertain future. Legal efforts to dismantle segregated educational systems have had the unintended effect of destabilizing HBCU enrollments, as dual admissions policies are eliminated and replaced by mandates to reduce the racial identifiability of institutions (Ware, 1994). Discrepancies between HBCUs and predominantly-white institutions in terms of financial support, alternative sources of income, and facilities, moreover, create additional competitive disadvantages which may hinder recruitment of students (Healy, 1996). Where HBCUs obtain a large proportion of their revenues from tuition, diminished capacity to recruit and retain students may imperil financial stability and pose a threat to survival.

Leaders of HBCUs are challenged to guide their campuses through a period of change where relationships with new constituencies must be developed, and historical missions are reconceptualized to accommodate contemporary social and political expectations. HBCU presidents, in their roles as change agents and behavioral models for campus cultures (Fisher, 1994; Keller, 1983; Seymour, 1993), navigate the course of institutional transformation. These executives reveal salient characteristics of their leadership styles, as they interact with institutional, public, and political constituencies critical to the future of HBCUs.

Commonalities among HBCUs in terms of mission, purposes, history, and culture suggest a rationale for sector-specific research on presidential leadership style (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). A characterization of espoused presidential leadership within a sector-specific group of institutions in transition, here HBCUs, can provide a perspective of

manifest leadership styles which may be considered in the context of current internal institutional needs and exogenous pressures and expectations (Smith, Misumi, Tayeb, Peterson, & Bond, 1986).

The purpose of this study is to delineate leadership styles and attitudes of presidents of HBCUs from an espoused leadership perspective. The characterization is limited, in terms of data sources, to perceptions of HBCU presidents themselves. Findings are considered in terms of the organizational circumstances of leadership at HBCUs. Implications for extended research exploring questions of executive effectiveness are suggested.

HBCUs: Delineating the Sector

The development of higher education for African Americans in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was mainly a chapter in Southern history. The largest proportion of the African American population resided in the South; 92 percent at the time of the Civil War and 90 percent as late as 1890 (Bond, 1966; Garibaldi, 1991; Hill, 1984; Matlock, 1984; O'Brien, 1989; Thomas & McPartland, 1981). African American higher education in the South was, however, almost entirely a product of Northern initiative. Northern missionaries and church groups established the first black colleges before the Civil War. More than one hundred black public and private institutions were founded following the war, largely through Northern philanthropy (Ware, 1994).

Many of these early institutions were industrial or normal (teacher training) schools. Others were land-grant colleges. About one-half of the public HBCUs which survive today were created in response to the Second Morrill Act of 1890 which permitted the establishment and maintenance

of separate land-grant colleges for white and African American students (Bond, 1966; Hill, 1984).

White institutions remained closed to many African American students, particularly in the South. State-sponsored segregation, sanctioned by the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision, limited higher education opportunities for African Americans. The doctrine of "separate but equal" gave constitutional authority to Southern states to promulgate statutes for the separation of the races in virtually every sphere of life, including education (Edwards & Nordin, 1979).

Beginning in the early 1930s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) mounted legal challenges to state laws requiring racial segregation. Supreme Court decisions (*Missouri ex. rel., Gaines v. Canada*, 1938; *Sweatt v. Painter*, 1950) enabled the opening of white college and university campuses to African Americans in Southern and border states. Several states -- Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia -- began to admit African Americans into their previously all-white institutions of higher education by the late 1940s. Only five states -- South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi -- had no African American students in their predominantly-white state universities by 1952 (Franklin & Anderson, 1978; Garibaldi, 1991; Thomas, 1981; Williams, 1988; Willie & Edmonds, 1978).

In 1954, the Supreme Court ended legally condoned segregation in public education with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. The Court mandated implementation of desegregation remedies "with all deliberate speed." Interpretations of this mandate, however, effectively extended the desegregation period for almost a decade, as states engaged in tactics of delay and resistance (Ware, 1994). State resistance to federal desegregation mandates was paralleled in efforts to enforce Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which barred discrimination in the use of public facilities, and in employment wherever the federal government was authorized to regulate such matters. To receive federal grants and contracts, colleges and universities, private as well as public, had to assure the government that they did not practice discrimination in the hiring of faculty and other personnel, in the admission of students, and in the granting of financial aid; in essence, in the entire operation of the enterprise.

State compliance with Title VI was incremental, at best. In 1970, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund filed a class action suit (*Adams v. Richardson*, 1973) against the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) for defaulting on their obligation to enforce Title VI in North Carolina. The ruling in this case affected all states that had been operating dual systems of higher education. The *Adams* decision required that 19 Southern and border states develop acceptable college desegregation plans under the scrutiny of HEW, later the Department of Education.

Throughout the period of piecemeal desegregation, HBCUs were able to maintain their racial identifiability,

and continue to address the educational and social needs of an underrepresented group in higher education. In 1990, HBCUs enrolled 17 percent of all African American college-goers, yet accounted for nearly one-third of all bachelor's degrees awarded to African Americans (Constantine, 1994; Healy, 1996). HBCUs assertedly foster an environment more conducive to student success. Drop-out rates for African American students at HBCUs are significantly lower than the rates for African Americans at other institutions; despite the fact that HBCUs tend to enroll students from less advantaged backgrounds (Hoffman, Snyder, & Sonnenberg, 1992). African American graduates, moreover, may derive some value-added benefits from attending HBCUs. Constantine (1994) found, for example, that wages for African American students who attended four-year HBCUs were higher than those earned by African Americans who attended other four-year institutions.

Nonetheless, HBCUs may be approaching the limits of traditional distinctiveness as historical missions are modified. There is mounting evidence that the survival of many HBCUs, at least in their current forms, may be unlikely (Healy, 1996; Ware, 1994).

Challenges to Stability and Self-Sufficiency

Increasing competition for students, mounting budget deficits, and assertions of mismanagement from faculty and political critics constitute significant challenges for HBCU leaders (Healy, 1997). Leadership is challenged to achieve goodness-of-fit between organizational and referent expectations and leader attitudes and behaviors (Jago, 1982; Lord & Maher, 1991); fit which enables synergies directed to the achievement of common goals.

Enrollment. Many HBCUs, particularly public colleges, have maintained comparatively lower admissions standards in efforts to enable access, maintain viable enrollment levels, and fulfill historical missions (Healy, 1996). New, higher operational standards imposed by the states by directive of the courts, however, may cut African American enrollment at public HBCUs by half in states like Mississippi where three public HBCUs must now admit students consistent with more stringent standards equivalent to those of the state's predominantly-white institutions (Healy, 1996; *United States v. Fordice*, 1992). Underprepared students may be denied admission to HBCUs, while these institutions experience a significant decline in applications and enrollments. Concurrently, predominantly-white institutions in the South, in efforts to comply with Title VI, are engaged in more extensive efforts to recruit African Americans to their campuses (Blumenstyk, 1991; Healy, 1995a, 1995b). Both public and private HBCUs, then, may be expected to compete with aggressive state universities and prestigious private institutions for a limited pool of eligible African American applicants. Problems may be particularly severe for tuition-dependent private HBCUs with limited alternative sources of revenue.

Finances. Traditionally, HBCUs have charged lower tuitions than predominantly-white institutions. They tend to obtain less tuition revenue than comparable universi-

ties, and secure minimal endowments. Funds to build and renovate facilities and enhance programs are limited. Public HBCUs, moreover, tend to receive lower levels of state funding than the flagship universities with which they are now expected to compete (Ware, 1994). Competitive disadvantages of HBCUs vis-a-vis other universities have become increasingly evident (Constantine, 1994).

In efforts to maintain financial equilibrium, HBCUs have engaged in more extensive fund-raising efforts, and HBCU presidents have assumed prominent roles in the donor relations process (Ingalls, 1997). Though donations are less predictable and controllable than other revenue sources (Gronbjerg, 1992), philanthropic contributions may provide the supplemental income necessary to build endowments and enhance distinctive programs. Major foundations and African American contributors appear receptive to such efforts (Carson, 1989; 1991; Roebuck & Murty, 1993).

Governance. Higher education institutions, including public and private HBCUs, encounter a number of challenges to effective leadership: declining pools of traditional-aged students, reductions in federal and state funding, and faculty discontent with salaries and working conditions, among others (Fisher & Tack, 1990). Particularly significant for HBCUs, however, is the potential conflict between institutional governing boards and the president (Fisher, 1994; Jencks & Riesman, 1967). Critics contend that HBCUs suffer from weak leadership, and tend to be dominated by politically-motivated boards of control (Healy, 1996).

Public HBCUs, in particular, face governance challenges, as state legislators link higher levels of accountability and continued taxpayer support. State officials in Texas, Ohio, Missouri, Louisiana, and North Carolina have questioned management practices at public HBCUs, and some policy-makers have called for a reduction in the autonomy granted to these institutions (Healy, 1997).

Intervention by external governing boards and other political entities may diminish the legitimate authorities of HBCU presidents, and may limit their capacities to address critical issues of institutional transformation. Lewis (1971) described HBCUs as imprisoned by rigid external power sources. Johnson (1971) suggested that HBCU presidents tend to display autocratic authority related, in part, to their role as mediator between the college and a threatening environment. External constraints and defensive behavioral repertoires may be incompatible with successful transformational leadership (Fisher, 1994; Fisher & Koch, 1996). HBCU presidents are challenged to maintain effective relations with their governing boards, while retaining authority to develop institutional strategy.

Presidential Leadership

Given significant levels of environmental change, HBCUs as social institutions may depend, increasingly, on transformational leaders. Transformational leadership is frequently contrasted with transactional leadership. The difference between fulfilling or changing expectations is the basis for the distinction. Transformational theory places

emphasis on the extent to which leaders engage followers to seek new levels of morality and motivation (Chaffee, 1984; Clark, 1970; Green, 1988; Kauffman, 1980; Richman & Farmer, 1976). Transformation implies the occurrence of a "metamorphosis or substitution of one state or system for another, so that a qualitatively different condition is present" (Cameron & Ulrich, 1986, p. 1). Transactional theory, in contrast, places emphasis on the relationship between leaders and followers based on an exchange of valued rewards or services. Leaders and followers engage in a bargaining process rather than in a relationship with an enduring purpose (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1972; Bennis, 1989; Blau, 1964; Burns, 1978).

Espoused theories of leadership may be useful in identifying the implicit leadership theories utilized by HBCU presidents in their executive roles. Argyris and Schon (1974) suggested that espoused theories represent the way leaders see themselves, and how they would like others to see them. Perceptually-bound espoused theories are likely to reflect leaders' behaviors and expectations.

We depend, in this initial study, on espoused views of presidential leadership; reflections of what these presidents say good leadership should be. Extended research, beyond our descriptive study, will focus on comparisons of leaders at HBCUs and presidents in majority-culture institutions, involve performance variables to differentiate relative effectiveness, and consider constituent expectations in an effort to identify leader behaviors deemed appropriate and acceptable.

Method

The Fisher/Tack Effective Leadership Inventory (Fisher & Tack, 1990), a forty-item self-report instrument, was completed by participating HBCU presidents. Descriptions of construction and pilot testing of the inventory, including principal components factor analyses and results of tests of internal consistency, suggest the appropriateness and utility of dimensional indices (factors) and items, and the internal consistency of each factor (Fisher, Tack, & Wheeler, 1988; Fisher & Tack, 1990).

The inventory includes five dimensions: management style (18 items), human relations (8 items), social reference (7 items), image (4 items), and confidence (3 items). The management style dimension refers to the president's general orientation toward day-to-day leadership activities. Sample items include: "I always appear energetic," "I tend to work long hours," and "I believe in community involvement." The human relations dimension involves the president's perceptions of her/his interpersonal interactions. Sample items include: "I am sometimes viewed as hardnosed," "I maintain a measure of mystique," and "I am often viewed as a loner." The social reference dimension refers to the type of relationships the president develops with others. Sample items include: "I believe in close collegial relationships," "I choose another CEO as a confidant," and "I often like people who are different." The image di-

mension concerns the president's self-presentation. Sample items include: "I appear confident even when in doubt," "I view myself and the institution as one," and "I smile a lot." The confidence dimension refers to the president's perception of self-efficacy. Items include: "I am rarely in keeping with the status quo," "I believe in the institution at all costs," and "I appear to make decisions easily."

The study universe ($N = 83$) included all presidents of accredited four-year public and private HBCUs. Presidents of predominantly African American community colleges were not included. Questionnaires were mailed to 38 presidents of public HBCUs, and to 45 presidents of private HBCUs. The return of 61 usable questionnaires resulted in a total response rate of 73%; a percentage which exceeds response rates in other studies involving college and university presidents (Fisher & Tack, 1990; Fisher, Tack, & Wheeler, 1988). The response rates for public (71%) and private (75.5%) institutions were comparable.

Independent variables were selected on the basis of theoretical potential for association with the Fisher/Tack Effective Leadership Inventory as suggested by related literature. They included gender, education, age, age on assumption of first presidency, prior employment experience, total tenure as a president, tenure in most recent position, and scholarly/professional activities.

Frequency distributions were computed, and chi-square analyses were used to test for significant differences among individual items for each dimension of the inventory. To test for significant differences in means of espoused leadership dimensions, *t*-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used. An alpha of .05 was chosen as the critical level for testing.

Findings

Demographic variables. The respondent pool was predominantly male (93%). Nearly all (97%) held the doctorate degree. Many (46%) were aged 60 or more; others were in their 50s (37.5%) or 40s (14%). Respondents were generally in their 40s (47%) or 50s (30.5%) when they assumed their first presidency.

A majority (78%) were employed by an HBCU prior to assuming their most recent presidential position. More than half (53%) of HBCU presidents were presidents prior to the assumption of their most recent position. Forty percent had served as presidents for 10 years or more. Thirty-five percent had 6 to 9 years of presidential experience. Others (25%) had served for 5 years or less. Many had extensive tenure in their most recent presidency. Sixty-five percent had served 6 years or more in their most recent presidential position.

Administrative experience outside higher education appeared more limited. Fifty-one percent had five years or less administrative experience in organizations other than colleges and universities. Twenty-three percent had 6 to 9 years of non-higher education administrative experience. Others (26%) had ten or more years of experience.

Many (64%) reported a medium to high level of scholarly publication activity. A majority (62%) reported extensive involvement in professional and scholarly organizations, and many (49%) held positions of leadership in these organizations.

Respondents may be characterized as highly-experienced executives with extensive backgrounds in higher education; particularly in HBCU settings. These executives appear to combine administrative activities with substantial productive scholarship and professional service involvement.

Differences between public and private HBCU presidents in terms of the independent variables were minimal. Public HBCUs, however, appeared to employ more presidents with 10 or more years of administrative experience outside of higher education (36% vs. 19%). Public HBCUs also had more presidents with 5 years or less experience as a college president (41% vs. 12%). Private HBCU presidents appeared to be less involved in scholarly endeavors. Forty-seven percent of private HBCU presidents reported low levels of scholarly publication.

In general, public HBCU presidents appear to have more non-higher education experience, but less presidential experience than their private HBCU colleagues. Higher levels of scholarship among public HBCU presidents may be associated with relative emphases on research at these institutions; many of which have access to federal land-grant research funding.

Leadership Characterization. Table 1 shows the responses to each item of the Fisher/Tack Effective Leadership Inventory. Among the 18 items in the management style dimension, respondents showed high levels of strong agreement with five: "I believe that respect of those to be led is essential" (74%), "I believe that an effective leader takes risks" (77%), "I believe the leader should be perceived as self-confident" (74%), "I believe in community involvement" (70%), and "I tend to work long hours" (70%). High levels of disagreement or strong disagreement were indicated for two items: "I count committee meetings as mistakes" (99%) and "I only occasionally speak spontaneously" (70%).

Among the eight items in the human relations dimension, respondents reported high levels of agreement or strong agreement with four: "I am sometimes viewed as hardnosed" (78%), "I believe that a leader serves the people" (97%), "I use large social functions to advance the institution" (79%), and "I would rather be viewed as a strong leader than a good colleague" (87%). High levels of disagreement or strong disagreement were indicated for two items: "I am often seen as somewhat aloof" (73%) and "I enjoy stirring things up" (74%).

Among the seven items in the social reference dimension, respondents reported high levels of agreement or strong agreement with four: "I believe in close collegial relationships" (82%), "I choose another CEO as a confidant" (70%), "I dress well" (96%), and "I am rarely viewed as flamboyant" (78%). High levels of disagreement or strong disagree-

Table 1
Responses of HBCU Presidents to Items on the Fisher/Tack Leadership Inventory

Item by Dimension	Number of Responses (Percentage)				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Management Style					
Respect	45 (74)	14 (23)	1 (02)	1 (02)	0 (00)
Risk taker	47 (77)	12 (20)	1 (02)	1 (02)	0 (00)
Consensus	7 (11)	48 (79)	1 (02)	3 (05)	2 (03)
Org./structure	36 (59)	25 (41)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Self-confident	45 (74)	14 (23)	2 (03)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Merit pay	26 (43)	28 (46)	7 (11)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Assertive	17 (28)	39 (64)	4 (07)	1 (02)	0 (00)
Delegate authority	29 (48)	30 (49)	0 (00)	0 (00)	2 (03)
Value one-on-one meetings	25 (41)	36 (59)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Community involvement	43 (70)	18 (30)	0 (00)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Energetic	28 (46)	29 (48)	2 (03)	2 (03)	0 (00)
Meetings/mistakes	0 (00)	0 (00)	1 (02)	34 (58)	24 (41)
Accept losses	11 (18)	36 (59)	2 (03)	10 (16)	2 (03)
Work long hours	43 (70)	15 (26)	2 (03)	1 (02)	0 (00)
Only occasionally spontaneous	3 (05)	14 (23)	1 (02)	30 (49)	13 (21)
Affable	21 (35)	34 (57)	4 (07)	1 (02)	0 (00)
Caring	33 (55)	26 (43)	1 (02)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Encourage creative types	18 (30)	38 (62)	2 (03)	3 (05)	0 (00)
Human Relations					
Hardnosed	16 (26)	32 (52)	0 (00)	9 (15)	4 (07)
Serve people	31 (51)	28 (46)	1 (01)	1 (02)	0 (00)
Mystique	6 (10)	24 (39)	8 (13)	18 (30)	5 (08)
Social functions to advance org.	12 (20)	36 (59)	3 (05)	9 (15)	1 (02)
Loner	1 (02)	11 (18)	10 (16)	27 (44)	12 (20)
Strong leader	22 (37)	30 (50)	4 (07)	4 (07)	0 (00)
Aloof	0 (00)	9 (15)	7 (11)	32 (52)	12 (21)
Stirring things up	4 (07)	8 (13)	4 (07)	27 (44)	18 (30)
Social Reference					
Being liked	0 (00)	3 (05)	2 (03)	35 (57)	21 (34)
Collegial	11 (18)	39 (64)	3 (05)	6 (10)	2 (03)
CEO	7 (12)	35 (58)	8 (13)	10 (17)	0 (00)
Like people who are different	10 (17)	28 (47)	17 (28)	4 (07)	1 (02)
Influential	9 (15)	11 (18)	14 (23)	26 (43)	1 (02)
Dress well	21 (34)	38 (62)	2 (03)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Rarely flamboyant	7 (11)	41 (67)	2 (03)	9 (15)	2 (03)

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 1 (Continued)
Responses of HBCU Presidents to Items on the Fisher/Tack Leadership Inventory

Item by Dimension	Number of Responses (Percentage)				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Image					
Appear confident	16 (26)	43 (70)	2 (03)	0 (00)	0 (00)
Institution/me	15 (25)	24 (40)	7 (12)	11 (18)	3 (05)
Enjoy prerequisites of office	5 (08)	36 (60)	6 (10)	9 (15)	4 (07)
Smile a lot	14 (23)	34 (56)	6 (10)	6 (10)	1 (02)
Confidence					
Rarely in keeping with status quo	7 (12)	29 (48)	5 (08)	16 (27)	3 (05)
Believe in org.	29 (48)	20 (33)	3 (05)	8 (13)	0 (00)
Appear to make decisions easily	11 (18)	43 (70)	2 (03)	5 (08)	0 (00)

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

ment were indicated for one item, "I am primarily concerned with being liked" (91%).

Among the four items in the image dimension, respondents reported generally high levels of agreement or strong agreement: "I appear confident even when in doubt" (96%), "I view myself and the institution as one" (65%), "I appear to enjoy the prerequisites of the office" (68%), and "I smile a lot" (79%).

Among the three items in the confidence dimension, respondents reported high levels of agreement or strong agreement for two: "I believe in the institution at all costs" (81%) and "I appear to make decisions easily" (88%). Moderate agreement was indicated for the third item, "I am rarely in keeping with the status quo" (60%).

Differences between public and private HBCU presidents were minimal in terms of espoused leadership perspectives. Significant differences were found for only five of the 40 items. Chi-square values for these items are included in Table 2.

Public HBCU presidents indicated more agreement with "accept losses gracefully" than did private HBCU presidents. Private HBCU presidents reported more agreement with the "loner," "aloof," and "stirring things up" items. The largest percentage differences involved the mystique item. Most (77%) private HBCU presidents agreed that they attempt to maintain a measure of mystique in their role as president, while the large majority (73%) of public HBCU presidents disagreed. Findings suggest that private HBCU

presidents may maintain higher levels of social distance between themselves and other institutional constituencies. Public HBCU presidents, in contrast, may engage in more open and direct forms of interaction.

Differences in leadership perceptions across a range of demographic variables were minimal. Significant group mean differences are reported in Table 3.

Respondents who assumed their first presidency in their 40s reported lower levels of agreement with the image dimension than did those who were first appointed president after age 50 or before age 40. Respondents indicating mid-level administrative experience in higher education (6 to 9 years), also indicated less agreement with the image dimension than those with five years or less, or ten years or more experience. Findings suggest that mid-career HBCU executives may be less concerned with the self-presentation (image) dimension of leadership than early- and late-career executives.

Agreement with the confidence dimension of leadership appeared strongest among HBCU presidents reporting 10 or more years experience in their most recent position. Moreover, HBCU presidents who assume a large number of leadership positions in professional and scholarly organizations indicated higher levels of agreement with the confidence dimension of the study inventory. Findings suggest that length of tenure and extent of external leadership involvement may be associated with higher levels of self-efficacy (confidence).

Table 2
Significant Differences Between Public and Private HBCU Presidents on the Fisher/Tack Effective Leadership Inventory

Item	Institution	Agree Row %	Disagree Row %	Chi-square Value	Significant <i>p</i> -value
Accept losses	Public	92	8	4.59	.032
	Private	70	30		
Mystique	Public	27	73	13.17	.0002
	Private	77	23		
Loner	Public	8	92	6.57	.010
	Private	38	62		
Aloof	Public	4	96	5.37	.020
	Private	28	72		
Stirring things up	Public	4	96	8.51	.003
	Private	35	65		

Table 3
Significant Differences by Demographic Variables on the Fisher/Tack Effective Leadership Inventory

Confidence Dimension			
Source	<i>F</i> -value	Significant <i>p</i> -value	Significant Means
Years in most recent position	4.23	.020	10 years or more > 5 years or less, 6-9 years
Number of leadership positions in professional/scholarly orgs.	5.55	.006	Low < High, Medium
Image Dimension			
Source	<i>F</i> -value	Significant <i>p</i> -value	Significant Means
Age on assumption of first presidency	3.32	.026	41-49 < 40 or less, 50-59, 60 or more
Total years administrative experience in higher education	4.43	.016	6-9 years < 10 years or more, 5 years or less

Discussion

Study findings suggest some interesting relationships among a set of variables associated with leadership at HBCUs. These presidents seem to embrace a philosophy of higher education which focuses on enabling constituents to meet a range of personal goals and objectives. They work long hours and attempt to establish supportive institutional environments. They are willing to make hard decisions and take risks to move their institutions forward. Finally, they seem to think it is more important to be respected than to be popular. Although, they tend to act decisively, they also seek opinions and ideas from constituent groups before taking action.

These presidents appear to believe in close collegial relationships. Given the competitive environment in which they must operate, the reduction of distance between presidents and key internal constituencies may enable these executives to monitor campus environments for early indicators of operational dissonance. To this end, these presidents subscribe to leadership styles which are consultative and mutual-means oriented. They recognize the value-added effects of a supportive leadership style which allows for participation of a number of concerned campus constituencies in institutional decision making, enables extended delegation of authority, and functions to encourage synergistic interactions in loosely coupled systems of higher education.

Organizational change in higher education is, most often, externally induced (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Change initiatives emanate from "massive outside enticements of money or from real internal stringency and a struggle for institutional preservation and individual livelihoods" (Keller, 1983, p. 57). Federal legislative, legal, and economic decisions over the past thirty years which have impacted HBCUs appear to be accelerating transformations toward postsecondary models emphasizing the provision of comprehensive education to more diverse student populations. Absent the infusion of substantial new resources, HBCU presidents are challenged to enable transitions which retain an historical sense of purpose and identity. Presidents in this study appear to understand their institutions' transitional, fluid circumstances, and recognize the need for reconciliation of the social, political, and academic forces of the past and present which may determine the future vitality and viability of their institutions of higher learning.

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