Towards a BlackboyCrit Pedagogy: Black boys, male teachers, and early childhood classroom practices, by Nathaniel Bryan. New York, New York: Routledge, 2021, 200 pp. $48.95, (paperback)

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Towards a BlackboyCrit Pedagogy by Nathaniel Bryan speaks into an alarming silence surrounding Black boys in educational research. Introducing BlackboyCrit, Bryan asks early childhood educators and researchers to recognize and reject anti-Blackness in schools. There is an urgent need to confront this reality as Black boys are particularly vulnerable to deficit narratives, stereotyping, and low academic expectations that lead to poor academic opportunities and outcomes (Wood et al., 2020). Yet educational research tends to center the experiences of Black youth in middle and high school, limiting the possibilities for early intervention and ignoring the needs of Black boys in early grades (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). As a result, according to Bryan, "we cannot say with honesty and integrity that Black boys are well" (p. 26). In addressing the social, emotional, and academic needs of Black boys in early childhood education, Dr. Bryan writes what many of us need to hear.

Bryan looks unflinchingly at the root of these injustices: anti-Black misandry. Anti-black misandry, the disdain of Black males in schools and society, is reflected in our laws, curricula, and the social and academic conditions of Black boys. Bryan proffers what he calls BlackboyCrit Pedagogy as an "antidote to the virus of anti-Black misandry" (p. 46). Modeled by Black male teachers, BlackboyCrit Pedagogy is a way of teaching and thinking about early childhood education that "acknowledges the inter-curricular nature of anti-Black misandry in ECE" and suggests that we must work together with Black boys to confront this injustice (p. 169). Teachers embodying BlackboyCrit pedagogy will develop a critical consciousness around anti-Black misandry, and in response, "demonstrate love and caring" (p. 169) for Black boys, their families, and their communities, and incorporate them into the curriculum.

There is something for everyone in the way that Bryan organizes and writes this book. His chapters weave together the systemic and intimate, zooming in on Bryan's experiences as a Black boy in school, detailed portraits of Black male educators and students, and expanding out into the social conditions of anti-Black misandry. Chapter 1 sets up the context of the study, unpacking the truths of anti-Black misandry in early childhood education (ECE). It is a must-read for practitioners and researchers seeking information about the conditions of Black boys in ECE which are rarely acknowledged elsewhere. In Chapter 2, Bryan walks through the framing ideas of BlackboyCrit Pedagogy and its developing tenets. Educational researchers will appreciate Bryans' nuanced presentation of Black Male Studies and BlackCrit. Practitioners who may have less context for these academic theories will gain a great deal from the way Bryan delineates five types of anti-Black violence in schools and provides examples of each. One striking aspect of Bryan's writing is his honesty when approaching the limitations of educational research even as he conducts it. For example, in this chapter Bryan draws on comparative achievement data between white and Black children to underscore the impacts of anti-Black misandry on Black boys. Yet he includes a caveat while doing so, urging practitioners and researchers to resist viewing "White children as the standard by which we should compare Black boys" (p. 30). This sort of thoughtful analysis makes his work especially approachable.

At this point in the book, readers are likely to be eager for details of how BlackboyCrit pedagogy might be implemented in the early childhood classroom. But Bryan pauses before

getting there, interrogating the conditions necessary for BlackboyCrit, namely, the recruitment, retention, and role-modeling of Black male teachers. Combatting anti-misandry stereotypes of Black male teachers as disciplinarians, Bryan suggests that ECE educators and researchers should seek to learn from Black male teachers' classroom practices.

In Chapter 4, we meet and learn from the three Black male pedagogues in Bryan's study- through portraits informed by Black boys in their classes. For example, the teachers Bryan describes show love for their Black boy students, let them know they are valued, and help them to imagine their possible futures. Again, appealing to a wide range of readers, Bryan zooms in and out of data description and analysis, concluding the chapter with practical recommendations for teachers.

Especially pertinent to those interested in ECE practices, the remainder of the book addresses aspects of ECE from the standpoint of BlackboyCrit. Chapters 5 and 6 work together to challenge literacy normativity rooted in White-centric and anti-Black misandrist logics. One kindergarten student describes the significance of his teachers' literacy practices, stating, "he always be reading the good books… you can listen to kinda like a rap" (p. 127). This Black male teacher used good books- ones that reflected students' cultures, empowered, and humanized his students, and "upheld the richness and joy of Black boyhood" (p. 128). In chapters 7 and 8, Bryan argues that though play is integral to early education, Black boys' play is often punished. BlackboyCrit Pedagogy requires teachers to understand and confront the anti-Black misandric violence that Black boys face during play. Some readers might argue that Bryan goes too far in declaring the need for sweeping and urgent changes to early childhood education for Black boys. But research and data support this claim (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). This work will be strengthened by future studies that implement BlackboyCrit Pedagogies in the classroom. When so much research and practice ignore their existence or views it as a problem (Proffitt, 2020), Bryan's work is a bold declaration that the lives of Black boys matter. Educators and practitioners have an obligation to reflect on their roles in anti-Black misandry and take direct action to address it. Towards a BlackboyCrit Pedagogy is an excellent tool for doing so.

References

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