

of opportunities for self-regulation, healthy human attachments, and positive educational experiences.

The authors provide a clearly accessible description of the parts of the brain and its functions. Sample materials and activities embody the sense of adults enjoying and appreciating their interactions with young children. It is important to consider how play becomes integrated with wholesome brain development. In fact, the dynamics of play mirror the dynamic nature of brain development. Young children explore physical and human interactions through contrasting patterns of connections, and their brains function with synaptic connections across neurons. A dynamic view of early curriculum is an active, play-based curriculum. Movements and contrasts support perception and connections between objects, events, and self and others. Meanings emerge through such contrasting patterns and connections. At a time when families and educators have concerns about academic achievements, it is particularly relevant to nurture children's brains with their active, imaginative, and playful pastimes.

This readable, slim book is a useful supplementary text for early childhood classes as well as a helpful resource for caregivers and teachers. Parents of young children could appreciate the many activity ideas, adaptations, and children's literature references. The book is devoid of either cuteness or lock-step approaches. It is a balanced accounting of the specific connections between accessible details about the brain, the brain's development, and active, engaging experiences for young children. It provides a refreshingly authentic respect for the unique competencies of

infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergarten and primary age children.

—Doris Pronin Fromberg, *Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY*

**What the Children Told Us:
The Untold Story of the Famous
“Doll Test” and the Black
Psychologists Who Changed
the World**

Tim Spofford

Naperville IL: Sourcebooks, 2022.

Foreword, acknowledgments, appendix, notes, select bibliography, about the authors, index. 368 pp. \$14.89. hardcover. ISBN: 9781728248073

The book cover features a widely recognized photo taken by the renowned photographer, Gordon Parks, that is associated with the doll choice studies. Along with the title, *What the Children Told Us*, this helps author Tim Spofford lure the reader and mounts their expectations to hear from the children who participated in Kenneth and Mamie Clark's iconic doll choice studies. Who were they? What do they remember? Do they regret their doll preference? How did it impact their lives? For those who snuggle in their chair with a book in hand, disappointment will soon follow the prologue, but, hopefully, not for the totality of the book.

In the field of social sciences and communications, generally speaking, Kenneth and Mamie Clark have been wedded to the doll choice paradigm; in *What the Children Told Us*, Spofford weds them to each other. He offers a biographical sketch

of their lives as college students who met and fell in love and as a professional couple who negotiated the challenges of romance, family, parenthood, and general wellness. The book is divided into three parts denoting significant transitions and accomplishments in their lives, and it essentially ends with Mamie's death in 1983. It is complemented by an epilogue that provides a broad-stroke summary of the more than two-decades-long period in which Kenneth survived his wife, recounts their impact in advancing public conversations and research on children's racial identity development, and acknowledges criticism of their work levied by other respectable scholars, namely William Cross. Twelve discussion questions invite the reader to interrogate the life and career decisions of Kenneth and Mamie within the reality of their—and their children's—lived experiences of racial segregation. Finally, the reader gets to listen in on "A Conversation with the Author" as Spofford shares a Q&A about his process and reflections. Feminists will appreciate Spofford's illustration of Mamie as her husband's intellectual equal whose master's thesis served as the impetus for the doll choice studies.

This book explicates Kenneth and Mamie's intellectual development through their collegial and mentor relationships with individuals such as Francis Sumner of Howard University, a student of G. Stanley Hall and the first African American to receive a doctorate in psychology. Sumner introduced them to Alfred Adler's theoretical tenet of the "inferiority complex." And later, the Clarks influenced Otto Klineberg of Columbia University, a student of Franz Boas. Klineberg's generation represented a group of scholars whose

work "undermined the quackery behind white supremacy" (p. 48), especially pertaining to race as a biological correlate of intelligence and social inferiority.

Spofford provides insight into Kenneth and Mamie's motivation for conducting, publishing, and general use of the doll choice studies. He notes the irony of their five-year deferment to publish their research until after the findings had been successfully tethered to a public relations campaign to bolster Mamie's 1946 establishment of the Northside Center for Child Development in Harlem. The center was a byproduct of Mamie's persistence in carving out space for her life's work and her discernment that "a blend of child psychiatry, remedial education, and social work was the best way to help kids who suffered the ills of a segregated society" (p. 207). Spofford highlights the impact of the Rosenwald Fund, founded by Sears tycoon Julius Rosenwald, as a granting agency that not only supported the Northside Center but also provided funds to conduct the earlier doll choice studies and absorb some of Mamie's graduate school expenses.

This book is more about how the doll choice studies shaped the Clarks' lives and how it elevated their public profiles, expanded their social and political circles to foster alliance and discord with some of the most prominent Black leaders of their day, and served as a gateway to other career opportunities and institution building that allowed them to project their "integrationist views on race, politics, and education" (p. 255).

Spofford notes, for example, that Kenneth and Mamie had "completed their [doll] experiment more than a decade before the Brown decision" (p. 195). It

was their public profile and steadfast integrationist stance—even as it would make Kenneth initially oppose his son’s attempt to establish a Black student association at Columbia University—that made them an asset to the NAACP legal team. Leaning on the legacy of their earlier doll studies, Kenneth conducted more with students from specific counties of interest to the NAACP. In addition, he shared a recently written paper he had prepared for the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth, established by President Truman to assess the mental health of the nation’s children. Kenneth included reports written by Mamie and reflective of the realities of the children she served at the Northside Center. Other initiatives for which the Clarks leveraged their name included the Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU) and the Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC), both aimed at improving the lives of Harlem children.

The biographical triumph of this book does nothing to move the needle on theoretical tenets of child development generally speaking or children’s play specifically. It, however, reminds us that children play and develop within a societal context that informs their understanding of self and others. It was Kenneth and Mamie Clark’s understanding of this that served as a compass for their life’s work as integrationists. Still, this book is valuable and needed. It contributes to the under-resourced biographical canon about the work and lives of Kenneth and Mamie Clark, two psychologists who changed our view of children’s doll play. While the doll choice studies are the most noted of their legacy, it was, as Spofford illustrates, “only their opening act in a lifetime of activ-

ism in Harlem and on the national stage” (p.xiii). This book reminds us, as history frequently teaches us, that our heroes the Clarks “were ordinary people who’d done extraordinary things and left a solid legacy” (p. 290). Still, I conclude that the title was not completely dubious. What did the children tell us? They said that racial discrimination hurts—they and our society. We must continue to strive for a more perfect union.

—Sabrina Lynette Thomas, *Duke University, Durham, North Carolina*

Peer Pedagogy on Digital Platforms: Learning with Minecraft Let’s Play Videos

Michael Dezuanni

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In Michael Dezuanni’s *Peer Pedagogy on Digital Platforms: Learning with Minecraft Let’s Play Videos*, we journey through an exploration of how contemporary digital platforms, particularly *Minecraft* and YouTube, offer children and young people fascinating new avenues for learning. The book, in its 224 pages, thoroughly examines “Let’s Play” practices, the videos, and fans’ reactions through comments and creative engagement with the Let’s Play culture.

Dezuanni’s lucid and engaging writing style breaks down intricate concepts, making them accessible to a wide range of readers. He introduces fresh perspectives