

The Black baby doll doesn't fit the disconnect between early childhood diversity policy, early childhood educator practice, and children's play ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full article PDF available for purchase online or through university database ^[2]

Abstract

This article explores how multicultural policy approaches, which mandate the inclusion of culturally and ethnically 'diverse' play materials in early childhood classrooms influence the pedagogical practice of educators and, in turn, children's play and social interactions. Using data collected through participant observation of children's play in a preschool/kindergarten classroom, interviews with early childhood professionals, and document analysis of a particular early years policy, we highlight the shortcomings of the focus on physical materials as the primary strategy for addressing 'race' and other forms of difference in early childhood education. Assumptions about children's play are examined and critiqued, with examples of children's play episodes provided to emphasize how play reproduces systems of power and oppression present in the broader social context. A number of recommendations are offered for both professional practice and the reconceptualization of early childhood policy.

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