Honors Theses

Honors College (Sally McDonnell Barksdale
Honors College)

Spring 5-5-2023

Black Male Educator Shortage in the Mississippi Public School System: Impact, Challenges, and Intervention Strategies

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BLACK MALE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE IN THE MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SCHOOL
SYSTEM: IMPACT, CHALLENGES, AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

University, Mississippi
May 2023

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the individuals in the state of Mississippi whose jobs are to nurture, to

teach, and to change the lives of children by inspiring their dreams and pushing them to reach

their highest limit of human potential. You are a piece of the compass that activates the magnets

of curiosity, knowledge, and wisdom in the lives of students.

I also dedicate this thesis to my dad, Dedrick Bryant, my grandmother, Patricia Scott-Bryant, and

one of my closest friends, Kelsey Hearn -- you live on through me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

JILKIAH BRYANT: Black Male Educator Shortage in the Mississippi Public School System: Impact, Challenges, and Intervention Strategies

The shortage of Black male educators in Mississippi's public school systems is a critical issue with far-reaching implications for the state's education system. Despite the state's sizable Black population, the percentage of Black male teachers remains disproportionately low, and there is little evidence of progress being made to address this issue. This paper examines the impact of the Black male educator shortage on Mississippi's education system, the challenges faced by Black male educators, and related intervention strategies to increase the number of Black male teachers in Mississippi's public school systems. Through a comprehensive literature review and interviews with Black male superintendents as well survey responses from all school leaders across Mississippi, this study sheds light on root causes of the shortage, including systemic barriers and cultural biases, and identifies effective intervention strategies such as targeted recruitment efforts, mentorship programs, and professional development opportunities. By providing insights and recommendations, this paper aims to inspire action and promote greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in Mississippi's public education system.

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Chapter I：Introduction

Mississippi's public schools lack a Black male presence, particularly among instructors and in positions such as assistant principals, principals, superintendents, and district coordinators. Many papers and much empirical research has focused on increasing the proportion of Black males in the teaching profession (Bristol and Goings, 2019; Brockenbrough, 2012; Brown, 2009; Davis, Long, Green, Crawford, and Blackwood, 2018; Lewis, 2006; Lynn, 2006; Warren, 2020). A significant media and scholarly debate has argued that Black instructors in general, particularly Black males, are required in education because they influence the academic attainment of Black students (Easton-Brooks, Lewis, and Zhang, 2009; Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, and Papageorge, 2017). However, the data show that Black males make up only 2% of the teacher workforce in the United States (Goings, Bristol, and Walker, 2018).

According to Mississippi Today, "Black women accounted for 21% of teachers, while Black male teachers accounted for only 6% of Mississippi's teacher workforce" (Skinner, 2019). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), White enrollment in public schools declined from 61% in 2000 to 49% in 2015. The Mississippi Department of Education reported in 2018 that "48% of students in Mississippi's public schools were African American, and 51% of students were male" during the 2017-18 school year.

Historical Context of Public Education

To obtain a better understanding of the educational status of Black males, one must first comprehend the historical events that influenced Black education, as well as the notion of social and political status in education. Restricting Black education has been used to suppress Black agency and fears about slave rebellions since the days of slavery. This rejection just served to fuel Black people's desire to learn and study. Following independence, Black education was

confined to under-resourced, segregated institutions (Brown and Jackson, 2015). Southern Black institutions, which were segregated schools that relied significantly on White charity to exist, were centered on industrial education, training Blacks for submissive roles in society. These institutions were less intellectually challenging than White universities and were largely geared toward acquiring trade skills to contribute to the labor market. Before the 1960s, Black students did not enroll in considerable numbers in mostly White schools (Anderson, 2010).

One of the first significant academics to explore the challenges confronting Black educators was John S. Detweiler of the University of Florida's Faculty of Journalism and Communications. In 1967, Detweiler published "The Black Teacher and the Fourteenth Amendment," a journal that highlighted the special burden imposed on Black teachers during the school integration process. Detweiler describes one-way school desegregation, in which White instructors were sent to previously all-Black schools while African Americans' teaching positions were endangered.

While gender diversity education originally arose in the 1970s and 1980s, diversity education in the United States expanded in the 1990s to address inclusion hurdles for other identity groups. Education and training began to reveal differences in ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other worldviews. Researchers began to do studies on Black education/educators and the issue of underrepresentation in schools about the same period. In the United States, a well-reported quantifiable achievement gap occurs and continues between White and Black students on national standardized examinations.

Gaps in Education Equity

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been used to assess student success in reading and mathematics at the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade levels since

1971 (National Center for Education Statistics Handbook, 2017). Between 1970 and 1990, the difference in test results between minority and White students reduced significantly on every major national exam, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress, particularly for elementary school students. Between 1976 and 1994, African American students' scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) increased by 54 points, while White students' results stayed steady (Hammond, 1998).

Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips demonstrated in the 1998 Black-White Test Score Gap that there was no evidence that these academic discrepancies were the result of weaker inherited intellectual aptitudes. Across social science fields, it is largely agreed that race is socially constructed and defined. Yet, minority students' educational experiences have remained significantly segregated and unequal. As William L. Taylor and Dianne Piche found in a 1991 report to Congress, inequitable school funding systems do disproportionate harm to ethnic and economically poor children. Nationally, such children are concentrated in states, mainly in the South, with the least capacity to fund public education (Allegretto, Garcia, and Weiss, 2022). In addition, in several states economically disadvantaged students, White and Black, are concentrated in rural districts which suffer from fiscal inequity (Hammond, 2001).

In 1990, Casanova and other specialists from the National Association of School Psychologists, Barona, and Garcia, published research on educational equity. It is worth noting that the National Association of School Psychologists was created on March 15, 1969, with the purpose of encouraging all students' learning, conduct, and mental health. Soon after, concerns about gender diversity and representation in education arose in the educational community. In 1995, Michael Fultz released an essay on African American teachers in the South, in which he explores the conflicting and frequently unfavorable judgment of black teachers in the pre-World

War II South, as well as compensation disparities for Black instructors. After this report, Fultz investigated the Black teacher workforce and published another essay in 2004 about the displacement of Black educators as a result of Brown vs. Board of Education. Carol Chmenlynski (2006), Edward Allyn Brockenbrough (2012), Thurman LeVar Bridges (2009), Thomas S. Dee (2004), and Travis J. Bristol (2020) investigated the lack of representation of Black men in education or the challenges that Black males face while entering the educational system. These researchers have made significant contributions to the debate over representation in education.

Research on the scarcity of Black male representation in schools demonstrate the difficulties Black males encounter in education, the importance of representation, and the vital need for greater recruitment/retention tactics for Black male educators. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of evidence-based strategy and implementation initiatives at the state level to address the difficulties that so many have observed. Representation helps to develop communities and increase student achievement in elementary, middle, and high schools. Representation indicates that teachers, administrators, and other school leaders represent the demographics of the student population. According to Johns Hopkins University research, Black students who had at least one Black teacher before third grade are 13% more likely to attend college. The likelihood of enrolling in college more than doubles (32%) for Black students who had at least two Black teachers in elementary school (Rosen, 2018). The inequities and gaps in the American education system, as well as how to solve them, are constantly debated.

Current Nationwide Teacher Shortage Crisis

Nearly 56 years after Detweiler first highlighted the unique burden placed on Black teachers, the United States remains plagued by a Black male teacher shortage, which has been a persistent worry for several decades. Nevertheless, the situation has expanded into a nationwide teacher shortage crisis following the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, which burned out instructors, resulting in 2.6 million U.S. educators and personnel leaving public K-12 and higher education (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Approximately 4.8 million "separations" occurred in public education during the pandemic, including layoffs (1.3 million), resignations (2.6 million), and other separations (771,000), which involved retirement, death, disability, and transfers. Data from the first four months of 2022 demonstrate that the exodus from the public education profession is still underway. In the first four months of 2022, the industry saw 734,000 total separations, with the great majority of them, 64%, or 474,000, being resignations. Recent data from the Institute of Education Statistics (IES) research, "The School Pulse Panel," which gathers information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic from a nationwide sample of public schools, demonstrate the impact of the pandemic on public education in K-12 public schools. About half of public schools, or 44%, report full- or part-time teacher shortages. Sixty-one percent of public schools reported an increase in teacher and staff vacancies in January 2022 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, while just 22% did not. Moreover, 45% of schools indicated that Special Education departments had the most openings (Institute of Education Sciences, 2022).

Mississippi First, a non-partisan public policy advocacy organization, administered a survey to educators across the state of Mississippi to better understand why nearly two-thirds of Mississippi school districts are now classified as critical shortage areas, with compensation cited as a primary driving factor of likely leavers from Mississippi classrooms. It is crucial to highlight

that teaching is not a popular career path for males of any race, although more men are entering the field. According to the National Institute for Education Statistics, the number of male instructors increased by 22% between 1988 and 2012. The gains were most pronounced among Hispanic and Asian males, but the gains among Black males have been relatively modest.

Between 1988 and 2012, the size of the American teaching force expanded by 46%. (Ingersoll, May, and Collins, 2017). According to data gathered by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics between 1999 and 2018, the percentage of Black teachers actually decreased by one percentage point, from 8% to 7%. Leadership in the field is equally bleak: apart from minor demographic adjustments, the nation's superintendents are still mainly White and male. According to a periodic survey conducted by American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the School Superintendents Association, the number of superintendents of color has increased at a relatively slow rate over the last two decades, with 8.6% of respondents identifying as superintendents of color in 2020, up from 6% in 2010 and 5% in 2000. In the principalship, not much progress has been accomplished over the course of a decade. According to government data, the primary workforce in 2007-08 was 81% non-Hispanic White and 11% non-Hispanic Black. The ratio of non-Hispanic White instructors declined to 78% in the most recent 2017-18 report, although Black principals remained stable at 11%. Meanwhile, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, forecasts for 2026 show the student body diversifying with students of color graduating at greater rates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Yet, the following turmoil may have created a curve in those trajectories, particularly for students of color and children from low-income households, raising concerns about the likely turnover of teachers, administrators, and superintendents of color.

The Black male teacher shortage existed even before the current major improvements in teacher recruitment and retention. There were 82,000 Black teachers in US public schools in 1954. Almost 40,000 Black teachers and principals lost their employment in the decade after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, when all-Black schools closed (Oakley, Stowell, and Logan, 2013). But there is a longer pattern at work. Teacher turnover is growing, and Black teachers are more likely to quit than White instructors. In 2019, teachers of color had a turnover rate of 18.9%, whereas White teachers have a rate of 15%. Black teachers have one of the greatest turnover rates, with Black male teachers quitting the field at a faster rate than their counterparts (Hinkley and McCorkell, 2019). In 2012, there were 4% fewer Black teachers in U.S. public schools than in 2008. (Hanford, 2017). Teachers, particularly Black male teachers, leave their jobs for a variety of reasons, including income, other fathering, stigma and prejudices in the workplace, loneliness, and overall opinion of the sector.

Examining Black Male Enrollment in Education Majors

First an evaluation of the gaps and challenges to admission must be conducted before delving into why Black men are leaving the field. In 2018, the top five institutions that awarded education degrees to Black men were Alabama State University, South Carolina State University, Grand Canyon University, Western Governors University, and Jackson State University, all of which were in the states of Alabama, South Carolina, Arizona, Tennessee, and Mississippi (see table 1.1 for Top 20). Nine of the top ten institutions were historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), for-profit institutions, or institutions with a significant online presence. Given that HBCUs have a long tradition of generating educators (Goings et al., 2018), and that various researchers have explored the role of HCBUs in training Black male teachers

(Davis et al., 2018), it stands to reason that HBCUs enroll a substantial number of Black male education majors.

When all degree kinds are considered, for-profit universities have the lowest four- and six-year graduation rates for Black men (Goings et al., 2018). As a result, future academics must explore what aspects of for-profit universities attract Black males wishing to become educators and what measures they employ to guarantee that Black men are retained and graduate. As indicated, the top producer of Black male educators issued 44 education degrees to Black males, which is insufficient considering the acute demand for Black male educators expressed by K-12 school systems. One weakness of this data set is that there are no guarantees these graduates went into teaching or if Black males who majored in anything else shifted to become educators after finishing college.

Additional examination of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data found that just 202 (21%) of the 953 institutions that reported having at least one Black male education major enrolled in 2018 had more than one Black male education major enrolled. To put it another way, around 79% of Black males enrolling in a teacher education program are the sole Black men in their program. While there are numerous factors that influence where Black men attend college and why they select a profession in education, the figures below imply that there is more work to be done.

Table 1.1 Top 20 institutions enrolling Black male education majors (2018).

Institution Name	Number of Black Men Enrolled	University Type	State
Alabama State University	221	**HBCU/Public**	Alabama
South Carolina State University	221	**HBCU/Public**	South Carolina
Grand Canyon University	193	**Private**	Arizona
Western Governors University	190	**Private**	Utah

Jackson State University	188	**HBCU/Public**	Mississippi
Grambling State University	186	**HBCU/Public**	Louisiana
University of Central Florida	170	**Public**	Florida
Old Dominion University	152	**Public**	Virginia
Albany State University	145	**HBCU/Public**	Georgia
Ashford University	138	**Private**	Arizona
University of Louisiana at Lafayette	136	**Public**	Louisiana
Lane College	130	**HBCU/Private**	Tennessee
Morgan State University	128	**HBCU/Public**	Maryland
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	118	**HBCU/Public**	Arkansas
Virginia Commonwealth University	117	**Public**	Virginia
University of Alabama at Birmingham	104	**Public**	Alabama
Delta State University	95	**Public**	Mississippi
The University of Alabama	93	**Public**	Alabama
University of South Alabama	88	**Public**	Alabama
Bethune–Cookman University	86	**HBCU/Private**	Florida

Table 1.2 Top 20 institutions graduating Black men with a degree in education (2018).

Institution Name	Number of Black Men Enrolled	Number of Black Male Graduates	Retention Rate	University Type
The University of Alabama	93	17	18.29	**HBCU/Public**
University of Alabama at Birmingham	104	17	16.34	**HBCU/Public**
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff	118	16	13.56	**Private**
Morgan State University	128	30	23.44	**Private**
Lane College	130	17	13.08	**HBCU/Public**
University of Louisiana at Lafayette	136	24	17.65	**HBCU/Private**
Ashford University	138	28	20.29	**HBCU/Public**
Albany State University	145	25	17.24	**Public**
Old Dominion University	152	22	14.47	**HBCU/Public**
University of Central Florida	170	44	25.88	**Public**

Jackson State University	188	33	17.55	**Public**
Grand Canyon University	193	27	13.99	**HBCU/Public**
Alabama State University	221	26	11.76	**Public**
South Carolina State University	221	23	10.41	**Public**

Note: The retention rate was calculated using the formula: total number of students enrolled (including any who have withdrawn or cancelled) minus the number of students who have withdrawn/cancelled divided by the total number of enrolled.

There is a significant disparity between the Top 20 schools with the most Black male enrollment and the Top 20 schools with the highest Black male education graduation rate. No school on the list has a retention rate greater than 26%. Alabama State University and South Carolina State University are the top two institutions in terms of enrollment. Just 23 of South Carolina University's 221 Black male students graduated from its teacher training program. Similarly, only 26 of Alabama State University's 221 students graduated. With 44 graduates out of 170 students, the University of Central Florida's (#7 on the Top 20 enrollment list) teacher preparation program had the most graduates. There is a significant disparity between those who enroll and those who graduate in these programs. It is important to note that some teacher education programs will not allow their student majors to graduate from their programs if they do not pass the PRAXIS. They can only go so far in the program before being denied.

Another noteworthy fact is that the bulk of the top 20 colleges are concentrated in the South. The South is classified as Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia by the federal government. Yet, this is not limited to teacher education programs; Black males are also less likely to complete high school and are less likely to complete college after enrolling. According to the National Center for Education Statistics in 2019, 28% of Black males aged 25-29 held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 30% of Black women, over 40% of White men, and almost half of White

women. Higher education levels show a far larger discrepancy, with nearly half as many Black males (4%) as Black women (9%) holding degrees higher than a bachelor's degree, compared to 8% for White men and 13% for White women.

Purpose Statement

Despite its prevalence, the Black male teacher shortage remains a largely unexplored area of study, especially in terms of state-level effects and intervention strategies. The state of Mississippi will be unable to better design programs and other resources to address the specific needs of Black males until we understand the effects of the Black male teacher shortage and test the effectiveness of key recommendations in Mississippi. As a result, a large-scale study is proposed in the content of this document to help address this gap in current knowledge. This study uses a mixed methods approach, with semi-structured interviews of Black male superintendents and Qualtrics surveys sent to school leaders across Mississippi. The research findings will aid in enhanced recruitment and retention methods to enhance Black male representation in teacher preparation programs, state-level interventions, understanding of the Black male point of view from an administration-level, and words of wisdom for existing and aspiring educators on the significance of representation and how they can make a significant contribution to the education field. This study makes an invaluable impact in the field.

Research Question

With the second highest Black population in the United States, only 6% of teachers in Mississippi public school systems are Black males while 48.13% of students in Mississippi's public schools are African American, and 51% of students are male (Mississippi Department of Education, 2019). Representation contributes to the strengthening of communities and the improvement of student performance in elementary, middle, and high schools. Representation implies that teachers, administrators, and other leaders in the schools they serve represent the

demographics of the student body. There is constant discussion regarding the disparities and gaps in the US education system, as well as how to overcome them. This study will explore two overarching questions: Why is there a lack of Black male educators in Mississippi's public-school systems? What are state-level intervention strategies that can be put in place to increase the recruitment and retention of Black male educators?

The findings of this study, using a mixed-methods approach, will provide important insights into Mississippi public school systems and those who work within them, as well as provide practitioners, scholars, and legislators with a chance to more fully comprehend and advocate for representation throughout the education system. Additionally, there is hope that the state of Mississippi will establish a strategy to determine how to effectively support and empower all Mississippi school districts, particularly ones that require more to meet student needs through increased state support, suitable resources, and better positive visibility.

Chapter II : Literature Review

The presence of Black males in public schools, notably as teachers and in higher-level jobs such as assistant principals, principals, superintendents, and district coordinators, has become a hot subject in today's education system. Due to a scarcity of Black men in teaching and learning, the education system has been under pressure to address the issue and enhance Black male representation in schools across the country. Researchers disagree on the causes of the Black male teacher shortage, as well as the best strategies and intervention approaches to address the teacher shortage in the United States. Nonetheless, there are a few instances where researchers agree. According to research on the Black male teacher shortage, there is widespread agreement on topics such as the role of teacher education programs and the school environment in the recruitment and retention of Black males, the importance of Black male teacher experience, and the advantages of increased representation of teachers of color.

There is evidence that teacher education programs have a substantial impact on the Black male teacher shortage. Sandles (2020) observed that additional efforts in teacher education and the school environment are needed to recruit and retain Black male teachers. According to Sandles, the number of Black males enrolling in teacher education programs is steadily declining. The author advocated intervention strategies such as concentrated mentorship for Black male teachers and genuine outreach programs as early measures to address the Black male teacher shortage crisis. Sandles' claim was supported using Derrick Bell's critical race theory tenets as a theoretical tool to assess the state of education in terms of the engagement of Black male instructors, but there is little data to support the success of recruitment/retention strategies in increasing the number of Black male teachers.

Furthermore, Goings and Lewis (2020) illustrate how Black teachers are considerably more likely to be placed in schools with dense populations of children of color and children in

poverty, as well as in struggling schools, despite the fact there is no curriculum in place for teacher training programs that prepare teacher applicants to work in various school settings or districts. In essence, there is little in teacher education courses that prepares Black male instructors for the realities of the classroom. Going and Lewis examined CalStateTEACH, a system-wide online multiple course teacher training program part of the California State University system. CalStateTEACH developed a programmatic effort to boost male retention in the teacher preparation program and the teaching profession in response to the program's administrative staff observing poor application numbers, enrollment, and retention with Black male teacher candidates. Through a survey of participants in their Men in Teaching program, Goings and Lewis (2020) were able to explore engagement strategies for recruitment and retention of Black male teacher candidates and discovered the need for an improved teacher education curriculum across programs. Additionally, they found tools such as mentorship programs, peer groups and career pathways as effective strategies; however, further research is required to determine the effectiveness of such strategies with Black men specifically as a population since CalStateTEACH's efforts focused on increased retention of males across demographics.

Likewise, Green and Martin (2018) employed a comparative study to ascertain the experiences and perceptions of Black males enrolled in teacher preparation programs, one at a Predominantly Black Institution (PBI) and three at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Green and Martin focused on the barriers encountered by Black men seeking to become teachers. The study focused on interviews with the men and identified several themes: (a) faculty and teachers' biases about students of color, (b) feelings of isolation, and (c) limited culturally responsive teaching practices in teacher preparation programs. Researchers highlight how to be

successful in a teacher preparation program, some Black male teacher candidates feel that they had to assimilate culturally to the dominant groups, culture, language, behaviors, and norms within the classroom. For example, one participant in Green and Martin's (2018) study of Black male preservice teachers reported that a professor accused him of plagiarizing a paper because it appeared to be of a quality beyond the man's perceived abilities. Another participant in this study recounted that a White female classmate was heard to say she hoped she "didn't have to teach in a ghetto school" (p. 6). While we cannot discount the importance of each of the participant's personal experience, one limitation of the study is the small sample size of four which can affect the precision or level of confidence in the sample estimates.

The educational environment in which Black males are placed after completing teacher training and other programs has an impact on recruitment and retention. In addition, given the limited number of Black male teachers, scholars have focused more on exploring their experiences in the classroom, as opposed to their experiences in schools, to inform efforts that recruit and retain these teachers.

To begin, studies show that representation among staff peers is crucial in the teacher shortage. Scott and Alexander (2018), for example, employed a grounded theory method to assess studies indicating how Black men's lived experiences may educate academics on why they may be turned away from education or exit the field entirely. Researchers observed that there are several reasons why Black males may not choose a teaching career, including school environment features such as racial disparities in the teaching sector in the United States. Similarly, after evaluating national survey data, Grissom (2011) discovered that working circumstances in schools, such as classroom discipline, family links, and teacher relationships, affect both teacher satisfaction and turnover. The author recommended methods for increasing

teacher retention and decreasing high turnover rates by modifying school elements such as administrative procedures through policy changes. Similarly, Bristol (2020) acknowledged the importance of the educational environment after Black males enter the profession. Using qualitative methods, Bristol analyzed the issue of social isolation in the school-based experiences of Black male teachers. While this sort of research makes general judgments about the study's conclusions difficult to make, the findings demonstrate that persons who were the only Black male teachers on their faculty were more likely to report feeling socially alienated and detached from their colleagues.

Black male educators are often overlooked due to their hypervisibility and negative perceptions of their teaching abilities, leading to hostile work environments and social outcasts (Carey, 2018; Nelson, 2016; Wallace, 2017). Prior study on the experiences of Black male educators discovered that they are frequently praised for their capacity to function as disciplinarians, saviors, and role models for "troubled" Black males (Brown, 2012). Moreover, Black male instructors are rarely acknowledged for their subject expertise, educational aptitude, and capacity to educate all children (Bryan and Ford, 2014; Jackson and Knight-Manuel, 2018). Black male teachers may join hostile work situations and confront colleagues who may subconsciously and explicitly regard them as social misfits due to their hypervisibility and poor evaluations of their teaching ability (Goings, 2015). Kanter (1977) proposed that when workers are in the numerical minority, such as Black male teachers in schools, they may experience boundary heightening, a phenomenon that investigates a worker's response when working in an institutional climate that: (a) magnifies the cultural distinctions between the numerical majority and minority; and (b) fosters behavior that continuously reaffirms the numerical minority population standing.

Bristol and Goings (2018) utilized a phenomenological approach to explore the organizational dynamic of boundary heightening for 27 Black male teachers, across 14 schools, in one urban school district. They demonstrated how teacher education programs can redesign facets of their preparation to attend to the boundary-heightening and workplace experiences that Black male teachers may face in becoming teachers of record. Black male teachers described how their colleagues were perceiving them and how those experiences created workplace environments in which participants felt alienated from their colleagues and strategically erected social boundaries to manage interactions with their colleagues. The authors argued that Black male teacher diversity campaigns in education preparation programs should be informed by Black male teachers' school-based experiences.

Ingersoll, May, and Collins (2019) examined and compared the recruitment, employment, and retention of minority and nonminority schoolteachers from the late 1980s to 2013. Researchers documented the persistence of a gap between the percentage of minority students and the percentage of minority teachers in the U.S. From the 1980s to 2000s, the number of minority teachers almost doubled, outpacing growth in both the number of White teachers and the number of minority students. But researchers argued that efforts have also been undermined because minority teachers have significantly higher turnover than White teachers, and this is strongly tied to poor working conditions in their schools. One limitation of the study was the use of self-reported data, which can influence social desirability bias.

Black Male Teachers Lived Experience in the School Environment

In schools, the notion of masculinity is being challenged, which has an impact on comfort and perception in the area. Crisp and King (2016) observed that the public has unfavorable assumptions about men in education, such as teaching being "women's work," which scares them away from the field (as cited in Bristol, 2020, p. 69). Furthermore, Brockenbrough (2012)

recognizes the importance of male-centered spaces; he conducted in-depth interviews with 11 Black male instructors from the United States' East Coast about their lived experiences as Black males and Black male instructors, revealing a desire for more male-centered spaces in female-dominated professions. While the data's self-reported nature, combined with the study sample's geographic location, limits the study's generalizability, Brockenbrough discovered that patriarchal gender ideologies contributed to contentious gender politics in the workplace for the men in this study, resulting in a high stress environment. This viewpoint was observed to occasionally transfer into the classroom.

Another focus of the study was the significance of Black men's life experiences in the teaching profession. According to researchers, understanding these experiences and demands from the teaching business is crucial in attempting to alleviate the Black male teacher shortage. For example, Scott and Alexander's (2018) study of the findings of eighteen Black males' interviews indicated various issues that academics have highlighted as deterrents to Black males, such as a high-stress work environment and a lack of a sense of belonging owing to underrepresentation. According to Bristol (2020), Black male faculty members were more likely to feel socially isolated and detached from their coworkers. The author observed that poor relationships influenced Black men's decisions to remain in the American teaching profession. While these sources give useful information about the relevance of Black male educators' lived experiences, they have certain limitations. Self-selection bias was discovered as a shortcoming in Bristol's (2020) research.

There has been little research devoted to where minority teachers tend to be employed, what happens to minority teachers once they are employed, or to the role of the employing organizations in teacher staffing problems (Ingersoll et al., 2019). What does persist, however, is

that the Black male teacher must master all of these other duties, but he is evaluated using the same rubrics that are applied to other teachers. Black male teachers get less support and are typecast into nonacademic roles. Many Black male teachers speak of feeling isolated. When administrators and colleagues did engage them, they only wanted to discuss disciplinary enforcement (Griffin and Tackie, 2016). Therein, lies the discrepancy of what it expected for Black male teachers versus what is required to be successful as a Black male teacher. A prevalent discourse among educational stakeholders has suggested that Black male teachers are the key to helping Black male students in urban schools and to develop skills to succeed by acting as role models (Brown, 2012). This is the foundation of saving an educational system by utilizing black male teachers as a method to increase cultural competence, help address the achievement gap through individualized support and teaching practices and provide black students with empathy and support. Overall, black male teachers can bring unique perspectives, experiences, and skills to the educational system that can help improve outcomes for all students, particularly those from marginalized communities. The belief is that the presence of Black male teachers can erase education inequities that exist in schools and school districts. This rhetoric suggests that by standing in for absentee Black fathers and acting as exemplars of Black manhood, Black male youth will adopt the resilience, grit, and determination to achieve in school (Pabon, 2016).

Finally, researchers feel that boosting the participation and representation of teachers of color or of the same race improves students by increasing engagement, improving achievement, acting as role models, addressing bias, and incorporating culture into teaching. One obvious advantage that researchers agree on is that racially diverse teachers benefit students, particularly Black students (Egalite, Kissida, and Winters, 2015; Hart, 2020; Sandles, 2020). Hart expressly

said that same-race teachers may boost the number of Black students enrolled in advanced-tracked courses (Hart, 2020). This idea spawned their experiment, which was aimed to evaluate the benefits of having same-race teachers in advanced-track courses as well as to study the inequality in advanced courses for students of color, particularly Black students, compared to their White counterparts. Additionally, Egalite, Kisida, and Winters (2015) discovered that when students and teachers have the same race/ethnicity, there are academic benefits such as increased classroom involvement.

Furthermore, Black teachers benefit students because they are viewed as role models who aid students both culturally and cognitively (Sandles, 2020; Scott, 2018). According to Pabon, Anderson, and Kharem (2011), Black teachers' responsibility "[was] not only to function as role models," (p. 359), but also to improve students' academic performance and to provide culturally relevant knowledge to students (as cited in Sandles, 2020, p. 70). Additionally, Villegas and Irvine (2010) revealed that the gap in the number of Black instructors versus Black students was crucial because researchers believed that Black teachers were more likely to be sensitive to the cultural requirements of Black students, allowing for good academic accomplishment (as cited in Scott et al, 2018, p. 9). Even though Egalite et al. (2015) were unable to make definitive statements about the benefits of same-race models in the observed study, they revealed that racially congruent instructors had a substantial impact on student grade performance. While these benefits prompted the authors to investigate the effects of assigning Black and White students to race-congruent teachers in reading and arithmetic in Florida public schools from grades 3 to 10, they discovered that some of the positive effects observed from same race/ethnicity matching may not be entirely attributable to race-matching but may be influenced by teaching quality.

Finally, a greater presence of Black male teachers in the classroom may help students feel less lonely and contribute to the debunking of stereotypes. Goings (2015) claimed that Black male teachers were "likely to consider the opportunity to educate as a tool to influence the trajectory for Black students and communities" (as cited in Sandles, 2020, p. 71). He explained how Black teachers serve a variety of roles inside a school, including parent, psychologist, and friend. Sandles (2020) used the phrase "other fathering" to characterize the responsibilities taken on by Black male educators (p. 68). These occupations present powerful images and high ambitions to impressionable young people.

Similarly, Carothers and Houdashelt (2019) claimed that the nation's schools face chronic shortages of teachers and the effect of these shortages disproportionately affected disadvantaged students. They stated that changing demographics resulted in racial/ethnic and cultural mismatch between the teachers and students served, causing additional educational problems. This study described the collaboration between a university and school districts to offer dual enrollment courses and a summer camp for high school students considering teaching careers. Study results suggested early exposure to teaching experiences positively influence high school students' perceptions of teaching as a career. One limitation of the study was that the respondents' perceptions of teaching as an occupation and the university as a place for career preparation may have been shaped by the novelty and anticipation of the experience. Additionally, the long-term impact of the experience on participants' professional goals cannot be determined.

While there is no universal agreement on the best practices for combating the Black male teacher shortage, researchers do draw connections between the growing role of the school environment in Black male recruitment and retention, the significance of the Black male teacher

experience, and the benefits of increased representation of teachers of color. Researchers found that the percentage of Black male instructors who decide to leave the education profession after entering the classroom is influenced by both positive and negative factors. Specifically, the number of Black males enrolling in teacher education programs and the classroom environment experienced by Black male teachers play significant roles in this decision (Sandles, 2020; Goings and Lewis, 2020; Scott and Alexander, 2018; Grissom, 2011). Additionally, while academics feel that increasing the presence of instructors of color may be used to increase enrollment, including advanced courses and student participation, they also provide statistics to indicate the usefulness of Black teachers in enhancing Black students' performance (Scott and Alexander, 2018; Egalite, Kissida, and Winters, 2015; Hart, 2020). Lastly, experts feel that understanding the lived experiences of Black male instructors might help overcome barriers that would otherwise go unnoticed.

In general, scholars dating back to as early as the 1900s to the late 21st century agree that there is a Black male teacher shortage in the United States, and their studies also reveal that the shortage is widespread (Bristol, 2020; Sandals, 2020; Scott, 2019; Chmelynski, 2006; Brockenbrough, 2012; Hart, 2020; Egalite, Kisida, and Winters, 2015). Nonetheless, it is clear that the lack of Black men in education is a problem, and in addition to communicating this widespread issue, research has also attempted to identify the key factors within education that could be used to better understand the reasons for the scarcity of Black males. Included among those factors are the role of teacher education programs and the school environment (Sandles, 2020; Hanushek, 2004; Grissom, 2011; Achienstein et al., 2010); the significance of the Black male teacher perspective (Bristol, 2020; Brockenbrough, 2012; Gordon and Anderson, 2021) and

the effects of representation in the classroom (Egalite et al., 2015; Hart et al, 2020; Dee, 2004; Dee, 2005; Levister, 2009; Scott and Alexander, 2019; Grissom, 2011).

Bristol and Goings (2020) indicate that the school environment and representation among staff peers are critical in the teacher shortage. For example, Black male teachers are more likely to report feeling socially alienated and disconnected from their coworkers (Bristol, 2020; Sandles, 2020; Brockenbrough, 2012; Crisp and King, 2016) among other factors such as a high-stress work environment and a lack of a sense of belonging due to underrepresentation (Scott and Alexander, 2019; Sandles, 2020). Similarly, Grissom (2011), Achinstein et al (2010), and Hanushek et al (2004) found that working conditions in schools, such as classroom discipline, family ties, and teacher relationships, influence both teacher satisfaction and turnover after reviewing national survey data.

A Public Health Perspective

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines public health as "the science of protecting and promoting people's and communities' health." In other words, public health is a distinct combination of study, investigation, and action that brings together individuals from many disciplines, experiences, and viewpoints to uncover the core causes of health issues and produce long-term, innovative solutions that enhance the quality of life for all. The Lancet Public Health, the world's premier public health publication, names education as a neglected social determinant of health in 2020. There is an overlap of public health and education concerns that has a direct impact on the ability of communities, particularly underprivileged populations, to thrive. Education has been the primary road to financial stability, secure job, and social achievement during the last several generations (Baker, 2014). Meanwhile, American adolescents have encountered more unequal educational prospects based on the schools they attend, the neighborhoods they reside in, the color of their skin, and their family's financial

means. The fall of manufacturing and the growth of globalization have reduced the middle class, while rising returns on higher education have widened the income disparities between working people and families (Psacharopoulos, 2004). Apart from these substantial structural changes, measures that safeguarded the welfare of disadvantaged people have been steadily weakened or eliminated (Temin, 2017). These trends, when combined, resulted in a precipitous increase in economic and social inequities in American society.

Predictably, health inequities rose in tandem with socioeconomic inequality. Although the average health of the US population has improved in recent decades (Jemal, Ward, and Thun, 2005; Martin, Schoeni, and Andreski, 2010), the benefits have disproportionately benefited the highly educated populations. Health inequalities and mortality inequalities have steadily increased (Goesling, 2007; Liu, 2008; Montez, Hummer, and Hayward, 2012; Martin, Schoeni, and Andreski, 2010; Sasson, 2010), to the point where we now see an unprecedented pattern: health and longevity are deteriorating among those with less education (Montez, 2013; Shiels and Anderson, 2017; Zajacova, 2017). Education is seen not simply as a means to social achievement, valuable resources, and good health, but also as an institution that perpetuates inequity across generations. With the media, policymakers, and the general public currently focused on the concerning health patterns among less-educated Americans (Case and Deaton, 2015; Case and Deaton, 2017), as well as the growing recognition of the importance of education for health (Marmot, 2009), research on the health returns to education is at a crossroads. Understanding how education and health are connected is critical to find effective sites of intervention to promote population health and minimize inequities.

Education and public health are intricately linked, and a lack of education is one of the socioeconomic drivers of poor health. Schools have a significant impact on people's future well-

being and economic productivity since they have a direct impact on both health and education. Education influences people's lives: it is one of the most important factors in raising people out of poverty and minimizing socioeconomic and political inequities. As the world was being rattled by the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a heightened awareness of structural racism and the role it plays in our systems, notably health and education across borders. Public health and the need for increased representation of teachers of color in education are connected in several ways. One of the key connections is through the impact of systemic racism on both fields, which can result in significant health and educational disparities for marginalized communities of color.

Thomas (2018) has shown that teachers of color can play a crucial role in reducing the achievement gap for students of color, improving educational outcomes, and increasing opportunities for success. However, teachers of color are significantly underrepresented in the education system, particularly in high-poverty and urban schools where students of color are more likely to be enrolled. The lack of representation of teachers of color in education can contribute to cultural and linguistic barriers in the classroom, leading to lower-quality education and reduced access to educational opportunities. This can have negative consequences for students' academic achievement, social-emotional development, and overall well-being.

Moreover, the lack of diversity among educators can also perpetuate systemic biases and contribute to the reproduction of racial disparities in the education system. This can limit opportunities for students of color to access higher education and pursue careers in fields like public health, where diverse perspectives and experiences are critical for addressing health disparities and promoting health equity. In summary, the need for increased representation of teachers of color in education is closely related to public health, as both fields are impacted by systemic racism and contribute to health and educational disparities for marginalized

communities of color. Addressing systemic racism in education and promoting diversity and inclusion in the education system can help improve health outcomes, reduce the achievement gap, and increase opportunities for success for students of color.

Conclusion

There is a Black male teacher shortage in the United States. Studies reveal that the shortage is widespread (Bristol, 2020; Sandals, 2020; Scott, 2019; Chmelynski, 2006; Brockenbrough, 2012; Hart, 2020; Egalite, Kisida, and Winters, 2015). It is clear that the lack of Black men in education is a problem, and in addition to communicating this widespread issue, research has attempted to identify the key factors within education that could be used to better understand the reasons for the scarcity of Black males. Included among those factors are the role of teacher education programs and the school environment (Sandles, 2020; Hanushek, 2004; Grissom, 2011; Achienstein et al., 2010), the significance of the Black male teacher perspective (Bristol, 2020; Brockenbrough, 2012; Gordon and Anderson, 2021), and the effects of representation in the classroom (Egalite et al., 2015; Hart et al, 2020; Dee, 2004; Dee, 2005; Levister, 2009; Scott and Alexander, 2019; Grissom, 2011). Further studies found that representation not only affected teachers, but they also influenced students in the classroom (Egalite, Kisida, and Winters 2015; Hart, 2020; Levister, 2009; Chmelynski, 2006; Dee, 2004; Dee, 2005; Casanova 1990). Although academics feel that increasing the presence of teachers of color may be used to increase enrollment, especially advanced courses, and student inclusion, they also provide statistics to indicate the benefit of Black professors in enhancing Black students' performance. Representation helps to build better communities and raises student accomplishment in the classroom.

Even though the literature on the Black male shortage provides a good starting point for comprehending and addressing the problem, much more study is required if we are to effectively

attract and retain Black males in public school systems. A scarcity of Black male teachers has a substantial influence on student performance and the school climate. Furthermore, comprehending the experiences of Black men from both an administrative and a teaching standpoint, as well as their demands from the teaching sector, is crucial in attempting to address the Black male teacher shortage.

The shortage of Black male teachers is not only a national issue but also a critical problem in specific states like Mississippi. Despite the state's sizable Black population, only a small percentage of the state's teachers are Black men. Unfortunately, there is little evidence of progress being made to combat this issue in Mississippi. In the Methods section, the research design, data collection, and analysis methods used to investigate why there is a shortage of Black male teachers in Mississippi will be examined, with the ultimate goal of providing insights and recommendations to address this critical issue.

Chapter III : Methodology

This research examines the impact, challenges, and intervention strategies of the Black male teacher shortage in Mississippi public school systems. Leading perspectives on the absence of Black male presence in public schools explain and emphasize the problems experienced by Black males seeking a position in schools, the significance of inclusion, and the critical need for better approaches to recruit and retain Black male educators. However, there is a lack of government efforts at the state and local level to effectively address the challenges that have been documented. States will be unable to improve programming, enhance diversity and inclusion in the classroom, or strengthen other services unless there is a better strategy on how to successfully tackle the Black male teacher shortage. Unfortunately, research on the Black male teacher shortage in Mississippi public school systems is severely limited, with little attention paid to the Black male perspective beyond the teacher-level, barriers to entry, and how the shortage affects the school system as a whole. This gap is intended to be filled by the research proposed in this thesis.

There are varying perspectives on the causes of the Black male teacher shortage, as well as the possible strategies and methods to utilize to successfully address the teacher shortage in the United States public school system. More study is needed to properly understand the Black male teacher shortage, particularly in Mississippi, and to develop state-level methods to tackle the pervasive issue, and the research detailed below could help supply this much needed data.

Research Methods

I used a mixed-methods approach, conducting semi-structured interviews and sending out Qualtrics surveys to superintendents and principals in Mississippi. First, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Black male superintendents across Mississippi. The state of Mississippi has a total of 141 superintendents. There are 29 African American male

superintendents (20.5%) and 21 African American female superintendents (14.8%). Except for two districts, all the districts with Black Male superintendents have a C or lower, according to Niche, an accredited source for school rankings and grades, provided by the district grades. Except for two districts, all the districts with Black female superintendents have a C or lower, according to Niche. In most of the cases shown above, districts with a higher percentage of Black students have a lower district grade than those with a lower percentage of Black students (found in Appendix A). The majority of the districts with Black male superintendents are predominantly Black districts. The Mississippi Department of Education database contained percentages of Black students from each district for the 2019-2020 school year.

The proposed research question aims to identify state-level intervention strategies for increasing the recruitment and retention of Black male educators. Specifically, the investigation focuses on the specific challenges that Black males encounter in education in Mississippi, as well as ways to alleviate the shortage on a state level through policy and intervention strategies. Black male superintendents serve as an excellent resource for addressing this issue. The choice to conduct semi-structured interviews with Black male superintendents stems from a recognized research gap: most studies examine the lived experiences of Black males solely at the teacher level, neglecting to explore the experiences of Black men in higher positions and the reasons behind their decision to remain in the profession while others may leave. Understanding the challenges faced by Black male teachers can be comprehensively grasped from a superintendent perspective, which also offers administrative solutions to mitigate the shortage and provides a personal viewpoint on effectively navigating current field challenges and advancing in the profession.

Each interview was recorded with the permission of the interviewee, and the participant provided a preferred pseudonym for reporting purposes. All participants had to sign or agree to an informed consent form (found in Appendix C). Interviews were conducted via Zoom (preferred) or phone call, transcribed, and edited as needed. Semi-structured interviews lasted approximately an hour. Questions covered topics such as their personal experiences as a Black male; why they chose to stay in education; significant challenges they have faced as both an educator and an administrator; and so on. However, before addressing the aforementioned topics, interviewees were asked a general question to learn more about their personal story and educational background. Appendix B contains a complete list of interview questions.

The interview questions allowed an endless variety of responses, because responses were based on personal experiences and general opinions. In the responses, respondents were not hindered by "yes or no" answer choices but were able to express personal beliefs and thoughts on the topic of the Black male educator shortage such as the role of Black male educators at their respective schools, challenges Black males face when attempting to pursue careers in academia, as well as administrative hurdles and state policy challenges. These responses generate much more variety, interpretations, and opinions that can be qualitatively reviewed and analyzed for significance. My focus largely centered on finding overarching themes and areas of intersection that all superintendents interviewed mentioned. During this process, I searched for patterns and common sentiments made by superintendents in reading the transcripts and re-evaluating the interviews. I began writing down consistent themes or key words from each interview in a Word document and draw conclusions of core ideas that appeared to be of importance. I knew these initial themes would likely be rearranged, consolidated, or removed altogether, and I remained

confident in my prediction that additional themes would emerge from the data as a I listened to interviews repeatedly.

Before undertaking the proposed research, I completed the appropriate IRB training and paperwork. Since there is no potential risk to participants, I only needed to complete the abbreviated IRB application. Following my receipt of IRB approval, I began soliciting participation for data collection. To recruit participants for my semi-structured interviews, I utilized a public database with superintendent and principals contact information. I would initiate contact by email and then follow up with a phone call within two weeks to provide further information as requested, confirm interest in participation, or attempt to seek participation again if my email request was unanswered. Participants were not provided with incentives or compensation for participation.

Next, I utilized Qualtrics survey as a method to reach superintendents, principals, and other positions in the field of education to gain a better understanding on perspectives of teacher representation in Mississippi schools. Emails of superintendents and principals were obtained via public records on the websites of the Department of Education and of the public-school districts. Superintendents and principals received an anonymous link to complete the survey. From February 23, 2023, to March 8, 2023, three requests were sent to take the survey. The Qualtrics survey did not ask for identifiable information, and it did not record the respondent's IP address, location data, or contact information. One hundred and forty respondents marked yes to participate in the study. Online surveys were conducted with a randomly selected sample of principals (n=745); 15% of the emails bounced. One hundred and three principals completed the survey, representing a 16.2% response rate. There were 135 superintendents who received the email to complete the survey; 6.5% of the emails bounced. Twenty-three superintendents

completed it, representing an 18.2% response rate. It is unknown if email messages were blocked by school servers.

The closed-ended questions are relevant in determining opinions and differences in perceptions by superintendents and principals around the state of Mississippi belonging to different groups and having spent different ranges of time and efforts within districts. In addition to this, the open-ended questions allow an endless variety of responses, because respondents can type anything they desire to say due to an absence of choosing an available answer choice. In these responses, respondents, not hindered by answer choices, are able to type as much or little as desired and are free to express personal beliefs and thoughts on the topic of the future challenges to education and teacher representation. These responses generate much more variety, interpretations, and opinions that can then be qualitatively reviewed, coded, and analyzed for significance.

Subjectivity Statement

As a researcher, it is important to acknowledge my personal background and experiences as a black female of who grew up in a low-income environment and made the transition from a predominantly black school to a predominantly white school during high school. These experiences have shaped my understanding of the complexities surrounding the shortage of Black male educators in the Mississippi public school system. My unique perspective allows me to bring insights into the impact, challenges, and intervention strategies within this context. While maintaining objectivity in my research, there is a need to recognize the significance of my personal background in informing my approach and interpretation of the findings, as well as in developing recommendations that are sensitive to the needs and experiences of underrepresented communities.

Chapter IV : Results and Findings

This project addressed the following research questions: Why is there a lack of Black male educators in Mississippi's public-school systems? What are state-level intervention strategies that can be put in place to increase the recruitment and retention of Black male educators?

Qualitative Results
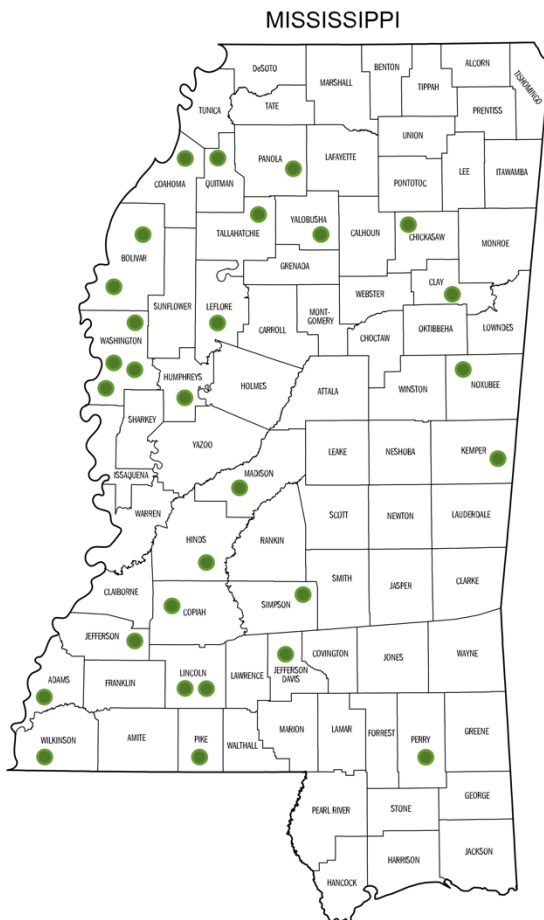
Figure A. Mississippi Map of Black Male Superintendents Across the State (2022-2023)

To address the research question around the lack of Black males in Mississippi public school systems and related state-level intervention strategies, qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with superintendents. Superintendents were invited to participate in the study via email, provided informed consent, and asked to schedule their

preferred interview times via Calendly. Black male superintendents represent 21% of superintendents in Mississippi. In other words, there are currently 29 Black male superintendents across the state of Mississippi out of 137 total superintendents. Roughly 17% of Black males work in urban counties (N = 5), and 86% work in rural countries (N = 25) with 38% working in the Mississippi Delta across seven counties (N =11). Interviews were conducted and recorded over Zoom. This study was approved by IRB, shared with participants during the informed consent process, and reiterated prior to beginning the recording. The interviews lasted an average of 32 minutes, ranging from 27 minutes to 48 minutes. Interviews were then transcribed for review and analysis.

Participants

I conducted six in-depth interviews, with four of my participants serving in rural school districts and two serving in urban school districts (please refer to Appendix E to see the definition of rural utilized to categorize counties), with one district being in the Mississippi Delta. Two out of six superintendents attended in-state teacher preparation programs with all six being Mississippi natives. It is important to note that two superintendents, Emmanuel and Micah, left Mississippi in their pre-adolescent years when their families moved away. Emmanuel attended middle school in an urban area. Micah attended both urban and rural schools throughout his pre-adolescent and adolescent years. Emmanuel and Micah both bring a unique perspective to this study as they chose to return to Mississippi to study here and remained to serve as superintendent in rural counties.

Superintendent Pseudonym	Native to MS	Rural vs. Urban School District	In-State Teacher Preparation Program	Degree(s)
Micah	X	Rural	X	
Timothy	X	Urban		• Bachelor of Science in Education • Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration
Reuben	X	Urban	X	• Associate of Arts Degree in Elementary • Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education, • Master of Education in Elementary Education • Specialist in Education Degree in Education Administration • Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education Administration and Supervision
Emmanuel	X	Rural	X	• Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education • Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Administration • Education Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership and Administration
Gabriel	X	Rural		• Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education • Master of Education
Hadar	X	Rural		• Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice • Master's Degree • Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership

Analytic Process

Themes from Black male Superintendent Interviews

What challenges do Black males face when attempting to pursue careers in academia?

ACADEMIC
Teacher Education Programs
Certification Exams
WORK ENVIRONMENT
Transformative Leadership Required by Black Males
Parental Support versus Pushback
MENTAL HEALTH
The Role of Social Media
Positive Visibility
Salary/Income

The analytic process revealed a conceptual nesting in which respondents discuss the importance of transitions from academic to classroom settings, community and work dynamics that may affect education in a specific district which was informed by their shared role as superintendents and black males, and mental health awareness to navigate internal/external conflict and growth in academia. Accordingly, the findings address each of these domains: transitioning out of academia, the work environment, and mental health.

Academic

The Academic theme consists of the following categories: teacher preparation and certification exams. Each of these aspects describes entry-level aspects to becoming an educator.

This theme explores the foundation set by teacher education programs and the certification process.

Teacher Education Programs vs. Real World Experience

Superintendents have different views on the level of impact that teacher education programs should have. Emmanuel and Micah discussed their different viewpoints on how lack of preparation may or may not be problematic and additional work is placed upon schools to adequately improve individuals once they are on the job. Emmanuel shared how even the best teacher education program will not adequately prepare you for a career in education: "When people have success and when they don't have success, a lot of times we blame it on the lack of preparation, but with the best teacher preparation, it's not going to prepare you for all you deal with. Being in education, a teacher and having an impact and influence on children - you must be built for this" (Emmanuel Interview, 2023).

However, Micah discussed how this lack of preparation is problematic and that additional work is placed upon schools to adequately improve individuals once they are on the job: "They don't teach about the wide spectrum of students that can be in the classroom. They don't prepare you for the parents that deal with those different types of students, and it emerges as on the job training" (Micah Interview, 2023).

Teacher Education Programs provide the curriculum, educational resources, and faculty that contribute to the quality of teaching and the development of information, skills, and competencies necessary for professional staff to function effectively in public schools. Respondents recognize that teacher education programs, in principle, play an important role in recruiting and preparing educators. Yet the perception of how much teacher education programs should prepare professionals varied among superintendents.

Certification Exams

Aspiring teachers in Mississippi must hold a bachelor's degree and complete a Mississippi teacher preparation program. Additionally, applicants must pass the required Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators (CORE) exam and content-area test. The core exam is a basic academic skills examination for educators, which consists of reading, writing, and mathematics. These extensive tests examine candidates' abilities and subject understanding when they enter teacher training programs. Certification, as a major barrier to entry, was threaded throughout interviews. Superintendents Gabriel and Hadar expressed how they felt getting certified was one of the most significant challenges. Gabriel reflected on how it was the most difficult obstacle in his own journey in education:

> "You know, trying to pass the certification test was the biggest challenge early on because they were so difficult. So, it was like we pass one part at this time, not pass another part. It was always a constant battle. That was my biggest problem with it at the beginning. So, once I got past those, it was fine. But the most difficult hurdle was to pass those tests and get certified" (Gabriel Interview, 2022).

What is more, Hadar acknowledged that attempting to be certified was a state-wide drawback when asked about policy challenges: "The only problem I have is, you know, the state tends to make it kind of difficult for a person to get certified. There are some things that I believe they should change as far as the scores are concerned and as far as some of the obstacles that are in place" (Hadar Interview, 2023). But the challenge of getting certified is not just a recent issue; one superintendent discussed the National Teacher Examinations (NTE), first administered in

1940. In September 2014, ETS transitioned to the Praxis "CASE" or "Core Academic Skills for Educators":

> "Matter of fact, this is crazy. But the test that I had to take to get my license, they called - it was called the NTE, what we used to call it was the Negro Termination Exam because it was hard for African Americans to pass it. Very hard. Very few people actually passed it. (Timothy Interview, 2022)

Participants stressed the significance of understanding how historical factors form the state, and impact admission into academia. Developing a combined curriculum and certification process that serves as a better conduit into education is a necessity for achieving systemic change.

Work Environment

The Work Environment theme consists of the following categories: transformative leadership and parental support/pushback. Although the first theme focuses on academic preparation and qualifications, this theme expands on that knowledge by exploring issues in the work environment.

Transformative Leadership

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership style that causes change in both individuals and societal systems. Superintendents highlight the necessity of developing community ties and inspiring both students and educators to achieve greater levels of achievement in order to significantly enhance and favorably affect districts where they are placed. Gabriel expressed his desire to make a significant difference in Mississippi, but explains

how this is a common beginning point or experience for Black males regardless of their individual professional goals:

"I took over failing schools and young in my career, because that's what I desired to do. I wanted a big change. I wanted to make an impact. But, for a young Black man, most of the time that's what you're going to be doing. You know, that's definitely where you're going to start out at least, if not anything, you're going start out in failing districts" (Gabriel Interview, 2022).

Reuben pointed out how credentials are valued differently in various areas: "I guess what I'm saying is I do see where we still have some ways to go to understand how qualifications matter and where. I mean think of all the A-rated school districts you have. I believe there may be four African Americans, I think three of whom are female" (Reuben Interview, 2023).

Superintendents note how there are very high standards required of Black males when entering education. Timothy found that one key piece of advice he would give to Black males considering education is to: "Work twice as hard as your counterparts, because we have to be twice as qualified. We have to work twice as hard, and we have to know twice what they know if we're going to be successful" (Timothy, 2022). Reuben goes on to describe how there is little room for mistakes: "We're still breaking down those barriers of giving us those opportunities. To where, you know, we have an equal shot at those jobs. You know, many times African American superintendents when we do get an opportunity, if it does not go well, we tend to not get a second opportunity" (Reuben Interview, 2023).

The common starting point stated by superintendents appears to necessitate a level of transformative leadership in order to advance through the ranks and obtain jobs in higher-rated

districts. Gabriel describes how he applied to one leadership program, the Mississippi Aspiring Superintendents Academy, multiple times: "All doing that time, I kept applying for Superintendent kind of jobs while I was there. I've been in Superintendent Academy, but always a finalist, just never got a shot. So, I probably applied to 20 some odd times, but I just believed in myself - I knew I could do it" (Gabriel Interview, 2022). The AASA/Mississippi Aspiring Superintendents Academy aims to demystify the function of school superintendent and provides a road map for success in important areas. The program's primary purpose is to link leadership duties to participants' understanding of themselves, their leadership styles, and their talents, preparing them to effectively lead their districts.

However, several superintendents find that even the accountability model for district grading could be improved. The Mississippi Statewide Accountability System assigns a performance rating of A, B, C, D, and F for each school and district based on established criteria regarding student achievement, individual student growth, graduation rate, and participation rate.

> "There's a lot of inconsistency with our accountability model because they tend to change the game – like I tell people and I will use the coach's analogy – if you tell me the rules and how the game is played, I'll play the game. But if you change the rules in the middle of the game, then that's not fair. So, there are some things within the model that I have an issue with, especially with our special education population." (Hadar Interview, 2022)

> "At the end of the day, you know, when you're trying to get into a college or get a trade, I mean aren't we trying to prepare our students for life beyond our schools?" (Emmanuel, 2023)

For superintendents, navigating the work environment provoked profound reflection into leadership and access across districts as well as interesting insight into improving Mississippi's statewide accountability model.

Parental Support versus Pushback

Parental presence ranges across school district, and participants emphasize the measurable influence parents have on their district and students' perceptions of education. When one superintendent asked his students why they weren't considering education, parents were a main concern: "Mr. Gabriel, I don't want to deal with them grown folks. I don't want to deal with no parents" (Gabriel Interview, 2022).

Gabriel goes on to describe how students view being a leader as a whole as a deterrent due to social aspects: "Once again, when I talk to my young people in my buildings, they simply tell me that, you know, we see what you all deal with dealing with the grown folks - we don't want to be a part of it. But I think that's leadership as a whole, my honest opinion, not just in education, but everywhere, you don't see as many young people that desire to be - their life to be put under a microscope" (Gabriel Interview, 2022).

For another superintendent, this outlook on parents slightly differs. Hadar describes how students understand that parents play an essential role in his school district and how they are key to district success and positivity: "This community has always been very positive when it comes to the schools - the public schools. We have many parents that help us. You know, they want to see us be successful (Hadar Interview, 2023). Through the eyes of superintendents, parents play a massive role in creating a stronger vision and contributing to the outlook of school districts.

Mental Health

The Mental Health theme contains the categories that pertain to identity and self-discovery, as well as the conflict and growth that accompanies this process. Categories include the role of social media, positive visibility, and salary/income. This theme expands on the previous two by detailing how obstacles to Black males' mental health are influenced as they navigate the workplace, and understanding how teacher education programs could play a part in the preparation for that environment.

The Role of Social Media

Respondents described several ways in which social media and digital platforms influence their role as superintendents and how education and performance in their different school districts is perceived. Superintendents Emmanuel, Micah, Hadar, and Gabriel consider social media to be harmful, calling on the phrase "cancel culture" as their justification: "I don't care if you're Black or White. I just think that the cancel culture is just something that's just out of control" (Emmanuel Interview, 2023).

Timothy goes into detail on how social media may be a helpful tool, but in education, it is frequently exploited to propagate negativity:

> "They've made our jobs harder because people flock to negative and all the great things that happen in every school district across this state - they don't get paid attention to. And I'll tell you what else it's done: it's made everybody an expert. Everybody can tell us how to fix education because they have a Facebook account and they've got an opinion now. It makes it hard for us because, you know, success breeds success. And if you output not a lot of successful things, people are not attracted to that."

Micah describes social media as "the death of schools because it creates so much confusion" and how people "go to social media for everything because they're looking for allies versus a simple fix; I mean, there's a lot of good in social media. You can let parents know that schools cancel activities to cancel different things like that. But the negative, the negativity gets more attention than anything else" (Micah Interview, 2023).

The sense among participants was that social media was utilized to do more harm than good and push negative stories about school districts, but had positive attributes, such as getting out information quickly to parents. All respondents cited not being on social media as a method of self-care and how important it was to prioritize mental health in a job like being a superintendent:

> "I've seen superintendent have heart attacks. Those things, you know, they stay on social media and see everything someone says about them, I've seen them quit behind that alone. Like, for me, it's important that, like I told you earlier, I'm not on social media, I'm not on these platforms and a lot of it has to do with protecting my personal life, protecting my time, my family. I don't post anything like that. Some people may say you should be able to live your life, should be able to do what you want to. Well, you know, it doesn't work that way when you accept these roles" (Gabriel Interview, 2022).

Positive Visibility

All superintendents mentioned the aspect of visibility in their respective interviews, but not just on a general surface-level, each superintendent made the distinction that there is a requirement for more positive visibility in school environments for teachers and administrators of color: "I think that a challenge Black males face when attempting to pursue a career in

education is a lack of seeing people that look like them in those positions" (Hadar Interview, 2023). Using our previous theme as a framework to begin to explore this challenge, research indicates that a decreased view of minorities in real life can cause individuals to rely on stereotypes perpetuated by the media. The average adult and child engages in digital media approximately 8 hours a day and the role of media and racial representation can influence perceptions of Black men inside and outside of the classroom (Tao, 2022). Four out of the six participants mention stereotypes of Black men as a challenge for Black men entering academia. Specific stereotypes noted repeatedly were "sexual aggressiveness", "aggressiveness", and "angry Black man".

One superintendent identifies how he has been personally affected by stereotypes and how he has made efforts in the respective school districts he has worked in to increase positive Black male visibility:

"I think we get stereotyped because of behaviors that people see on TV, behaviors that they may have witnessed or experienced that were not you know, that were not seen in their communities. I've been stereotyped as an angry Black man, and it actually stopped me from getting some jobs that I knew I was better than the people who got the jobs. But because there is this narrative about me being aggressive when really, it's just passion because I care about what I do, I enjoy changing kids' lives. You'll hear people say, oh, we want minorities until it's time to hire a minority. Even when I was in Macedonia, I hired an African American male who had a felony on his record because I knew how important it was for kids to see us" (Timothy Interview, 2022).

Superintendents reiterate this theme of positive visibility through their own personal reasons of why they chose to pursue education. In five out of six interviews, when asked to share about an experience that inspired them to become an educator in the public school system, each interviewee cited an influence by a Black male figure or other role model and how they never imagined education as a path for them (see Table 2). Reuben cites his 10th grade history teacher and first African American male teacher outside of physical education as his source of inspiration. While Hadar accounts his inspiration as the older administrators in his upbringing: "I always had some older Black administrators, African Americans, who always pushed myself and a couple more of our other coaches. And they would always tell us, you know, we're going to need individuals to replace us so, you all need to go back and get your master's and get your certification in administration" (Hadar Interview, 2023).

Timothy credits his spark to an associate minister at the church he attended and how he simultaneously served in the local district: "He was an associate minister at my church, and he worked in the school district and seeing the kids, the response I got from the kids and then having him talk about how he noticed, how the kids responded to me is kind of what you know and kind of what made me." This was a similar story for Gabriel, who explains how prominent Black males in his church, who also served in the school districts, were a key influence in his decision to teach: "But they were, in my view, every Sunday at church. They would tell me you were needed. Oh, my parents told me I was needed, and that's how I got here. Basically, it was a recruitment thing" (Gabriel Interview, 2022).

Emmanuel describes how it was not one singular person, but multiple people who guided him towards education along the way: "When I was in school, there were people who really,

really, really influenced me and guided me in and positive directions. And so, as I got older, I viewed education differently" (Emmanuel Interview, 2023). However, another source of inspiration existed among participants. Superintendent Micah says he chose education based on a personal experience he had in an education course he took his sophomore year of college: "I was taking an education course and we had some kids that were there. I remember there was this kid who was struggling to get along with the other kids in the particular clinical area that we were at because we were doing observations. And when I sat with the student, he started doing his work and I never looked back" (Micah, 2023).

In essence, there is a running theme of how the presence of Black male figures, as role models and mentors, provided a pathway into education for five superintendents. It is also vital to underline Micah's relevance and how experiencing a hands-on experience teaching in college transformed his collegiate path.

Table 2: Participant Overview of Black Male Educators and Reason for Choosing Education

Participant	# Of Black Male Educators	Grade of 1st Black Male Teacher Encounter	Grade of Last Black Male Teacher Encounter	Reason for Choosing Academia
Micah	1	6th grade	6th grade	Experiential Learning Experience
Timothy	2	5th grade	10th grade	Black Male Figure/Role Model
Reuben	3	5th grade	6th grade	Black Male Figure/Role Model

Emmanuel	12	4th grade	12th grade	Black Figure/Role Model
Gabriel	3	5th grade	8th grade	Black Male Figure/Role Model
Hadar	6	5th grade	10th grade	Black Male Figure/Role Model

Impact of Salary/Income

The Mississippi state House passed the largest teacher pay raise in state history in March 2022. The average annual teacher raise was $5,140, and the raise began for the 2022-2023 school year. Starting teacher pay will increase from $37,123 to $41,638, putting Mississippi above the southeastern and national averages. Superintendents acknowledge the importance of salary and the impact it plays in the attractiveness to the field. Hadar highlights how the recent pay raise in Mississippi was necessary to be competitive against other states in recruitment and retention efforts: "You know, there's a need for teachers, period, on every level K through 12. There's a need for those positions. Mississippi has had a recent pay raise in order to be somewhat competitive because it's hard to compete with surrounding states, especially Texas."

While some participants acknowledge that Mississippi raised its salary for educators significantly in the past year, others believe that it is still not enough. Emmanuel observes that teacher salary is insufficient to attract and retain Black male educators, and that Black male educators frequently experience the additional pressure of providing for their families as a result of systemic economic disparities:

"But a first-year Black male teacher, just like any other first year teachers, makes $41,000. I just think the pressure on all Black males to take care of families and responsibilities just

don't allow for such a low starting off salary. Because I could go get another job and I could work 12 hours a day and I can get overtime – essentially, I can make a lot of money. But in education, I'm stuck on this salary and I'm putting in all these long hours working weekends and things, and I just don't have any opportunities to earn extra money." (Emmanuel Interview, 2023)

Gabriel and Reuben discuss two different viewpoints on teacher pay. Gabriel argues that pay is not great, and leadership is needed to encourage young people to become administrators: "So, a lot of young people, it's not attractive to them. Pay is still not great. So, it's not something that they desire to do and like I said, a lot of it is what they see out there on a daily basis and pay. And the second part is like leadership towards young people desiring to become an administrator" (Gabriel Interview, 2022). Reuben argues that teacher income is sufficient to support a family, but there is a myth that teachers cannot provide for their families: "One challenge, another challenge, I think, is the myth that you cannot take care of and provide for your family on teacher pay" (Reuben, 2023).

Quantitative Results

From February 23, 2023 – March 8, 2023, a survey questionnaire was emailed to principals and superintendents across Mississippi. After sending three additional reminders, the total response rate for the survey was 18.2%. Among the respondents, 17.42% were superintendents (N = 23), 78.03% were principals (N=103) and 4.55% were other which included roles like special education directors, assistant principals, district administrators, curriculum and instruction specialists, and directors (N=6). With regard to school districts, 71.96% (N=77) were primarily located in a rural area, while 15.89% (N = 17) were located in a suburban area and 11.21% (N = 12) in an urban area.

Descriptive Results

The survey included a set of Likert-scale questions where respondents identified their agreement with statements around diversity and perspectives on teacher representation. These secondary data were utilized to explore more deeply the perception of teacher representation and its impact. As the previous findings indicated, responses ranged from complete disagreement (1) to complete agreement (5). Significant results are detailed in the table below.

The data from the study will provide additional support for understanding the perceptions of teacher representation and how Black males fit into that gap. It is interesting to note that almost 57% of school leaders agree with the statement that their school district does not have a teacher representation problem. This finding is noteworthy, seeing how 69% go on to agree that one way to close the achievement gap is with better representation. Additionally, when school leaders were asked which teacher demographic is least representative in their school district, the top two selections were Black and Hispanic males with both at 34.78%.

Table 3: School Leaders' Perception of Teacher Representation (%)

Statement	Strongly Agree to Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Disagree to Disagree
1) "My school district does not have a teacher representation problem."	N = 52 56.52%	N = 16 17.39%	N = 24 26.09%
2) "One way to close the achievement gap is with better teacher representation."	N = 71 68.93%	N = 15 14.56%	N = 17 16.51%
3) "Higher Education Teacher Programs in Mississippi need to do a better job preparing	N = 44 48.89%	N = 24 26.67%	N = 8 8.89%

minority teachers for certification."			
4) "Until Mississippi does something to address teacher pay, we're always going to lose teachers, especially our teachers of color, to other states."	N = 67 74.45%	N = 11 12.22%	N = 12 13.33%
5) "Certification exams can be a barrier for minority teacher candidates."	N = 31 57.78%	N = 15 16.67%	N = 23 25.55%
6) "Our staff at our school reflects the diversity of our student population."	N = 54 62.07%	N = 10 11.49%	N = 23 26.44%

The Likert statements provide valuable insights into the perceptions and beliefs of respondents regarding teacher representation, the achievement gap, teacher preparation programs, teacher pay, certification exams, and staff diversity within their school district. With 56.52% of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that their school district does not have a teacher representation problem, there is a notable portion of individuals who feel confident about the current state of teacher representation in their district. Regarding closing the achievement gap, a majority of 68.93% strongly agree or agree that better teacher representation is one way to achieve this goal. This highlights the recognition of the importance of diverse teachers in addressing the disparities in academic outcomes. Concerning teacher preparation programs in Mississippi, 48.89% strongly agree or agree that there is a need for improvement in preparing minority teachers for certification. This indicates a significant proportion of respondents acknowledging the need for enhancements in this aspect.

The statement regarding teacher pay resonates strongly with 74.45% of respondents who strongly agree or agree that until Mississippi takes action to address teacher pay, the state is likely to lose teachers, particularly those from underrepresented groups to other states. Furthermore, 57.78% of respondents strongly agree or agree that certification exams can present a barrier for minority teacher candidates, highlighting the recognition of the challenges faced by these candidates in obtaining their certification. In terms of staff diversity reflecting the student population, 62.07% of respondents strongly agree or agree, indicating a substantial proportion of individuals perceiving alignment between the diversity of staff and students within their school.

Overall, the Likert statements provide valuable insights into various dimensions related to teacher representation, achievement gap, teacher preparation, teacher pay, certification exams, and staff diversity. These findings underscore the importance of considering these perspectives when addressing the Black male educator shortage in the Mississippi public school system and designing intervention strategies to promote diversity and equitable education.

Chapter V : Discussion

This research project undertakes the following research questions: Why is there a lack of Black male educators in Mississippi's public-school systems? What are state-level intervention strategies that can be put in place to increase the recruitment and retention of Black male educators?

There is a considerable degree of overlap between quantitative and qualitative findings that builds on the themes that developed from the superintendent interviews and found in the literature review. This level of data saturation suggests sufficient evidence to address the research question of why there is a black male teacher shortage in Mississippi. This research aimed at identifying why there is a lack of Black male educators in Mississippi's public school system, as well as identify its impact and related intervention strategies. Based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of school leaders' perception of teacher representation, it can be concluded that one of the main reasons there is a lack of Black male educators in Mississippi's public-school systems is the historical legacy of systemic racism and discrimination in education, which has created significant barriers for Black men to enter the teaching profession.

These superintendents leverage elements of their identity to navigate education through resilience, dedication, and persistence. These personal ideals make the superintendents aware of the role race plays in their opportunities and requires a greater understanding of that responsibility in order to reach new heights within their districts. Therefore, Black male superintendents in Mississippi must be aware of the challenges put in place as well as how to navigate them from their perspective.

The results indicate that several factors contribute to the underrepresentation of Black male educators in Mississippi's public-school systems. Among the study were several significant subcategories in the themes which included teacher education programs and certification exams

under the academic theme; transformative leadership required by Black males and parental support versus pushback in the work environment theme; and the role of social media, positive visibility, and salary/income under the mental health theme. The data suggest need for an improved teacher education program curriculum and certification exams. Additionally, other significant challenges noted in this study were the work environment and mental health.

The results suggest that superintendents are mixed on whether teacher education programs can make a more significant contribution to teacher preparation, and in turn, improve retention/retainment. However, results from the school leaders' perception of teacher representation indicate a clearer response: "Certification exams can be a barrier for minority teacher candidates" where 57.78% of respondents agree with the statement, and "Higher Education Teacher Program in Mississippi need to do a better job preparing minority teachers for certification" where nearly 50% of respondents agree.

Based on the findings of similar studies, a more plausible explanation is a need for improved teacher education program curricula and more resources of support to navigate certification exams. As discussed in the literature review chapter, there is evidence that teacher education programs have a substantial impact on the Black male teacher shortage. Sandles (2020) observed that additional efforts in teacher education and the school environment are needed to recruit and retain Black male teachers. The author advocated intervention strategies such as concentrated mentorship for Black male teachers and genuine outreach programs as early measures to address the Black male teacher shortage crisis. Goings and Lewis (2020) illustrate how Black teachers are considerably more likely to be placed in schools with dense populations of children of color and children in poverty, as well as in struggling schools, despite the fact that

there is no curriculum in place for teacher training programs that prepare teacher applicants to work in various school settings or districts.

The curriculum of teacher education programs is important in retaining Black men in education because it shapes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they will bring to their work as educators. A well-designed and culturally responsive curriculum can provide Black men with the tools they need to succeed as teachers and support their ongoing professional growth and development. This analysis supports the theory that teacher education programs' curriculum should reflect real classroom settings in order to retain more teachers of color, particularly Black males, because this approach can provide a more authentic and relevant learning experience that prepares candidates to meet the challenges of teaching in diverse classrooms.

To better benefit Black males, teacher education programs' curricula can be improved in a number of ways which include: implementing culturally responsive teaching practices; addressing systemic inequities through research based evidence-practices; emphasize leadership development and provide training on how to become effective advocates for social justice and equity in the classroom and beyond; engage with Black male students and educators to better understand their needs and perspectives; and provide mentorship and networking opportunities for Black male students to connect with Black male educators who are already working in the field.

Related Intervention Strategies

A final significant finding is to focus on increased recruitment and retention efforts that build relationships, both among students and faculty. Research shows that there are various intervention strategies that can be employed to recruit and retain Black men in education. Outlined below are some potential strategies.

Recruitment

Recruiting Black men into education can be a challenge due to various factors, such as lack of representation in the field and negative perceptions of the teaching profession. Some intervention strategies that could help to recruit Black men into education include:

1. Increasing representation: One of the most effective ways to recruit Black men into education is to increase representation of Black male teachers and educational leaders. This can be done by providing incentives for Black male students to pursue education degrees, and by actively recruiting and hiring Black men into teaching and leadership positions.

2. Mentorship and outreach programs: Outreach programs that target Black male students and provide mentorship and guidance can help to increase interest in the teaching profession. This can include programs that provide exposure to the teaching profession, such as shadowing opportunities or internships.

3. Scholarships and financial support: Offering scholarships or other financial incentives to Black men who pursue education degrees can help to reduce financial barriers that may discourage them from entering the field.

4. Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment: Institutions should strive to create an environment that is welcoming and inclusive to Black men. This can include providing resources for Black male students, creating affinity groups, and addressing bias and discrimination.

5. Highlighting the importance of diversity: Academic entities can emphasize the importance of having a diverse teaching workforce, and how this benefits students from

all backgrounds. This can help to encourage Black men to see the value in pursuing careers in education.

Retainment/Retention:

1. Mentoring programs: Mentorship programs can provide guidance and support to Black male students as they navigate their educational journeys. This can include academic and career advice, as well as emotional support. In one interview, a superintendent highlights how he thinks this should start on a high school level.

2. Culturally responsive teaching: Educators who use culturally responsive teaching methods can help create a learning environment that acknowledges and celebrates the cultural backgrounds of their Black male students. This can increase engagement and motivation to learn.

3. Financial support: Many Black male students face financial barriers to accessing and completing education. Providing financial support such as scholarships, grants, or financial aid can help to reduce this barrier.

4. Community partnerships: Establishing partnerships between educational institutions and community organizations can provide additional support to Black male students. These partnerships can provide resources such as tutoring, career development opportunities, and mentoring.

5. Addressing systemic barriers: Educational institutions and policy makers can work to address systemic barriers that disproportionately affect Black male students, such as inequitable funding, disciplinary policies, and lack of representation in leadership positions.

Overall, intervention strategies should be tailored to the specific needs and challenges facing Black male students in their educational journey. Educational institutions and policy makers can work to increase the representation of Black men in education and address the underrepresentation of this group in the field. Providing support, addressing barriers, and creating an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment can help to retain Black men in education and increase their success.

In line with the hypothesis, positive visibility is also a significant component of the challenges faced when black males attempt to pursue careers in academia. Black male educators are often overlooked due to their hypervisibility and negative perceptions of their teaching abilities, leading to hostile work environments and social outcasts (Carey, 2018; Nelson, 2016; Wallace, 2017). There are several reasons why negative stereotypes and biases about Black males can impact how they are perceived and evaluated by others in academia. The research shows that Black males may be stereotyped as less competent, less professional, or less suited to academic roles. Positive visibility can help to challenge these stereotypes and biases by providing positive and diverse representations of Black males in academic settings. Additionally, the lack of positive visibility of Black males in academia can make it more difficult to recruit Black males into academic positions. When Black males do not see positive representations of themselves in academia, they may not consider it as a viable career option, or they may feel discouraged or unwelcome in the field. The lack of positive visibility of Black males in academia can also contribute to high attrition rates among Black male academics. When Black male academics do not see positive representations of themselves in the field or experience isolation and marginalization in their institutions, they may feel discouraged, unsupported, or

undervalued, and may be more likely to leave the field. It can also impact the networking opportunities available to Black male academics.

When Black male academics are not visible or are underrepresented in their fields, they may have fewer opportunities to connect with colleagues and mentors who can provide support and guidance in their careers. In summary, positive visibility is a significant component of the challenges faced by Black males when pursuing careers in academia. By promoting positive and diverse representations of Black male academics, one can help to challenge negative stereotypes and biases, promote greater understanding and empathy, and inspire Black males to pursue and thrive in academic roles. It may help to challenge negative stereotypes and biases, promote greater understanding and empathy, and inspire Black males to pursue and thrive in teaching roles.

Another significant theme is the transformative leadership required by Black males. Transformative leadership is not only required by Black male educators to effectively rise through the ranks of academia, but it is also essential for advancing the interests and needs of Black students and communities. Transformative leadership is about challenging the status quo and creating more equitable and just systems. In academia, Black male educators may face various systemic barriers and biases that can hinder their advancement and make it challenging for them to fully realize their potential as leaders and change agents. Transformative leadership is not just about advancing one's own career, but about using one's position and influence to advance the broader interests and needs of the communities that one serves. As such, transformative leadership is a critical skill set for Black male educators in academia, and one that can help them to make a meaningful impact on the lives of Black students and communities.

There is a limited amount of research specifically focused on transformative leadership required by Black male educators in Mississippi. However, some studies have explored the experiences of Black male educators more broadly and suggest that transformative leadership is essential for their success. For example, Floyd Jeter and John Melendez (2019) published a study in the Journal of Negro Education that examined the experiences of Black male educators in urban schools across the United States. The study found that these educators faced numerous challenges, including racial biases, isolation, and lack of support. However, the study also found that those who exhibited transformative leadership, by challenging the status quo, promoting cultural competence, and advocating for equity and justice, were more likely to be successful and to make a positive impact on their students.

Another study published in the Journal of School Leadership by James Avery (2020) examined the experiences of Black male principals in urban schools. The study found that these principals faced similar challenges to Black male teachers, but that they also had a unique opportunity to promote transformative leadership at the school level. The study identified several key practices of transformative leadership, including empowering others, building relationships, and promoting equity and social justice. In summary, while there is limited research specifically focused on transformative leadership required by Black male educators in Mississippi, existing research suggests that transformative leadership is essential for the success of Black male educators more broadly. By challenging the status quo, promoting cultural competence, and advocating for equity and justice, Black male educators can make a positive impact on their students and communities, and help to create more inclusive and supportive educational environments.

Other interesting findings surround aspects of teacher pay where nearly 75% of school

leaders agree that "Until Mississippi does something to address teacher pay, we're always going to lose teachers, especially our teachers of color, to other states." Superintendents have differing opinions on whether teacher pay is adequate; however, there is discussion that the most recent salary raise in Mississippi will not be enough. Teacher pay can be a contributing factor to the Black male teacher shortage in Mississippi. When teacher pay is low, it can make it difficult to attract and retain talented individuals, including Black males, into the teaching profession. This is particularly true for individuals who may have other career options that offer higher pay and more benefits. Additionally, Black males may be less likely to choose teaching as a career if they feel that it will not provide them with the financial stability and security they need to support themselves and their families. If teacher pay is too low, it may not be a viable option for individuals who have financial obligations and responsibilities.

Low teacher pay may also lead to more competition from other fields for talented individuals, including Black males. If individuals have the choice between teaching and another field that offers higher pay and better benefits, they may be more likely to choose the other field. According to a report by the National Education Association, the average teacher salary in Mississippi for the 2019-2020 school year was $45,105, which is lower than the national average of $63,645. Low teacher pay in Mississippi, and in other states across the country, has been identified as a contributing factor to the teacher shortage and difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers, particularly in high-needs schools and subjects.

Moreover, Emma Garcia and Eunice Han (2022) published a study in the American Educational Research Journal that found that teacher salary increases were associated with an increase in the proportion of Black teachers in a district. This suggests that increasing teacher pay may be one way to address the shortage of Black male teachers in Mississippi and promote

greater diversity in the teaching profession. However, it is important to note that addressing the Black male teacher shortage and promoting diversity in the teaching profession involves addressing multiple factors, including recruitment, retention, and support for Black male teachers. Teacher pay is just one aspect of a broader effort to create a more equitable and diverse education workforce.

Implications

This study offers several implications for practice and future research. One of the most salient findings about the Black male educator shortage is that it is a persistent and widespread problem in the United States. Despite efforts to increase diversity in the teaching profession, Black men continue to be underrepresented among teachers, especially in certain subjects such as STEM and in schools with high poverty rates. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, in the 2017-2018 school year, Black males made up only 2% of the total teaching workforce in public schools. This lack of representation can have negative consequences for Black male students, who may benefit from having positive role models and culturally responsive instruction that reflects their experiences.

Research suggests that the reasons for the shortage of Black male educators are complex and multifaceted. Factors that contribute to the shortage include low teacher pay, lack of diversity in teacher education programs, negative school and classroom environments, and a lack of support and mentorship for Black male teachers. Efforts to address the Black male educator shortage have included increasing recruitment efforts, creating mentoring and support programs for Black male teachers, improving teacher education programs to be more inclusive and

culturally responsive, and increasing teacher pay and benefits to attract and retain talented educators.

One policy idea that emerged in the interviews is to reconsider the Accountability Model. The findings should be considered to improve Mississippi's accountability approach. This can help to encourage greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in education, which can assist to alleviate the Black male educator shortage and enhance outcomes for all students. Some possible strategies include focusing on multiple measures of school and teacher effectiveness instead of heavily relying on standardized test scores as a measure of school and teacher effectiveness, prioritizing equity and access by focusing on closing the achievement (opportunity) gap, incorporating cultural competency and responsiveness, and encouraging and rewarding diversity in the teaching profession. The data contribute a clearer understanding of the importance of diverse representation in the teaching profession, the impact of teacher diversity on student achievement, the need for systemic change in education, and the importance of teacher recruitment and retention.

Limitations

There are some limitations to consider in this study. A significant one is that findings of this study may not be generalizable due to the data's self-reported nature, combined with the study sample's geographic location. Another limitation is the low response rate for the online surveys and interviews.

Positionality

The voice of the researcher, a black female of color who emerged from a low-income background and underwent the transition from a predominantly black school to a predominantly

white school during high school, holds immense significance within this research These personal experiences and backgrounds uniquely position the researcher to bring forth valuable perspectives and insights. Additionally, the inclusion of the voices of black male superintendents in the semi-structured interviews further amplifies the importance of diverse perspectives in understanding the impact, challenges, and intervention strategies related to the shortage of black male educators. These superintendents, who hold positions of influence within the education system, contribute valuable insights based on their lived experiences and professional expertise.

The researcher's voice, as well as the voices of the black male superintendents, serve to provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding the shortage of black male educators in Mississippi. Their perspectives shed light on the unique challenges faced by black males in the education system, offer potential solutions, and emphasize the need for representation and inclusivity. By incorporating these voices, the thesis not only acknowledges the researcher's personal background but also acknowledges the importance of diverse perspectives and the need to uplift and amplify underrepresented voices in the pursuit of addressing the black male educator shortage in Mississippi.

Chapter VI : Conclusion

The results in the preceding chapters highlight the need for further action to increase Black male representation as teachers, administrators, and co-creators of knowledge. The Black male superintendents in Mississippi recounted numerous challenges during their own time in academia – from their own time as students in teacher education programs to leading entire school districts, superintendents reflected on who they were, what they could contribute, how they were perceived, and how to find alignment to overcome several barriers.

Benefits of More Black Male Teacher

The presence of more Black male teachers and administrators in Mississippi public school systems could have several potential benefits for the educational experience of students. First, having more Black males in positions of authority could provide positive representation for Black students, particularly Black students, who may not see themselves reflected in their teachers and school leaders. Research has shown that having same-race teachers can lead to better academic outcomes for Black students, including higher test scores and graduation rates. Black male teachers can serve as positive role models for students, especially those who come from underrepresented and disadvantaged communities. They can provide inspiration, support, and guidance, and help students see what is possible for their future.

Second, Black male teachers can bring a unique perspective to the classroom, drawing on their own experiences and cultural knowledge to connect with students and create a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment. For example, they may be better equipped to understand and address the challenges that Black students face, such as racism and discrimination. Third, research has shown that having a diverse teaching workforce can lead to improved academic outcomes for students, especially those from underrepresented groups. This is particularly true in subjects such as math and science, where the achievement gap between

Black and White students is most pronounced. Finally, addressing the shortage of Black male teachers is a critical step in promoting greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in the education system, which can have a positive impact on all students and society as a whole. Having a more diverse teaching and administrative workforce can help to create a more inclusive and welcoming school environment, which can lead to improved student engagement and academic achievement.

In summary, the representation of Black male teachers is vital for promoting positive role models, creating a more inclusive learning environment, improving academic outcomes, and advancing equity and social justice in the education system. However, it is important to note that simply hiring more Black male teachers and administrators is not a silver bullet for improving Mississippi's public school systems. It is also necessary to address systemic issues such as underfunding and racial disparities in discipline and academic achievement.

Challenges and Barriers to Entry

Despite the potential benefits of having more Black male teachers and administrators in Mississippi public schools, there remains a significant shortage of these individuals in the education workforce. This shortage can be attributed to various factors, including low recruitment and retention rates, unequal access to educational opportunities, and systemic barriers such as racism and discrimination. Black male teachers face several challenges when entering the field of education, ranging from societal stereotypes to institutional barriers. First, negative societal perceptions of Black men as being "dangerous" or "untrustworthy" can create a sense of mistrust among some school administrators and parents. Teacher education programs may contribute to the black male teacher shortage by failing to recruit and support black male candidates. Additionally, Black male teachers may struggle with navigating predominantly white

teaching environments, where they may feel like outsiders or struggle to find mentors who understand their experiences.

Finally, Black male teachers may also face challenges in advancing in their careers, as they are often underrepresented in leadership roles within schools and districts. This lack of representation can make it difficult for Black male teachers to find mentors and role models who share their experiences and can provide guidance on how to navigate the system. Overall, the challenges facing Black male teachers are complex and multifaceted, and require a concerted effort from schools, districts, and policymakers to address.

Future Research

To further explore this issue and potential solutions, it is important to examine the research on the shortage of Black male teachers and administrators in the education system. Further research on the black male teacher education shortage in Mississippi should focus on several key areas to better understand the underlying causes of the shortage and identify effective strategies for addressing it. Some of the areas that should be highlighted in future research include the experiences and perspectives of Black male teachers, the impact of teacher preparation programs, the impact of policy and funding decisions, and the impact of cultural factors.

First, research should explore the experiences and perspectives of black male teachers in Mississippi, including their motivations for becoming teachers, their experiences in the classroom, and the challenges they face in their professional lives. This can help to identify strategies for recruiting and retaining more Black male teachers in the state. Additionally, the impact of teacher preparation programs on the recruitment and retention of Black male teachers in Mississippi should be examined further. This can include exploring the ways in which teacher education programs can better prepare Black male teachers for the classroom, and the role that

mentorship and support play in the success of these teachers. Also, there should be more study on the impact of policy and funding decisions on the recruitment and retention of Black male teachers in Mississippi. This can include exploring the ways in which state and district policies, such as teacher pay and evaluation systems, impact the ability of schools to attract and retain diverse teachers. Finally, the research should highlight the impact of cultural factors on the recruitment and retention of black male teachers in Mississippi. This can include exploring the ways in which societal and cultural norms impact the perception of teaching as a profession for black males, and the role that positive representation and visibility can play in attracting and retaining more black male teachers. By focusing on these key areas, further research can help to identify effective strategies for addressing the Black male teacher education shortage in Mississippi.

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Chapter VIII : Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent for Participants

<div align="center">Consent to Participate in Research</div>

Study Title: IMPACT AND CHALLENGES OF THE LACK OF BLACK MALE PRESENCE IN MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS

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Key Information for You to Consider
Purpose: The purpose of this research is to explore the impact and challenges of the lack of black male presence in Mississippi public school systems.

- **Duration.** It is expected that your participation will last 60-90 minutes.
- **Activities.** You will be asked to answer questions in an interview.
- **Why you might not want to participate.** Some of the foreseeable risks or discomforts of your participation include sharing information about your personal experiences as a black male within the public school system.
- **Why you might want to participate.** Some of the benefits may be expected include having your experiences shared to better improve the efforts to recruit and retain black males in the public school system. Your participation can be viewed as a service to Mississippi public school districts.

___ By initialing this box, I certify that I am 18 years of age or older.

What you will do for this study
You will participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. This interview may occur using a video conference software to accommodate for the travel distance. The researcher will ask you to respond to a list of questions. Responses will be audio recorded and written notes will be taken.

Possible risks from your participation
There are no possible risks of hurt or harm.

Benefits from participation
You might experience satisfaction from contributing to the knowledge and understanding of the effects and implications of black male presence in Mississippi public school systems. Participating in the interview may make you aware of the challenges that black males face in education.

Confidentiality
Research team members will have access to the information collected during the interviews. Confidentiality will be maintained by separating information from the responses that may identify you. Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) - the committee responsible for reviewing the ethics of, approving, and monitoring all research with human subjects - have the authority to access all records. However, the IRB will request identification only when necessary.

Right to Withdraw
You do not have to volunteer for this study, and there is no penalty if you refuse to participate. If you start the study and decide that you do not want to finish, just inform the researcher. Whether or not you participate or withdraw from the study, it will not affect your current or future relationship with the University of Mississippi and it will not cause you to lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

IRB Approval
This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482 or irb@olemiss.edu.

Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions are answered, then decide if you want to be included in the study or not.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information. I have been given a copy of this form. I have had an opportunity to ask questions, and I have received answers. Furthermore, I also affirm that the

experimenter explained the study to me and told me about the study's risks as well as my right to refuse to participate and to withdraw. By continuing, I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____

Appendix B: Interview Questions Used in Study

Black Male Superintendents Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself. *(Hometown, high school, the journey to college, the journey to current career, etc.)*

- Tell me about the first black male educator you encountered during k-12. What was he like?

- During your entire grade –school (k-12) experience, how many black male educators would you estimate you came in contact with?

- What role did black male educators play at your school(s)?

- Tell me about an experience that inspired you to become an educator in the public school system?

- What challenges do black males face when attempting to pursue careers in academia?

- Walk me through a "good day" at your job as an educator.

- Walk me through a "bad day" at your job as an educator.

- For future black male educators, what does the field look like regarding job vacancies? Administrative hurdles? Federal and state policy challenges?

- How do you feel representation of teachers impacts students in and outside of the classroom?

- What was the climate of your district when you entered?

- Pretend I am an aspiring black male educator. Give me your best advice as it relates to pursuing a career in academia.

- Are there any other thoughts or comments you would like to share about this topic?

Note: It is important to note that both figures represent school districts with **black male superintendents.**

Percentage African American Students and District Grade

■ Percentage African American Students   ■ District Grade
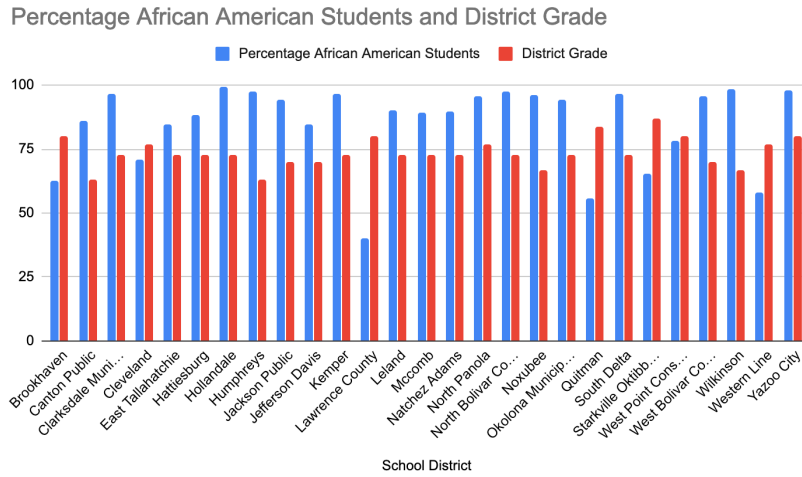

Figure 1. Percentage African American students versus District Grade
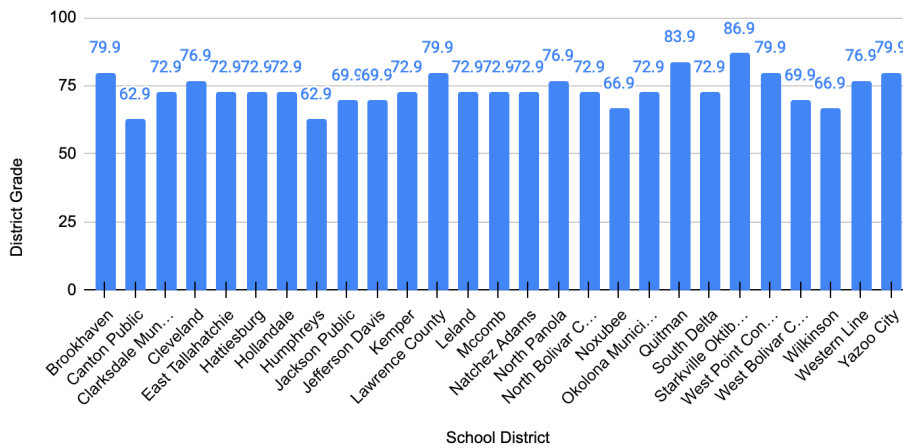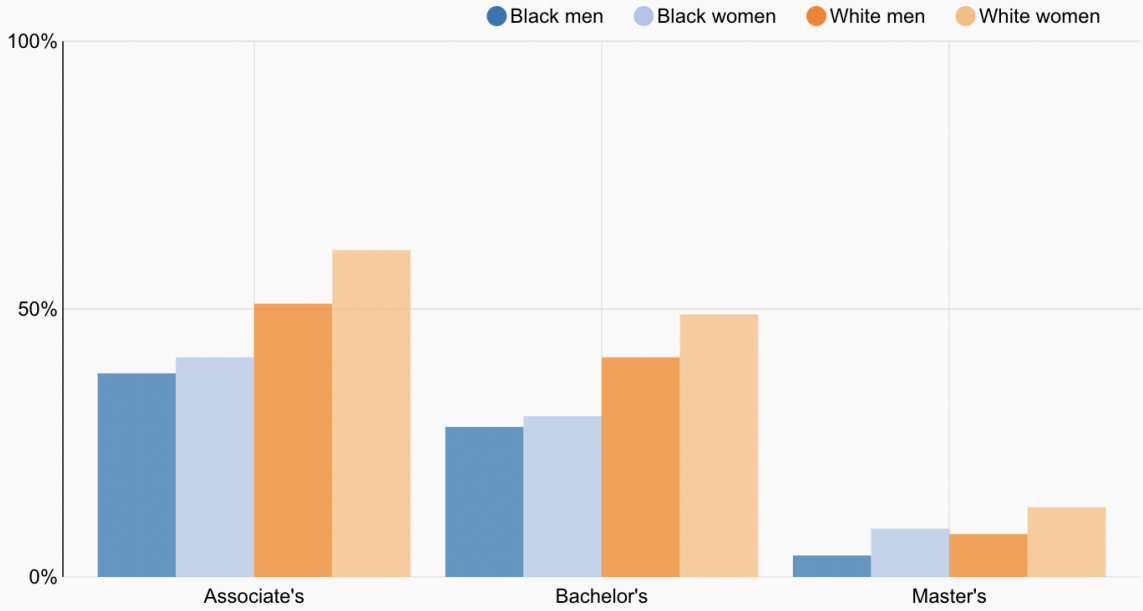
District Grades

Figure 2. District Grades versus School District

Appendix B

Appendix D: Young Black men are Poorly Served by Schools

Young Black men are poorly served by schools

Percentage of 25- to 29-year-olds with select levels of educational attainment or higher, 2019

● Black men   ● Black women   ● White men   ● White women

National Center of Education Statistics from the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, 2019.

Appendix E: Mississippi Rural Definition based on Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

Mississippi

Rural definition based
on Office of Management
and Budget (OMB)
metro counties

	Rural: Nonmetro county
	Urban: OMB metro county

For more information on definitions,
see documentation