

5-2022

“Effective Immediately”: A Qualitative Analysis of the Reaction of Mississippi Newspapers to 1969’s Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education Decision

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“Effective Immediately”: A Qualitative Analysis of the Reaction of Mississippi
Newspapers to 1969’s *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* Decision

by

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Honors College of
The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment
of Honors Requirements

May 2022

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study analyzed articles from Mississippi newspapers in three regions. In North Mississippi, Greenville and Tupelo were surveyed. In Central Mississippi, Jackson, Meridian, and Natchez were surveyed. In South Mississippi, Hattiesburg, McComb, and Biloxi were surveyed. These newspapers were chosen as they were among the biggest in the state and reported either daily or weekly and would be able to provide a wide range of opinions. These newspapers were surveyed from October 30, 1969, through November 14, 1969, and headlines, editorials, and other opinion pieces were analyzed. This study analyzed articles in order to investigate what the media response, specifically newspapers, was to the 1969 *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* case decision.

The materials used for this study were newspapers obtained from the William F. Winter Archives in Jackson, Mississippi. Materials were collected from microfilm. This study found that overall, the newspapers were overwhelmingly negative. There were almost no positive responses to the *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* decision. There was no real difference between different regions of the state in views of the newspapers. Overall, these newspapers represented a homogenous view across the state of overwhelmingly negative views against the *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* decision.

Keywords: Race, Media, Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education, Desegregation, Integration, Desegragtion

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Civil Rights advocates of the 1960s. Without their advocacy and bravery, many of the institutions that discriminated against racial minorities in the United States would still be in place. This advocacy was found in all types of people, from newspaper editors to those who marched in rallies. It is a generation that we in the modern day that we are quickly losing touch with, and we must act to honor their work and their legacy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I want to thank my advisor, Dr. Kathanne Greene, for being a mentor and willing to take me on as a advisee when I asked her despite not knowing me at all. It has been a long road, but I consider it a great accomplishment to have made it to this point. I could not have done it without your help. I also want to thank the other political science faculty members for supporting me, challenging me, and helping me to learn. I also want to thank the Honors College here at the University of Southern Mississippi for providing me with the resources to complete this thesis and working with me so that I could complete it early. My college and academic career would not be where it was without the Honors College.

Thank you to all my friends and family for continuously supporting me throughout this process, from school friends, to my roommate, to friends living thousands of miles away, to my parents and other family members - I could not have completed this process without the support of all of you and your continuous encouragement and inspiration. Thank you for cheering me on and rooting for me through the good and the bad, my ups and down.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Alexander	<i>Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education</i>
Brown	<i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>
Brown II	<i>Brown v. Board of Education II</i>
HEW	Department of Housing, Education, and Welfare

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

August of 1969 was shaping up to be a normal month in Mississippi, as teachers and schools prepared for the new year. However, not all was calm, because on August 17, Hurricane Camille, one of the most powerful hurricanes to ever hit the United States, devastated Mississippi, killing 143 in the state and causing countless amounts of damage (Morris 2014). Camille's impact caused evacuation, but when evacuating, the Mississippi National Guard attempted to segregate the refugees (Morris 2014). The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the Combined Community Disaster Organization Committee both were local organizations that tracked the racialized response to Hurricane Camille disaster relief (Morris 2014). Disaster relief organizations such as the Red Cross were also accused of favoring white people; in one instance, clothes were held back for white Mississippians instead of being given to Black Mississippians (Morris 2014). White Mississippians also saw Black Mississippians as taking advantage of disaster relief (Morris 2014). However, disaster relief and Camille demonstrated the last legs of legalized racial segregation in Mississippi; just a couple months later, on October 29, 1969, the court case *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* was ruled on by the Supreme Court of the United States (Hustwit 2019, 138).

The origins of school segregation began long before the Civil War and Reconstruction. One of the earliest cases to deal with school segregation was in Massachusetts, the 1850 case *Roberts v. Boston*, ruled that it was legal to deny admission to school based on race (Kluger 2004, 74). This legal precedent translated to Mississippi. Before the end of Reconstruction, in 1870, Mississippi had no real system of schooling, public or private (Bolton 2005, 4). Slave children, all Black, had no opportunity to learn

(Bolton 2005, 4). Poor white children did not have many opportunities for school either, but rich white parents could afford to have their children educated (Bolton 2005, 4).

After the Civil War, in the 1860s, three important amendments to the Constitution were added: the Thirteenth Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment, and the Fifteenth Amendment. The Thirteenth Amendment banned slavery, saying that “neither slavery nor involuntary servitude...shall exist within the United States” (Kluger 2004, 42). The Fourteenth Amendment was added later: anyone born in the United States is a citizen, and entitled to “due process” and “equal protection of the law” (Kluger 2004, 46). Next came the Fifteenth Amendment, which stated that voting rights could not be denied to any citizen of the United States “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude” (Kluger 2004, 49). However, the effects of these amendments were not long lived. As early as 1873, with the *Slaughter-House Cases*, a case dealing with economic rights, rights of Black citizens were being stripped away by the white elite (Kluger 2004, 55). The *Slaughter-House Cases* limited the power of the Fourteenth Amendment, taking it from applying from the states to just the federal level (Kluger 2004, 55). This was upheld again in 1876 in *United States v. Cruikshank*, where it was ruled again that the Constitution’s Bill of Rights did not apply to state governments (Kluger 2004, 59-60).

During the Reconstruction era, many Black Mississippians were able to take positions of power in the political process across the state (Hustwit 2019, 15). This was not pleasing to many white Mississippians, and as early as November 1865, laws were being passed to limit the rights of Black Mississippians (Hustwit 2019, 17-18). These laws would become known as “Black Codes”, and limited the rights of Black Mississippians in a way similar to slavery (Hustwit 2019, 18). These laws had the

intended effect of disenfranchisement, and by 1880, no Black Mississippian remained in the Mississippi legislature (Hustwit 2019, 19). One of the most notable cases which solidified the legality of the Black Codes was the Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, which ruled that segregation was allowed as long as it was held in equal facilities, and that “segregation was not discrimination” (Kluger 80). This applied to the entire country.

How courts would handle the issue of segregation in schools became clear after the ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In 1899, *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education*, the court ruled that education is to be left up to the individual states (Kluger 2004, 82). The next blow to equalized education came in the form in 1908’s *Berea College v. Kentucky* 211 U.S. 45, where it was ruled that states could regulate private institutions in regards to segregation, saying that the school “unlawfully and willfully permit[ted]” Black and white students to study together. (*Berea College v. Kentucky*, p. 1). In 1933, *Hocutt v. Wilson* was brought to the Supreme Court by the NAACP, where it was ruled that the University of North Carolina did not have to admit the plaintiff (Kluger 158). This failure only strengthened the resolve of those fighting against segregation, and in 1936, the NAACP won the *Murray v. Maryland* case, which effectively ended segregation in Maryland by banning discrimination based on skin color (Kluger 2004, 189). In 1938, the NAACP also won the *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* decision, which ruled that states had to provide equal programs for the races, saying that the failure to do so was “discrimination repugnant to the Fourteenth Amendment” (*Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* p. 343).

Post World War II, a series of cases headed by the NAACP targeted higher education (Kluger 2004, 256). One case did decide on elementary education, *Carr v. Corning*, which failed to get rid of desegregation (Kluger 2004, 515). *Sipuel v. Board of Regents*, where a Black student applied for law school in Oklahoma and was given admission in a token school, also successfully argued for the admission of Black students into higher level education (Kluger 2004, 258). Two cases - *McLaurin v Oklahoma*, to allow a Black student into the graduate school, and *Sweatt v. Painter*, where Texas was not allowed to disallow students based on race (Kluger 2004, 262-266) were ruled on. *McLaurin* ruled that the state must provide equal education to all applicants, and *Sweatt* ruled that the Texas law school provided for Black students was insufficient to the school provided for white students (Kluger 2004, 260-267). However, the 1954 case *Brown v. Board of Education*, which forbade segregation, began to slowly change the state.

One major precursor to *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* was the 1954 court case *Brown v. Board of Education*. Daily press across Mississippi reacted very negatively to the news of *Brown*, with the story getting “front-page play” (Weill 2001, 25). One example of this was in editor Hazel Brannon Smith’s *Lexington Advertiser* where she defended segregation (Kaul 2001, 240). Even Greenville’s Hodding Carter, Jr., editor of the *Delta Democrat-Times*, did not call for integration at the time of *Brown*, but instead sat in the middle (Carter 2001, 277). *Brown II*’s decision in 1955’s ordered compliance with *Brown*, but this did not ensure swift integration (Davies 2001, 230). Even among the Black community, there was some animosity towards integration; Percy Greene of the *Jackson Advocate* advocated for a still “separate but equally funded” school system (Cooper 2001, 65).

Even ten years after *Brown*, the grips of integration had not yet taken hold of the state of Mississippi. In 1964, no students in Mississippi attended schools with those of a different race (Adams & Adams 2018, 6). This changed in late 1964, when three cases combined were heard by the Fifth Circuit Court in New Orleans: that of Winson and Dovie Hudson in Leake County, Medgar Evers in Jackson, and Gilbert and Natalie Mason in Biloxi, who sued on behalf of their children (*Evers v. Jackson Municipal School Dist.*, 1964; *Biloxi Municipal Separate School District et al v. Gilbert R. Mason Jr. et al*, 1966; *Leake County School Board et al v. Dian Hudson et al*, 1964). But by 1965, “53 of the state’s 151 school districts still had not submitted any desegregation plans to HEW” (Bolton 2005, 120).

By 1964, the Citizens’ Council, a white supremacist group dedicated to the segregation of schools, was encouraging parents to withdraw their children from public schools and send them to private schools. The Council set up a number of schools of their own across the state (Adams & Adams 2018, 190). In 1964, a law that allowed students to access tuition grant funds for private schools was passed (Bolton 106). In January 1969, *Coffey v. State Educational Finance Commission* was decided, holding that tuition school grants provided through the state for private school students discriminating on the basis of race was not constitutional (*Coffey v. State Educational Finance Commission*). Mississippi immediately struck back, passing a law that allowed students ages sixteen and up to take out loans for tuition. Due to the nature of the age of the students it affected, it was intended for students to use for private schools (Adams & Adams 2018, 196-197).

Mississippi schools began desegregation plans in 1964 through a program called “freedom of choice”, where students could attend “any school in a district” (Bolton 2005, 117). In 1966, *United States v. Jefferson County Board of Education* ruled that schools had a duty to their students to desegregate (Adams & Adams 2018, 28). In 1968, *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* decided that “freedom of choice alone” was not sufficient to fulfill desegregation demands (Adams & Adams 2018, 29). *United States v. Hinds County School Board* in 1969 only further exacerbated these freedom of choice plans, where “a three-judge panel of Mississippians” ruled that freedom of choice plans could stay (Bolton 2005, 128).

Brown v. Board of Education was one of the initiating events of the Civil Rights Movement. Major events in Civil Rights history besides *Brown v. Board of Education* included the integration of the University of Mississippi, or Ole Miss, 1964’s Freedom Summer, and the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The media played a major role in how these events were portrayed. According to Weill, many newspaper editors disagreed with the *Brown* decision, and even led to “outright defiance” among some papers (Weill 2001, 25). The ruling at Ole Miss to admit James Meredith, a Black student, was met with anger in Mississippi (Weill 2001, 31). This ruling was almost immediate and allowed Meredith to attend classes in 1962, leading to riots in Oxford, where Ole Miss was located (Weill 2001, 31). Both Hodding Carter III, editor of Greenville’s *Delta Democrat-Times*, and Ira Harkey Jr., editor of Pascagoula’s *Chronicle*, disagreed with the widely held view that Meredith should not be allowed to attend Ole Miss, and were two of the only editors to support Meredith’s right to attend the university (Weill 2001, 34).

Jimmy Ward of the *Jackson Daily News* attacked the Freedom Riders, who rode buses throughout the South to promote desegregation, calling them “human freaks” among other derogatory terms (Davies & Smith 2001, 91). 1964’s Freedom Summer culminated in the murder of three Civil Rights activists near Philadelphia, Mississippi (Weill 2001, 41). The press largely remained silent or placed the blame for the deaths of the three men, Michael Schwener, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney, on themselves for getting involved in the Civil Rights movement (Weill 2001, 43).

During the summer of 1964, a series of bombings took place in McComb, Mississippi (Davies 2001, 119). J. Oliver Emmerich’s *McComb Enterprise-Journal* reported on these bombings, often taking the “police at their word” that the police were having a difficult time finding who was committing the bombings (Davies 2001, 121). This culminated in the *Enterprise-Journal* reporting very skeptically on the bombings later in the summer (Davies 2001, 125). The *Enterprise-Journal* was accused of withholding information from reporting that made Civil Rights activists look bad (Davies 2001, 125). However, the *Enterprise-Journal* began again to condemn the bombings as arrests were made in October 1964 over the year’s earlier bombings (Davies 2001, 128). A contrast to these editors was George A. McLean of the *Tupelo Journal* (Fairley 2001, 147). Although he did not mean to push “racial equality...his sincere interest in the downtrodden would eventually help bring the same results” (Fairley 2001, 147).

But by 1969, the tide of desegregation was changing. 1969 was a year of change across Mississippi. In August, Hurricane Camille hit the Mississippi Gulf Coast as a category 5 hurricane (Adams & Adams 2018, 76). The deciding *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* decision was handed down in October 1969, fifteen years

after *Brown v. Board of Education*. The first hearing for the case was in Jackson in 1965. It was first ruled that four grades a year would desegregate (Hustwit 2019, 68). The case was sent to the Fifth Circuit Court in New Orleans, which reversed the initial order in Jackson in August 1969, before being challenged in the Supreme Court (Hustwit 2019, 68). Beatrice Alexander of Holmes County spearheaded the case in the name of being against freedom of choice (Adams and Adams 2018, 29).

On October 29, 1969, the unanimous judgment of the Supreme Court was announced: the “with all deliberate speed” clause of *Brown II* was dead (Hustwit 2019, 138). Desegregation was to happen now, and schools, including the thirty-three districts named in the suit, were ordered to comply (Hustwit 2019, 2). In January 1970, months after *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* was ruled on, *Carter v. West Feliciana Parish School Board* was also ruled on by the Supreme Court; it was ruled that schools must also desegregate immediately (Hustwit 2019, 145).

Echoing the flight from public schools after *Brown v. Board of Education*, “between 1968 and 1970, total white public school enrollment in the thirty-three districts named in *Alexander* atrophied by 25 percent” (Hustwit 2019, 150). The number of all-white private schools in Mississippi almost doubled from 1966-1970, with sixty-one of those being formed within a year of the *Alexander* ruling (Hustwit 2019, 150).

However, the ruling of *Alexander* did not mean that the school systems were automatically equal. In 1969’s *Singleton v. Jackson Municipal Separate School District*, rules were implemented on how the hiring and firing of teachers in desegregated districts would be handled. These “Singleton factors” would be used in later cases (Adams & Adams 2018, 112). Another blow came to those hoping for less school desegregation

court orders with the unanimous 1972 *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* decision, which upheld busing for racial reasons (Kluger 2004, 763).

However, a setback to pro-integrationists came in the form of *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), which ruled that unless segregation was done deliberately, it did not have to be fixed by methods such as busing (Kluger 2004, 766).

One question that remains today: how did Mississippi newspapers report on *Alexander v. Holmes*, and did the geography of the state influence the way that newspapers reported on *Alexander* at all? The newspaper's reports across the state of Mississippi varied greatly in the headlines, editorials, letters from the editor, and everything in between.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Press and Race

The Press and Race remains an invaluable resource for newspapers in the Civil Rights movement. With the exception of the first chapter, each chapter covers a different journalist active in Mississippi during the Civil Rights movement. This book remains useful as it is one of the only resources available on this topic and this provides a strong background on the history of the press and race in Mississippi. As it is a formative resource on this subject, it is important to use this book as a study on this subject.

The first chapter discusses the way that daily newspapers reported on *Brown v. Board of Education*, the desegregation of Ole Miss, and Freedom Summer of 1964, focusing less on individual newspapers and newspaper editors. The overall consensus on *Brown v. Board of Education* was overwhelmingly negative; Andrew Harmon of the *Hattiesburg American* wrote that desegregation was “against the law of God and nature” (Weill 2001, 27). Even the more vocal advocates for *Brown* such as Hodding Carter, Jr., of the *Delta Democrat-Times* in Greenville, did not advocate for total integration; Carter only advocated for integration at the college level, saying that “A majority of Southerners...are not ready for the reality of integration” (Weill 2001, 29). The desegregation of Ole Miss also presented a challenge to the “closed society” of Mississippi; many editors across the state supported then-governor Ross Barnett’s decrying of the situation (Weill 2001, 31). Only some editors, such as Ira B. Harkey of Pascagoula and Hodding Carter, Jr., of Greenville, decried the situation (Weill 2001, 34). When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was in Congress, only Hodding Carter Jr., once again, supported the bill’s passage, and “encouraged his readers to give the [bill] the

benefit of a doubt” (Weill 2001, 39). Freedom Summer brought similar reactions from the state’s major editor; when Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney went missing and were later found murdered, James B. Skewes, the editor of the *Meridian Star*, ignored their disappearance until they were found murdered, blaming it on the Civil Rights movement (Weill 2001, 43).

The only chapter that does not cover a Mississippi journalist is the sixth chapter, which talks about Wilson F. (Bill) Minor, a columnist who wrote for the New Orleans *Time-Picayune*. He wrote from Jackson as the Mississippi correspondent for the *Times-Picayune* (Strout 2001, 210). Minor’s position in Jackson allowed him to witness key aspects of the Civil Rights movement. While Minor was never an advocate for integration, he did progress in his belief to become more of an advocate for both desegregation and equality among the races (Strout 2001, 210). For example, in 1963, during the murder trial of Byron De La Beckwith for killing Medgar Evers, Minor described him as “dapper” (Strout 2001, 216). Later, in 1964, Minor reported on sentencing for bombings in McComb, criticizing the sentences for being lenient, saying that “racial justice does not prevail in Mississippi” (Strout 2001, 228). Minor remains relevant as he had eyes on the outside of the state, even if his point of view was just in New Orleans.

The second chapter discusses Percy Greene, editor of the *Jackson Advocate*. The *Jackson Advocate* was a majority Black newspaper, and Greene was Black. Greene was controversial because he was accused of catering to white people (Cooper 2001, 55). For example, Greene did not advocate for *Brown v. Board of Education* in his editorials, wanting to maintain the status quo (Cooper 2001, 65). Greene and the *Jackson Advocate*

became a vehicle of the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, as Greene was put on their payroll in 1956 (Cooper 2001, 69). This was apparent in later issues as Greene attacked Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Medgar Evers, who he called a “zealot” (Cooper 2001, 71). While Greene did support James Meredith’s admission to Ole Miss, he did not condemn the people who rioted against him (Cooper 2001, 73). Even as the Civil Rights movement grew and later groups like the black nationalist movement grew as well, Greene’s lack of support for it cost him the trust of local Black Mississippians (Cooper 2001, 79). Greene remains a polarizing figure in Mississippi newspaper history because he was a man of contradictions; both Black yet not fully supportive of civil rights, he goes against the mold.

The third chapter discusses Jimmy Ward, editor of the Jackson *Daily News*. The *Daily News* was known for being ardently pro-segregation throughout the Civil Rights movement. Ward took editorship of the paper in mid-1954. Ward believed that race mixing “would destroy Southern society” and firmly decried the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954 (Davies & Smith 2001, 87). Ward also “began a campaign of ridicule” against the Freedom Riders in May 1961 (Davies & Smith 2001, 91). Black people only appeared in the *Daily News* “as objects of ridicule” or for “participation in any violent act” (Davies & Smith 2001, 97). Ward “presented Mississippi as a happy, peaceful state with few or no problems”, turning a blind eye to racial issues (Davies & Smith 2001, 104). Ward’s impact was that he remains a controversial figure but important for speaking on the political status quo of the time. Although his views are considered extremely outdated and racist, they remain crucial to identifying how his editing shaped Mississippi society.

The fourth chapter discusses J. Oliver Emmerich, editor of the McComb *Enterprise-Journal*. Emmerich was editor of the *Enterprise-Journal* during the bombings of 1964, but helped by repeatedly calling for “law and order” (Davies 2001, 112). Emmerich was known as a “moderate” throughout the state; he believed in segregation, but also believed in voting rights for Black Mississippians (Davies 2001, 114). The *Enterprise-Journal* also at points doubted the bombings by adding quotation marks to headlines or casting doubt that the bombings were not done by Civil Rights workers (Davies 2001, 123-124). While Emmerich was no proponent of integration or otherwise fully advancing Civil Rights, his views reflected that Mississippi was changing, slowly but surely (Davies 2001, 134).

The fifth chapter discusses George A. McLean, editor of the *Tupelo Journal*. McLean did not put himself in the spotlight with his editorials, instead staying behind the scenes to promote change that way (Fairley 2001, 138). McLean was described as “liberal” by Mississippi standards, but still kept his head down to stay within the status quo (Fairley 2001, 139). McLean started his work at the *Journal* in 1934, and eventually expanded the *Journal* to a daily newspaper (Fairley 2001, 142). Slowly but surely, McLean helped improve race relations in Tupelo; he became a trusted confidant of many Black community leaders (Fairley 2001, 148). McLean’s behind-the-scenes work also helped smooth the Tupelo school integration (Fairley 2001, 156). While McLean was not as active in his editorials as other editors of the time, he still played a major part in Tupelo’s quest for Civil Rights.

The seventh chapter discusses Hazel Brannon Smith, editor of the *Lexington Advertiser*. Smith was the only female editor discussed in this book. The author of this

section, Arthur J. Kaul asserts that Smith was never a bastion of Civil Rights advocacy, but instead a woman of early 1900s Progressive ideals (2001, 234). Smith was born and raised in Alabama, and bought the *Durant News* in 1936, her first foray into journalism (Kaul 2001, 235). In 1943, she acquired the paper *The Lexington Advertiser*. In the early years of editing the paper, she took on bootleggers in her column “Through Hazel Eyes” (Kaul 2001, 238). While Smith did decry segregation after *Brown*, she also described herself as “caught in the middle” of “an extremist or radical group on either side of the racial controversy” and continued to endorse segregation (Kaul 2001, 245). In 1959, the rival paper *Holmes County Herald* was organized to undercut her support (Kaul 2001, 248). In 1964, Smith won the Pulitzer Prize (Kaul 2001, 258). Smith remains important to the discussion of the press during the Civil Rights movement as she was one of the few women to own a paper during the time, and displayed how even those with good intentions could still have more bigoted points of view.

The eighth chapter discusses Hodding Carter, Jr., editor of the *Delta Democrat-Times*. Hodding Carter, Jr., was notable for pushing back against the status quo of the day and advocating for equal rights. Carter was born in Louisiana and moved to Maine for college, which he attributed to his change of mind regarding race relations (Carter 2001, 268). After working in the newspaper industry for ten years, and in 1938, he bought Greenville’s *Daily Democrat-Times*, merging it with the *Delta Star* to create the *Delta Democrat-Times* (Carter 2001, 271). Carter was early in defending rights for Black Mississippians; he insisted on using “Mrs” as a courtesy term for married Black women (Carter 2001, 275). While Carter did support desegregation, he also never fully called for integration either (Carter 2001, 276-277). By the 1960s, Carter was well established as a

prominent Mississippi editor, but he faced setbacks such as regarding his health and the death of his son (Carter 2001, 290). Carter remains significant as he was a trailblazer for continued racial equality in Mississippi.

The Smell of Burning Crosses

The Smell of Burning Crosses is the autobiography of Ira B. Harkey, a newspaper editor for fourteen years in Pascagoula, Mississippi in the 1950s and 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement (Harkey 111). Harkey was threatened by the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist terrorist organization, several times throughout his career, leading to “the smell of burning crosses” - the book title, and representative of how the Klan often burned crosses on the front lawns of those they disagreed with.

Harkey begins his autobiography by describing how he came to buy the Pascagoula *Chronicle-Star* from its former owners; he purchased it in 1949 from Tristram Shandy Easton King (Harkey 25). There is no specific reason given why the paper was being sold. Harkey’s biggest change was when he removed the phrasing of the word “colored” from the paper’s circulation (Harkey 27). Almost immediately Harkey came into conflict with local citizens by reporting the news “good and [bad]” instead of only reporting positive things (Harkey 32). This was shown when Harkey reported on the mayor Frank Canty getting arrested and jailed for drunkenness (Harkey 31). The pushback came from Jim Ford, a local lawyer, who stated that a newspaper was “supposed to help its community, not tear it down” (Harkey 32). Harkey’s response to that was that “*The Chronicle* will report the news” (33).

Harkey was very concerned about the separation of Black and white people in newspaper writing, and was very disturbed by the tendency to call Black citizens by

dehumanizing terms. One example of this was the refusal to call married Black women “Mrs” - Harkey changed this (Harkey 64). Harkey argued for treating Black people like “men instead of a second class citizen” (Harkey 74).

Harkey’s remarks in 1954 regarding school desegregation, in which he reacted positively, was met with the Klan burning a cross on his front lawn (Harkey 102). His support for principles like integration was met with negativity from other newspaper editors across the state, even when Harkey won a Pulitzer Prize (Harkey 125). Harkey only received support from four editors - “Hodding Carter III at Greenville, Hazel Smith at Lexington, H.H. Crisler at Bay Springs and Moon Mullen in Canton” (Harkey 125). In McComb, J. Oliver Emmerich’s son John Emmerich congratulated Carter in private (Harkey 126). Harkey referred to the people pushing back against him as “race hateists” (132).

After the advent of Ross Barnett’s governance in Mississippi, and Harkey’s support for James Meredith, who integrated Ole Miss, Harkey began to lose support (Harkey 168). Harkey was also a supporter of labor unions, making him a target of radical conservatives (Harkey 172). Harkey in particular had to deal with the response from churches as he made several columns decrying the hypocrisy of the churches (Harkey 204). During a 1956 revival in Pascagoula, a sermon entitled “God’s Answer to Segregation”, with the content about how the Bible justified racial segregation, was preached (Harkey 204). Jimmy Ward of the Jackson *Daily News*, an ardent segregationist, wrote that he hoped that the parishioners of a white Episcopalian minister “puke in his plate” for being in favor of racial equality (Harkey 205). Harkey’s inclusion

of these examples of church hatred towards racial equality indicates the pervasive attitudes at the time.

This work remains useful as it provides a perspective from an editor during the Civil Rights movement. While Harkey was not an editor of the *Pascagoula Chronicle* during the *Alexander v. Holmes County* decision, his progressive views remain important as they represent a small but impactful change in the attitudes of major political epicenters like newspapers. Harkey's work represents a rarity within this genre - the tenacity of a newspaper editor to stand alone in the crowd and stand up for the rights of Black citizens.

As demonstrated above, the literature regarding *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* and the newspaper coverage remains rather limited. The literature is largely limited to books such as *The Press and Race*, which broadly cover the subject, and *The Smell of Burning Crosses*, an autobiography. One major limitation of *The Press and Race* is that it only covers up through 1965, while the *Alexander v. Holmes* case occurred in 1969, echoing a gap in the literature. The aim for this project is to fill the gaps in what was reported on *Alexander* in newspapers.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

For this project, the question investigated is “How did newspapers in Mississippi report on the *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education (Alexander v. Holmes County)* decision?” The research that was completed to investigate this question was qualitative research. This research was collected at the William F. Winter Archives in Jackson, Mississippi. There were no special tools or materials used in this research.

The newspapers varied in location, and came from every corner of Mississippi in order to analyze attitudes of Mississippi newspapers to see if there were any major differences in the regions. This research analyzed the front-page headlines, editorial, and opinion pieces from the two week period of October 30, 1969 through November 14, 1969, in Mississippi newspapers. These dates were chosen to provide an overview of how newspapers from across the state covered the *Alexander* decision. The newspapers examined were in Natchez’s *Natchez Democrat*, Tupelo’s *Daily Journal*, McComb’s *Enterprise-Journal*, Greenville’s *Delta Democrat-Times*, Meridian’s *Meridian Star*, Hattiesburg’s *Hattiesburg American*, Biloxi’s *Daily Herald*, and two in Jackson, the *Clarion-Ledger* and the *Jackson Advocate*. The *Jackson Advocate* was a Black-run paper; it was chosen as it was one of the largest Black-run papers in the Mississippi at the time and to give an alternate view to the majority white papers that dominated most of the state. These papers were divided up into regions to analyze. For North Mississippi, Tupelo and Greenville were analyzed. For Central Mississippi, Natchez, Meridian, and the two Jackson newspapers, were analyzed. For South Mississippi, McComb, Hattiesburg, and Biloxi were analyzed.

For the analysis, headlines, the content of front-page articles, editorials, and letters to the editor that were about the *Alexander v. Holmes County* decision were analyzed. The purpose for this was to emphasize a contrast between the types of articles in the newspapers across the state that reported on the decision. This method of analysis was chosen in order to draw comparisons between the headlines, editorials, letters to the editor, and opinion pieces that discussed the *Alexander v. Holmes County* decision across the state and to analyze if different regions of Mississippi reacted differently to this court case and how they did so.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

Media coverage of the *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* case was analyzed from October 30th through November 14th in the North Mississippi areas of Greenville and Tupelo, the Central Mississippi areas of Jackson, Meridian, and Natchez, and the South Mississippi areas of Hattiesburg, McComb, and Biloxi. This media coverage was found to be overwhelmingly negative towards the idea of integration.

North Mississippi

In North Mississippi, *The Delta Democrat-Times* was the main newspaper in Greenville. *The Delta Democrat-Times* tended to have less inflammatory language in their headlines; this is immediately demonstrated by the October 30th headline, which read “Supreme Court orders desegregation ‘at once’” (Donovan 1969). A November 2nd column refers to this court decision as “inevitable”, reinforcing the idea that many Mississippians had come to terms with integration and were preparing to deal with it (1969). A headline from November 3rd also echoes this, saying “Justice readies implementation” (1969). Integration was here, and Mississippi would have to adapt.

A November 6th column describes the Justice Department backing Mississippi schools in adapting their own desegregation plans instead of following federal guidance, describing it as a “Softer Nixon administration approach” (1969). On November 7th, it was reported that the “Fifth Circuit sets December deadline”; the “Nixon administration bids for delay...of recalcitrant Mississippi school districts” were given until Christmas break to sort out the issue of desegregation (1969). On November 10th, the Nixon administration was again criticized for being soft on the integration delays, and causing resistance to integration (1969).

Hodding Carter Jr.'s legacy of racial equality was in full sight in this paper. An October 30th column entitled "Leaders' reaction" quotes the Black mayor of Fayette, Charles Evers, who said about the court order, "I think it's great" (1969). In one of the few editorials criticizing the Southern status quo, Bob Boyd remarks in "Hide your kids! It's the 'quality education' gang:" nothing "so massive as public education could escape the simple guarantee of the Fourteenth Amendment" (1969). A November 5th commentary by Ed Rogers on "Southern schools seeking loopholes" describes the attempts of Southern politicians to extend freedom of choice and also predicts the rise in the use of private schools (1969).

Tupelo's *Daily Journal* tended to be the paper in the state that used the most incendiary language and was the most anti-desegregation. The October 30th byline once again used the term "mix", saying "State Officials Express Dismay Over Mix Ruling" (1969). On October 31st, the *Daily Journal* called the ruling a "Death Knell", further adding incendiary language (1969). Mississippi governor John Bell Williams was reported on saying it would "Destroy State Schools" in an October 31 article, saying that the "the school children of our state have been cruelly offered as sacrificial lambs on the altar of social experimentation" (1969). A November 3rd article reads "Mix Ruling Sparks Cry Of Apprehension For Schools", where John Bell Williams was again quoted, this time saying that this ruling would lead to "the destruction of public education itself" (Reese 1969). A November 8th column read "State Leaders Sound Warning As School Officials Work Toward Court Compliance", once again demonizing those who were trying to make change in districts (1969).

In a column from October 31st, it was reported that “25 Republicans Offer Desegregation Aid”, noting that none of them were Southerners (1969). This further emphasizes the Republican-Democrat gap. Another October 31st column, “Court Order Aimed At 14 School Districts”, is more objective, naming the 14 school districts in which the *Alexander* case was brought up against (1969). Another October 31st column reported that the “5th Circuit Gives Time to File Mix Plans”, meaning that the school districts had until November 5th to file integration plans (1969). Another October 31st column also remarks that this lifts the burden of interpreting “deliberate speed” “by establishing a clear rule and that it shall be promptly enforced” (1969). A November 4th column details the request of the thirty school districts involved in the *Alexander* case to have a new hearing (1969). A November 6th column reads “U.S. Asks Schools Draw Own Mix Plans”, allowing school districts to create their own mix plans and not rely on the federal government’s plan (1969). On November 7th, the headline read “Unitary School System Deadline Set On Dec. 31”, which meant that schools under this order must desegregate by that date; other schools were able to wait until September of 1970 (1969). On November 11, it was reported that “Free Choice Appeal For 44 Districts Turned Down”, emphasizing the end of freedom of choice to end segregation.

The view that integration is inevitable was also clear in the *Tupelo Daily Journal*, however dissatisfied; US Attorney General John N. Mitchell believed that federal troops would not be necessary, and that “the area of cooperation and the time of cooperation has arrived” (1969). A November 5th column read “School Boards In Warfare With Community” criticizing the role of school boards and their compliance with desegregation orders (1969). A November 8th column emphasized that the role of

integration lay within the local sphere of local government and school boards (1969). However, there were once again concerns voiced from HEW Secretary Robert H. Finch, who in a November 6th column worried that private schools would dominate as a way to skirt integration (1969). To address the idea that the North was getting away with segregation while the South was not, a concern listed throughout the state, on November 10th, it was reported that “Stennis To Include North In School Mix, Will Draft Amendments to Enforce Prompt Compliance To New School Integration Rule on National Basis” (1969). This demonstrates Stennis playing to his voter base.

Central Mississippi

In Jackson, the *Clarion-Ledger* was the main vehicle for reporting. The articles in the *Clarion-Ledger* tended to focus heavily on the logistics of how desegregation was going to happen and less on the politics of the matter. The October 30th headline, the day after desegregation was ordered, read “Supreme Court Orders Immediate State Mix”. The word “mix” was used frequently in the *Clarion-Ledger*; on November 12, the headline read “Hinds Schools Receive Details of Mix Orders”. The word “mix” was used again in the headline on November 7th and 8th, with the November 7th headline reading “Mixing Plans Ordered Implemented By Dec. 31” and the November 8th headline reading “State Mixing Order Is Formally Issued” (1969). The October 31st headline reinforced this, saying that “U.S. To Enforce Court’s Mandate”.

On November 13th, Billy Skelton, a *Clarion-Ledger* staff writer, reporting on the headline that “School Chief Urges Support”, wrote about Hinds County Superintendent of Education Clyde Muse and how he believed that education quality would only be

guaranteed through parents, administrators, and teachers working together. (Skelton 1969). Muse's vagueness in the matter represents the resentful sense that integration was inevitable. Skelton wrote another article on Sunday, November 9, entitled "How Does Court Ruling Really Apply?". In this article, Skelton criticizes the response from the federal government and quotes State Attorney General A. F. Summer by saying that "they have gone into the force integration by-the-numbers game, but they haven't told us what the magic numbers are" (Skelton 1969). Summer does however note in a November 5th article that he will follow the ruling, saying that "we have always been law abiding people" (1969). The courts were also urged to let Mississippi school districts draw their own desegregation plans, but a compromise to let the districts work with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to complete this (1969).

The editorials throughout the paper remained critical of the decision. Editorials also bring up issues that would continue to be ongoing, such as busing; a November 12 editorial by Paul Harvey headline read "Busing Not Pleasing Blacks Nor Whites". This article points out that "blacks complain[ed] of being bused to school". Even children complained about the decision; one editorial from November 13 read "Jackson 13-Year-Old Has Question For Chief Justice of United States", where 13-year-old Valerie Majors urges the Chief Justice to consider not interrupting the school year of the children. On November 10, Bill Bradley, a senior at Forrest Hill High School, also complained about possibly having to switch schools in the middle of the year.

The desegregation decision was also referred to as communism in the editorials, with one editorial proclaiming that "Commie Fulfilling Boast of Taking America Under Guise of Civil Rights". Editorials also complained about the hypocrisy of only ruling on

Southern schools, but not northern ones, such as in an editorial by Florence Sillers Ogden on November 9; in this editorial she especially focuses on then-Mississippi Senator John Stennis and his crusade against integration.

The overall mood from Jackson's *Clarion-Ledger*, a majority white paper, was overwhelmingly negative in both the headlines and in the editorials. The paper tended to use loaded language such as "mix" to refer to desegregation, and focused mainly on the effect that this order would have on white Americans. This represents Jackson's stronghold as a city that tended to oppose integration.

Besides the *Clarion-Ledger*, the *Jackson Advocate* was another main paper in Jackson; however, unlike the *Clarion-Ledger*, the *Jackson Advocate* was a majority Black newspaper. At this time, the *Advocate* was only published biweekly, so it contains little information about this. An article from November 1's headline reads "The United States Supreme Court Rips Nixon Administration Ordering Immediate Desegregation Mississippi Public Schools", demonstrating a more hopeful manner in which Black Mississippians viewed desegregation and this court order. In an editorial from November 15, the *Advocate* notes that this decision presents "a rare and unique opportunity to free itself from the shackles left over from the history of Negro slavery" (1969). This demonstrates how Black Mississippians saw this court case as a chance to become a beacon of freedom in the United States.

The Meridian Star reported from the town of Meridian, on the eastern border of central Mississippi. Meridian overall remained fairly negative in its coverage of the court ruling. On October 30th, the headline read "South Facing Flurry of Mix Cases"; the use of the word "mix" once again displays hostility (1969). Other front-page columns from

October 30th represent local shock and anger over the decision; headlines such as “Local Leaders Urge Parents to Remain Calm”, “Nixon Offers Help; Stennis Vows Fight” and editorial “Idiotic Decision” demonstrate the waves that this ruling made in Meridian (1969). The editorial “Idiotic Decision” in particular remains relevant as the author decries the Supreme Court as “know[ing] nothing about school administration” and that this decision will only cause “dissatisfaction and unhappiness” (1969). John Perkins’s column “What’s Perkin” also heavily criticizes this decision, calling it a “national disgrace” and “the decay which eats at the fibre of America” (1969).

An October 31st headline, “No Court Definition of ‘Unitary’ School”, reinforces the ideal that Meridian schools “will not defy the U. S. Supreme Court desegregation order” but also raises questions about how schools will function when the federal government is not giving clear orders (Perry 1969). Despite this, on November 8th, Mississippi governor John Bell Williams described the integration process as “grim but not hopeless”, demonstrating how there was still hope that the order could be defied (1969). Another article quotes former Alabama governor George Wallace, who remarked that this decision would have “a strong effect on the 1972 presidential race”; this article also quotes Alabama Attorney General MacDonald Gallion as the day this decision was handed down as “Black Wednesday” (1969). The *Star* also reported on November 1st that “Fifth Circuit Has 13 More School Cases”, referring to the desegregation hearings that would be happening across the South (1969).

A November 1st *Meridian Star* headline again uses the term “mix”, saying that “Court Sets Wednesday Deadline For Mix Plan” (1969). Many regular people were affected by this decision, including teachers; an October 31st article read “Dixie

Educators Shocked At Supreme Court Edict” (1969). However, they were warned that even though plans were due soon, it “May Take Months To Change Schools”; this represents another attempt at stopping integration in its tracks (1969). However, a November 6th headline reported that “Meridian Schools Seek 1970 Mixing Deadline”, signaling even further that they will comply with the integration demands (1969). The Justice Department did end up helping local schools, according to a November 6th article; it was reported that they advocated to let schools “pick their own desegregation plans rather than those devised by the federal government” (1969).

One angle that the criticisms of the decision came from was calling the decision hypocritical, as seen in the November 2nd column “Crackdown on State Will Not Extend North” (1969). The argument was that many Northern cities practiced “de facto” segregation and the South was being unfairly targeted (1969). This was argued again by Senator John Stennis, who said integration should be “nationwide” on November 8 (1969). Others, such as Mr. and Mrs. Donald E. Tingle on November 8th, argued that as private citizens, they had the right to choose where their children went to school (1969). Some were ready to defy the order; a November 3rd column quotes Louisiana governor John McKeithen as saying “the people of Louisiana just aren’t going to do it” (1969). However, a November 8th article remarked that “Louisiana Schools Handed ‘Same Dose’” - they were ordered to integrate as well (1969). It was also reported that “Southerners Searching For School Loopholes” on November 3rd in order to get out of the integration order (1969).

However, other criticisms were more unfounded; in an editorial from November 6th entitled “Wants The People To Operate The Schools”, the author, J. P. Roberson,

claims that “those who are a part of this destruction are helping the Communist cause” (1969). David Lawrence echoes this again in a November 13 editorial entitled “Real Issue Behind Fight On Integration” where he argues that “television shows have been influencing the younger generation to participate in riots and disorder”, and that an increase of Black Americans on TV shows will lead to interracial marriage (1969).

Natchez’s *Natchez Democrat* reported on the issue in a more basic manner, avoiding overly incendiary language. On Thursday, October 30th, the headline read “Supreme Court Orders State Schools to Desegregate Now” and the byline read “Unanimous Decision Orders Districts To End Dual System” (1969). According to James Phelps, this was seen as a “Victory For All Negro Children” according to the NAACP (1969). On November 1st, it was reported that “Court Calls For Local Mix Plan By Wed.”, emphasizing the urgency in the desegregation plans (1969). On November 5th, it was reported that “Local School Desegregation Plan Completed; Submitted To The Court” (1969). On November 6th, it was reported that the school boards would be able to draw up their own integration plans, according to the Justice Department (1969). On November 7th, the “December 31st Deadline To 30 Public School Districts” was given, and “Implement Mix Is Ordered By Court” (1969). On November 12th, it was reported that the “HEW Desegregation Plan To Be Used In Local Schools” and that “Major Changes Are Not Allowed” (1969). On November 13th, it was also reported that there had been no conclusion on how students would be divided among schools (Lambert 1969). That same day, it was also stated that the “Department of Justice Will Not Appeal Decision” (1969).

In an editorial, Paul Harvey criticizes busing, saying “[it] has proved effective neither for integration nor for better education” (1969). Private schools were again reported on November 7th, when Richard R. Thomsen, representative of the National Association of Private Schools, spoke on it; he remarked that “we are not enthusiastic about schools being founded on the basis of trying to avoid integration” (1969). The same day, a private school in Adams County that would teach all grades was announced (1969). Jimmy Swan, a former Mississippi gubernatorial candidate, advocated for private schools on November 13th as well (1969).

South Mississippi

Hattiesburg’s *Hattiesburg American* overall reported negatively on the court ruling. Many were concerned with how the courts were going to enforce a mandate this quickly; in an October 30th column, Barry Schweid wrote that “Nixon says administration will help with problems order creates” (1969). G. C. Thelen Jr. also wrote on October 30th that “Order raises the guidelines problem”, referring to how schools were going to modify integration plans (1969). Another October 30th article says that “Much depends on the meaning of ‘immediate’”; it quotes John Satterfield, the lawyer who argues for Mississippi, who says that he does not know how the court will enforce this so quickly. In an October 30th article by Don McLeod, entitled “‘Deliberate speed’ has become ‘now’”, he criticizes the abrupt decision of the court to decide that “deliberate speed” means “now” (1969). The *Hattiesburg American* also published the full text of the Supreme Court decision on October 30th (1969).

The way that integration was going to happen was reported on November 4th in an article titled “Integration conference set Thursday”, where a conference of school leaders was set to decide on how to cover integration (1969). A November 6th headline read “Court wrestles with details of imposing immediate desegregation” (1969). A November 7th headline entitled “School Boards Work Toward Deadlines” reinforced that integration was here to stay; local leaders were collaborating with the federal government (1969). However, this communication also meant that “Schedules Shuffled By Meridian Board”; according to the November 7th column, the rush to finalize where students would go meant that dates in the school year got moved around (1969).

An October 31st headline reported on how the Black community reacted to the decision, with the headline being “Negro leader predicts some public schools to be abolished” (Morganti 1969). There was also a begrudging sense of acceptance that this was coming; the October 31st headline “Finch may use desegregation as springboard for action” discusses how Secretary Robert H. Finch would use the court’s decision to take “vigorous, new action against hundreds of holdout southern school districts” (Thelen 1969). A November 13th article reported that “New pressure to be applied 130 holdout school districts”; this referred to not just in Mississippi, but across the South (Thelen 1969). Another article from the same day reported that the Forrest County “Board must work out own interpretation of HEW plans” (Reddin 1969).

On November 7th, it was reported that “County schools must put HEW plan into effect”; students would be split up depending on grade, and “30 districts must have new plans in effect by Dec. 31” (1969). On November 8th, “Official desegregation orders [were] announced” in Forrest County (1969). A November 11th column noted that

“Teachers as well as board included in court order” (1969). Another November 11th column criticizes Forrest County’s lack of transparency over borders, which would determine where students would go to school, in “Nobody knows where north-south line is under new county school plan” (1969). A November 12th article discusses Forrest County’s response to desegregation, saying that there is a “Meeting tonight for those opposing desegregation plans” in Jackson (1969). An article from November 12th discusses Mississippi Senator John Stennis in that he “calls for preservation of Mississippi’s public schools” in “all but unbearable problems” (1969).

An October 31st editorial criticized the decision, saying “Public schools must survive”, and decried the decision as hypocritical “when segregation is in fact so widespread throughout the nation” (1969). Another editorial from the same day called it “bitterly ironic” that Black Vassar students “demanded segregated living quarters” on the same day that the *Alexander* decision was handed down (1969). Another editorial with a similar title, from November 6th, “Public schools must prevail”, discusses Mississippi Senator John Stennis and his urging to not abandon public schools. Robert H. Finch, however, Welfare Secretary, predicted that “White Southern children may move into private schools” on November 6th (1969). This article was also published in the *McComb Enterprise-Journal*. A letter to the editor on November 11th echoes this, as a parent urges other parents to move their children to private schools to avoid “deplorable conditions” (1969). A November 11th editorial entitled “Think first of the children” where the author points out that children will be living with the decisions the adults make - “white and black” - and to not make “emotionally motivated mistakes” (1969). A November 12th

editorial from a local pastor on “the court, the schools, and the Christian” implores local Christians to follow the law of the land (1969).

McComb’s *Enterprise-Journal* consisted of fairly negative headlines regarding integration, but the wording tended to be less sensational and more focused on reporting the news. The October 30th headline did read “Court Orders Immediate Mix” with the bylines “Mississippi Loses Supreme Court Fight” and “Reaction in State is Varied” (1969). Another column, “Justice Department Stunned By Decision”, emphasizes how Southerners felt vindicated that they were not the only ones slighted by this ruling (1969). An article by Charles Dungan entitled “Area School Attorneys Ponder Current Ruling” discusses how local school attorneys were handling the cases (1969).

The October 31st headline, “Threat Seen to Education”, discusses Black McComb citizens and their fears that schools may close (1969). According to the article, there were worries about public school abolition because in a 1954 - the same year *Brown v Board* was ruled on - amendment to the state constitution, local school boards can shut down schools (1969). The same day, an article on Attorney General A. F. Summer discussed the ruling, saying “it means now and we think it means now”, emphasizing that time really was up for segregation in Mississippi (Saggus 1969). McComb Schools Superintendent Julian Prince tried to reassure parents that the court ruling will have “no impact upon the McComb school district” “for the immediate future” (Prince 1969). Louisiana school integration was also discussed in the article “Mix Plans to be Discussed” where school officials would present desegregation plans to the federal government (1969). A November 6th article reported the same thing in Mississippi, saying “School Men, Judges Meet” (1969).

On November 7th, it was reported that “South Pike’s Plan Accepted” and that “Court’s Orders Are ‘Immediate’, signaling the end of segregation in McComb; the plans were going through. “Freedom of Choice Takes Another Blow” was reported on November 10th, where Louisiana’s plans to enact freedom of choice in New Orleans were rejected (1969). This policy change represents a continued shift away from education policy in Mississippi. However, it was reported that same day that “School Districts Face Problems Adjusting”, criticizing the ruling coming in the middle of the school year (1969). An alternative, private schools, was again emphasized in Amite County as a “Mass Meeting is Held in Liberty”, as well as a smaller meeting in Gloster (1969). This represents a shift away from full support of public schools. However, on November 13th, it was reported that “Stennis Wants Schools Saved”, saying “we must face up to the terrible consequences that would result if we abandon the public school system” (1969). On November 13th, “Desegregation Plans Revealed”, posting the new school assignments for integrated schools in Pike, Amite, Franklin, Lincoln, and Lawrence Counties (1969).

Biloxi’s *The Daily Herald* was the big newspaper on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Much like the *Clarion-Ledger*, *The Daily Herald* also used loaded terms like “mixing”; in an October 30 byline to the headline “Demands Made On Harrison Schools”, it read “Supreme Court Ends Mixing Delay” (1969). The *Herald* also reported on what comments state officials made in the column “State Officials React To Decision”; Senator James O. Eastland was quoted saying that this decision “spells disaster for public education in Mississippi and in many parts of the south” (1969). In a column from October 31, entitled “Nixon Has Problem In School Decision”, the speed at which courts

ordered schools to desegregate was discussed as a problem and deemed as a “rush” (1969). The tone given from these articles was also begrudging acceptance; in a November 1 column entitled “School Mixing Ordered”, Mississippi Attorney General A. F. Summer was quoted saying “we’ll at least try to comply with what the court orders” (1969).

The legal side of the court order was also called into question; an article by Don McKee on November 4th noted “it might be weeks - even months - before significant effects are felt in Dixie” (1969). This article was also published in the *Hattiesburg American* on the same day. On November 6th, it was reported that “Mississippi School Case in U.S. Court”, where the legal details of what would constitute desegregation plans was once again discussed (1969). In a November 7th article entitled “Mississippi School Mix By Dec. 31”, Judge Griffin B. Bell from Alabama told reporters that the school plans would be made by December 31st of that year (1969). A November 13th article reported on how local Coast schools were handling integration; in “County Schools Eye Reply”, the way Harrison County replied to integration demands was made (1969). An editorial by David Lawrence entitled “Supreme Court Decision” argues that schools are already integrated as zoning is determined on housing, and white and Black students live in separate neighborhoods; this represents a point of view that desegregation and integration had already happened and should not need to be worried about (1969). This article was also published by the *Hattiesburg American* and *The Meridian Star*.

Discussion

The findings in this paper have found that overall, media coverage of *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* was overwhelmingly negative, but for different

reasons in different papers, although there are a few common threads. One commonality between papers was the use of the word “mix” in the *Tupelo Daily Journal*, *Jackson Clarion Ledger*, *Meridian Star*, *Natchez Democrat*, *McComb Enterprise-Journal*, and *Biloxi Daily Herald* demonstrates the prolificness of the word in Mississippi headlines, but is also problematic as it implies interracial relationships - and that desegregating schools would lead to interracial relationships. Another sentiment echoed was that the North was getting away with keeping segregation, and only the South was being punished; this view was expressed in *Tupelo’s Daily Journal*, *Jackson’s Clarion-Ledger*, and the *Meridian Star*. This point of view was meant to point out the perceived hypocrisy seen by Southern editorialists and opinion columnists.

It was also found that there was also no real difference in opinion between one region and another. The most “liberal” newspaper was Greenville’s *Delta Democrat-Times*, which bore the column “Hide your kids! It’s the ‘quality education’ gang” by Bob Boyd, one of the few columns criticizing the common negative Southern response to the integration order. This could possibly be attributed to former editor Hodding Carter Jr., a very liberal editor who was head of the paper during the earlier parts of the Civil Rights movement.

Overall, the newspapers seemed to view integration as inevitable. The sense wasn’t as much that integration was good - as it was clearly viewed as bad - but many Southerners accepted integration as a fact of life. They had had time to prepare, as seen in articles discussing private school foundings, and for many, the decision was unavoidable.

The *Alexander v. Holmes* decision ended the doctrine of legal segregation in schools once and for all. Schools could not continue to delay integration; they were given a deadline and forced to comply. This forever changed Mississippi, but as demonstrated above through newspaper articles, did not happen without a fight from legislators, authority figures, parents, and even children. Mississippi in 1969 was cresting a wave of change.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The introduction of this thesis covers the history of the Civil Rights movement, specifically focusing on educational policy in the United States and how race has informed educational policy. The introduction covers the years of the 1850s through the 1970s and focuses on major court cases that helped shape educational policy in the United States relating to segregation, desegregation, and integration. The introduction also touches on Mississippi newspaper editors during the Civil Rights movement and their involvement in civil rights.

The literature review of this thesis focuses on two books: *The Press and Race*, with essays by many different authors and edited by David R. Davies, and *The Smell of Burning Crosses*, an autobiography by Mississippi newspaper editor Ira Harkey. *The Press and Race* expands deeper into the biographies of different Mississippi editors, discussing both those who supported civil rights and those who did not. *The Press and Race* provides a look at the divided editors of Mississippi and the roles they had in the Civil Rights movement, whether positive or negative. *The Smell of Burning Crosses* discusses editor Ira Harkey, who was not written about in *The Press and Race*. *The Smell of Burning Crosses* describes Harkey's experiences as a pro-Civil Rights newspaper editor in 1960s South Mississippi; the titular "smell of burning crosses" refers to the Ku Klux Klan burning crosses on his front porch to warn him to stay away from supporting the Civil Rights movement.

The methodology of this thesis describes the process taken to conduct this research. This qualitative research was performed at the William F. Winter Archives in Jackson, Mississippi, using microfilm. The analysis of this thesis focuses on nine

newspapers in three areas: Tupelo and Greenville in North Mississippi, Jackson, Natchez, and Meridian in Central Mississippi, and Hattiesburg, McComb, and Biloxi in South Mississippi. The analysis found that the newspapers were overwhelmingly negative, and very few articles were positive. There was no real difference between regions in the number of articles that were positive and negative. The articles did not follow a clear pattern of one region being fully positive or negative.

One way that this thesis could be expanded on in the future would be to complete further research into the identities of the people writing the editorials. As many editorials were written by the same people and reproduced across the state, it would be a good exercise to see what informed the beliefs of these authors.

Another way this thesis could be expanded on in the future is to widen the scope of which papers were examined from only a few major papers in each region to papers in smaller cities. One challenge of this is that many of these smaller papers were not published daily, instead published weekly or even biweekly, limiting the scope of what articles could be observed and analyzed.

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