

Racial wage gaps in early education employment ^[1]

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Excerpted from the article

The current early education system is built on racial inequities.

Racial wage gaps and limitations to professional opportunities exist for women of color across occupations. Regardless of their job or field, women of color experience the greatest wage gaps when compared to white, non-Hispanic men (Hegewisch, Phil, & Hartmann, 2019). These structural inequities impact not only their immediate circumstances, but establish economic inequalities that follow them into retirement (Hogan & Perrucci, 2007).

The historical and pervasive undervaluing of labor performed by women and minorities in the United States has combined to create one of the most underpaid workforces in the country: those who care for and teach young children. The early care and education (ECE) sector is comprised almost exclusively of women, 40 percent of whom are people of color. These educators represent the most racially diverse sector of the teaching workforce, compared to K-12 and postsecondary education in which nearly three-quarters of educators are white (Taie & Goldring, 2017; NCES, n.d.; Myers, 2016). Early educators are among the lowest-paid workers in every state (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018), which creates especially compromised circumstances for African American and Hispanic women in this profession.

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