

Kenneth Clark, PhD

Your Biography

You are Kenneth Clark, a psychologist, educator, and social reformer dedicated to understanding and eradicating racial injustice. You grew up in Harlem, attending the integrated schools of NY City, but attended college at Howard University in D.C. There, you met Mamie Phipps, who eventually became your wife, and with whom you authored numerous studies on the psychological damage caused by segregation and racism. You were the first African American to receive a Doctorate in Psychology from Columbia, and the first black permanent professor at City College of New York, where you still teach.

In addition to your excellent academic collaboration with Mamie, together you founded Harlem's Northside Center for Child Development in 1946, with the mission to “fosters the healthy development of children and families and seeks to empower them to respond constructively to negative societal factors including racism and its related consequences. Through comprehensive, high quality mental health and educational services, coupled with research, children and families are aided in developing to their full potential.”¹

In your most famous study (co-authored with Mamie), you presented four identical plastic dolls that different only with respect to color to black children between the ages of three and seven. When asked which doll they preferred, the majority selected the white doll. When asked to color in a drawing 'the same color' as themselves, most of the black children choose yellow or white crayons. You concluded that “prejudice, discrimination, and segregation” had caused the children to develop a sense of self-hatred and inferiority.

The study become something of a sensation, and it is still included in most introductory psychology textbooks. It's effects, however, were much more profound than that.

In 1950, You (Kenneth), wrote a summary of the paper for the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth. The summary was read, ultimately, by Robert Carter, who was one of the NAACP lawyers pushing the various cases challenging segregation that ultimately were consolidated into the pivotal 1954 *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision. The NAACP contracted you as an expert witness for at least three cases: *Briggs v. Elliot* (South Carolina), *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* and *Belton v. Gebhart* (Delaware).² You co-authored the summation that was ultimately endorsed by leading social scientists at the time when it went before the Supreme court.

Writing for a unanimous court, Chief Justice Warren stated

“Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does.”

Quoting from the appellate court (which actually ruled against the NAACP), Chief Justice Warren argued:

"Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system."

Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, this finding is amply supported by modern authority.¹¹ Any language [347 U.S. 483, 495] in *Plessy v. Ferguson* contrary to this finding is rejected.

Footnote 11, which supports the central finding of *Brown*, cites your 1950 memo “Effect of Prejudice and Discrimination on Personality Development.”

In the 1896 case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme court ruled that so long as railroad accommodations were 'separate but equal', the state of Louisiana was allowed to enforce racial segregation. The court reasoned that laws which kept races separated did not necessarily entail the inferiority of one to the other. Your study was pivotal in the Warren's court rejection of that idea.

Brown v. Board of Education was not only a milestone in the modern civil rights movement, it also made you into something of an academic superstar. You went on to become the most influential black social scientist of your generation. You received honorary degrees from more than a dozen of the nation's finest colleges and universities, but your larger goal of integrated, adequate schooling for blacks had not become a reality even four decades after the announcement of the monumental court decision.

In the 1960s, you helped establish the Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, a project that influenced President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty program.

Your many books include *Prejudice and Your Child* (1955), *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (1965), and *The Negro American* (1966).

Game Objectives

As an initial member of the Research committee, you'll be called upon to judge the scientific legitimacy and ethical acceptability of proposed research programs. You should make yourself familiar with the sections of the game book titled 'A Primer on Research Methods' and 'Ethics of Human Research'. Your gamemaster will give you an additional sheet outlining the responsibilities of members of the research committee in evaluating proposals. In the first year, you are likely to get a proposal to the research committee that proposes an experiment on a child. It is vital that you prompt the committee as a whole to seriously consider the nature of 'consent' in the context of power dynamics and social inequality.

Oppose the passing of the 'Leona Tyler principle', which states:

“As citizens, members of the APA have the right to advocate for any cause through the myriad of political advocacy organizations, but when psychologists and psychiatrists speak for the profession through APA public stances and proclamations, it should be from science and professional experience.

On occasion psychiatrists are asked for an opinion about an individual who is in the light

of public attention or who has disclosed information about himself/herself through public media. In such circumstances, a psychiatrist may share with the public his or her expertise about psychiatric issues in general. However, it is unethical for a psychiatrist to offer a professional opinion unless he or she has conducted an examination and has been granted proper authorization for such a statement.”

Get elected president. That can be before or after your symposium.

You are neutral on the **definition of mental illness**.

Specific Assignments

Organize, propose and participate in a symposium on the role of psychology as a mechanism of social change or more generally, on the social responsibilities of scientists, preferably in 1973. Chomsky and Marmor may be a good choices as a co-panelists. You should present a paper on psychology's role for social good. If you are elected president, it should be your presidential address. If not, it can be a part of the symposium.

In 1975, propose an affirmative action plan for psychology and psychiatry. Here's the *real* language. You should adapt it to your needs:

THERE IS a continuous need to increase the number of minority psychiatrists; the American Psychiatric Association has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the principle of affirmative action as reflected in its efforts of recruitment and training of minority psychiatrists. APA has previously developed and instituted policies recognizing and supporting the special mental health issues of minority populations; however, there are serious threats to affirmative action programs that have facilitated the following endeavors: APA reaffirms these commitments and policies by 1) issuing a public statement drawing attention to the potential deleterious effects that such threats pose to the delivery of health services to minority groups; 2) actively participating with other professional and educational groups to assure continued recruitment and training of minority candidates in medical disciplines; and 3) further exploring and developing, through its appropriate components, mechanisms to assure continued implementation of these commitments.

Must Read

Phillips, L. “Recontextualizing Kenneth B. Clark: An Afrocentric Perspective on the Paradoxical Legacy of a Model Psychologist-Activist” from *Evolving Perspectives on the History of Psychology*, Pinkren, W & Dewsbury, D.

Clark, K. (1971) "The pathos of power: A psychological perspective" *American Psychologist* 26(12) 1047-1057

Further Reading

Clark, Kenneth B. & Clark, Mamie K. (1939). The development of consciousness of self and the emergence of racial identification in negro preschool children. *Journal of Social Psychology, S.P.S.S.I. Bulletin*, 10, 591-599. [Available at psychclassics: <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Clark/Self-cons/>]

Clark, Kenneth B. & Clark, Mamie K. (1940). Skin color as a factor in racial identification of negro preschool children. *Journal of Social Psychology, S.P.S.S.I. Bulletin*, 11, 159-169. [Available at psychclassics: <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Clark/Skin-color/>]

Cook, S. W. (1957). "Desegregation: A Psychological Analysis." *The American Psychologist* 12: 1-13. [Presidential address at the Annual Meeting of the New York State Psychological Association, 1956]

¹ Quoted from <http://www.northsidecenter.org/v4/ourmission.php>

² See <http://www.will.uiuc.edu/community/beyondbrown/brown5cases.htm>