Addressing *Anti*blackness in Early Childood Educator Preparation

Implications for Young Black Children and Their Families

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Abstract

Early childhood teacher preparation programs offer a curriculum that centers the White normative perspective (i.e., devoid of diverse perspectives). Because the young children and families that these

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teachers will work with are representative of the U.S. demographic, it is important that these programs consider alternate ways of preparing their early childhood teachers. This paper examines how teacher preparation in early childhood programs operate in paradigms that perpetuate White Supremacy and hinders Black family engagement. Critical frames such as BlackCrit are useful as we look for ways to improve curricular and instructional approaches in teacher preparation. We believe that teacher preparation programs are the conduit for preparing teacher educators with the knowledge that *anti*blackness can be disrupted and dismantled through critical consciousness around race. In this article, a discussion of (a) a foundational context regarding teacher accreditation and preparation for early childhood education (ECE) candidates, (b) the integration of culturally sustaining pedagogies in ECE preparation, (c) a BlackCrit theoretical framework to examine and dismantle *anti*blackness in ECE preparation programs, and (d) how to dismantle *anti*blackness when engaging with Black families. Finally, recommendations are suggested for ECE teacher preparation programs seeking to dismantle *anti*blackness.

*Keywords: Anti*blackness, BlackCrit, teacher preparation, early childhood education, and early childhood special education

Introduction

Consistent family engagement in preK-12 settings is a critical component of student achievement in and out of school (Friesen et al., 2020; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Senechal & LeFevere, 2002). However, due to the practices and policies (i.e., *anti*black) that often run counter to the cultures of children and families from minoritized backgrounds, many children and families disengage from the education process (Coles & Powell, 2020). If teachers are to dismantle those practices and policies of *anti*blackness, they must acquire the skills necessary for the cultivation of the engagement of young Black children with and without dis/abilities and their families. These skills, acquired in teacher preparation programs, could provide teachers with the pedagogical tools (i.e., culturally sustaining practices) that could assist in the facilitation of culture-affirming environments that meet the needs of young Black children (Caruthers et al., 2021). According to Bryan (2022), teacher education programs in the U.S. prepare pre-service teachers to operate within cultural norms that are rooted in White Supremacy and *anti*blackness. To disrupt this type of preparation, it is important to prepare teachers early and often so that they do not perpetuate *anti*black ideologies and practices in the classroom environments.

As scholars from minoritized backgrounds, we submit that, to successfully prepare early childhood professionals, it is imperative that

we understand the impacts of *anti*blackness in teacher preparation programs. Further, it is important to address the lasting impacts of *anti*blackness that serve to disempower Black family engagement. In this article, we refer to Dumas and ross's (2016) definition of *anti*blackness. They define *anti*blackness as a form of oppression that devalues Black life through interactions, practices, and policies.

Although the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2020) identifies early childhood education (ECE) as birth to age 8 years old, this article refers to ECE to include children between the ages of 3-8 years old. These children receive early childhood education services from pre-school to second grade. Conversely, early childhood special education (ECSE) refers to children between the ages of 3 and 8 years old who receive special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B (IDEA, 2004).

In what follows, we discuss (a) a foundational context regarding teacher accreditation and preparation for ECE candidates, (b) the integration of culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) in ECE preparation, (c) a BlackCrit theoretical framework to examine and dismantle *anti*blackness in ECE preparation programs, and (d) how to dismantle *anti*blackness when engaging with Black families. Finally, recommendations are suggested for ECE teacher preparation programs seeking to dismantle *anti*blackness.

ECE Teacher Accreditation and Preparation

Currently, ECE program accreditation is often aligned with standards developed by organizations such as NAEYC (2020) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2020). These organizations provide frameworks for teacher quality and practices in ECE. In addition, the standards and practices of these organizations are essential in the development of culturally competent teachers that work with diverse groups of children and families.

The National Association of the Education of Young Children

NAEYC (2020) and CEC (2020) should play major roles in the way teacher preparation programs prepare early childhood professionals. For example, the NAEYC identifies six competencies and standards, including (a) child development and learning in context, (b) family-teacher partnerships and community connections, (c) child observation, documentation, and assessment, (d) developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate teaching practices, (e) knowledge, application, and integration of academic content in the early childhood cur-

riculum, and (f) professionalism as an early childhood teacher. These ECE standards and competencies reflect how early childhood teachers must engage children and families to provide equitable and high-quality learning experiences. The Professional Standards and Competencies indicate that:

> Early childhood educators must develop a habit of reflective practice, including integrating their knowledge and practices across all six standards in order to create optimal learning environments, design and implement curricula, use and refine instructional strategies, and interact with children and families whose language, race, ethnicity, culture, and social and economic status may be very different from educators' own backgrounds. (NAEYC, 2020, p.11)

For the purposes of this article, three of the NAEYC (2020) standards and competencies are addressed. Specifically, family-teacher partnerships and community connections, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate teaching practices; and professionalism as an early childhood educator are discussed in relation to ECE teacher preparation and family engagement. Each of these standards acknowledge the importance of developing reciprocal partnerships that value culture, diversity, and the needs of families. If teachers effectively implement these standards, then they can promote equitable ECE experiences for all children and their families.

Council for Exceptional Children

Like NAEYC (2020), CEC (2020) developed the *Early Interventionist/Early Childhood Special Educator Standards* for the preparation of special education teachers. Specifically, CEC addresses the following standards (a) child development and early learning, (b) partnering with families, (c) collaboration and teaming, (d) assessment processes, (e) application of curriculum frameworks in the planning of meaningful learning experiences, (f) using responsive and reciprocal interactions, interventions, and instruction, and (g) professionalism and ethical practice. These standards reflect how early interventionist and ECSE teachers must work with children with dis/abilities and their families. Although the 2020 CEC standards address seven practice areas, this paper addresses the three that (i.e., partnering with families, using responsive and reciprocal interactions, interventions, and instruction, and professionalism and ethical practice) are specific to ECSE teacher preparation. Each of these standards acknowledge the importance of collaborative partnerships with children with dis/abilities and their families. Additionally, CEC standards highlight the importance

of teachers integrating culturally affirming practices and tools that meet the needs of families. If teachers effectively implement these standards, they may learn to be self-reflective in their teaching practices and interactions with families.

Currently, many ECE/ECSE programs are aligned to meet NAEYC (2020) and CEC (2020) standards. However, teacher candidates are not provided with enough cross-cultural experiential learning experiences (i.e., learning by applying knowledge and reflection; Kopish, 2016). Teacher candidates who leave teacher preparation programs in ECE/ECSE are supposed to be equipped with the pedagogical and theoretical knowledge to teach in diverse (e.g., racial, ability, etc.) contexts with children whose ages range from zero to eight. However, based on the inequities experienced in ECE/ECSE by young Black children and their families, the ways that teachers are currently prepared needs to be revisited. If young Black children (i.e., with and without dis/abilities) and their families are to benefit from EI, ECSE, and ECE services that these teachers will ultimately provide, then preparation programs must adopt a culture-sustaining position when preparing ECE/ECSE teachers.

Early Career Educators:
The Importance of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2022) the demographic of teachers are predominately White and female. However, with the increase in the number of students coming from diverse backgrounds, teachers must develop strategies to facilitate positive climates within which all students can thrive (Doucet, 2017*)*. The literature cites culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP) as one way to cultivate positive learning environments for children from diverse backgrounds in ECE (Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2019). For example, the literature suggests that exposing teacher candidates to CSP during their teacher preparation programs can positively shape teacher candidates as they develop instructional practices to support diverse learners in diverse contexts (Paris & Alim, 2017). Additionally, Souto-Manning and Cheruvu (2016) indicate that engagement in CSP can mitigate the potential negative effects of the racial mismatch between teachers and young children in early childhood classrooms.

Culturally sustaining pedagogies are rooted in Ladson-Billings' (2014) culturally relevant pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017) that aims to advance student learning by incorporating student culture into the classroom (Paris & Alim, 2017). Culturally sustaining pedagogies utilize asset-based approaches (i.e., funds of knowledge; Moll et al.,

1992), third space (Gutiérrez, 2008), and culturally relevant pedago-gy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) to address and examine school diversity in education and were initially used in educational research to reposition linguistic, literate, and cultural practices amongst poor communities of color (Paris & Alim 2017).

Preservice teachers will eventually leave their programs. There-fore, it is important that their programs implement practices that facil-itated their development as critically conscious teachers. These ECE/ECSE preparation programs must be intentional in how they address the concepts of CSP. Once teacher preparation programs begin to em-bed a culture of acknowledgement through difference, then teachers who leave the program can begin to understand ways to value a class-room that represents various types of difference (e.g., Black children and families, ability, gender). Most importantly, providing teacher can-didates with an opportunity to enter the profession with a culture-ac-cepting lens can begin to shift the deficit perspective that they may use when teaching Black children.

Black Critical Theory (i.e., BlackCrit) can be the lens that ECE/ECSE teacher preparation programs use to cultivate a perspective in their ECE/ECSE teachers that affirms the culture of Black children and families. Rather than viewing Black children and families as less/than deficient, ECE/ECSE teachers would come to understand the structural inequalities and inequities that create a system where Black children cannot thrive and where they and their families are margin-alized within that system. They will be able to counter the implicit (e.g., biases, microaggressions) and explicit (e.g., disproportionately suspended, overt racism) forms of *anti*blackness experienced daily by Black children in ECE/ECSE spaces. The following section focuses on what BlackCrit is and why it is imperative (i.e., to combat *anti*black-ness) that ECE/ECSE preparation programs utilize it to prepare pre-service ECE/ECSE teachers.

BlackCrit

BlackCrit is a theoretical concept that emanated from critical race theory (CRT). It helps to precisely explain the marginalization, disre-gard, and disdain projected onto Black bodies (Dumas & ross, 2016) in schools and other spaces. Additionally, BlackCrit uncovers the ways institutions reproduce Black suffering through policies and practices (Dumas & ross, 2016). Instead of tenets, BlackCrit offers foundation-al framings (i.e., *anti*blackness, Blackness in tension with neoliber-al-multicultural imagination, space for Black liberatory fantasy) for

conceptualization (Dumas & ross, 2016). In this article, we focus on *anti*blackness to explain its impact on the ways that ECE/ECSE teachers are prepared, and how that preparation ultimately impacts the ways they engage with young Black children and their families. Figure 1 represents a theoretical framework regarding the relationship between *anti*blackness in teacher preparation programs, as well as how those programs ultimately prepare teacher candidates to perpetuate *anti*blackness subconsciously/consciously in ECE/ECSE practice during child and family engagement.

Dumas and ross (2016) define *anti*blackness as a form of oppression that devalues Black life through interactions, practices, and policies. In this framework, *anti*blackness serves as a filter through which teacher preparation programs train ECE/ECSE teachers, and ultimately how those teachers engage with children and Black families. Currently, *anti*blackness is filtered in multiple ways in ECE/ECSE teacher preparation programs (i.e., whiteness, bias, racism). This *anti*blackness lens clouds the way in which teachers are prepared to interact with Black children and families. For example, in our current system, teachers are prepared to perpetuate bias (i.e., *anti*blackness) when interacting with Black children and families. Oftentimes, this creates feelings of racial/cultural anxiety for Black children and families (Godsil & Richardson, 2017) with interactions with ECE/ECSE teachers because they fear those teachers will unjustly discriminate against them. This is a form of trauma. Conversely, when we train ECE/ECSE teachers to dismantle *anti*blackness (e.g., through BlackCrit) we prepare them to move towards being culturally competent teachers (e.g., culturally affirming, self-reflective, asset-minded approaches), therefore, unclouding their perceptions of Black children and families (see Figure 1).

As teacher preparation programs continue to perpetuate *anti*blackness, preservice teachers will continue to lack the necessary knowledge and skills to engage with and support young Black children and their families. Furthermore, young Black children and their families will continue to experience inequities during the IDEA (2004) Part B process (i.e., identification, inclusion, and access; Meek et al., 2020) and miss out on the benefits that ECE/ECSE provides. This framework helps us interpret the dismantling of *anti*blackness in educator preparation programs.

Utilizing BlackCrit to Dismantle *Anti*blackness

BlackCrit helps examine how antiblackness is perpetuated through educational policies and practices (Dumas & ross, 2016). Thus, Black-

Crit may help teacher preparation programs identify the *anti*blackness perpetuated through pedagogy, curriculum, discourse, and field experiences. However, teacher preparation programs must engage in the critical work necessary to address and dismantle the practices of *anti*blackness. For example, teacher preparation programs must provide opportunities for pedagogical practices (e.g., critical reflection, journaling; Shandomo, 2010). Also, teacher preparation programs must intentionally include curricula that promotes pro-Black perspectives. The following sections uncover the ways that *anti*blackness exists in ECE/ECSE teacher preparation programs.

Antiblackness in Early Childhood Teacher Preparation

The increasing amount of emotional and physical violence inflicted on Black and brown children and families in the U.S. has been the impetus for more critical consciousness among teachers in preK-12 settings, as well as teacher educators (Souto-Manning & Cheruvu, 2016). For example, in teacher preparation programs, preservice teachers are constantly engaging in field experiences that magnify the perceived deficits (i.e., unintelligent, lazy; Bryan, 2020; challenging behavior, unteachable; Wright & Counsell, 2018) of Black and brown children and their families as opposed to placing their focus on the assets that they bring to ECE/ECSE spaces.

Figure 1
Dismantling Antiblackness: Shifting the Paradigm in ECE/ECSE Teacher Preparation
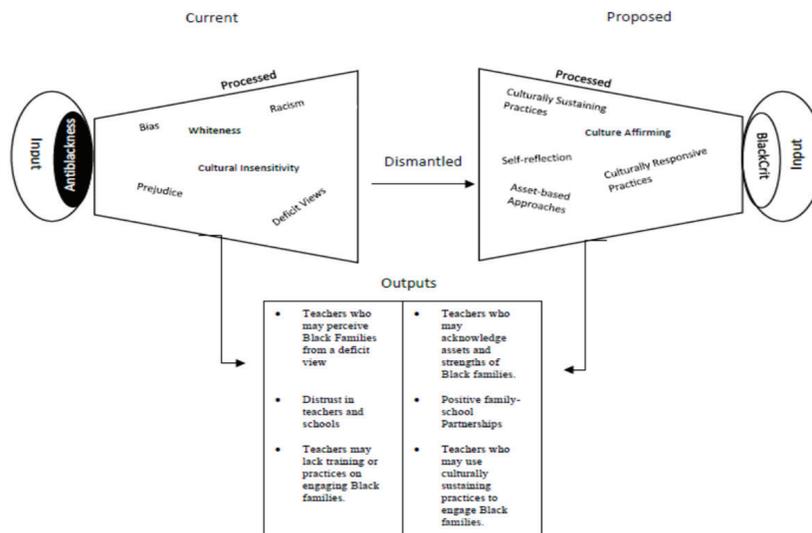
Additionally, Shah and Coles (2020) emphasized the need to bring race and racial issues to the forefront of teacher preparation. The use of an *anti*blackness lens to dismantle hegemonic practices in early childhood teacher preparation is necessary. Shah and Coles (2020) stated that, "being a teacher in a nation where racism is endemic means that no one is exempt from being complicit or directly engaging in racism at points in their lives and careers" (p. 596). Further, with the influence of *anti*blackness on the everyday lived experiences of Black children and youth (Dumas & ross, 2016), schools of education must examine practices and policies rooted in *anti*blackness (Waite, 2021). Thus, teacher preparation programs should work towards the dismantling of *anti*blackness, as it could interfere with Black children's early and later development, and hinder Black family engagement.

Understanding Black Family Engagement

Black families of young children often engage in home and community-based activities. For example, Black families provide the space for learning activities in the home (e.g., reading books, asking about the school day, and activities in the community; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2019). Black families' engagement is positively correlated to future preschool competencies (e.g., persistence, attention, motivation; Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2019). Thus, Black families have educational expectations (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2019) and dreams for their children (Matute-Chavarria, 2022).

Although Black families have dreams for their children, they have many negative encounters (e.g., bias, discrimination) when engaging with the education system (Matute-Chavarria, 2022) that leads them to disengage from the school (Loque & Latunde, 2014). In addition, there are several reasons (e.g., lack of access to screening, evaluations, and services) why Black families may not engage in ECE/ECSE services. Latunde and Clark-Loque (2016) found that Black families are interested in and desire to be a part of their children's education. However, there are many challenges (i.e., racism, limited opportunities to engage, and not being invited) that sometimes prevent Black families from engaging (Fenton et al., 2017). For example, because educational environments are situated in White ways of being (Carela, 2019), Black children and their families are often viewed as inferior or deficient (Parks, 2018). Additionally, young Black children experience frequent degrading and racial assaults (Bryan, 2022) at school leading to increased feelings of alienation by Black families (Parks, 2018). Using BlackCrit as a paradigm-shifting framework, ECE/ECSE

teachers can address the challenges (e.g., Black families don't value education) Black families face when making the decision to participate in ECE/ECSE and/or when interacting with ECE/ECSE teachers. The following sections elaborate on the challenges Black families face when engaging in White normative schooling spaces.

The Value of Education

Because *anti*blackness is pervasive in schooling spaces (Dumas & ross, 2016), school staff often perceive that Black families do not value education (Latunde & Clark-Loque, 2016). However, this is a misconception that teachers have regarding the engagement of Black families in schools. Howard and Reynolds (2008) found that Black families value education highly and have dreams for their children. Additionally, because Black families often engage in their child's education in the home (i.e., homework, recreational sports, church; Latunde & Clark-Loque, 2016), teachers tend to devalue these experiences because it does not conform to their narrow ideas of involvement/engagement (Boutte & Johnson, 2014).

The traditional and acceptable practices of engagement are based on a White normative perspective (Boutte & Johnson, 2014). However, this perspective marginalizes Black families and perpetuates *anti*blackness. Because these practices look different from the traditional ideas (i.e., visiting the school, attending parent nights), teachers are not prepared to understand different practices of family engagement and/or how these different practices may appear across different cultures. Additionally, teachers may not understand how these practices may impact the outcomes of Black children. Therefore, it is important for teacher preparation programs to prepare teachers to gain cultural competence on the dynamics and practices of how Black families engage with their child's education. This is key to dismantling the perpetuation of *anti*blackness within schools. For example, Souto-Manning and Cheruvu, (2016) support that when Black ECE teacher candidates are among their White peers, conversations surrounding Black children and families are rooted in White Supremacy and deficit language.

Lack of Cultural Sensitivity in Family Engagement

There are many cultural considerations (i.e., lack of cultural sensitivity and communication) that contribute to the lack of family engagement of Black families in schools. Due to the cultural mismatch, teachers often do not understand how Black families engage in schools. However, recent research is clear that Black families are engaged in

their child's education (i.e., communication between home and school) and communities (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016). However, because practices are based on the Eurocentric experience (Hyland, 2010), the cultural value for the practices of Black families are devalued and un-acknowledged. This devaluing of culture is rooted in *anti*blackness. Thus, it is important that teachers understand the dynamics of Black families and how they engage in their child's education. Teachers should create an environment for Black families to feel welcomed and part of the ECE/ECSE community. Schools and Black families would benefit greatly when teachers create environments that are culturally sustaining. When schools and programs are not willing to create these types of environments, Black families may be apprehensive to engage with teachers and their previous negative experiences (Loque & Latunde, 2014) may persist.

Alienated Due to Negative Experiences

Black families have addressed their negative experiences. For example, disproportionately suspended and expelled (Barbarin & Hoffman, 2017; Meek & Gilliam, 2016), overrepresentation in special education (Mahon-Reynolds & Parker, 2016; Wright & Counsell, 2018; Wright & Ford, 2016), and negative experiinces with schools (Latunde, 2009). These negative experiences for Black children create barriers to engagement for Black families (Louque & Latune, 2014). Consequently, the disparities experienced in school by Black children have caused tensions in the formation of the relationships that Black families have with schools (Delpit, 2012). Oftentimes, this leads to a lack of trust between Black families, teachers, and their child's school (Skiba et al., 2011). However, Black families may seek engagement opportunities through their community and churches (Latunde, 2017). Unfortunately, these engagement activities often do not fit the traditional ideas (i.e., visiting the school, attending parent nights) of engagement that are valued by teachers and schools.

Although Black family's negative experiences can lead to alienation, they may also lead to parent advocacy. Research indicates that parental advocacy in early childhood may promote empowerment, as it relates to receiving better services for children (Wright & Taylor, 2014). These opportunities for advocacy suggest that both parental involvement and advocacy could lead to long term academic advantages (i.e., less grade retention, less school mobility, increased reading achievement, and a lower rate of special education placement; Wright & Taylor, 2014) for young Black children.

Recommendations for Practice

There is much discussion in the literature regarding the improvement of teacher preparation programs for early childhood educators (McLean et al., 2020). However, a lot of this discussion centers on the fact that ECE/ECSE teacher preparation is complex. In this article, we have discussed ECE program standards in teacher preparation, as well as the disparity in ECE participation by young Black children and their families. We specifically offer what we believe are the issues with teacher preparation, and how that preparation leads to unhealthy engagement with young Black children and their families. We provide a thorough line (i.e., *anti*blackness) from ECE/ECSE teacher preparation to the ways that ECE/ECSE teachers engage with young Black children and their families.

As a potential reform mechanism for ECE/ECSE teacher preparation, BlackCrit can be used to address and dismantle implicit and explicit *anti*blackness teaching (i.e., the absence of culture sustaining practices). Specifically, in Table 1, recommendations are offered for programs that prepare ECE/ECSE teachers to work with young Black children and their families. For example, when there is no instruction regarding the implicit and explicit biases that preservice teachers may hold regarding young Black children and their families, programs could be intentional about providing instruction through self-reflection assignments. Another example might include providing preservice teachers with opportunities for internships and/or field experiences in communities that serve Black families. This could be a way for the pre-service teacher to address any deficit views that they have. Table 1,*"Recommendations: Dismantling Antiblackness in Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Programs"* is not an exhaustive list of recommendations, but it could be a good start for programs to implement reforms that address *anti*blackness, implicitly or explicitly.

Conclusion

ECE/ECSE programs are integral to the development of young children with dis/abilities. As such, organizations dedicated to the children who require these services created guidelines and standards for the preparation of pre-service ECE/ECSE teachers. Unfortunately, training programs in the U.S. have not fully addressed the implicit and explicit *anti*black messaging present in the ways ECE/ECSE teachers are trained. To address these racialized and/or inequitable practices, teachers and educational researchers must first identify where *anti*blackness shows up in ECE/ECSE programs. For example, a colonized

Table 1
Recommendations:
Dismantling Antiblackness in Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Programs

Antiblackness Manifested in Teacher Preparation	*Antiblackness Manifested with Families*	*Opportunities for Teacher Preparation*	*Standards Addressed (NAYEC/ CEC)*	*Recommendations for Instruction*
Lack of instruction on implicit and explicit biases (Ladson-Billings, 2014).	The perpetuation of implicit and explicit biases when engaging with Black children and families.	Provide instruction on implicit and explicit biases and the impacts those biases have on teaching practices.	NAEYC 6d, 6e. CEC 7.2.	Provide opportunities for a self-reflection paper on implicit and explicit biases. Provide an opportunity to engage in a privilege walk activity and/or White privilege checklist (McIntosh, 2020).
Deficit views and references towards Black children and families within courses (Souto-Manning & Cheruvu, 2016) and field	The use of deficit language when speaking about or to Black families in school environments (i.e., clasrooms, hallways).	Address the inequities Black children and families experience from the literature (i.e., disproportionate suspensions and expulsion, overrepresented in special education, and deficit perspectives; Wright & Counsell, 2018). Address the strengths and positive aspects of Black children and families.	NAEYC 2a, 2b, 2c, 4c, 6d, 6e CEC 2.1, 6.7, 7.2.	Provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to volunteer or do field work in communities that serve Black children and families (Gay, 2018).

Table 1 (continued)

Antiblackness Manifested in Teacher Preparation	*Antiblackness Manifested with Families*	*Opportunities for Teacher Preparation*	*Standards Addressed (NAYEC/CEC)*	*Recommendations for Instruction*
Lack of asset and strength-based approaches to working with Black children and families (Paris & Alim, 2017).	Using a deficit lens when working with Black children and families.	Address the literature regarding the assets Black children and families bring to ECE/ECSE.	NAYEC 2a, 2c, 4c, 6d, 6e. CEC 2.1 2.3, 6.2, 7.2, 7.3.	Provide pre-service teachers with the opportunity to create a project that focuses on the assets Black children have. Reflect on the Reflect on the importance of using a strengths-based approach (Gay, 2018).
Lack of culturally sustaining pedagogical practices (Paris & Alim, 2017.	Difficulty building positive relationships with Black children and familises due to lack of cultural sensitivity and awareness.	Embed culturally sustaining practices within *all* coursework using activities that build preservice teachers' cultural awareness and competence.	NAEYC 2a, 4b, 4c. CEC 2.1, 6.2, 6.3	Embed lessons and curricula that represent the dynamics and strengths of Black culture (Gay, 2018).
Lack of emphasis on culturally sustaining relationship building (Ladson-Billings, 2014).	Creating environments that are unresponsive and non-inclusive for Black children and families.	Provide pre-service teachers with instruction and activities on building relationships and trust with Black families.	NAEYC 2a, 2c, 4c, 6d, 6e. CEC 2.1 6.2, 6.7, 7.2	Provide teachers with opportunities to observe the interactions of churches (Emdin, 2016) and community-based organizations involving Black families.

curriculum, use of deficit-centered language, lack of culturally sustaining teaching practices, and lack of relationship building may illustrate the ways in which *anti*blackness appears in the preparation of early childhood teachers.

To combat /dismantle the implicit and explicit *anti*black teaching in preparation programs, we offered BlackCrit as a framework. BlackCrit proposes that we acknowledge *anti*blackness and address White Supremacy within educational systems (Dumas & ross, 2016).

More research on how teacher preparation programs prepare ECE/ECSE professionals to dismantle *anti*blackness through curriculum and field experiences could enhance the way curriculum is designed, as well as enrich field experiences for pre-service teachers. BlackCrit as a lens of interpretation for disrupting *anti*blackness in teacher preparation programs offers opportunities for teachers to reimagine early childhood education for all children and particularly for those children who have been pushed to the margins.

Additionally, *anti*blackness in ECE/ECSE services was discussed as a roadblock to strong and meaningful relationships between early childhood teachers and Black families. Because young Black children (i.e., with and without dis/abilities) and their families are often viewed through the cloudy lens of *anti*blackness, it makes it very difficult for ECE/ECSE teachers to view young Black children (i.e., with and without dis/abilities) and their families as valuable members of the ECE/ECSE environment. We offered BlackCrit to clear the EC teacher's lens so that they might be better able to serve Black children (i.e., with and without dis/abilities) and their families. For example, we propose to use BlackCrit as a lens to identify biases in practices that serve to devalue Black families. Therefore, by using BlackCrit we can challenge the biases and racism that exist when engaging Black families in schools.

Finally, preparation programs should consider modeling culturally sustaining teaching (Paris & Alim, 2017) so that ECE/ECSE teachers can take these skills to their ECE/ECSE settings. Once there, they can use the skills and knowledge they learned in their programs to cultivate more meaningful relationships with young Black children and their families. By doing this, ECE/ECSE teachers can improve the academic outcomes of the young children in their charge. In fact, Bennett et al. (2018) reported that building meaningful relationships as early as Head Start and pre-K positively impact the students' readiness in all subject areas.

Although research on Black family engagement is growing, there is still a need to address the experiences of Black families that encounter early childhood teachers who engage in CSP. Additional research can

inform how early career early childhood educators use CSP to build relationships with Black children and families. If we are to truly make ECE/ECSE equitable for young Black children and their families, then it is time that we address the systemic issues present in the preparation of ECE/ECSE teachers. The schooling experiences of *all* Black children will not improve until there is an all-inclusive effort to acknowledge and dismantle *anti*blackness. In essence, we must critique the current pedagogies and practices of early childhood professionals and foster new ones that foster sustainable school-family connections. This must and should begin while the child is young.

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