

# BOLD Ideas, ESSENTIAL Reading

## A World of Many

### Ontology and Child Development among the Maya of Southern Mexico

NORBERT ROSS

*A World of Many* explores the world-making efforts of Tzotzil Maya children from two different localities within the municipality of Chenalhó, Chiapas. The research demonstrates children's agency in creating their worlds, while also investigating the role played by the surrounding social and physical environment. Different experiences with schooling, parenting, goals and values, but also with climate change, water scarcity, as well as racism and settler colonialism form part of the reason children create their emerging worlds. These worlds are not made to believe or anything less than the ontological products of their parents. Instead, Norbert Ross argues that by creating different worlds, the children ultimately fashion themselves into different human beings—quite literally being different in the world. *A World of Many* combines experimental research from the cognitive sciences with critical theory, exploring children's agency in devising their own ontologies. Rather than treating children as somewhat incomplete humans, it understands children as tinkers and thinkers, makers of their worlds amidst complex relations. It regards being as a constant ontological production, where life and living constitutes activism. Using experimental paradigms, the book shows that children locate themselves differently in these emerging worlds they create, becoming different human beings in the process.

**NORBERT ROSS** is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Theater at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of *Culture and Cognition: Implications for Theory and Method* and the co-author (with Douglas L. Medin and Douglas G. Cox) of *Culture and Resource Conflict: Why Meanings Matter*.

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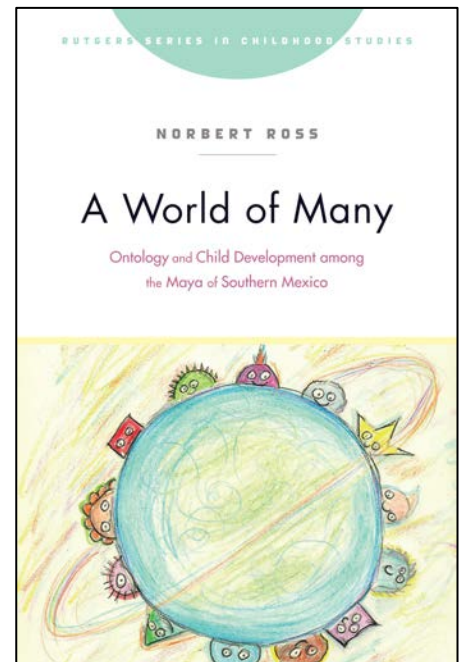
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