

KaBOOM!: How One Man Built a Movement to Save Play

Darell Hammond

New York: Rodale, Inc., 2011. Contents, end notes, index, illustrations. 286 pp. \$24.99 cloth. ISBN: 9781605290751

Free play is a child's passion, and this book reaffirms that our society has not lost complete sight of this important resource in a child's life. A playground remains an important feature of the landscape, helping keep play front and center in the public eye. This autobiography by Darell Hammond, founder of the nonprofit, playground-building organization KaBOOM!, provides insight and inspiration to those working at a smaller, grass-roots level in playground design and research.

Hammond provides an excellent historical narrative outlining the beginnings and the ongoing success of KaBOOM!. He starts with his unique childhood at Mooseheart, a privately funded residential child-care facility in Illinois, and continues the story to the current day. The book covers the trials and tribulations of a start-up nonprofit and the growing pains that come as it expands and gains success. He communicates the advancement of KaBOOM! by chronologically recounting some of the numerous projects the group has completed and the inspirational people he has encountered along the way. Hammond shares his varied experiences with first ladies, a vice president, and the individual community activists associated with each of the projects KaBOOM! has completed.

Hammond's book focuses on the business aspects of his career, and this limits its usefulness for play researchers.

Throughout the book, he highlights innumerable profound moments I wish he had explored in greater depth. He accords the projects he identifies fairly equal amounts of the reader's time, which dilutes their individual significance. A deeper examination of fewer projects could have made this as an exceptional resource of case studies. Such an approach could also have provided additional insight into the constraints and opportunities of community participation and into the impact these projects have on building community capacity.

The book does not cover in depth the theoretical foundations of play and child-development theory. Nor does it present a connection between theory and the physical design of the playgrounds KaBOOM! installs. This is unfortunate, for research questions abound about the organization's projects, and it would be useful to know if and how theory affects the design process. Likewise, the book provides only a cursory examination of the physical evolution of the playground over time, concentrating primarily on the work of noted Danish landscape architect, Carl T. Sorensen and his introduction of adventure playgrounds after World War II. Hammond cites adventure playgrounds as the inspirational foundation for a new partnership program the organization has embarked on to promote loose-object play in the twenty-first century. The book, however, neglects alternate directions in play such as nature-based play opportunities which hold great promise for their contributions to child health and development and are sorely needed in urban settings and day-care playgrounds.

Hammond concludes the book by providing a detailed accounting of the

KaBOOM! process in his discussion called "Anatomy of a Build." He also includes a section in the book on how individuals can become more involved in the conversation and become advocates for play spaces. He encourages any one to become successful community activists like the ones he highlights throughout the book, and this advocacy and promotion of play in the public sector and our communities is Hammond's most valuable contribution.

—David J. Watts, *California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA*

The Anthropology of Learning in Childhood

David F. Lancy, John Bock, and Suzanne Gaskins, eds.

Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010.

Illustrations, bibliography, index. 483 pp. \$90.00. ISBN: 9780759113220

David Lancy, John Bock, and Suzanne Gaskins make an important contribution to our understanding of children's learning through a unique collection of eighteen essays written by archeologists, cultural anthropologists, evolutionary anthropologists, and linguists. This volume is noteworthy for its comprehensiveness including chapters examining the archeological record, nonhuman primates, traditional societies, and children's learning in adverse environments. The scope and depth of this work brings to the fore a variety of important, but too often understudied, aspects of children's learning. I highly recommend this book to scholars, students, and practitioners in the social

sciences, education, and human services. A few examples and key themes illustrate this book's importance and the rich discussions in its many excellent chapters.

Consider the material on children's learning emerging from an evolutionary context. Lancy, Bock, and Gaskins's anthropological focus on children's learning broadens our perspective of the evolutionary context of human learning. The lengthy period of immaturity experienced by humans is a product of evolution. Bock reviews the evolutionary ecology of childhood and how the history of adaptation plays out in various contemporary contexts. He argues that our physical maturation and cognitive development are interactively responsive to social, cultural, and ecological influences. Human history has led to learning in childhood that is broadly patterned and highly responsive to particular environments.

Next, let us look at the author's notion that the focus of children's learning is culturally shaped. An anthropological focus on children's learning deepens our appreciation of what it is that children learn, especially beyond the classroom or in other didactic contexts. The book organizes its focus of learning through culturally specific ideas about desirable learning outcomes. Sara Harkness, Charles Super, and colleagues, for example, describe how, in traditional cultures in sub-Saharan Africa, parents' concepts of children's intelligence tend to highlight aspects of social competence, including responsibility and helpfulness. Heidi Fung and Benjamin Smith examine culturally specific patterns of moral socialization and include Taiwan where care givers value children's learning of shame. Care giv-