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## **Black Certified Educators' Lived Experiences Seeking Employment In Connecticut's Public Education System**

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BLACK CERTIFIED EDUCATORS' LIVED EXPERIENCES SEEKING EMPLOYMENT IN  
CONNECTICUT'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

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2019

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ABSTRACT

Many researchers have studied how Black educators serve as role models for Black students and affect students' academics and emotionality. Currently, a shortage of U.S. Black educators has prompted many state legislatures to create initiatives to increase the number of Black educators in school systems. In the State of Connecticut, legislators implemented initiatives in 2012 and 2015 to increase the number of minority (Black and Hispanic) school teachers and administrators. To date, these initiatives have not been successful. In fact, approximately 270 Black educators certified between 2013 and 2017 had not found employment in public schools in 2018. The researcher conducted a qualitative study to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of certified Black educators seeking employment in Connecticut's public school system. The researcher sought a better understanding of the barriers and opportunities these educators encountered throughout the hiring process. Data for this study were collected from semistructured interviews of Black certified educators in Connecticut who experienced the hiring process since the passage of legislation seven years ago. The researcher found all participants perceived racial discrimination and unconscious bias when applying for positions. The personal stories of participants represented their various challenges, which included many application submissions, few interviews, and even fewer hires. In addition, participants seeking

administrator opportunities found the path toward job attainment more difficult than did those pursuing teaching positions. Because the State has expressed the need for more Black certified educators, and Black certified educators are finding it difficult to get hired, a better understanding of possible motives is needed. The findings show that Connecticut's State Department of Education should monitor human resource departments and hiring practices at the local and district levels.

*Keywords:* Connecticut's Education System hiring practices, systemic racism, Black educators, inequitable hiring practices

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the State of Connecticut, legislators implemented several measures in 2012 and 2015 to increase the number of minority (Black and Hispanic) school teachers and administrators in the public school system. State statute 10-155~~l~~ was enacted in 2012 to encourage minority (defined as non-White) teacher and administrator recruitment (Minority Teacher Recruitment, 2012). In 2015, Senate Bill 1098 was signed into law to address “teacher certification requirements for shortage areas, interstate agreements for teacher certification reciprocity, minority teacher recruitment and retention, and cultural competency instruction” (Substitute for Raised S.B. No. 1098, 2015, Subtitle section). The 2012 legislation afforded an opportunity for minorities who sought reciprocity between states to find employment; in addition, the law was intended to increase the number of minority educators. Urban districts with low academic performance (presently 33) could apply for an Alliance Grant to help improve student academic outcomes in urban districts. In addition, the Alliance Grant (2015) included recommendations for increasing the numbers of minority teachers and administrators. Through these interventions, Connecticut has taken action to increase the number of Black and other minority educators; however, the minority educator shortage persists, and many are unable to find positions (CTDOE, 2018, para. 2).

In Connecticut, in 2019, some districts had no minorities on staff; some affluent districts employed few educators of color or none at all. For example, among Greenwich district’s 978 teachers, 2% were Black; Darien district had 1% among 544; Westport and Wilton had fewer than 1%; and Weston district had none (CTDOE, 2017a). Black educators with the appropriate credentials have found job attainment difficult in any Connecticut district (CTDOE, 2018;

Knaus, 2014; Ursery, 2016). The State's education system already faces deficits of Black teachers and administrators (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Williams & Loeb, 2012). DuBois and Schanzenbach (2017) suggested the "presence of an overlooked and particularly troubling obstacle to boosting the number of black educators: racial discrimination and bias in school-district hiring practices" (para. 4). Tillman (2003) argued, "Despite a commitment to diversify, our fields remain predominantly White" (p. 1). Studies have shown that Black educators with abilities comparable to those of White educators have encountered barriers in job attainment (D'Amico, Pawlewicz, Earley, & McGeehan, 2017; Martinez, 2014; Walker, 2015). In some cases, unconscious bias and in-group favoritism in hiring practices have hindered job attainment (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Pearson, 2016; Fisher & Borgida, 2012; Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014).

The phenomenon of Black educators teaching Black students produces positive effects on students' academics and emotionality (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015). According to Sanchez, Thornton, and Usinger (2008), "For minority students, minority school leaders can provide strong role models significant to identity development and future aspirations" (p. 3). Further, minority leaders "practice a form of caring that empowers students to identify alternative ways to confront particular situations, rather than attempting to authoritatively control student behaviors" (Sanchez et al., 2008, p. 4). In an analysis of a Tennessee STAR Experiment, Dee (2005) studied class sizes to assess the significance of minority educators (Black and Hispanic) on the achievement of minority (Black and Hispanic) students. The Tennessee STAR Experiment was a longitudinal four-year study with treatment and control groups among the same cohort of students. Dee evaluated student-to-teacher achievement ratios from kindergarten through third grade and concluded that student academic achievement increased when randomly assigned to same-race teachers. Similarly, after

an evaluation of the Tennessee STAR Experiment, Gershenson, Hart, Hyman, Lindsay, and Papageorge (2018) concluded that same-race teacher and student partnerships had a prolonged positive impact. Gershenson et al. proposed that teaching hidden curricula (based on their own life experiences as Blacks) and culturally relevant pedagogy provided benefits to learning and academic achievement. In another study, Egalite, Kisida, and Winters (2014) found that students' math and reading achievement scores were significantly positively influenced when they were the same race/ethnicity of their teacher (p. 4). Hence, findings have supported the efforts to increase the number of Black educators in order to teach the growing Black student population.

The issue concerning the Black educator shortage has been well documented for decades; every state in the union has been addressing this deficit (ConnCAN, 2015; Ingersoll & May, 2011; NCES, 2016). The problem is significant in Connecticut—the State employs approximately 92% White educators and only 3.7 % Black educators (CTDOE, 2019). Other states with comparable statistics include Kentucky (EdTrust, 2019), Massachusetts (DESE, 2019), Oklahoma (Oklahoma Watch, 2015), and Iowa (Breux, 2018). In 2017, Connecticut's total population was 3,574,000; of that total, 77% were White, 15.4% were Hispanic, and 10.5% were Black (U.S. Census, 2017); thus, a greater number of White educators was expected. However, 46% of the student population comprised Black, Hispanic, and Asian students, and specifically, 13% were Black (CTDOE, 2017a). However, only 3.7% of educators were Black (CTDOE, 2017a). Thus, a great need exists for more Black educators to influence the success of Black students.

Blacks have been particularly disadvantaged in the United States. Efforts to remedy disparities through legislation are historic. For example, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was a historical event, an example of unethical leadership, and a contributor to the present-day

Black teacher shortage (A. Smith, 2016). *Brown v. Board of Education* was designed to implement equality for students; however, the implementation of the law did not do the same for Black educators (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Sanchez et al., 2008; Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004). Neither did the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Martinez, 2014). The Civil Rights Act was enacted to mitigate Jim Crow laws and address overt racial discrimination in the workforce (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Walker, 2015). In a 2019 survey, “roughly eight-in-ten blacks with at least some college experience (81%) [said] they’ve experienced racial discrimination, at least from time to time, including 17% who say this happens regularly” in various contexts, including from employers (Anderson, 2019, para. 1). Further, researchers have found no change on racial and ethnic hiring discrimination in the labor workforce in decades (Quilliam, Pager, Hexel, & Midtbeen, 2017). Bendick and Nunes (2012) suggested, “Despite considerable progress, a mix of covert and overt bias continues to pervade the American hiring system” (p. 239). Quilliam et al. (2017) documented racial discrimination in hiring practices between 1989 and 2015 in a meta-analysis of various field experiments in the overall labor force. Aside from a slight decrease in bias against Latinos, the researchers found no evidence of change in racial discrimination against Blacks. Thus, racial biases remain common in U.S. society even after legislation to transform inequitable practices.

Minority groups, including Blacks, have historically contended with significant barriers when seeking employment or promotions in other countries as well (Betancur & Herring, 2013; Dasguta, 2004; Walker, 2015). The experiences of Black educators encountering racism have been investigated on an international level (Bush & Moloji, 2008). Findings from a study in England illuminated biased practices in the UK education system, in which the majority in power were White (Bush & Moloji, 2008). Moreover, when Black educators were hired, they were



concentrated in inner London schools because of the minority student population and because of opinions regarding the capabilities of Blacks to lead schools with mostly White students (Bush & Moloji, 2008). Centralization and practice foster racial discrimination and further segregation; in fact, racial discrimination in hiring practices was most prevalent when the predominant group in power was White (Bush & Moloji, 2008). Proving discrimination did not occur should be the employer's burden, and training interviewers could provide objective selection of leaders (Bush & Moloji, 2008).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The State of Connecticut has implemented initiatives to increase the number of Black educators in public schools; however, these efforts have not been very successful. Many Black educators have difficulty finding employment in the public school system. For example, in the United States, Williams and Loeb (2012) found unconscious bias in hiring practices that adversely affected Black educators. Williams and Loeb stated,

School districts may influence the racial composition of principals through the attitudes and beliefs of individuals in charge of the hiring process. Hiring authorities may simply discriminate based on race. Such preferences are discriminatory because they are unrelated to the prospective principal's ability and productivity. Sometimes those responsible for principal selection may not have racial preferences for principal candidates, but make decisions based on the preferences of parents, students and/or teachers, who in turn discriminate by race even in the absence of productivity differences.

(p. 12)

Williams and Loeb's findings (2012) were consistent with findings of studies on the overall labor workforce (Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Quilliam et al., 2017). These studies addressed the

persistent inequitable hiring practices of Blacks occurring decades after the Civil Rights Act. In the State of Connecticut, between 2013 and 2017, 739 people of color were certified to teach but as of this writing were not employed in the education system (CTDOE, 2018, para. 2). To identify difficulties experienced by the certified educators of color and to learn more about the experiences of minority educators, including Blacks seeking employment, the CTDOE Talent Office (2018) developed and administered a survey (Appendix A). In addition, the Office provided those who had not attained employment with information about district job fairs.

Researchers for the Connecticut State Department of Education and the State Labor Department found that many minority educators were having difficulty finding employment as educators (Talent Office, 2018). In fact, the responses to the Talent Office's (2018) survey that inquired about perceived barriers to job attainment, many educators indicated that they had applied to various districts multiple times, and others had relocated to other states. Some survey-takers expressed exasperation in their survey answers and asked for assistance from the State (Talent Office, 2018). If the State's initiatives are to be successful, further study is warranted to investigate the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators who seek employment. That need was the impetus for this study. Documenting Black educators' perceptions of factors that influence their ability to attain employment in Connecticut school districts could help leaders evaluate the programs' efficacy.

Researchers have found that the shortage of Black educators has occurred partly because Black educators have sought other careers and partly because of their perceptions that educator salaries are inadequate (MTRR, 2012 Sanchez et al., 2008). "The limited numbers of minorities who make it to college are strongly recruited by other fields and corporations" (Sanchez et al.,

2008, p. 4). Torres et al. (2004) stated, “Minority students entering college are attracted to business, science, or math degrees that can lead to more lucrative jobs in the future” (p. 15).

Some qualitative and quantitative researchers have confirmed that the barriers Blacks experience during the hiring process affect their job attainment (Dovidio et al., 2016; A. Smith, 2016; Ursery, 2016). Obstacles in hiring practices in education include preconceptions by hiring committees about the abilities of Blacks (Berry, 2014; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Haynes, 2015). Additionally, Sanchez et al. (2008) stated, “A review of the current status of public education suggests that barriers common in the past decades are still present” (p. 4). Barriers include “conscious or unconscious resistance from the educational system” as well as negative stereotypes for those seeking leadership positions (Sanchez et al., 2008, p. 4).

In the past four to five years, new studies and discourse on this topic have started to emerge. However, the researcher identified a gap in the literature regarding actual stories from Black educators who have experienced barriers in the hiring process. This study was unique—most extant studies have not been based solely on personal accounts of Black educators seeking employment. For instance, Anderson (2019) used surveys and focused on college-educated Blacks rather than on noncollege-educated Blacks experiencing racial discrimination during the hiring process. Brown and Jackson (2013) studied the emergence of critical race theory and assessed how historical events affected racism in education. D’Amico et al. (2017) examined the racial composition of one public school district’s teacher labor market through teacher application data and subsequent hiring decisions. Knaus (2014) conducted a qualitative study consisting of semistructured interviews of participants. A. Smith (2016) conducted an integrative review and analysis of national data.

A few researchers have captured the sentiments and lived experiences of Black educators related to equitable hiring practices of educational institutions (Knaus, 2014; Ursery, 2016).

Barriers for Black educators, nationally and in Connecticut, appear to be multidimensional:

The data are clear: Even when African Americans pursue higher education, purchase a home, or secure a good job, they still lag behind their white counterparts in terms of wealth. Moreover, the disparities between white and black Americans can nearly always be traced back to policies that either implicitly or explicitly discriminate against black Americans. (Hanks, Solomon, & Weller, 2018, para. 8)

Additionally, pursuing higher education and a professional path has its drawbacks for Blacks:

“Blacks who have attended college are more likely than those who have not to say they have been met with suspicion or that someone has questioned their intelligence” (Anderson, 2019, p. 1). In fact, 81% of a sample of Blacks with at least some college experience said they faced discrimination or were treated unfairly because of their race (Anderson, 2019, p. 1).

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators regarding their efforts to seek employment in Connecticut since the passage of the 2012 and 2015 legislation. Connecticut has 170 school districts (municipalities); approximately 30 are considered urban (low-income, diverse), representing half the State’s population of students (Pascarella & Benigni, 2018). Connecticut has created an opportunity for Black educators by passing legislation to increase their presence in schools; the Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention (MTRR) Act and the Alliance Grant were intended to do just that (CTDOE, 2015). In addition, Connecticut’s Minority Teacher Recruitment Job Fairs, conducted annually, are purposeful attempts to recruit educators of color (Appendix B).

Most studies on Black educators have been concerned with the shortages among this group (ConnCAN, 2015; NCES, 2016) and not with studying their experiences with job attainment. Scant empirical research exists pertaining to specific barriers encountered by Black certified educators seeking employment in Connecticut. The basis of this study was formulated from a gap in the available research regarding the shortage of Black educators in Connecticut and nationally. This study enhances existing scholarship in Connecticut, and the findings may apply to other states as well. Based on participants' personal stories, this research's findings might indicate obstacles that Black educators have experienced when seeking employment. Results could influence hiring practices of human resource managers and policymakers in education.

### **Research Questions**

One overarching research question guided this study: "What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators seeking employment within the school systems in the State of Connecticut?" Two sub-questions guided data collection and elicited responses pertinent to this study:

1. What barriers do Black educators identify as they seek employment in Connecticut's school districts?
2. What opportunities do Black educators identify as they seek employment in Connecticut's school districts?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for the study was built on the tenets of critical race theory (CRT). As a framework, CRT has been used to scrutinize racial discrimination in the context of historical events, policies and laws, social sciences, and personal accounts of those who have

been marginalized (Brown, 2016; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Griffin & Tackie, 2016; Sleeter, 2012). In essence, the theory holds that people's mental models emerge from historical events associated with hierarchies embedded in U.S. society and that shape people's decision making. The theory originated from critical legal studies conducted after the Civil Rights Act (Warde, 2017). Researchers have used CRT to analyze racial inequities in educational research and practice by examining racism between dominant and marginalized communities (Warde, 2017). In addition, CRT has been used as a "comprehensive framework for applying research methods, developing study procedures, and for examining the resulting data" (Knaus, 2014, p. 421). The framework shows the Civil Rights Act did not do enough to curtail discrimination, which after the Act became covert and implicit (Martinez, 2014). As suggested in CRT, racial discrimination occurs in daily practices; therefore, an evaluation of social sciences, along with past events and personal accounts, should be included when assessing the existence of discrimination (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Walker, 2015). In this study, the theory was used as a lens to evaluate systemic unconscious bias and in-group favoritism in a structure in which one group had most of the power.

Researchers have used CRT methodology to explore historical events underlying the origins of bias practices against Black educators, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (Sanchez et al., 2008, p. 3). Some researchers have asserted this case was the beginning of the present-day shortage of Black educators (Torres et al., 2004; Walker, 2015). Paradoxically, Blacks continue to be marginalized in the education system even while states declare a serious shortage of this particular group (Anderson, 2018). "Critical race researchers acknowledge that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways, with their potential to oppress and marginalize coexisting with their potential to emancipate and empower" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26).

CRT supporters have asserted that the United States, because of its history, has a tradition of devaluing Blacks and their capabilities; therefore, this phenomenon is an element of the fabric of U.S. society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; A. Smith, 2016).

Racism remains an element of society and “racial inequality has remained the fabric of American imperialism” (Knaus, 2014, p. 421), albeit sometimes covertly. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 launched the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), intended to eliminate racism in the workplace (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017). Specifically, the Act stipulated that employment practices and policies in recruitment, hiring, assignment, and promotion that receive federal funding must be lawful (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017). Racism and discrimination have evolved into covert systemic practice after the Civil Rights Act (1964). In fact, CRT is a reaction to surreptitious biases that Blacks still encounter, even after the Civil Rights Act (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Sanchez et al., 2008).

Barriers in job attainment in the form of unconscious bias and in-group favoritism continue to permeate hiring practices that affect Blacks when they pursue employment nationwide, including in education (Dovidio et al., 2016; Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014; Quilliam et al., 2017). Fisher and Borgida (2012) stated, “Stereotypes about a racial out-group, whether explicit or implicit, can automatically affect impression formation, memory, and other processes that influence judgments of people” (p. 387). In this study, the researcher used the storytelling aspect of the CRT lens, based on the personal account principle (Givens, 2008), to collect Black educators’ perceptions, thus affording them a voice regarding the barriers they encountered during the hiring process, including implicit bias and in-group favoritism.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope**

Several limitations affected this study. First, the scope of the study was limited to participants from Connecticut; Black educators in other parts of the country may not have had similar experiences. Second, the study was limited to participants who were willing to relive and disclose their experiences.

For this study, the term *educator* was broadly defined to encompass teachers, administrators, and support staff to capture a broad scope of experiences of Black educators seeking employment in Connecticut's K-12 educational system. The researcher assumed that results from this study could foster awareness regarding the challenges and opportunities of minorities seeking employment as educators; leaders could leverage this awareness to inform the hiring process for other minorities at a national level. The findings could expose those doing the hiring in education at local, state, or federal levels to learning development opportunities and unconscious bias and thereby promote equitable practices.

At the time of this writing, the researcher was a Black educator in Connecticut who had experienced unconscious bias during the hiring process. Thus, the researcher's experience and epistemology were the impetus for an evaluation of practices that affect Blacks adversely. Curiosity about the perceptions of other Black educators regarding Connecticut's hiring practices led to this study. However, the researcher's personal bias entailed frequent examination and scrutiny during data collection and analysis to strive for impartiality in the process. For the sake of producing a valid, balanced, ethical study, the researcher sought to maintain objectivity throughout. In sum, the researcher's relationship with the central phenomenon of this study contributed to an investigation of "a richer understanding of the authentic positions and perspectives of others" (Shapiro & Gross, 2013, p. 45).



## **Rationale and Significance**

Researchers at the Connecticut State Department of Education found in a recent data inquiry that “739 educators of color, certified in CT in the past four years, were not employed in CT public schools” (Educator Data System, 2018, para. 2). In a study of Wisconsin Black principals and job attainment, Williams and Loeb (2012) found because of the attitudes and beliefs of hiring managers, unethical hiring practices influenced the racial composition of principals. Judgments on the abilities of minorities seeking employment in education are based on congruency of their lives with those in the hiring committee (A. Smith, 2016). Moreover, self-interest motivates hiring people of color when it advances White interest (Martinez, 2014). Because teachers in U.S. schools are mostly White, another consideration for placing minorities in leadership positions is the staff they will lead. White principals create pipelines for Whites to move upward and have an overall preference for White teachers regardless of their experience or expertise (Knaus, 2014). In essence, Knaus found race is interjected in hiring practices and job attainment.

## **Definitions of Terms**

**Alliance District.** Connecticut General Statute Section 10-262u “establishes a process for identifying Alliance Districts (33 lowest performing schools) and allocating increased Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding to support district strategies to dramatically increase student outcomes and close achievement gaps by pursuing bold and innovative reforms” (CTDOE, 2018, para. 1).

**ConnCAN.** Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now is “a nonprofit advocacy organization committed to a vision of a Connecticut in which every student has access to a high-quality education, regardless of their address” (ConnCAN, 2015).

**Connecticut General Assembly.** State legislature of the U.S. State of Connecticut (CGA).

**Ethical leadership.** Ethics of justice, critiques, care, and the profession form the theoretical framework intended to help educational leaders solve dilemmas (Shapiro & Gross, 2013).

**In-group favoritism.** This term refers to the tendency to respond more positively to people from one's in-groups than to people from one's out-groups (Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014).

**Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention (MTRR).** Legislation designed to boost the recruitment and retention of minorities (CTDOE, 2012).

**Senate Bill 1098 (SB1098).** "An act concerning teacher certification requirements for shortage areas, interstate agreements for teacher certification reciprocity, minority teacher recruitment and retention" (CGA, 2015).

**Unconscious bias.** Unconscious attitudes, reactions, stereotypes, and categories that affect behavior and understanding (Yale Center for Teaching and Learning, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

Events such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and perceptions of hierarchy embedded in U.S. society have inadvertently led to a Black educator shortage (Sanchez et al., 2008). Before the Civil Rights Act, almost all college-educated Blacks in the United States were educators (Sanchez et al., 2008). *Brown v. Board of Education* sought equality for children yet left many Black teachers and administrators demoted or without jobs because of preconceptions about their abilities (Sanchez et al., 2008). Because Whites are dominant in the Connecticut public school system, existing biases and in-group favoritism should be investigated as a possible cause of the

Black educator shortage; in fact, researchers have found no change in racial discrimination in the hiring process in decades (Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Quilliam et al., 2017).

As mentioned, the partnership between Black educator and Black student enhances and encourages positive productivity in academics and emotionality (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Gershenson et al., 2015). According to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CTDOE, 2019), 92% of teachers are White, 3% are Black, 3% are Hispanic, and some districts have no employees (teachers or administrators) who are Black. In contrast, 41% of Connecticut students are Black and Hispanic (CTDOE, 2019). Despite the MTRR and Alliance Grant interventions, researchers with the Connecticut Department of Education (CTDOE, 2018) reported that 739 minority educators certified within the last four years were not employed in the system (para. 2). Moreover, according to Connecticut Department of Labor (2012) 2012/2022 projections, 651 open positions become available for certified educators every year, a number that is increasing 12% annually.

Many researchers have detailed the prevalence of unconscious bias in hiring practices (Berry, 2014; D'Amico et al., 2017; Ursery, 2016). In a system in which most participants are White, further investigation was warranted to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of Black certified educators' hiring processes. This study encompassed Black educators who were employed, unemployed, employed in other fields, or retired. Findings from this study identified common factors experienced by participants and will inform needed changes to make the hiring process more equitable.

The path to job attainment for Black educators in Connecticut is challenging (Ursery, 2016). In a society challenged by racial discrimination, some of which permeates Western systems and policies, the assumption can be made that hiring practices are also affected by biases

(Sleeter, 2012). In this study, the tenets of critical race theory represented a wide lens to evaluate the central phenomenon of this study. Ethics of care and justice (Shapiro & Gross, 2013) were justifiably applied proactively to evaluate the present system. Speculation about inequitable hiring practices has increased (Anderson, 2018). In Chapter 2, the researcher explores the available research on this topic to create a comprehensive literature review comprising studies and historical events associated with barriers toward job attainment of Black educators.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers have found that minority educators in a classroom of minority students can positively influence students' academic, social, and emotional success (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Gershenson et al., 2015). Because of this impact, as the diverse student population increases, so should the number of diverse educators. "There is a particular social and emotional benefit to minority children, and especially minority children from high-poverty neighborhoods, from knowing and being known and recognized by people who look like themselves who are successful and in positions of authority" (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015, p. 6). The U.S. Department of Education (2016) reported some states in the union have sought to increase their minority educator staff, believing this approach serves the minority student population best. "The elementary and secondary educator workforce is overwhelmingly homogenous (82 percent white in public schools)" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 3). Teachers of color are positive role models for all students in breaking down negative stereotypes and preparing students to live and work in a multiracial society (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 1). In addition, teachers of color are more likely to (a) have higher expectations of students of color; (b) confront issues of racism; (c) serve as advocates and cultural brokers; and (d) develop more trusting relationships with students, particularly those with whom they share a cultural background (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 2).

Similar to Connecticut, some states have initiated programs to increase the Black educator population. New York, Massachusetts, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Arkansas, Illinois, and Colorado have employed various methods to attain more Black educators. Some of the initiatives in these states have produced some success. In New York, the percentage of Black

students in public schools in 2015–2016 was 27%, and Black educators comprised 18% of the educator workforce, a gap of 9% (Disare, 2018). However, the Latino gap was 26% in New York: The Latino student population was 41% in 2015–2016, but Latino educators comprised 15% of the total workforce (Disare, 2018). According to the Massachusetts Department of Education (2018), from 2014 to 2017, Black educators showed a slight increase, from 3.2% to 4.0%. Arkansas showed a slight increase in Black educators, from 12.7% in 2016 to 13.3% in 2019–2020 (Arkansas Department of Education Data Center, 2019).

Researchers have conducted qualitative and quantitative studies in Connecticut. For example, Ursery (2016) confirmed the barriers affecting Black educators' job attainment and promotion. According to some studies, these barriers have been directly associated with unconscious bias of hiring committees (D'Amico et al., 2017; Dovidio et al., 2016; Ursery, 2016). Hiring committees might choose not to hire Blacks because of committee members' own mental models, some of which underpin the belief that Blacks are less likely to possess desired skills (Berry, 2014; Martinez, 2014; Walker, 2015). This belief stems from the way Blacks look, speak, dress, and demonstrate other soft skills (Berry, 2014, p. 5). Similarly, to receive promotions in independent school headship positions, minority respondents had to possess greater education levels, experience, and social networks than did their White counterparts (Brown, 2016).

Racial discrimination has evolved from its overt origin. During the Jim Crow era, racial inequality and segregation were enforced through explicit means, for example, by signs in business windows saying "No Niggers, Spics, or dogs" (Martinez, 2014, p. 16). The law and policies on racial discrimination have not addressed problems caused by unconscious bias (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 14); therefore, in this study, the researcher gathered Black

educators' perceptions and lived experiences to explore the elements of racism and discover opportunities in racism's contribution to systematic approaches in hiring practices.

Even though State-sponsored interventions are in place, between 2013 and 2017, 739 qualified Black educators had not attained positions in Connecticut's education system (CT Educator System, 2018, para. 2). In order to discern the obstacles faced by the 739 certified educators of color, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CTDOE, 2018) administered a survey in May 2018 to gain an understanding of their experiences as they sought employment. The survey was composed of multiple-choice, yes–no, and short-answer questions and was made accessible to participants electronically, either by text or email (CTDOE, 2018). The survey incorporated a series of 12 questions designed to elicit explanations for Black educators' exclusion from the State's education system (CTDOE, 2018). Further, the survey authors offered assistance for those who were not employed in education and reiterated the State's commitment to increasing the number of minority teachers statewide (CTDOE, 2018).

The survey data accrued from the responses of the educators of color were taken at face value by this researcher—however, the data did not originate for the sake of the study but were collected by the State Department of Education and Department of Labor (CTDOE, 2018; CTDOL, 2018). The educators of color were certified between a four-year period, from 2013 to 2017 (CTDOE, 2018). The Connecticut State Department of Education was the only agency with identifying information on these individuals (CTDOE, 2019). The State sent the survey to 717 educators; the variance in numbers from 739 to 717 stemmed from the fact that the State “couldn't match the educator in the database to a current certification” (G. Weiner, personal communication, July 2, 2019). Of the 717 certified educators, nine provided no racial data; therefore, a base sample of 708 was used. In terms of the racial/ethnic demographics of the

original 739 educators, 304 were Hispanic, 276 were Black, 124 were Asian, and four were Native American (CTDOE, 2018). The State received survey responses from 250. The State received no race/ethnicity data for the 250 respondents because they were not tracked by a demographic identifier (CTDOE, 2018).

Participants in the Connecticut State Department of Education survey did not answer every question. Of the 250 participants, 53 had moved to another state for various reasons; seven moved for personal reasons, 14 could not find a teaching position in Connecticut, and 21 specified “other” as a reason (CTDOE, 2018). Of the 53 who moved out of Connecticut, 40 were interested in returning to the State to teach (CTDOE, 2018). When asked if they were still interested in teaching in Connecticut, 168 of 250 answered “yes,” 13 answered “no,” and 69 did not answer the question (CTDOE, 2018). Of the 197 who resided in Connecticut, 119 had applied for but not secured a teaching position, 25 had not applied for any position, many did not answer the question, and six had left the education field (CTDOE, 2018). Most participants did not answer the question, “How many teaching positions have you applied for in Connecticut?” However, 33 answered “5 or more,” which was the highest possible among the options, and 14 of the 33 who had applied had been granted interviews (CTDOE, 2018).

On June 26, 2018, the Connecticut State of Education’s Talent Office held a networking event that included school districts. The 250 certified educators who responded to the survey were invited, and 52 attended. However, the State did not track the race/ethnicity of those who attended (G. Weiner, personal communication, July 2, 2019). The purpose of the event was to provide prospective teachers the chance for on-site interviews and overall assistance in securing employment. By January 1, 2019, 33 attendees of the networking event had secured teaching positions, and by June 25, 2019, 111 of the initial 717, or 15%, of the educators were employed.



However, no further tracking of race/ethnicity was recorded; therefore, it was not clear who successfully secured teaching positions.

Most scholarly studies on minority educators have involved assessing their shortage in education (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Sanchez et al., 2008; Torres et al., 2004). A query conducted for this study showed scant empirical research on the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators regarding hiring practices in Connecticut and nationally.

The literature review contains five sections. First, the researcher explores significant events in history associated with racial discrimination in the education system. Next is a review of researchers who have affirmed the shortage of Black educators and described their contributions in teaching, interacting with, and leading Black students. Third, the researcher examines the laws and policies designed to assist Black educators, followed by a review of research on the impact of unconscious bias and in-group favoritism in hiring practices against Blacks. Fifth, the researcher discusses evidence of barriers in hiring practices of Black educators. Finally, the literature review closes with a review of critical race theory (CRT) that serves as the theoretical framework for this study.

### **Historical Events**

As a backdrop to possible inequitable hiring practices against Blacks, the researcher explores significant events in history associated with racial discrimination in education. Previous researchers have identified *Brown v. Board of Education* as a source of biases toward Black educators—in fact, the case set the precedent for present-day hiring practices (Haynes, 2015; A. Smith, 2016). The final decision in this case left many Black educators without employment (Sanchez et al., 2008; Torres et al., 2004). In *Brown v. Board of Education*, legislators sought to desegregate schools that were predominantly Black or White (Sanchez et al., 2008); however, the

decision to integrate Black students to White schools did not include moving Black teachers and administrators—in fact, most were demoted or fired (Sanchez et al., 2004, p. 2). Researchers have suggested that this practice led to the present shortage of Black teachers and administrators as well as current discriminatory hiring practices (Torres et al., 2004; Williams & Loeb, 2012).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a historical event mentioned in many studies for its attempt to achieve equality and prohibit employment discrimination according to race, color, national origin, sex, and religion (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017, para. 1). The Act stipulated, “Employment practices and policies in recruitment, hiring, assignment, and promotion that receive federal funding must be lawful” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017, para. 5). The Act proposed an end to inequitable practices; however, racial discrimination has persisted “despite significant gains through the Civil Rights movement, Blacks continue to be denied equitable access to senior school administrative positions (A. Smith, 2016, para. 1). In fact, before the Civil Rights Act, most college-educated Blacks were educators (Torres et al., 2004). The Act was successful in curbing overt racial discrimination in the workplace, but the movement of Blacks into education slowed (Sanchez et al., 2008; A. Smith, 2016; Quilliam et al., 2017).

The Civil Rights Act served an ethics of justice in the Jim Crow era; however, the law did nothing for covert discrimination (Shapiro & Gross, 2013). In organizations, covert racial discrimination has persisted in the form of unconscious bias, in-group favoritism, implicit organizational bias, and other barriers that block Black educators, identified as intellectually incapable, from receiving the same opportunities and options as do Whites (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Bush & Moloji, 2008; Dasgupta, 2004; Dovidio et al., 2016; Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014; Ursery, 2016). The Civil Rights Act was enacted to mitigate overt racial discrimination, including in the workforce; however, biases against Blacks and minorities have remained

prevalent (Betancur & Herring, 2013, p. 1), with no noticeable change in the hiring of minorities in the labor workforce in decades (Quilliam et al., 2017).

### **Present-Day Teacher/Administrator Shortage**

The need for minority teachers and educators has been well documented. Leaders at most educational institutions have sought to increase the number of minority educators, including institutional leaders in Connecticut (Educators for Excellence, 2018; Ursery, 2016). The positive impacts of Black teachers educating Black students have been researched using quantitative and qualitative approaches; researchers have found this student–teacher partnership facilitates academic success (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015; Griffin & Tackie, 2016). In addition, Black teachers serve as role models sensitive to the cultural needs of Black students (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). Dee (2005) conducted a quantitative examination of the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 survey (NELS:88) by “evaluating whether assignment to a demographically similar teacher influences the teacher's subjective evaluations of student behavior and performance” (p. 158). Dee included data on Black and Hispanic children and concluded that the student–teacher interactions had positive effects on student academics. Dee noted “passive” teacher effects, including the teachers’ race and ethnicity, as a source of positive impact. Similarly, the “role model” effects in which teachers and students are demographically similar served to increase student academic motivation (Dee, 2005, p. 159).

In another quantitative study of the NELS:88 survey, Gershenson et al. (2015) assessed the impact of teacher and student demographics but concentrated on demographic differences in the student–teacher relationship. Gershenson et al. found that in a mismatch of demographics (White teacher/Black student), “on average, teachers have systematically biased beliefs about student potential” (para. 3), especially for Black low-income students.

In fact, minority students perceive minority teachers more positively compared to their perceptions of White teachers (Cherng & Halpin, 2016, p. 407). Students have reported that Latino and Black teachers are “clearer” (Cherng & Halpin, 2016, p. 411). Additionally, minority teachers can translate their experiences to form rapport with students from other races. Cherng and Halpin examined quantitative data collected in the 2009–2010 school year; the samples consisted of 50,000 students in grades 6 through 9 and 1,680 teachers in urban schools. The purpose of Cherng and Halpin’s study was to ascertain students’ perceptions of their teachers’ instructional practices. Black students perceived Black teachers (more than White teachers) to hold them to high academic standards, to support their efforts, to help them organize content, and to explain ideas clearly and provide feedback (Cherng & Halpin, 2016).

Some researchers have suggested that the shortage of Black educators has not occurred just because they are choosing not to pursue the career; those with the appropriate credentials face obstacles and barriers such as unconscious bias and in-group favoritism (Berry, 2014; Bush & Moloi, 2008; D’Amico et al., 2017; A. Smith, 2016; Ursery, 2016). In contrast, Ingersoll and May (2011) suggested that many factors have contributed to the shortage of Black teachers, such as, Blacks seeking other careers, their graduation rates, and the lack of motivation to pursue post-secondary education.

### **Unconscious Bias and In-group Favoritism**

Unconscious bias is generated by “automatic responses that are shaped by our lived experiences and the broader social contexts in which we live and work, a pervasive byproduct of reflexive decision-making” (Gershenson & Dee, 2017, para. 1). Policies and laws have been enacted to subjugate overt discrimination but have failed to mitigate covert discrimination (Brown & Jackson, 2013). The United States has a long history of racial bias. In-group

favoritism refers to people's preference to associate with those like themselves, leading to a form of unconscious bias (Greenwald, & Pettigrew, 2014). "When people strongly identify with their in-group and when their self-esteem is linked to the perceived worthiness of their in-group, they will tend to favor their in-group and sometimes derogate other out-groups" (Dasgupta, 2004, p. 146).

The mental models of the mostly White hiring committees in education are in play when committees make judgments on the capabilities of Blacks (A. Smith, 2016, para. 8). Those in interview panels are part of a larger society in which unconscious bias, in-group favoritism, and overall racial discrimination are prominent (Knaus, 2014, pp. 439–440). Unconscious bias against out-groups (those unlike self) has been detailed in many studies (Brown, 2016; Bush & Moloji, 2008; Dovidio et al., 2016).

Similar to initiatives in public education, a push for leaders of color has appeared in independent schools as well. However, Brown (2016) noted, "Although there is a push for a greater representation of people of color in this position, in order for people of color to be considered, it seems that they are held to a higher standard than their white counterparts" (p. 606). Brown found barriers for people of color applying to headship positions included their lack of alumnus status from independent schools. Those of color considered for positions were alumni of selective graduate schools or held terminal degrees. However, "heads of color reported that they found it important, yet difficult, to develop relationships with the educational search firms who often serve as the gatekeepers to these highly coveted positions" (Brown, 2016, p. 606).

Similarly, on an international level, Bush and Moloji (2008) studied the education system in England using quantitative and qualitative methods, specifically regarding leadership

preparation and roles. They acknowledged the urgency of improving school leadership diversity, finding that in some cases, minorities with stronger academic credentials were not given the opportunity to lead schools. Dovidio et al. (2016) conducted extensive research on the topic of unconscious bias, both quantitative and qualitative. Dovidio et al. stated, “Blatant expressions of bias continue to have a significant negative impact on the well-being of Black Americans, but overt prejudice has substantially declined in the United States [; however,] race still matters in the United States” (p. 2). Dovidio et al. found that the behaviors and feelings of well-intentioned Whites contributed to the unfair racial disparities in the United States. “Whereas overt expressions of prejudice declined over a 10-year period, the pattern of subtle discrimination in selection decisions remained essentially unchanged” (Dovidio et al., 2016, p. 9). More important, Dovidio et al. proposed methods for addressing the biases within well-intentioned Whites. One such method was termed *individual-level interventions*, in which people receive the opportunity to identify what they would do and assess their personal standards regarding what they should do in cases of racial bias (Dovidio et al., 2016). This form of self-regulation could “produce sustained changes in even automatic negative responses” (Dovidio et al., 2016, p. 26).

The history between Blacks and Whites has been a foundation for decisions and hierarchical beliefs in the two groups; categorizing by race is automatic because of past historical events in the United States (Martinez, 2014, pp. 13–14). According to the Albert Shanker Institute (2015), implicit bias in hiring practices seems to be automatic and hard to correct because it is outside conscious control and influenced by societal stereotypes (p. 8). Additionally, judgments on the abilities of Blacks seeking employment can be based on mental models and commonalities among those on hiring committees (Berry, 2014; Griffin & Tackie, 2016). Hiring committee members’ preconceptions hinder Black educators seeking jobs; committee members

may choose not to hire Blacks because of mental models that Blacks are less likely to possess desired skills (Berry, 2014). Committee members may reach this conclusion based on the way Black job candidates look, speak, dress, and demonstrate other soft skills (Berry, 2014). For example, in a mixed-methods study of Black principals, Williams and Loeb (2012) found that the job attainment process included obstacles of unconscious bias in hiring practices. School districts influenced the racial composition of principals because of the attitudes and beliefs of those involved in the hiring process (Williams & Loeb, 2012). Williams and Loeb used survey data from Wisconsin as well as data from NCES to investigate the “underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities in school leadership positions relative to student populations” (p. 2).

Most states require leaders to have been teachers at some point in their careers. Williams and Loeb acknowledged the need for more minority teachers, consistent with other researchers; however, they focused on the need for minorities to feed into school leadership. Williams and Loeb noted the importance of race in school leadership and identified pathways toward these roles, along with factors influencing the racial composition of the principal workforce. Possible factors in job attainment included number of positions available, candidate qualifications, and preferences of hiring authorities for certain candidate characteristics. Although administrator certification doubled between 2002 and 2007, data did not show that minorities moved into leadership positions. Williams and Loeb recognized that a factor of this phenomenon was that “hiring authorities may simply discriminate based on race” (p. 12). Further, “sometimes those responsible for principal selection may not have racial preferences for principal candidates, but make decisions based on the preferences of parents, students and/or teachers, who in turn discriminate by race even in the absence of productivity differences” (Williams & Loeb, 2012, p. 12). In addition to improving student outcomes, mentoring, being role models, and providing

cultural familiarity, minority principals were more likely to encourage minority teachers to pursue administrator positions; thus, their presence in leadership could serve as informal recruiting of minorities into the district (Williams & Loeb, 2012).

### **Opposing Beliefs to Unconscious Bias Exist**

Even though opposing beliefs on the existence of unconscious bias have not emerged in research, Bartlett (2017) argued against the link between unconscious bias and biased behavior. Similarly, Forscher et al. (2017) found little evidence that implicit or unconscious bias caused biased behavior. Forscher et al. conducted a meta-analysis of 484 studies by researchers who sought to identify the effectiveness of various procedures designed to alter implicit bias. Forscher et al. concluded that explicit and implicit bias could be minimally influenced, and neither could be linked to biased behavior.

Several researchers have studied unconscious bias. Dovidio et al. (2016) have conducted many studies on the prevalence of unconscious bias in hiring minorities. In addition, A. Smith (2016) has researched hiring and promotion of K-12 administrators using CRT as a framework and found evidence of unconscious bias. Similarly, in a quantitative study of a large Virginia district, D'Amico et al. (2017) identified barriers for minorities in job attainment, including minorities who possessed greater prowess and credentials than did their White counterparts yet were not given positions. Griffin and Tackie (2016) discussed Black educators' perceptions on various obstacles encountered in the system. Cherng and Halpin (2016) collected student sentiments on teacher competence. Previous researchers have demonstrated the impact of this phenomenon when committee members hire those different from themselves (Brown, 2016; Dovidio et al., 2016; Herring, 2013).



In addition to the need to adopt policy to alter existing practices is a need for deeper thought about promoting equality (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015). Although some researchers have found no link between unconscious bias and biased behavior, in this study, the researcher used existing studies on unconscious bias and in-group favoritism to justify the need for further study of the barriers and obstacles faced by Black educators in the hiring process. One common element in some of the studies used to formulate the methods of this one was the use of the CRT framework (Knaus, 2014; A. Smith, 2016; Ursery, 2016; Walker, 2015; Wolfe, 2010). Other factors that informed this study included (a) historical events in the United States (Martinez, 2014); (b) the many mentions of *Brown v. Board of Education* as a catalyst for the present-day shortage of Black educators and racial discrimination in education (Sanchez et al., 2008; Tillman, 2003; Torres et al., 2004); and (c) the assumption that the Civil Rights Act would curtail racial discrimination but did not (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

### **Barriers in Hiring Practices**

Minorities have had to contend with significant barriers when seeking employment or promotion (Herring, 2013). In a mixed-methods meta-analysis of field experiments, Quilliam et al. (2017) documented racial discrimination in hiring practices in the U.S. labor force occurring between 1989 and 2015. Aside from a slight decrease of hiring discrimination against Latinos, Quilliam et al. found no statistical evidence of any change in hiring discrimination against Blacks.

Several researchers have affirmed the existence of barriers in hiring practices of Blacks in education (D'Amico et al., 2017; Griffin & Tackie, 2016; Haynes, 2015; A. Smith, 2016; Ursery, 2016). For example, using an integrative review frame, A. Smith (2016) synthesized previous relevant literature and empirical studies and found a gap in the literature regarding inequitable

hiring practices of minorities in education. Although policies have been enacted to subjugate discrimination, those who do the hiring are part of the larger society in which racism is prominent (A. Smith, 2016, p. 16). A. Smith's finding aligns with the framework of CRT. Further, Ursery (2016) used CRT as a framework for a mixed-methods study specific to Connecticut's Black educators. The qualitative data represented educators' perceptions of obstacles they faced as minorities in education (Ursery, 2016). Ursery affirmed that hiring practices were a barrier to job attainment.

D'Amico et al. (2017) examined the hiring process of an affluent district in Virginia and found discriminatory practices against Black teachers. In a quantitative study, D'Amico et al. initially focused on the minority educator shortage. The researchers found that in one district in Fairfax, Virginia, racial discrimination occurred during the hiring process (p. 26). D'Amico et al. found that qualified Black applicants who applied for teaching positions were less likely than were their White counterparts to receive job offers. Further, in all scenarios, White teachers were hired even if Black teachers had stronger accomplishments or higher skill levels (D'Amico et al., 2017, p. 40). Districts have policies in place to recruit and retain minority teachers; however, leaders should question the policies' effectiveness if principals or hiring committees fail to adhere to them (D'Amico et al., 2017, p. 31).

### **Theoretical Framework**

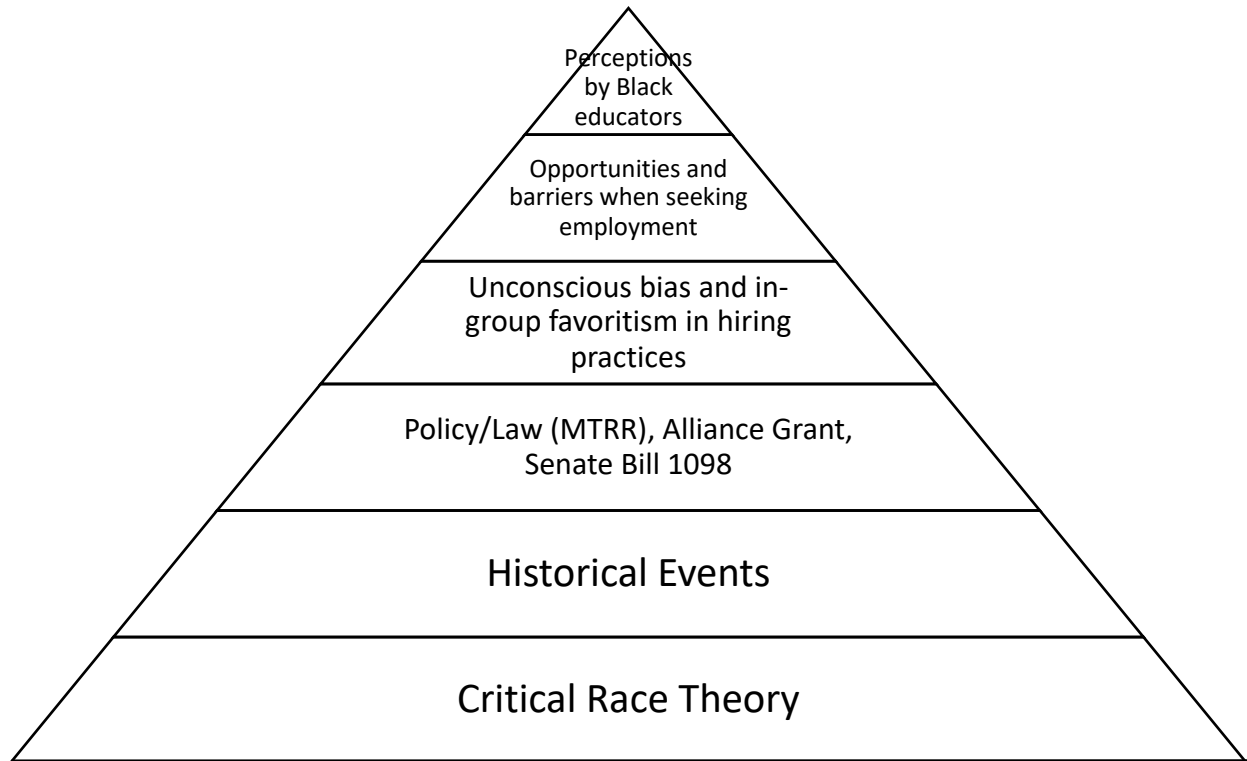
The themes found through the literature review required a framework encompassing a wide lens to evaluate historical events, policies and laws, social sciences, and personal accounts significant to this study. The tenets of critical race theory (CRT) provided such a lens. A significant element of this study involved the voices of Black educators. One of the tenets of CRT includes personal accounts and storytelling (Warde, 2017). The choice of this theoretical

framework was justifiable in terms of the literature review themes and the use of qualitative methods; further, the CRT framework uses race as the central point of analysis (Warde, 2017).

Researchers have used CRT to assess if race and racism contribute to the deficit of Black teachers (Knaus, 2014; A. Smith, 2016; Wolfe, 2010). Proponents of CRT hold that race and racism are defining characteristics of America (A. Smith, 2016). CRT theorists use statistics, personal accounts (storytelling), and social sciences to expose systemic and customary biases and examine laws and policies that keep a majority in power (Brown, 2016; Bush & Moloji, 2008; Griffin & Tackie, 2016). Ursery (2016) illustrated the CRT framework in a mixed-methods study specific to Connecticut's Black educators; however, Ursery's study was specific to becoming and remaining a teacher. In contrast, this study focused on Black educators' perceptions and lived experiences regarding education hiring practices in Connecticut.

### **Origins of Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) originated from critical legal studies that "challenged the neutrality and objectivity of the law" (Walker, 2015, p. 136). Bell, Crenshaw, and Freeman developed the framework in the 1970s in response to perceived shortfalls of the Civil Rights Act (Given, 2008, pp. 163-164). The Act did not stop racial discrimination; instead, discrimination became covert and systemic among organizational practices (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 14). According to Lisa M. Given (2008), Bell, Crenshaw, and Freeman believed that evaluating racism and its effects should encompass a wide lens, including U.S. history, laws, politics, and society as a whole, asserting that none of those elements can be scrutinized in isolation (Warde, 2017). Figure 1 summarizes the topics that comprise CRT.



*Figure 1.* Depiction of critical race theory as the foundation for the study and its alignment to research questions guiding it. *Note.* Adapted from “Inequality in U.S. social policy: An historical analysis” by B. Warde, 2017. “Critical race theory: An introduction” by R. Delgado, & J. Stefancic, 2001.

Five major tenets form the basis of CRT and provide boundaries for the framework:

1. the embedded and persistent nature of racism;
2. a critique of liberalism, notions of color-blindness, meritocracy, neutrality, and objectivity;
3. the value of the experiential knowledge of people of color;
4. interest convergence, or the belief that the needs of the minority group are only accommodated when their interests intersect with those of the majority group; and
5. the breakdown of systemic racism (Walker, 2015, p. 137).

## **Inequities in Educational Research and Practice**

Researchers have used CRT to analyze racial inequities in educational research and practice by examining racism between dominant and marginalized communities (Brown, 2016; Griffin & Tackie, 2016; Sleeter, 2012). The CRT lens provides a mechanism to scrutinize power structures and explore historical events such as dismissals and demotions underpinning Black educator shortages. CRT theorists have claimed the United States has a tradition of devaluing Blacks and their capabilities (Herring, 2013; Martinez, 2014; Walker, 2015); in essence, devaluing Blacks has become part of the fabric of U.S. society (A. Smith, 2016, p. 16). Toppo & Nichols, (2017) suggest that, decades after the civil rights, black teachers are rare in public schools. Moreover, throughout U.S. history, racism has been evident in blatant acts of discrimination, name-calling, and overt acts against Blacks; however, present-day racism is covert (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Herring, 2013).

## **Analysis of Policies and Laws**

Researchers have applied a tenet of CRT to analyze policies and laws designed to encourage equitable practices, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which can be perceived by employers and employees as beneficial (EEOC, 2019). In Connecticut, these policies and laws are present in State statutes such as the Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention Bill (MTRR, 2012), and the Alliance Grant (Alliance District, 2015). However, policies and laws alone have not changed the racial ideology and practices inherent in U.S. culture and institutions; the perseverance and prevalence of racial inequities continues (D'Amico et al., 2017; Dasgupta, 2004; Dovidio et al., 2016). Further, many forms of discrimination remain—for example, institutional, cultural, and unconscious—that have not been addressed in

antidiscrimination laws (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Therefore, to date, these laws have not adequately addressed the present-day challenges of Black educators seeking education jobs.

### **Personal Account Principle**

Blacks pursuing employment in the U.S. labor force face barriers in the form of unconscious bias and in-group favoritism in hiring practices (Dovidio et al., 2016; Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014; Quilliam et al., 2017). Using the personal account principle of the CRT lens could provide a method to collect the perceptions of Black educators regarding the barriers and opportunities they encounter during the hiring process, including implicit bias. Sleeter (2012) stated, “The people who understand racism best are not its perpetrators, but rather those who are routinely victimized by it” (p. 2). Thus, the individuals who have first-hand knowledge of racism should be afforded an opportunity to share their lived experiences (Warde, 2017). In this study, their voices could serve as a counter-story to existing ideology.

### **Arguments Against Critical Race Theory**

Some have argued against CRT. Bennett (2012) claimed the tenets of CRT are based on anti-White resentment and suggested CRT theorists have used the theory to condemn those who do not accept its viewpoint. Mocombe (2017) argued against CRT and its defining intersection of race, law, and power, claiming the theory was a means to subordinate those who were not White (p. 83). Mocombe proposed that CRT does not affect Western beliefs or offer an alternative discourse to beliefs embedded in Western society (p. 83). Another weakness of CRT is that it has not always been taken seriously (Subotnik, 1998). In fact, when people of color interject race into conversation or practices, they are often characterized as racially biased (p. 682).

Many studies on race, education, or inequitable hiring practices have used CRT as a framework (Knaus, 2014; A. Smith, 2016; Ursery, 2016; Walker, 2015; Wolfe, 2010). CRT

affords a wide lens of analysis inclusive of history, policy, White dominance in education, and society as a whole (Brown, 2016; Griffin & Tackie, 2016; Martinez, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

College-educated professionals often deny the possibility of unconscious bias, race discrimination, and inequitable hiring practices in Western systems and policies (Dovidio et al., 2016). Quilliam et al. (2017) found racial discrimination in hiring processes has not lessened in decades. *Brown v. Board of Education* was designed to address racial discrimination in education for children yet left many Black teachers and administrators demoted or fired (Sanchez et al., 2008, p. 3). The decrease of Black teachers has continued through decades. Before the Civil Rights Act, almost all college-educated Blacks in the United States were educators (Torres, et al., 2004). The history of events pertaining to education has inadvertently contributed to the present-day teacher shortage.

In the State of Connecticut, in 2019, 91% of teachers were White even though the student population was approximately half Black and Hispanic. As of this writing, some districts have no employees (teachers or administrators) of color. Interventions have been implemented to increase the number of minority educators. In Connecticut, interventions have included the Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention (MTRR, 2012), Senate Bill 1098 (2015), and the Alliance Grant program that assists low-income districts with funding (Alliance Districts, 2015). However, the interventions have not been successful or if the State has implemented a monitoring system to ensure hiring committees follow nondiscriminatory policies toward Black educators at the local level.

The extant literature supported the need for this study. Many researchers have detailed the prevalence of unconscious bias and other obstacles faced by Black educators seeking

employment (Berry, 2014; D'Amico et al., 2017; A. Smith, 2016; Ursery, 2016). In a system in which most decision makers are White, further investigation was warranted to explore Black educators' perceptions of discrimination during the hiring process. Using the CRT framework and employing qualitative data analysis, the researcher evaluated historical events, policies and laws, unconscious bias and in-group favoritism, and barriers and opportunities that may have contributed to participants' experiences with hiring practices in Connecticut's education system. This study addressed a gap in the literature. Results could enhance existing studies. Further, this study brings to light obstacles and opportunities encountered by Black educators at the state and local levels. Awareness of these elements could positively influence hiring practices of human resources and policymakers. Chapter 3 will detail the methodology employed to conduct this study.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Black certified educators have faced challenges and barriers in hiring and promotion, contributing to shortages of Black teachers (Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Brown & Jackson, 2013; D'Amico et al., 2017; Martinez, 2014; Walker, 2015; Ursery, 2016). The State of Connecticut has responded to the need with initiatives to increase the number of minority educators in schools (MTRR, 2012); however, by the State's own admission, 739 people of color were certified between 2013 and 2017 but were not yet employed in the education system (CTDOE, 2018, para. 2).

Most studies on Black educators have centered on their shortage and the efforts to increase their presence in the education system (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Knaus, 2014; Ursery, 2016; Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Williams & Loeb, 2012). This study enhances present scholarship by featuring storytelling by Black educators. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of Black certified educators who sought employment in Connecticut. "The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76).

This study employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach; that is, the focus was on the researcher's interpretation of participants' descriptions of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This approach afforded the researcher a fresh perspective of the phenomenon under examination; hiring practices in Connecticut's education system.

IPA is a useful methodology to examine complex topics or situations that are emotionally laden and difficult to define (J. Smith, 2004). J. Smith (2004) introduced the IPA approach in 1996 as an alternative to grounded theory, conversation analysis, and narrative psychology. IPA

originated from qualitative approach of evaluating topics within the field of psychology (J. Smith, 2004). IPA has been further developed (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Additionally, IPA is oriented in hermeneutics, the study of experience; in phenomenology, researchers interpret the texts of participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 79). For this study, the researcher applied a double hermeneutic approach: “The participant is trying to make sense of their personal and social world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world” (J. Smith, 2004, p. 40).

This chapter provides descriptions of the setting, the participants, the protections of participants’ rights, the types of data collection used to address the research questions, the methods of data analysis, and the potential limitations of the methodology.

### **Research Questions**

One overarching research question guided this study: “What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators seeking employment within the school systems in the State of Connecticut?” Two sub-questions guided data collection and elicited responses pertinent to this study:

1. What barriers do Black educators identify as they seek employment in Connecticut’s school districts?
2. What opportunities do Black educators identify as they seek employment in Connecticut’s school districts?

### **Setting**

The setting of this study was limited to the State of Connecticut. After years of State interventions to increase the Black educator population, many Blacks currently remain without positions, and others are having difficulty attaining jobs (Ursery, 2016). The State has

continually employed approximately 91% White teachers but only 3% Black (ConnCAN, 2015). Therefore, the history of the State's hiring practices sets the background for this study and may illuminate reasons for the lack of Black educators in the system. According to the Connecticut State Department of Education, approximately 739 certified educators of color certified between 2013 and 2017 were not employed in the education system as of 2018 (CTDOE, 2018, para. 2). Data projections have indicated 2,604 new positions opening in a four-year period (CTDOL, 2012). As of this writing, the State Department of Education and Connecticut Department of Labor are investigating whether these educators pursued other fields, teach now in private schools, or experience obstacles to employment (CTDOE, 2018). Gaining access to these potential participants required the researcher to contact some of the 739 certified educators not in the State education system, necessitating outreach to education organizations and personal acquaintances.

### **Participants**

Purposeful sampling facilitated the collection of information-rich sentiments from participants. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). The 15 participants of this study were credentialed and highly qualified K-12 public school Black certified educators. In the State of Connecticut, *highly qualified* refers to educators who hold full state certifications, bachelor's degrees, and demonstrated competency in the areas in which they teach, as evidenced by success in Praxis II.

This study was based on a constructivist position regarding how "complexities of the social and cultural world are experienced, interpreted, and understood" by the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 41). Participants chosen for the study had experienced the hiring

process in the past seven years, since the implementation of State initiatives to increase the number of Black educators. To qualify, they needed to be employed in the field, be employed in other fields, or be unemployed. Their certifications could be in any area of education and at any level, such as administrator or support staff, and participants could be any age and gender. Participants were asked to provide personal accounts regarding their lived experiences of the education system's hiring process and to indicate whether their experiences included promotion, first-time hire, or lateral movement. Individuals were screened and selected based on their answers to survey questions and their willingness to participate in semistructured interviews. The researcher reviewed each survey to ensure a diverse pool of participants. An evaluation of experiences using a qualifying survey and semistructured interviews helped the researcher identify the common perceptions of several Black educators based on their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013).

The initial invitation for participation (Appendix C) was transmitted by electronic mail; a link to the survey was included in the initial invitation. The survey questions were designed to collect pertinent demographic questions (Appendix D) regarding certifications, employment status in education or some other field, and applications for employment in education. Participants reported if they had not applied for a position in education and why. In addition, they reported the number of years they had worked in the education system, the level at which they had worked (e.g., administrator, superintendent, department head, or teacher), and their districts of employment. Participants were asked for their certification areas in the initial survey.

At the end of survey, participants were asked if they would agree to an hour-long interview. The researcher chose participants for the semistructured interview from those who agreed to be interviewed after evaluating answers from the survey. For instance, Survey

Question 7 was used to determine participants' most recent experiences with the hiring process. An affirmative answer meant that the hiring experience occurred after the implementation of initiatives to increase minority educators, thus qualifying participants for interviews.

### **Types of Data**

The data that best answer research questions derive from purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2015, p. 205). Two data sources generated data for this study: surveys and interviews. The survey was used to qualify participants for the semistructured interviews. Black educators' views and perceptions were sought regarding their experiences with the central phenomenon (seeking employment in the Connecticut education system). The interview data helped the researcher develop "a composite description of the essence of the experience for all individuals" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76), thus guiding data collection and analysis. Data collection from the interviews was an iterative process—that is, the researcher collected and analyzed data simultaneously, cross-referencing data to engage in continuous meaning making. Revisiting data as questions emerged afforded a deep understanding of the material and ensured accuracy and validity of the findings. In addition, upon completion of the interviews, participants were asked to elaborate on their answers, clarify responses, and add any additional information that may have come to mind after reviewing their interview transcripts.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Survey**

A web-based survey instrument designed with the REDCap (Vanderbilt University, 2004) application was used to collect qualitative and qualifying participant data for this study. The REDCap application provided the researcher with survey-building tools and existing formats from a shared library. In the developmental stage, the design of the survey was created using the

REDCap Online Designer; this stage included designing data collection instruments during which modifications to fields could be made before publication. The researcher enlisted colleagues to review the survey questions to ensure they were clear, unambiguous, and understandable.

Thirty-three attendees of a workshop sponsored by the Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention Office voluntarily provided their email addresses to the researcher. Potential participants received an emailed electronic link to a survey containing 12 questions. The REDCap application managed participants by designating a number for each and created reports by gathering survey data derived from questions.

### **Semistructured Interviews**

In addition to survey data, data were collected from semistructured interviews. A script and eight questions appear in Appendix E. Of the 33 possible participants, 15 qualified for interviews based on a screening protocol. Participants were selected based on their qualifications and interest in being interviewed. Specifically, the interview recruitment process was as follows:

1. The researcher sent emails to a population of 33 Black educators based on their qualifications to participate. If no response was received, the researcher sent a follow-up email one week later. If no response appeared at the end of two weeks, the researcher assumed the individual was not interested in participating.
2. For those who responded to the survey, responses were sorted into those who consented to be interviewed and those who did not consent.
3. Of the individuals agreeing to be interviewed, the primary screening question was whether the individual had sought employment during the last seven years. Those who had not were excluded from the study.

4. Of those who remained, participant selection occurred in a manner that generated a varied pool based on employment district, age, credentials, number of years in the education system, and experiences with barriers and opportunities.
5. The maximum size of the desired sample for the study was 15. “It is typical in qualitative research to study a few individuals or a few cases” (Creswell, 2015, p. 208). If the sorting process had yielded more than 15 participants, the number would have been reduced by random selection of participants from each of the largest categories in order to produce a final sample of 15.
6. The final sample was defined after the closure of the two-week survey and interview invitation period.

Fifteen participants proceeded to the interview process and shared their lived experiences of seeking employment in Connecticut’s education system. After the selection process was completed, an email was sent to the 15 potential participants with an invitation to participate. If after receiving the invitation, a participant decided not to participate, a random selection would be made from a pool of names from the same category; names were kept in a secured lock box. However, this did not occur during the invitation process. If an interview participant did not respond to the invitation after two emailed requests, the researcher assumed he or she no longer wanted to participate in the interviews. A random selection was then made from the pool of names in the same category. When the 15 interview participants had returned their consent forms, a time for interviews was finalized by email or phone, whichever was preferred by participants (Appendix F). The researcher conducted interviews on a one-to-one basis with participants for one hour, either face-to-face or on the phone for those who were geographically

dispersed. In both scenarios, with participants' approval, the interviews were recorded and transcribed by Rev Voice to capture comments and reflections to open-ended questions.

The interview questions were developed to facilitate participants' honest sentiments regarding their experiences with seeking employment. Interviews did not restrict the views of participants; instead, the researcher asked only open-ended questions to give participants the opportunity to voice their own experiences in unconstrained detail. In addition, transcription involved capturing in vivo coding of the actual words of participants to avoid making assumptions. Using participants' direct quotes helps researchers create frameworks for the data and avoid researcher bias (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, "Particularly in qualitative research when interviews are often the primary method of data collection, perceptual information is the most critical of the kinds of information needed" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 150). Thus, the best method of gathering perceptual information derives from interviews—they "uncover participants' descriptions of their experiences" and provide the opportunity for follow-up questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 150).

The researcher sought to gather data consisting of a "textual and structural description" of Black educators' experiences (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). Some interview questions in the study were designed to elicit the opportunities and barriers common among participants. For example, participants were asked, "What have you experienced in terms of opportunities during the hiring process in the State of Connecticut? What have you experienced in terms of barriers during the hiring process in the State of Connecticut? What situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences while seeking employment?" Thus, the two research subquestions focused the data collection on common experiences of the participants.



A phenomenological analysis approach can incorporate bracketing the researcher's personal experiences with the central phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). A defining feature of interpretive phenomenology research design is that the researcher "brackets himself or herself out of the study by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 78). In other words, the researcher sets aside preconceived ideas in a journal. Bracketing was important: The researcher is Black, is an educator, and has experienced discrimination when seeking employment in Connecticut's school districts. For this study, the central phenomenon was the educational hiring process in Connecticut. A full description of the researcher's personal experiences was collected through journaling and then set aside so the focus could remain on the participants in the study (Creswell, 2013, p. 193).

### **Data Analysis**

Data gathered through the surveys were not analyzed; however, the responses provided insight into the sample characteristics. The primary data source for this study was the semistructured interview. REDCap assisted the researcher to identify qualified participants from the survey data. The semistructured interview transcripts were analyzed manually to generate data, and the results were entered in a password-protected computer. All interview participants received their interview transcriptions and the opportunity to verify, correct, and clarify the information, according to member checking guidelines (Creswell, 2015, p. 259).

Next, the researcher analyzed the data by "reducing the information attained by participants to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). To facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon of the study, Saldaña's (2013) coding process was used, consisting of four steps: coding, sorting, synthesizing, and theorizing. Before coding began, the researcher bracketed researcher influence, interactions

with participants, and wrote personal reflections (Saldaña, 2013). Throughout this process, the researcher used journaling and memo writing to reflect on the procedure as it occurred. Finally, using data from the transcribed interviews, the researcher determined codes, categories, themes, and theories (Saldaña, 2013).

### **Survey**

The researcher identified possible candidates for interviews by screening participants' survey answers. Selections for the interviews were based on agreement to participate, range of credentials, age, district, number of interviews, and the barriers and opportunities participants reported experiencing. Using the REDCap application ensured trends in the survey data were clustered into themes, producing descriptive profiles of responses. This process helped inform the interview questions and ensured that the questions elicited responses that would produce information to answer the research questions.

### **Semistructured Interviews**

The researcher selected the interview sample by examining the survey responses to ensure diversity in age, district of employment, years in education, area of certification, most recent experience with the hiring process, and perceptions of the hiring process. Of the 21 educators who replied, seven used the online REDCap survey. Of those seven respondents, three included a phone number. The remaining 12 participants called the researcher by phone—the researcher's personal phone number and email were included in the qualifying survey. These 12 participants expressed interest in the study; therefore, the protocol was modified for their inclusion. They were not comfortable with putting their phone numbers on the survey. The researcher conducted the qualifying survey by phone, and individual records were kept for each participant. After the phone surveys were conducted, the researcher examined each for the

criteria required for inclusion into the study, similar to the method used by REDCap.

Subsequently, the researcher placed a phone call to each participant and scheduled interviews with each one.

After the 15 interviews were completed, audio files were uploaded to the Rev Voice professional transcriber tool (2010). Reviewing the transcripts involved listening to the recordings while reading the transcriptions and proofreading. After reviewing the transcripts, the researcher emailed the transcriptions to participants for member checking. Participants had a week to review and respond with any changes. Next, the researcher manually coded data from the interviews (Saldaña, 2013). Data analysis during the coding process indicated the “sources of information that support the categories” in the study (Creswell, 2015, p. 429). The significant statements were developed into meaning clusters, themes, and textural descriptions (Creswell, 2013). Analyzing and synthesizing data from the interviews enabled coding of themes and categories (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Finally, the researcher wrote a “structural description” depicting the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 82).

Data analysis followed Saldaña’s (2013) framework. In the first cycle, the researcher sought words and phrases that reflected the participants’ realities and could be associated with the phenomenon. In the first cycle, coding was a descriptive in vivo process that captured action and emotion (Saldaña, 2013). Next, the researcher sorted the descriptions by categorizing codes to create a systematic arrangement, thereby generating themes based on frequencies and relationships among codes (Saldaña, 2013). The second cycle of coding consisted of rereading the transcripts, editing, rewording, and regrouping for focused coding and synthesizing (Saldaña, 2013). Patterns were reviewed for similarities, frequencies, differences, sequencing, and

causation (Saldaña, 2013). After coding and categorizing the data, the researcher identified emergent themes. Iteratively examining and cross-referencing between first- and second-cycle data sets ensured validity. After the textural and structural descriptions were formulated, a descriptive composite of the essence of the phenomenon was developed, focused on the common experiences and themes found in the participants' sentiments. The process began with broad categories and narrowed to specific themes. This narrowing process was achieved by analyzing the data multiple times as needed to identify specificity (Saldaña, 2013).

### **Participants' Rights**

All survey participants were given an opportunity to volunteer for the study and interview. All potential participants received details of the study, including information regarding risks and benefits. The link in the invitation survey included the purpose of the study, the goals of the researcher, and the study's significance in the field. The potential participant pool was limited to 33 individuals who were contacted by email; those who responded were screened. Participants for the study were Black certified educators who were contacted, consented to be interviewed, and met screening criteria for diversity and eligibility (seeking employment in the last seven years). Participants signed informed consent forms (Appendix G) indicating their willingness to participate (Merriam, 2009, p. 162), and received information about the study title, the principal investigator, the study procedures, and any risks and benefits. Contact information for the researcher, the researcher's advisors, and the Director of Research Integrity was provided.

Participants received assurances that identifiable information would not be divulged. They were advised on the length of the interviews and asked if they chose to participate in the process. An opportunity to debrief at the end of the interview process with the researcher was

offered for participants who wished to comment or ask questions (Merriam, 2009, p. 162). The researcher prepared statements of encouragement and recognition for debriefing focused on positive accomplishments, such as attainment of academic degrees and serving as role models to the Black community (Appendix H). Participants were informed of the security measures the researcher employed to safeguard their personal identifiers. All identifiers were removed from data collection and analysis, and unique numbers were used as pseudonyms. Throughout the process of their involvement in this research, participants could choose to end their participation. Participants were informed their information would remain confidential except to the researcher, and their names would be secured in a safe, password-protected lockbox for a year, then shredded.

### **Potential Limitations**

Several limitations affected this study. First, the researcher is a Black educator in Connecticut who has had multiple experiences seeking employment. This personal experience implies researcher bias could exist in relation to the topic of study (Shapiro & Gross, 2013); however, all efforts were made to remain objective and to conduct a reliable and valid study. Objectivity and cross-analysis of data by the researcher helped ensure an impartial product that projects true events, as shared by participants.

A further possible limitation of this study was participants' accuracy and honesty regarding involvement with the central phenomenon. Their recollection of experiences could have been skewed or distorted. In addition, the experiences of participants may not have represented the experiences of the entire Black educator population in Connecticut. A final potential limitation was the sample size of 15 Black educators.

## Conclusion

Leaders in the State of Connecticut have sought a more diverse population of educators for the rapidly growing diverse student population. Researchers have demonstrated the positive impact of Black educators on Black students, both academically and emotionally (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Dee, 2005; Gershenson et al., 2015). Other researchers have attributed the shortage of Black educators to personal needs, desire for other careers, high school student graduation rates, and the lack of pursuit of post-secondary education (Ingersol & May, 2011; Sanchez et al., 2008). The State of Connecticut has initiated interventions to increase the number of Black certified educators in schools; however, many remain unemployed as educators (CTDOE, 2018, para. 2).

The extant research conducted before implementing this study illuminated CRT as a framework and highlighted the importance of personal reflection by Blacks. Therefore, the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators seeking employment in Connecticut's education system was the focus of this qualitative study. Purposeful sampling, the qualifying survey, and semistructured interviews provided data and insight into the lived experiences of Black educators seeking employment. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS and FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators seeking employment in Connecticut since the passage of State statute 10-155l (Minority Teacher Recruitment, 2012), which was designed to encourage minority (defined as non-White) teacher and administrator recruitment. In 2015, Senate Bill 1098 was signed into law, representing “an act concerning teacher certification requirements for shortage areas, interstate agreements for teacher certification reciprocity, minority teacher recruitment and retention and cultural competency instruction” (Substitute for Raised S.B. No. 1098, 2015, Subtitle section). Exploring Black educators’ experiences and perceptions associated with barriers and opportunities encountered when seeking employment in Connecticut’s public education system could provide a deeper understanding of this group for those involved in the hiring process.

The researcher analyzed data collected through semistructured interviews on the experiences and sentiments of Black certified educators. The participants were chosen for the interviews based on answers to a qualifying survey. All participants were Black, spanned a broad age range, and had sought employment in Connecticut within the past seven years (since implementation of Connecticut’s initiatives to increase minority educators). The critical race theory (CRT) framework was used because of its broad lens applicable for examining historical events, policies and laws, social sciences, and personal stories to identify sentiments and experiences of minorities. As in this study, CRT scholarship seeks to understand and challenge systemic racism. Understanding systemic racism is accepting and acknowledging the unique points of references of individuals. It is recognizing that the framework that is used in decision-

making by individuals within an organization are not in isolation, but on the rudiments of societal beliefs and experiences of those within, subsequently, all connected. Even in quantum physics, it is observed that nothing is in isolation but composed and connected of various elements (Wheatley, 2006). In human beings, the source of one belief is all beliefs within them (Thich Nhat Hahn, 1991).

Based on findings of this study, the use of the CRT framework was justifiable; its guidance served to evaluate the history of White dominance and its impact on Blacks as it still thrives in Connecticut's Education System. The path for educators is the same for all races/ethnicities; however, in an inequitable system, one race is favored and the other continues to be marginalized. White dominance is maintained. CRT framework challenges the elements that permeate systemic racism; however, their existence must be acknowledged first.

One overarching research question guided this study: "What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators seeking employment within the school systems in the State of Connecticut?" Two sub-questions guided data collection and elicited responses pertinent to this study:

1. What barriers do Black educators identify as they seek employment in Connecticut's school districts?
2. What opportunities do Black educators identify as they seek employment in Connecticut's school districts?

To address the research questions, interview transcripts were analyzed, coded, and categorized, resulting in emergent themes. In Chapter 4, the researcher describes the methods used to analyze the data collected from 15 participants. The researcher discusses the data



analysis and presents the findings. Additionally, the researcher includes quotes extracted from interview transcripts. The chapter closes with a summary of the findings.

### **Qualifying Survey**

The qualifying survey consisting of 12 questions (Appendix B) was created and emailed to 33 Black educators through the web-based REDCap application with an invitation to participate in this study. REDCap is a secure web-based application for building and managing online surveys and databases (Vanderbilt University, 2004). The REDCap application collected demographic information and organized the answers to the survey, including gathering consent for future interviews. All participants signed consent forms before taking the qualifying survey. Of the 33 educators surveyed, 21 replied, and 15 met the criteria to be interviewed. The criteria for the interviews included participants' perceptions of the hiring process, notably whether they had encountered barriers or opportunities. In addition, participants reported if their most recent experience with the hiring process had occurred within the past seven years. Finally, they were asked about their willingness to be interviewed.

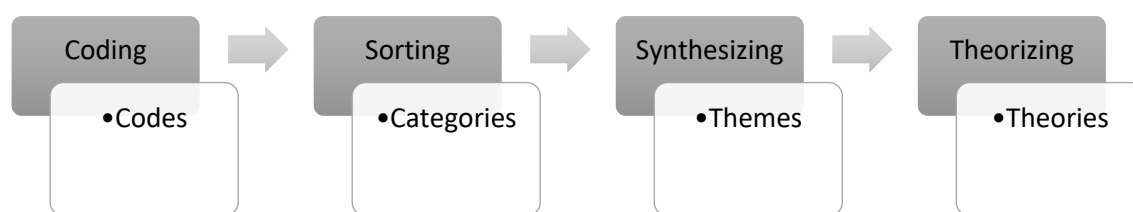
### **Interview Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis was used to examine the interview transcripts. Even though the interviews were allotted 60 minutes, most of the interviews were approximately 45 minutes long due to participants' time constraints. Eleven interviews occurred by telephone, and four were held face-to-face. The researcher read the informed consent form (Appendix G) to participants who chose phone interviews, and they agreed to proceed; this consent appears in the transcripts. Phone and face-to-face participants were provided with hard copies of the consent form.

The interviews were all recorded using Rev Voice, sent to the same company for transcriptions, and emailed back to the researcher. There was no identifiable participant

information noted when recordings were uploaded to Rev Voice. Participants were known only by a designated number (Participant 1, 2, etc.). Once transcripts were returned to the researcher, transcripts were read while listening to the audio recording. This process afforded the researcher an opportunity to “take time to become thoroughly familiar with the data; to make sense of what people said and to integrate what different respondents said”, and errors corrected (Roberts, 2010, p. 172).

As a form of member checking, participants were emailed a copy of their transcripts to make changes and correct inaccuracies; however, no participant responded to the follow-up with feedback. After member checking was completed, the process of coding began according to Saldaña’s (2013) framework for qualitative analysis (coding, sorting, synthesizing, and theorizing), leading to the creation of various codes, categories, themes, and theories (Figure 2). Memoing or documentation of impressions and reflections observed by the researcher of the participants of the study occurred in the pre-coding stage. The researcher manually coded the data and sorted the raw data to generate meaningful categories. The resulting categories were further synthesized to generate themes.



*Figure 2.* Coding process.

*Note.* Adapted from *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*, by J. Saldaña, 2013. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., p. 58.

In accordance with Saldaña’s (2013) first cycle, the coding process of the interview transcripts began with the researcher reviewing transcripts for single words or phrases associated

with the phenomenon. The data collected were descriptive in vivo process-oriented coding that captured action and emotions. After the first cycle, the researcher sorted, categorized, and synthesized codes based on frequency (often or seldom) and noted underlying meanings across codes. In the second cycle, the researcher reread the coded transcripts and decoded text, regrouped words and phrases, and recognized patterns based on similarities, differences, and sequencing until themes representing a meaningful insight of the phenomenon of this study emerged.

Phenomenological reduction consists of analyzing data to distill significant participant information into statements and quotes, which are used to develop themes (Moustakas, 1994). Quotes relevant to participants' experiences with seeking employment were noted. Certain delimited horizons or meanings of the commonalities of the experiences of all participants became evident. Individual textural and structural descriptions were produced verbatim from the transcripts of participants' experiences. Subsequently, reflective interpretative analysis by the researcher produced a composite of the lived experiences of the sample of 15 Black certified educators who sought employment in Connecticut, including their experiences and perceptions regarding racism, challenges, and opportunities, all commonalities of participants' experiences.

## **Survey Results**

### **Participant Demographics**

All participants submitted copies of credentials before their interviews to ensure their certification in education. The sample size consisted of 15 Black certified educators; their demographics appear in Table 1.

Table 1

*Qualifying Survey Demographic Data*

Demographic Characteristic	Number
Age range (years)	
21 to 30	3
31 to 40	4
41 to 50	7
51 or over	2
Employed	
Yes	12
No	3
Years in education	
1 to 5	3
6 to 15	4
16 and over	5
Certification	
Teaching	10
Teaching and administration	5
District of employed	
Urban	10
Suburban/affluent	2
Last experience with hiring process (years)	
0 to 1	5
1 to 3	8
4 to 7	2
Times interviewed before hire	
2 to 4	0
5 to 8	3
9 or more	12
Perception of barriers	
Yes	14
No	1
Perception of opportunities	
Yes	4
No	11
Knowledge of State's initiatives	
Yes	14
No	0
Some	1

Five participants were certified in mathematics, four in English Language Arts, four in science, one in business, and one in technology education. For the interview sample, the researcher sought diversity in both employment and district type; however, only two of the participants were from suburban/affluent districts; the others were employed in urban districts.

Participant 4, Participant 10, and Participant 15 were women certified within the past two years who had not found permanent employment in education. Participant 4 was certified in mathematics and working in another field; Participant 10 and Participant 15 were certified in English Language Arts, worked as substitutes, and had one child each; all were paying for student loans and stated they were barely making ends meet. The three participants were between the ages of 21 and 30.

Participant 2, Participant 5, Participant 7, Participant 9, and Participant 11 taught mathematics, science, and business. All were seeking administrator positions. Aside from Participant 7, all were women, three were single parents, and one was married; all had worked in education for over six years. Further, in total, they had applied for administration positions about 240 times; suggesting that pursuing a leadership role is challenging for Black candidates. They must be perceived as capable, intelligent, and in all scenarios will lead mostly Whites. Some of these participants are frustrated because they are still paying for student loans. Their ages ranged between 41 and 50 years. Participant 1, Participant 3, Participant 6, Participant 8, Participant 12, and Participant 14 had experienced the hiring process within the past seven years. When seeking lateral positions to other districts, each interviewed over nine times before being hired. In total, these six participants had applied approximately 71 times until hired.

## Interview Results

### Emergent Themes

Three themes emerged regarding barriers and opportunities associated with Black certified educators who sought employment in Connecticut's education system. Themes were uncovered using Saldaña (2013) framework for qualitative studies and further informed by applying Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological model. During the coding process and iterations of data, themes emerged. After 60 pages of transcriptions were analyzed, data were extracted based on words and repeated statements and sentiments. Categories emerged; the researcher synthesized the categories to form themes regarding racism, challenges, and opportunities, shown in Table 2.

**Racism was a common element of the employment process.** All participants perceived racism in some form while seeking employment in Connecticut's education system. They all reported that racism created barriers to job attainment. Fourteen participants said unconscious bias was a factor in hiring committees' decision making concerning Black applicants. While they sought employment, participants encountered interviewers whom they believed practiced racism. Most participants described job interviews with racial implications; for instance, Participant 7 perceived the hiring of two White candidates over him for assistant principal positions in a school with mostly Black and Hispanic students was racist.

Five participants (2, 5, 7, 9, and 11) were teaching at the time of this study; however, they were certified in administration and seeking administration positions. They had been educators for six, eight, and over 16 years; all had applied many times but had not yet found positions. Four were women. One was a man. All wanted to progress in the field of education. Some believed they had a strong understanding of Black students' intellectual capabilities.

Table 2

*Code Mapping: Perceptions and Lived Experiences*

Themes (3)	Categories (2)	Evidence from Data Repeated Phrases (1)
Racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All participants believe that they encountered some form of racism when seeking employment.</li> <li>• Some participants are not surprised by the racism they have encountered; it's expected.</li> <li>• Some participants believe that districts interview Blacks to demonstrate to the State that they're trying, but don't really hire Blacks.</li> <li>• Some participants believe that no change has occurred when it comes to racism.</li> <li>• Most participants believe that there is a great deal of inequity in education; not just about students.</li> <li>• Most participants believe that there is unconscious bias.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prejudice</li> <li>• Racial discrimination</li> <li>• Bias</li> <li>• In-group favoritism</li> <li>• Bigots</li> <li>• Inequity</li> <li>• Injustice</li> <li>• No change in society</li> <li>• Race always a factor</li> <li>• Only Whites hired</li> <li>• Blacks are not capable</li> <li>• Blacks are not intelligent enough</li> <li>• Blacks will not mix well with mostly White staff</li> </ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most participants explained that the process of applying and interviewing is painful as most of the time it is not successful.</li> <li>• Some participants felt uncomfortable in interviews as all panelist were White.</li> <li>• Most participants perceive unfair practices by districts and an unwillingness to change practices.</li> <li>• Some participants believe they have been passed-over even when their skills are greater.</li> <li>• Some participants have felt invisible in interviews; no eye contact with panelist.</li> <li>• Most participants mentioned how challenging it is to constantly apply and not hear anything back.</li> <li>• Some mentioned that panels do not believe in the intelligence and capabilities of Blacks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hurtful/painful</li> <li>• Unfair</li> <li>• Uncomfortable</li> <li>• Don't want us</li> <li>• Difficult process</li> <li>• Invisible</li> <li>• No call back</li> <li>• No opportunity</li> <li>• Passed-over; I have greater education and skills</li> <li>• Many applications; no interviews</li> <li>• Interviews but no hires</li> <li>• No Blacks in interview panels</li> </ul>
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most participants were disappointed in the lack of support by the State Department of Education.</li> <li>• Most participants believe that the State should monitor Black hiring.</li> <li>• Some participants believe the State is trying to assist Black educators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State is trying to help us</li> <li>• Initiatives give us a chance; opportunity</li> <li>• Having the initiatives is good</li> <li>• I feel protected</li> <li>• After many applications I can get the position</li> <li>• Initiatives should be monitored</li> <li>• State should do more</li> <li>• State should check on districts</li> <li>• State doesn't care</li> </ul>

Some participants stated that White teachers and administrators do not provide rigorous instruction and are thus widening the achievement gap. These participants had sought positions in administration for the past five years, as a group submitting 240 applications and participating in 39 interview processes; to date, none had been hired as an administrator. When these five participants were asked how they chose districts to which to apply, most stated they believed urban districts were more receptive to Black educators.

All participants were asked about their experiences with the hiring and interviewing process. The sentiments and perceptions of their experiences showed commonalities. Participant 13 was hired in an affluent district five years ago; however, sees many Black educators not hired and believes her district practices are racist. When asked about their experiences with the hiring and interview process, including whether race played a role in both, most exhibited anger:

I have worked so hard to get my admin cert and now can't find a job. We've been told there is a shortage of minority teachers and administrators, so why can't I find a job? I have student loans to pay. I've been applying for V.P. jobs for years to mostly urban districts and a couple affluent districts and still nothing. I'm getting tired of this. (Participant 2)

These people are racist, they just don't hire us. They think we're not capable or intelligent enough to help lead a school. (Participant 9)

I got an interview in a mostly Black and Hispanic district. There were two Assistant Principal positions available. So at the end of the interviewing process, there were three of us, two White guys and me for two positions. I didn't get the job, they did. That's unfair, it made me angry; it hurts and was very disappointing. (Participant 7)

There are obstacles and barriers when we try move up to administrators and I know it has to do with unconscious bias and racism. (Participant 5)

Most participants had had over nine interviews before being hired. They noted unconscious bias and racial discrimination in the hiring process; most believed that this was an element of U.S. society based on the nation's history and beliefs about hierarchy.

In 2014, I put in applications; I wasn't receiving any phone calls from anyone. So I started sending out emails to principals. So I figured, I'll just work in XXX. So I started



sending out emails to different principals in XXX and, by talking to the principals, they were telling me the principals had the autonomy of the school and they played a real big role in the hiring practices. And the principals were telling me, “Well we find it strange that you’re certified in science and science is a high-need area. We need science teachers, but when we contact human resources they tell me that they don’t have any candidates.” Then I’m like, “Really? Because my application has been in for a couple months now and I haven’t heard anything. So the principal at XXX High, the nursing academy, he ended up contacting human resources like, “Hey, I have this candidate. She told me that she applied and she hadn’t heard anything.” And they said they couldn’t find my application. I had contacted them various times and they had it, told me there was nothing available. There is so much unconscious bias and racism and no one does anything about it. Eventually, I found a position in another district, after about six interviews. (Participant 3)

You know, we never get the call, it’s terrible. It’s hard to get hired. There’s a lot of discrimination and bigots out there. Most interview panels are White; I’m not saying all White people are racist but sometimes they don’t think of us as intelligent. (Participant 4)

I had an alarming experience at an interview once. After the interview, the Principal pulled me to the side and she brought me in her office. It was just me and her. She pulled me from the hiring committee because they had a parent and somebody from central office and there were all these people in the room and she pulled me in the back and was like, “It’s going to be hard here.” She said, “Our kids, they never ... some of them don’t have African American neighbors. They’re not accustomed to having African American teachers. And then you’re teaching a complex subject where they’re going to question, “Does she really know?” (Participant 1)

[He/she said,] “I’m not going to lie to you, you’re going to have some challenges here at DEF High School.” And I said, “Well why?” And she was like, “Because if I was to hire you, and I want to hire you and I’ll support you.” She was like, “But if I hire you, you will be the first Black teacher in XXX’s history.” (Participant 14)

Unfortunately, Blacks are not always connected with people in high places to help us navigate through the system. Since, we are not usually in hiring committees or making hiring decisions, we’re not chosen ... people kind of look out for their people. (Participant 15)

They are not always hiring effective educators but hire those that are like them...it’s favoritism ...they don’t provide us with the same options as they do Whites ... nothing has changed. (Participant 10)

I work in an affluent district, but they do not hire many Blacks. In fact, I have recommended former classmates with excellent records, but they haven’t been called for an interview yet. I really feel bad and a bit guilty that I was hired. I hope that change can happen for us because this is sad. I have friends that I graduated with that have had multiple interviews before getting hired and a couple that are still looking for positions. It is so unfortunate that bigotry is everywhere. (Participant 13)

Of course, race plays a role in interviewing and getting a job offer; they will all deny it. (Participant 1)

Participants were asked to describe their experiences with job fairs and experiences interacting with attending districts and to report whether the job fairs had led to job attainment.

Most indicated they did not get hired from job fairs:

The district representatives are very nice and informative; they had good conversations with me; however, it has never led to a position. (Participant 4)

I attend every single minority recruitment fair, but I have never had a job offer. (Participant 5)

**Challenges occurred throughout the process of seeking employment.** Most participants encountered challenges that affected their paths toward job attainment. When asked to describe their experiences with the hiring and interviewing process and to share how they felt during interviews, most indicated they had had many experiences with the application process; however, hiring and interviews had been challenging. Some participants described their interviews positively, believing they had answered questions appropriately and would get a job offer. When asked if the interview questions were ones they had expected, all participants agreed the questions had been expected.

I've applied for about two years and have not found a position yet. I am presently working in another field while I continue to interview. Yes, I've had about 10 interviews. (Participant 4)

I have applied many times, but it is difficult to get to the hiring process. (Participant 10)

Sometimes, it is very uncomfortable when I get an interview because the panels are all White. (Participant 7)

I just don't understand why the process is so difficult for us. I have friends who are having the same difficulty that I am. This is one reason why not many of us are choosing careers as educators. I wonder if it was always like this because I had one Black teacher throughout school and know that many of my friends had none. If the process continues to be so difficult, there are going to be less of a presence in schools and Black children will not perceive education as a career option. (Participant 6)

There have been a few times that I interviewed and felt invisible in front of the panel. I went to an interview and the entire time the principal did not look at me, in fact, he did not ask any questions, only the other panel members did. I don't think it mattered what I said in that interview, he was not interested. It was really hurtful. (Participant 12)

I was passed over for a position last year and it hurts. When there is a problem with a Black student, they call me. I am very educated and gone beyond the education of many in my building; I've been asked to take leadership roles from time-to-time. I've gotten passed over twice now. (Participant 2)

I think we have to keep applying a lot; I mean, inundate them with applications until we get an interview. That's what I do. (Participant 15)

You know what I felt during my interview? I felt like they didn't want me there; like they weren't really listening to me. I can't believe that I'm going through this, it pisses me off. (Participant 11)

I was told by the interview panel that I'd done a great job. I truly expected a job offer but did not get one. (Participant 2)

I'm not saying I'm perfect; however, my interviews have gone very well. I prepare a great deal before an interview I research all the data available on the district and particular school that I'm applying to. I tell them how I can be an asset in particular areas and always expect a job offer and [I'm] shocked when I don't get one. (Participant 9)

Sometimes, I feel invisible during interviews. (Participant 14)

Our greatest challenge is the perception that Whites have about the capabilities and intelligence of Blacks. Based on the history in the United States, I'm not sure that can ever change. (Participant 3)

Yes, I thought the questions were ones that I would expect in an educational environment. (Participant 15)

**Opportunities were perceived to be minimal.** Some participants associated opportunities for Black certified educators with State initiatives designed to increase minorities in education. Some were thankful to have the support of the State. The sentiment of some was that although the initiatives are a positive move, more efforts should be made by the State to oversee their implementation in districts. The sole creation of the programs is not enough; the State should monitor the execution by assessing how many Blacks are interviewed and how many are hired to assess the programs' success effectively. Participants asserted that the

initiatives are opportunities for Black educators but stressed that the State should do more to monitor their implementation at the district level.

Listen, I know that they are not working as they should, but at least the State has our backs. (Participant 8)

I'm thankful that they are helping us; they should know there is a problem. (Participant 1)

### **Summary of Findings**

Fifteen Black certified Connecticut educators participated in this interpretative phenomenological analysis study. The participants included Black educators presently employed and not employed, as well as participants of various ages, certifications, and years in education. All participants had experienced the hiring process within the past seven years, since the implementation of Connecticut State Department of Education initiatives to increase the number of minority educators in the public school system.

Phenomenological reduction was applied to synthesize categories from participant statements and quotes into themes (Moustakas, 1994). Quotes relevant to participants' experiences were noted. Individual textural and structural descriptions from the transcripts of participants' experiences seeking employment were produced verbatim. Subsequently, reflective interpretative analysis by the researcher produced a composite of lived experiences of Black certified educators seeking employment in Connecticut. Racism and other challenges appeared to be commonalities of the participants' experiences.

In Chapter 5, the researcher discusses the study's findings and their correlation to the research questions. The chapter provides an interpretation of the findings, the implications, and recommendations emerging from the findings, including recommendations for further studies to enhance the one presented here.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This study's findings could enhance extant research regarding the lived experiences and perceptions of Black certified educators seeking employment in Connecticut. The findings could foster awareness of the challenges and opportunities Black educators face with job attainment. The sentiments of the Black educators who participated in this study paralleled those found by some researchers (Knaus, 2014; Ursery, 2016). According to this sample of Black educators, when they sought employment as educators, they faced racial discrimination, unconscious bias, and other challenges. The interview included a question on participants' beliefs about possible opportunities; some participants perceived the State's initiatives (MTRR and Alliance Grants) to be an effort by the State to improve Black educator job attainment. The findings of this study show a challenging path toward hiring for Black certified educators; the chances of applying, interviewing, and getting hired are not promising. Based on their personal stories, participants who taught while they sought administrator positions found the job-hunting process extremely challenging.

The phenomenon of Black educators teaching Black students produces positive effects on students' academics and emotionality (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Gershenson et al., 2015). "For minority students, minority school leaders can provide strong role models significant to identity development and future aspirations" (Sanchez et al., 2008, p. 3). Gershenson et al. (2018) found same-race student-teacher partnerships have prolonged positive impacts. Other researchers have found that Black educators with the appropriate credentials find it difficult to obtain employment in any district; the entire path toward job attainment is difficult (CTDOE, 2018; Knaus, 2014; Ursery, 2015). Researchers at the NEA (2019), concerned mainly for Black and Hispanic

children, wrote of the significance of diversifying the educator population to mirror the student population: “Most districts still fail to hire minority teachers proportional to the increasing number of minority students in schools. This minority teacher shortage becomes more acute each year” (para. 1). Many states in the union have implemented programs to attract Black educators, including New York, Massachusetts, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Arkansas, Illinois, and Colorado (Aleshina, 2019; Arkansas Department of Education, 2019; Cortes, 2018; Disare, 2018; Gordon, 2019; DESE, 2019). Arkansas, Massachusetts, and New York have realized some success (Arkansas Department of Education, 2019; DESE, 2019; Disare, 2018). However, in Connecticut, a gap has persisted between the ratio of Black educators to Black students, even after the implementation of programs to increase the number of Black educators (CTDOE, 2019).

In 2012 and 2015, the Connecticut State Department of Education began implementing initiatives to increase minority educators in the education system (CTDOE, 2019). Since the execution of the programs, the population of Black certified educators has minimally increased (CTDOE, 2019). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators regarding their efforts to obtain employment in Connecticut since the passage of the legislation.

The researcher employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach (J. Smith, 2004). The focus was on the researcher’s interpretation of participants’ descriptions of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). A survey created on REDCap was used to invite potential participants to qualify for subsequent interviews. Fifteen Black certified educators qualified and agreed to participate in in-depth interviews. The 15 participants represented various ages, tenures in education, and certifications, and all had experienced the hiring process within the past seven

years. Interviews were conducted over a three-week period, beginning September 22, 2019, and ending on October 13, 2019. The research questions were the essential focus during the analysis of the interview transcripts and creation of classifications. To answer the research questions, the researcher applied a qualitative framework consisting of coding, categorizing, synthesizing, theorizing (Saldaña, 2013). Multiple iterations of data analysis were conducted. Additionally, phenomenological reduction assisted in condensing data to significant statements and quotes by participants (Moustakas, 1994) as discussed in Chapter 4. Once, the process was completed, themes were evident.

One overarching research question guided this study: “What are the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators seeking employment within the school systems in the State of Connecticut?” Two sub-questions guided data collection and elicited responses pertinent to this study:

1. What barriers do Black educators identify as they seek employment in Connecticut’s school districts?
2. What opportunities do Black educators identify as they seek employment in Connecticut’s school districts?

### **Interpretation of Findings**

All participants described experiences with racial discrimination and other challenges encountered in the process of finding employment. They credited unconscious bias as a factor hindering job attainment. That finding paralleled Ursery (2016), whose research was exclusive to Connecticut. The findings of this study are significant as State of Connecticut leaders actively seek to increase the number of Black educators entering the education system. The State’s efforts should include evaluating existing initiatives and implementations on a local level.

In addition, this study brings awareness to obstacles Black certified educators might encounter as they seek employment. Participants described being passed over for employment, feeling invisible, and feeling uncomfortable with hiring committees composed entirely or mostly of White interview panelists. Participants shared similar sentiments regarding the application process: Many applications are submitted, interviews are infrequent, and hires are rare.

The five participants in this study who were teaching while seeking administrator positions reported encountering greater job-hunting challenges compared to the teachers in the sample. These findings were consistent with Williams and Loeb's (2012) findings that unconscious bias was a factor in job attainment for Black educators seeking leadership roles. The five participants had pursued leadership roles for approximately five years, submitted about 240 applications, and endured 39 interviews with no success. These findings may reflect A. Smith's (2016) findings that

negative stereotyping, particularly within hiring and promotion processes, presumes to assume that physical or behavioral traits which do not align with the *model image* [emphasis original] of the school administrator as White, and male, renders applicants who do not fit this mold *unsuitable* [emphasis original] candidates for such senior positions. (p. 130)

Qualitative measures were derived from interview transcripts, and themes of common sentiments emerged. The themes that emerged at the conclusion of data analyzes are based on the lived experiences of the Black educators and are discussed in this chapter in the context of the research questions.



### **Research Question 1: Perceptions of Racism**

All participants perceived the experience of seeking employment in Connecticut's public education system as one infused with racism, racial bias, discrimination, and in-group favoritism. Participants viewed the hiring process as challenging—many applications were submitted but few invitations for interviews were received, and fewer job offers were forthcoming; in some cases, participants received no invitations for interviews. Bendick and Nunes (2012) suggested, “Despite considerable progress, a mix of covert and overt bias continues to pervade the American hiring system” (p. 239). Similarly, in a meta-analysis conducted between 1989 and 2015, Quilliam et al. (2017) documented racial discrimination in hiring practices in the U.S. labor force. Findings from this study were similar to conclusions of prior studies in which researchers identified barriers encountered by Black educators, including hiring committees' preconceived notions on the abilities of Blacks (Berry, 2014; Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Haynes, 2015).

During the interviews, all participants spoke of their frustrations with Connecticut's education system. All participants said that racial discrimination and unconscious bias played a role in job attainment, regardless of candidates' credentials. Similarly, Dovidio et al. (2016), Fisher and Borgida (2012), and Greenwald and Pettigrew (2014) found unconscious bias and in-group favoritism prevalent in hiring practices hindered job attainment. The Black educators in this study all believed that some form of discrimination based on their race had contributed to their lack of job offers or to the slow pace of job offers. The sentiment of most participants of this study was that Whites do not believe in Black educators' intellectual prowess, even when experience and credentials were equivalent to or greater than the qualifications of their White counterparts. The findings were consistent with those of D'Amico et al. (2017), who found that

Black educators with abilities comparable to those of White educators have encountered barriers in job attainment.

During the interviews, the researcher observed anger, pain, and frustration in many of the participants as they discussed their lived experiences; further, many conversations were perceived as uncomfortable by the researcher. A few participants did not make eye contact with the researcher. In other cases, during phone conversations, some participants asked, “This is confidential, right? I don’t want any problems.” On many occasions, the researcher calmed participants and reassured them of their anonymity. Even though a debriefing and reflection protocol was in place, none of the participants used it.

### **Research Sub-question 1: Challenges**

The challenges experienced by the Black certified educators in this study paralleled those reported in other research. For instance, participants mentioned that standards for hiring Black educators are higher than are those for White educators. Brown (2016) noted, “Although there is a push for a greater representation of people of color in this position, in order for people of color to be considered, it seems that they are held to a higher standard than their white counterparts” (p. 606). Most Black educators in this study said that despite the many applications submitted to districts, most went unanswered. The gap between numbers of applications and interviews was wide: Three applicants had yet to find positions after completing certification two years ago. All participants perceived the hiring process as difficult and frustrating; some had received interviews but few were hired.

Most participants mentioned the scarcity of Blacks on interview panels. This aspect of the hiring process made some uncomfortable; they believed that districts should do more to include Blacks on interview panels. Most participants said that it could make a difference in hiring—

some noted feeling invisible during their interviews. Black educators' confidence could be enhanced if they perceived equality in the process.

### **Research Sub-question 2: Opportunities**

Most participants were aware of Connecticut's initiatives to increase the number of Black educators. The sentiment of some was that the State was providing an opportunity for educators to receive a more equitable chance to gain employment. Most participants had attended the recruitment fairs sponsored by the State's initiatives; however, their attendance rarely led to job offers.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study could enhance existing scholarship regarding barriers and opportunities associated with job attainment for Black educators, not just in Connecticut but in other states as well. The findings could inform practice and bring awareness to obstacles that Black educators experience when seeking employment. Results could influence hiring practices by human resource managers and policymakers in education. A change in hiring practices could potentially mean more Black educators gain employment in education, which would better support Black students. Dee (2005) studied same-race student-teacher partnerships and found Black and Hispanic students increased achievement in academics when randomly assigned to a same-race teacher.

Most studies on Black educators have been concerned with the shortage of Blacks in education (ConnCAN, 2015; NCES, 2016), rather than focusing on Black educators' job attainment challenges. Scant empirical research exists pertaining to specific barriers encountered by Black certified educators seeking employment in Connecticut. Ursery (2016) found Black certified educators in Connecticut encountered problems with job attainment. Ursery concluded

that hiring practices and the mental models of those making decisions hindered employment for Black educators. The findings of the current study have enhanced Ursery's findings by providing a deeper investigation of lived experiences solely related to barriers and opportunities for Blacks seeking employment. These barriers continue to occur despite the State's interventions to increase the Black educator population in the public school system. In addition, this study gave voice to Black educators who sought leadership roles in the education system, thus providing a vehicle for them to tell their stories about the barriers they have encountered.

The NEA (2019) urged "local and state affiliates and appropriate governing bodies and agencies to work to increase the number of ethnic-minority teachers and administrators to a percentage at least equal to, but not limited to, the percentage of the ethnic minorities in the general population" (p. 1). Researchers for the Connecticut State Department of Education declared, "A recent data inquiry revealed that 739 educators of color, certified in CT between 2013 and 2017, were not employed in CT public schools (CTDOE, 2018, para. 2). Of the 739 educators of color, 276 were Black certified educators who could not find jobs in the public school system (CTDOE, 2018). The findings of this study provide a possible cause and indicate an element of the public school system that should be investigated by Connecticut leaders and leaders of other states who seek to increase the number of Black educators in their school systems.

The need for Black educators has been well documented; however, the road to job attainment in Connecticut has been hampered by persistent unconscious bias and racial discrimination (Ursery, 2016). All participants in this study perceived racism, unconscious bias, and in-group favoritism while job seeking. For some, applications went unanswered; for others, interviews and hires were minimal. In a system in which the majority in power is White, the

body of literature shows that past historical events such as slavery, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and Jim Crow laws have permeated U.S. society and created mental models of hierarchy (Martinez, 2014; Sanchez et al., 2008; A. Smith, 2016). Further, participants' perceptions that hiring committees believe they lack capability and intelligence were consistent with previous findings (Berry, 2014; D'Amico et al., 2017). This idea that Black educators lack capability and intelligence permeates the fabric of the United States—perhaps representing the underlying cause of the lack of improvement in discrimination in hiring practices seen in recent decades (Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Quilliam et al., 2017).

Beneficiaries of this study are the Connecticut State Department of Education, Black certified educators, and the Black student population. The study focused primarily on Black educators seeking employment. The State could realize more success from its initiatives by considering the obstacles Black educators encounter during job seeking. State leaders could bring much needed change by monitoring the practices of districts. Further, State leaders should realize that Black educators serve as role models for Black students and affect their academic, social, and emotional achievement (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Gershenson et al., 2015). The State of Connecticut found the need for Black educators significant enough to create initiatives to increase their presence in public schools. This study provided some reasons to explain why these initiatives have not achieved greater success.

Because Black educators have found attaining positions difficult, despite State initiatives to facilitate employment, it can be concluded that greater guidance is necessary from the Connecticut Department of Education. Providing greater opportunities to Black educators could facilitate job attainment. Further, as the number of Blacks in education increases, their role

modeling to Black students can serve as inspiration for students' interest in education as a possible career pathway.

### **Recommendations for Action**

This study provides evidence for required change in hiring practices and processes. Researchers at the Connecticut State Department of Education found Black educators have encountered barriers when seeking employment. In fact, the CTDOE (2018) results showed some educators were leaving the State because of difficulty getting a job in Connecticut. A four-year trend has shown that the initiatives implemented by the State have not been successful: The number of Black educators in this same period increased only one tenth of a percent (CTDOE, 2019). The data cannot be ignored; State leaders should do more to initiate equitable practices.

State leaders should open conversations with each Black certified educator who has not acquired a position. Further, a representative from the State Department of Education should be at every interview involving Blacks, despite possible accusations of micromanaging districts. The State's participation could encourage fairness, and districts could learn about the significance of equitable practices and expectations by the State. Currently, Black educators have sought administrator positions but not been afforded the opportunity for professional growth in various districts. This outcome goes against Alliance Grant provisions that stipulate additional funding to districts to increase the number of Black teachers and administrators

If the State's programs are to be effective, greater efforts should be made to evaluate existing practices at the district level. All Black educators in this study perceived racial bias at the district level. The State should provide an opportunity for Black educators to tell their personal stories, including stories about applying, interviewing, and working for specific districts. Moreover, it is important for district leaders to disclose the number of applications

Black educators have submitted. These data could provide the State with firsthand information on the practices of districts. The State cannot leave hiring solely to districts or expect hiring committees to practice equitability in the hiring of Black educators.

The State Department of Education should increase its substantive, systematic monitoring of the efficacy of initiatives. Most participants said that State initiatives would have provided greater opportunity to Black educators if their implementation were monitored. Systematic monitoring would involve tracking how many applications Black educators submit to a district for a particular position, how many Black educators are interviewed, and how many are hired. State education leaders should ensure that a comparative analytical review of applications at the district level is equitable. Leaders should confirm that hiring decisions are based on educators' skills, education, and experience and on the academic, social, and emotional needs of Black students. These factors are the foundational philosophy of the State's initiatives to increase Blacks in education (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015; Griffin & Tackie, 2016; NCES, 2016; Pascarella & Benigni, 2018).

Participants in this study spoke of the need for more Blacks on hiring committees. In some cases, participants encountered interview panels composed entirely of White panelists. Specifically, in urban schools in which student populations are mostly Black and Hispanic, and where most Black educators are employed, human resources managers should ensure that half to three fourths of Blacks are placed on interview panels. Further, human resources officials should ensure that all interview panelists receive professional development training on avoiding unconscious bias and become aware of the need to increase the number of Black educators.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Several areas for further study could enhance this research:

1. Participants of this study who were currently teaching and pursuing administration positions were not successful in job attainment. Future researchers could examine the leadership pathway for Black educators and discern if their obstacles and barriers are different from those encountered by teachers.
2. This study examined perceptions and lived experiences of Black certified educators. Future researchers could examine human resource officials' perceptions and expectations of Black educators.
3. The data analysis of participants of this study detailed the obstacles consistent with seeking employment in Connecticut. Future researchers could examine the lived experiences of Black educators in other regions of the United States.
4. This study showed that Connecticut's initiatives to increase the number of Black educators have not been successful. Future researchers could examine initiatives in other states and assess their success rates, identify differences between programs, and ascertain elements of success.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators regarding their efforts to seek employment in Connecticut since the passage of State legislation to increase the number of Black educators in the school system. Data were collected from in-depth interviews; transcripts of 15 Black certified educators' lived experiences of Connecticut's hiring process were analyzed. Critical race theory (CRT) was used as the theoretical framework and broad scope to investigate historical events, policy and laws,



social sciences, and personal accounts as they pertained to Black educators seeking employment in Connecticut's public school system. This study is consistent with existing CRT scholarship (Ursery, 2016) that has demonstrated that perceptions on the capabilities of Blacks during the hiring process in Connecticut's Education System is thriving and contributes to systemic racism. The historical tenet of CRT suggests that scrutiny to past events in society contribute and assists in forming beliefs of hierarchy today. This study demonstrates that challenges associated with job attainment by Black certified educators in Connecticut can be attributed to White dominance in the education system that emboldens systemic racism and maintain marginalization of Blacks.

The State Department of Education motivated opportunity by launching its initiatives to increase the number of Black educators. These initiatives have been in place since 2012 and 2015; however, during that period, only a tenth of a percent increase in the number of Black educators has been recorded annually. Based on the data collected for this study, these initiatives have not facilitated job attainment for Black educators. Black educators have submitted many applications but received few interviews or jobs. This study provides information regarding the barriers and obstacles of Black educators seeking employment. Three themes emerged from the data: All participants perceived racial discrimination and bias in the hiring process, most detailed challenges they encountered while seeking employment as Black educators in Connecticut, and few believed that the State's initiatives (MTRR and Alliance Grants) facilitated employment.

The Black educators in the study identified many challenging frustrations: They felt invisible during interviews, and some were passed over by Whites in favor of other Whites. Most participants perceived unfair practices by districts and sensed district leaders' unwillingness to change. Some participants perceived that panelists did not believe in the intelligence and capabilities of Blacks. Leaders at the Connecticut State Department of Education should ensure

that hiring practices and selection of staff in public schools are fair. As the creators of the State's initiatives, these State leaders should evaluate for effectiveness and monitor the districts at the local level, where most barriers to Black educator job attainment occur.

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## Appendices



## Appendix A: State Survey



### Default Question Block

#### Introduction

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is dedicated to increasing minority teacher recruitment statewide and filling vacancies in critical subject shortage areas. We are reaching out to you because our records indicate that you hold a Connecticut educator certificate but you are not currently serving under that certificate in a public school in Connecticut.

**The survey will take approximately two minutes to complete.** Your responses are confidential and will be used only to inform the CSDE of factors impacting employment as a teacher.

We appreciate you taking a moment to answer the following questions about your continued interest in teaching.

Do you currently reside in Connecticut?

- Yes  
 No

**Does not reside in Connecticut**

Where did you complete your educator preparation program?

What is the reason you left Connecticut? (Select all that apply)

- I could not find a teaching position in Connecticut.  
 There were no open teaching positions in my certification area.

- I applied for teaching position(s) in my certification area, but was not selected.
- I found a teaching position in another state.
- I am no longer interested in a career in teaching.
- Personal/family reasons.
- Other

Are you interested in returning to Connecticut to teach?

- Yes
- No

If you would like someone from the CT State Department of Education (Talent Office) to contact you about teaching opportunities, please provide your contact information below:

First name

Last name

Email

Phone

Please select the next button to submit your responses.

### Resides in Connecticut

Where did you complete your educator preparation program?

According to CT State Department of Education records, you are not currently teaching in a Connecticut public school. What is the reason?

- I have not applied to any teaching positions.
- I have applied to teaching positions, but have not been offered an interview.
- I have applied to teaching positions, have interviewed, but have not been offered a position.
- I was offered a teaching position, but I did not accept it.
- I am currently teaching in a private school.

I am no longer interested in a teaching position.

Other

Approximately how many teaching positions have you **applied** for in Connecticut?

1-2

3-4

5 or more

List school districts (optional)

Approximately, how many teaching positions have you **interviewed** for in Connecticut?

1-2

3-4

5 or more

List school districts (optional)

Are you still interested in teaching in Connecticut?

Yes

No

If you are no longer interested in pursuing a teaching career, please explain below:

If you would like someone from the Connecticut State Department of Education (Talent Office) to contact you about teaching opportunities, please provide your contact information below:

First name

Last name

Email

Phone

## Appendix B: Sample Career Fair Flyer

**Districts Attending:**

Bloomfield, Bristol, Canton, East Hartford,  
Ellington, Farmington, Newington, Simsbury,  
South Windsor, Vernon, Windsor  
and CREC Magnet Schools



# 27th Annual CREC Region Minority Teacher Recruitment Career Fair

Tentative Positions: Administration, ELA, Library Media, Math, Science,  
Special Education, World Languages, EL, TESOL, and more.



Meet with administrators of all grade levels.

March 4, 2017

9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Two Rivers Magnet Middle School

337 East River Drive, East Hartford, CT 06108

**[CLICK HERE](#)** to Register by February 28

OR VISIT <https://www.applitrack.com/crecmtr/onlineapp/default.aspx>

Bring copies of your certification, resume and letters of recommendation.

## Appendix C: Study Invitation

Dear Potential Study Participant:

As a doctoral student completing a dissertation study through the University of New England, I am inviting you to *participate in a study where you can share your lived experiences and perceptions of seeking employment in Connecticut's education system*. I am seeking to explore the experiences of Black educators seeking positions in Connecticut's school systems.

**Procedures:** Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. The survey includes an invitation of consent to be interviewed. By opening the link below, you consent to participate in this study.

**Confidentiality:** Your identity will be kept confidential and protected throughout the study and thereafter. Only I, the researcher, will have access to your information. Any verbal/signed discussions will identify you only as a number (e.g., Participant 1). Your name will not be shared with anyone else, ever. Your confidentiality will be protected in compliance with the University of New England's research policies and procedures.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for their participation.

If you choose to participate in the survey click on this link, survey. At the end of the survey interested participants can consent to a one-hour interview. I will contact those who are interested.

Sincerely,

Anita Watkins  
Doctoral Student  
University of New England  
Educational Leadership

## Appendix D: Participant Survey

### 1. What is your age range

- A). 21-30
- B). 31-40
- C). 41-50
- D). 51 or over

### 2. Are you presently employed in:

- A). Education
- B). Other field

### 3. Years working in education

- A). 0
- B). 1-5
- C). 6-15
- D). 16 and over

### 4. Area of certification

- A). Teaching
- B). Department Head, Administration
- C). Support Staff (Social Worker, Speech Therapy, School Psychologist, etc.)
- D). Central Office (Superintendent, Assistant Super., CAO, CFO, etc.)

### 5. Are you employed in a/an

- A). Urban district
- B). Suburban/Affluent district

- C). Rural district
- D). None of the above

**6. If not employed in education, why?**

- A). I didn't like it
- B). I didn't like the salary
- C). I could not find employment
- D). Other reason

**7. When was your last experience of the hiring process?**

- A). 0-1 year ago
- B). 1 to 3 years ago
- C). 4 to 7 years ago
- D). 8 and up

**8. How many times have you interviewed for a particular position before hire/promotion?**

- A). 2-4
- B). 5-8
- C). 9 or more
- D). Still haven't been hired

**9. Did you perceive any barriers throughout the interview process?**

- A). Yes
- B). No

**10. Did you perceive any opportunities throughout the interview process?**

- A). Yes
- B). No

**11. Are you familiar with the state's initiatives to increase minority educators; Minority**

**Teacher Recruitment and Retention, SB 1098, Alliance Grant**

A). Yes

B). No

C). Not all of them

**12. Would you be interested in a confidential one-hour interview on your perceptions and**

**lived experiences when seeking employment in Connecticut's education system?**

A). Yes

B). No

**13. Contact information**\_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix E: Interview Protocol

**Opening Statement:** I am currently in a doctoral program at the University of New England. My chosen study will be exploring the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators when seeking employment in Connecticut. I thank you for allowing me to interview you; it should not take more than 60 minutes. I will ask you a series of questions and then allow you time for comments and questions at the end. There are no right or wrong answers; however, they should be based on your own experiences as you remember them. To ensure that I get the scope of the interview, do you mind if I audiotape it? Myself, and the professional transcribe service will have access to the digital recorder. Once the data is transcribed into written format, and after you have reviewed the transcription, I will erase the data from the digital recorder after a period of 1 year. All data will be protected in a secure lockbox, and not shared with anyone else. Your name and identifiable information will be removed from the beginning of your participation including in the transcribed interview data, and replaced with a numeric identifier (e.g., Participant 1) to protect you and your confidential information throughout the study and after completion. Participants may end the interview at any time.

Before we begin, do you have any questions for me?

1. Are you presently working in education? In what capacity?
2. What district do you work in?
3. How did you decide which district to apply to? Do you believe one district is more receptive to Black educators than another?
4. What certifications do you have?
5. Can you tell me about your experience with the hiring and interviewing process; whether initial hire, promotion, or lateral? Have you attended any job fairs? What was your experience at the fair? What was it like interacting with representatives from districts seeking to fill positions? Did it lead to job attainment?
  - a. Have you had many experiences with the hiring process/interviewing?
  - b. What types of questions were you asked?
  - c. How did you feel during the interview?
  - d. Were the questions asked, ones that you expected? Why or why not?
  - e. Did you get the position?
  - f. Was job seeking a positive experience, can you identify any opportunities? Please specific. Can you identify any barriers? Please be specific.
6. Do you believe race plays a role in the selection to interview? In job attainment? Can you be specific?
7. What is your familiarity with the current state initiatives to increase minority educators?
8. Do you believe the initiatives (MTRR, SB1098, Alliance grant) are facilitating job attainment?

Thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences seeking employment in Connecticut. This information contributes to a better understanding of current practices as they pertain to Black educators and job attainment, and how they can be improved. Debriefing will entail reconvening and resetting the tone by stating positive accomplishments of participant, such as an accomplished college graduate, a role model for the Black community. The researcher will also review the objectives and positive possibilities of the research with the participant and the potential to change hiring practices that will be beneficial for all Black educators.

May I contact you if I have follow-up questions? Feel free to contact me with any questions or if you would like a copy of the completed dissertation

## Appendix F: Scheduling Interview Email

Dear Participant,

You have agreed to participate in a semi-structured interview for the *this study, Black Certified Educators' Lived Experiences Seeking Employment in Connecticut's Education System* study.

The interview can be via phone, but it is preferred that they are conducted face-to-face. The researcher of the study will accommodate the date and time that you are available; however, after school times, three o'clock and after, or weekends are favored. Interviews will be held during a four-week allotted time table, from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. Please respond to this email with your phone number, favored date, time, and preference of phone or face-to-face interview, if the time table is not feasible, please advise with other times that you are available. I am including my phone number so that we can discuss where the meeting will occur and any additional concerns or questions that you may have. Please do not hesitate to call me at any time, my greatest priority is to accommodate you.

Sincerely,

## Appendix G: Informed Consent Form

**Project Title:** Black educators' lived experiences seeking employment in Connecticut?

**Principal Investigator:** Anita Watkins

### **Introduction**

- Please read this form. The purpose of this form is to give you information about this research study.
- You are encouraged to ask any questions that you may have about this study, now, during or after the project is complete.
- Your participation is voluntary.

### **Why is this research study being done?**

- This research is being done to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of Black educators seeking employment in Connecticut's school systems.

### **Who will be in this study?**

- Participants of this study will be Black certified educators from Connecticut.

### **What will I be asked to do?**

- Participants will be asked to participate in an hour long interview.

### **What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?**

- Aside from recalling an unpleasant experience, and the inconvenience of your personal time for interviewing, this study posts no risks throughout the process.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?**

- Your participation in this study may contribute to improving hiring practices as they pertain to Black educators in Connecticut.

### **What will it cost me?**

- Aside from the personal time to interview, participation in this study has no cost.

### **How will my privacy be protected?**

- Your personal identifying information will not be reported with the findings.
- Only I, will know your identifying information.

### **How will my data be kept confidential?**

- Any data collected, including the recorded interview will remain confidential and personal identifiers removed.
- Along with the professional transcriber, I will be the only other person with access to the data and transcriptions.
- Transcriptions will be safely stored in a lockbox of which I am the only one with the

- combination or in a password protected computer hard drive.
- All original data that is collected for this research will be destroyed at the end of the study and erased from the hard drive.
- You may request access to your interview transcript at the conclusion of the study, including any notes derived from the interview.

**What are my rights as a research participant?**

- Your participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will have no impact on your current or future relations with the University.
- You may skip or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time.
- You will be informed of any significant findings developed during the course of the research that may affect your willingness to participate in the research.

**What other options do I have?**

- You may choose not to participate.

**Will I receive a copy of this consent form?**

- You may print and keep a copy of this consent form.

**I understand the above description of the research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I understand that by proceeding with this survey I agree to take part in this research and do so voluntarily.**

Upon signing this consent form to be a participant, you are acknowledging and agreeing that you are aware, have been provided with full disclosure of its purpose, procedures, and possible need for follow-up questions. A copy of this consent form will be handed to you or emailed.

I, (participant's name) \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in this study, titled *Black educators' lived experiences seeking employment in Connecticut's Education System?*

Electronic or Handwritten Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H: Reflection/Debriefing

**Debriefing will entail reconvening and resetting the tone by stating positive accomplishments of participant, such as an accomplished college graduate, a role model for the Black community.**

### **Questions I will ask in debriefing.**

How are you feeling after the interview?

What came to mind during the interview?

### **Answers I am prepared to give.**

As a Black educator, there is so much to be proud of; you have great accomplishments under your belt. You are a college graduate and I am sure your family and community is quite proud of you. You are a source of pride and you have worked hard which will empower others to follow in your foot steps. I am sure that there are children in your community that look up to you and many that you can mentor and motivate towards career-seeking and post-secondary education.

Please don't give up in your pursuit to better yourself, continue your journey seeking positions and opportunities that you feel are best for you; you are worthy. There have been many leaders that worked harder than we have to provide us with the opportunities that we presently have in our society. We owe it to them to continue to stay strong, better ourselves, and our community.

**The researcher will also review the objectives and positive possibilities of the research with the participant and the potential to change hiring practices that will be beneficial for all Black educators.**

This study was born of a personal struggle and the lack of opportunities that I had for growth. The objective of this study was to investigate if others were having the difficulties that I encountered. There is much good that can derive from this study, as it may provide greater awareness to the struggles that Black educators are presently facing. It has the potential to change hiring practices by human resource departments.

## Appendix I: IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board  
Mary DeSilva, Chair

**Biddeford Campus**  
11 Hills Beach Road  
Biddeford, ME 04005  
(207)602-2244 T  
(207)602-5905 F

**Portland Campus**  
716 Stevens Avenue  
Portland, ME 04103

To: Anita Watkins

Cc: Bill Boozang, Ed.D.

From: Liam Harrison, M.A., J.D. CIM

Date: September 19, 2019

Project # & Title: 19.09.13-013 A Phenomenological Study on the Perceptions and Lived Experiences by Certified Black Educators Seeking Employment in Connecticut's Public Education System

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed the materials submitted in connection with the above captioned project and has determined that the proposed work is exempt from IRB review and oversight as defined by 45 CFR 46.104 (d)(2).

Additional IRB review and approval is not required for this protocol as submitted. If you wish to change your protocol at any time, including after any subsequent review by any other IRB, you must first submit the changes for review.

Please contact Liam Harrison at (207) 602-2244 or wharrison@une.edu with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liam Harrison", written over a light blue horizontal line.

William R. Harrison, M.A., J.D. CIM  
Director of Research Integrity

IRB#: 19.09.13-013  
Submission Date: 09/09/19  
Status: Exempt, 45 CFR 46.104 (d)(2)  
**Status Date: 09/19/19**