her predictions about the flood of boomer retirements on the horizon are now on hold, or so it seems. Naturally, older people hanging on to their jobs means that younger people are not going to get them or, at least, not right now. But, it may be that only the timing of Nazareth's predictions is thrown off. After all, the boomers have to retire—or die—sometime. But maybe the values of members of Generation X and Generation Y will be affected. After all, 2009 high school and college graduates face a bleak job market, one in which they experience the hypercompetition that Nazareth claims shaped the values of the boomers.

Nazareth's argument has merit, nevertheless, and those interested in the future of work and leisure should take a look at the book. Many will find it written in what might be called a breezy and engaging style. Frankly, I found it annoying and difficult to read. She uses anecdotes from apparent interviews to support numerous claims, but these wear thin pretty quickly. Sample sizes of one are never very impressive. Moreover, while she is careful to point out that not everyone has profited, or will profit, equally from economic cycles and generational changes, she has a tendency to homogenize people (e.g., baby boomer, Generation X, Generation Y). People in these alleged groups are not the same and do not all have the same attitudes and values. The sweep of her generalizations is often breathtaking.

Nevertheless, there is one thing that we can learn by reading the book. Making predictions is still hard, especially about the future.

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Forming Ethical Identities in Early Childhood Play

Brian Edmiston

New York: Routledge, 2008. References, diagrams, photographs. 224 pp. $42.50 paper. ISBN: 9780415435482

Part of Routledge's Contesting Early Childhood series, Brian Edmiston's *Forming Ethical Identities in Early Childhood Play* adds to the growing literature on the experience of classroom play. In particular, he explores some of the meanings of ethical relationships that are inherent in the social context of early-childhood classrooms. Unlike John Dewey, with his pragmatic notion about play and classroom community, Edmiston works from a dialogic perspective; play activities are where ethical identities are "authored" by the participants. Rather than seeing play primarily as a developmental phenomenon like Jean Piaget or Lev S. Vygotsky, Edmiston elaborates on the moral meanings that contribute to who players are as they create classroom play. This approach to understanding play adds a whole new layer to the sets of meanings that we can consider when we practice and study classroom play.

To support his argument, Edmiston takes us on a well-documented journey through classroom-play experiences. He begins with some familiar notions about imaginary play and then adds depth to them by seeing how pretend can be "everyday" or "mythic." It is in mythic play that children (and their teachers) begin to explore some of the deeper meanings that resonate in high art and literature and in popular culture. Pretend is not merely enactment of what is imagined;

it becomes part of how we begin to experience metaphor. Edmiston shows how the aesthetics of play draw children into deeper understandings of who their characters are and who they are as players.

As I read these chapters, I thought of parallels between this work and Vivian Gussin Paley's *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play* (2004). Edmiston and Paley share a great deal: the weaving of literature and culture into an understanding of play; understanding children's play relationships as they explore meanings; and seeing play as central to learning and classroom life in early childhood. What Edmiston adds to these ideas is rich and complex theory. Paley alludes to Vygotsky. Edmiston interprets his play case material with an impressive range of theories by Sigmund Freud, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Pierre Bourdieu, as well as Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, and others. This conceptual treatment of classroom play points to the complexity of play, and it provides a model for using multiple theoretical lenses for understanding what many see as simply play.

After establishing his argument, Edmiston provides more data and analysis to show how children deal with moral aspects of identity. His use of literature and literary characters as one source for play seemed to draw on Anee Dyson and her work on early literacy; in fact Dyson is one of many scholars that he cites. Rather than focusing on literacy, however, Edmiston brings to the foreground the contributions of players to their imaginary worlds. The quality of these relationships, the ethics of human relationships, is Edmiston's unique contribution.

In terms of topic, Edmiston is unique. In terms of the richness of his analysis and a complex use of theory, his work is reminiscent of a number of works of scholarship that explore the density of classroom play life. For example, in her work on gender construction in the classroom, *Playing It Straight: Uncovering Gender Discourse in the Early Childhood Classroom* (2005), Mindy Blaise conducts a highly theorized analysis of play to show the multiple ways that children contribute to their gender-role formation. Play is an important avenue for expression and development of gender in the classroom. Focusing on a different aspect of classroom play, Carrie Lobman and Matthew Lundquist see classroom play as improvisatory. In their *Unscripted Learning: Using Improv Activities across the K–8 Curriculum* (2007), they employ a range of theories to understand the expanding meanings of play. Edmiston brings comparable theoretical lenses to play, with a commitment to the rights and responsibilities of all players, including that all-powerful teacher.

Forming Ethical Identities in Early Childhood Play could be a powerful teaching tool for master's-level students. It could also prove useful for doctoral students who are striving to conceptualize the knotty world of play. Students of play should welcome this new resource.

—Stuart Reifel, *The University of Texas at Austin*