

CONTESTING EARLY CHILDHOOD



Series Editors: Gunilla Dahlberg and Peter Moss

***'Forming Ethical Identities in Early Childhood Play* is an extraordinary theoretical tour de force that traverses historical, interdisciplinary, and contemporary theories on play, ethics, and pedagogy. By contesting many of the implicit assumptions of the existing theories, Edmiston generates an important new theory and pedagogy for the formation of ethical identities in early childhood, premised on child-adult pretend play interactions.'**

Maureen Kendrick, *Associate Professor of Language and Literacy Education, University of British Columbia*

***'Forming Ethical Identities in Early Childhood Play* is a welcome addition to the literatures on play, moral development, and postmodern theorizing in early childhood education ... It is a terrific example of postmodern scholarship that does not sacrifice complexity for clarity and readability.'**

J. Amos Hatch, *Professor of Early Childhood Education, University of Tennessee*

Forming Ethical Identities in Early Childhood Play breaks new ground in three interconnected aspects of the broad field of early childhood studies: child-adult play, superhero play, and moral development. The author convincingly demonstrates through compelling examples why and how adults should play with young children to create with them a 'workshop for life'.

In showing how child-adult pretend play can form what he calls 'ethical identities', Edmiston contests many of the common assumptions about play and moral development. Aligning himself with those postmodern, post-structuralist, feminist, and Vygotskian scholars who have challenged dominant assumptions about early childhood, he draws in particular on Bakhtinian theory to argue that pretend play can create a social aesthetic space in which children and adults can co-author understanding and, over time, shape and form ethical identities. In a chapter on 'mythic play' Edmiston confronts adult discomfort over children's play with pretend weapons, as he encourages adults both to support children's desires to experience in imagination the limits of life and death, and to travel with children on their transformational journeys into unknown territory. The book's final chapter considers what early childhood institutions might look like if they applied the framework developed within the book to recognise play's potential as ethical pedagogy.

This book provides researchers and students with a sound theoretical framework for re-conceptualising significant aspects of pretend play in early childhood. Its many practical illustrations make this a compelling and provocative read for any student taking courses in Early Childhood Studies.

Brian Edmiston is Associate Professor at the School of Teaching and Learning, Ohio State University.