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TE WHĀRIKI IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Witnessing and Resisting Neo-liberal and Neo-colonial Discourses in Early Childhood Education

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This chapter argues that Aotearoa New Zealand is the place/space of neo-liberal and neo-colonial practices that shape childhoods, and analyzes the bicultural early childhood curriculum framework *Te Whāriki* as an agent that both witnesses and resists these practices. Early years settings in Aotearoa New Zealand work with and alongside *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). They resemble and relive the country's histories, and various shifts from Indigenous, through colonial, to free-market, contemporary neo-colonial, and neo-liberal realities. These shifts have not been smooth or easy progressions, but, as outlined in this chapter, they are complex stories of colonization and subjugation, dominance, partnerships, failed promises, and resistance. I argue that *Te Whāriki* has become a witness and a resistant force in relation to the neo-liberal turn that has been influencing educational policy in Aotearoa New Zealand since the 1980s (Codd, 2008).

As a colonialist settler state, Aotearoa New Zealand has a very specific history. *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (the Treaty of Waitangi) was signed in 1840, and embedded key principles of partnership, protection, and participation between Māori and the British Crown. Its principles have been disregarded in many colonizing practices, mostly by the white settlers, and the outcomes of colonization are felt still today (Orange, 2011). They continue in different forms and shapes, such as in the rising non-Māori population, and in the disadvantage of Māori and Pacific children in education, health or other benchmarks of Western measurements. In early childhood education (ECE), the development of *Te Whāriki* as a bicultural curriculum framework began in the early 1990s. This chapter argues that since this time the curriculum document has witnessed and created a framework for resistance to continuing colonizing and neo-liberal ideologies, which have brought a strong focus on economic structures and

individual rights, hegemonizing and globalizing practices, and deregulations to Aotearoa New Zealand (Dale, 2008).

Neo-liberalism and neo-colonization are “connected assemblages [that] allow us to rethink and open up early childhood research practices that attempt to pay attention to colonial past/present” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, and Rowan, p. 40). These assemblages play out through policies that recognize Aotearoa New Zealand as a bicultural nation (Lourie, 2013), and as an increasingly multicultural society. Bicultural policies in ECE, including *Te Whāriki* itself, exist in tension with multicultural, neo-liberal and neo-colonial realities. They are entangled in quite contradictory ways; for example, *Te Whāriki* maintains a strong focus on implementing the intentions of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* through the protection of the Māori language and by promoting awareness and respect for cultural rituals, stories, and practices (Ritchie and Skerrett, 2014). In addition, government subsidies support participation of Māori children in early childhood settings, and grant scholarships to Māori early childhood student teachers (Ministry of Education, 2014a). Such strong support of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is contradicted by simultaneous market-driven, neo-liberal policy shifts, for example, reducing the requirements for qualified staff and professional development opportunities (Dalli, 2010), both factors which affect the extent to which relationships and understanding of Treaty articles can be fostered.

In ECE neo-liberalism is particularly visible in its focus on economic growth, and in the growing numbers of early years centers built for profit, in response to the call for higher enrolments of very young children, in both Aotearoa New Zealand (Farquhar and Gibbons, 2010) and internationally (OECD, 2004). I argue that *Te Whāriki* witnesses and resists these practices, both in the non-prescriptive nature of its framework, which creates opportunities for various interpretations and responses to the economic and political contexts, and in its groundedness in bicultural philosophies. *Te Whāriki* and its development reflect the spirit of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* in the collaborative bicultural partnership that characterized its development, as well as its focus, and is unique to the context in Aotearoa New Zealand (May, 2013). Its flexibility and openness can be seen as reflecting the non-compulsory ECE sector that has been struggling for recognition within the wider field of education (Nuttall, 2013). May (2013) claims that there are many stories of *Te Whāriki*, reflected in its development, and trialed “from the ground up” in local communities and early childhood services, as a weaving of Western and Māori philosophies about the child, childhood, education, values, and the world. Rose (1999) argues that children and childhood are “the most intensively governed sector of personal existence” (p. 123). This is reflected in the curriculum framework *Te Whāriki* as it governs childhoods through its bicultural weaving. While the neo-liberal context positions the child as a competitive, individualistic consumer subject, *Te Whāriki* resists this by positioning the child as a biculturally aware, relational, non-materialist, collectivist subject. Both discourses exercise forms of governmentality, albeit in very different ways, and producing very different kinds of subjects. The specific bicultural agenda of *Te Whāriki*, as an instrument of governance based

in Māori and sociocultural philosophies, has been subjected to the hegemonic impacts of neo-liberalism and neo-colonialism.

This chapter traces *Te Whāriki's* performance of counter-colonial discourses, as it witnesses and resists governance embedded in neo-liberal and neo-colonial practices. First, the chapter outlines some impacts of colonization in Aotearoa New Zealand, making genealogical links to *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. It then explores current neo-liberal and neo-colonizing practices in the microcosm of ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand. Finally, the chapter examines how the counter-colonizing discourses in *Te Whāriki* resist the very practices that shape ECE, children, and childhoods in New Zealand. The chapter attempts to rupture the notions of one kind of intensive governance of children that Rose refers to, by challenging and unsettling contemporary early childhood “business as usual” in Aotearoa New Zealand, through an elevation of the already governing bicultural discourse inherent in the curriculum.

Colonization of Aotearoa New Zealand

Māori and Pākehā (non-Māori) contact already existed before the signing of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (Ka'ai, Moorfield, Reilly, and Mosely, 2004). In their research of these pre-Treaty times of the early nineteenth century, Jones and Jenkins (2011) uncovered unexpected stories and written traces through their archival project. They muddy the early colonial history of Aotearoa New Zealand, rather than replacing it with yet another layer of truth, as they write about the very first Māori-Pākehā written conversations, stressing the strong educational relevance of mutual conversations and learning in these early meetings. When Māori encountered the first act of writing, for example, Jones and Jenkins point out, that “the reciprocity Māori sought in the new relationship was, to a large extent, to be rejected” (p. 202) by the settlers. Despite Māori attempts to develop relationships, Pākehā were reluctant to do so. This suggests that, even prior to the Treaty, tensions were evident (Ka'ai et al., 2004).

The colonial history of Aotearoa New Zealand is marked by *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, and its articulation of the relationships and partnerships, between tangata whenua (Indigenous people) and the British Crown. *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* was not only about relationships and interpretations of its articles through the notions of partnership, protection, and participation (Ka'ai et al., 2004), but was also implicated in subsequent massive land transactions. Walker (1990) argues that, from the very beginning, *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* was based on signing different Māori and English versions. He further argues that the differences in meanings between translations, such as between the words “sovereignty” and “governance” were intentional, and that this translation was a political act of colonization, underneath the premises of the Treaty articles. Despite the Treaty having not been fully upheld, it provided the foundation for a bicultural nation and policies, and gives support for the retention of Māori culture in the Aotearoa New Zealand national ethos. Even though all non-Māori peoples living in

Aotearoa New Zealand are bound by the British Crown obligations under the Treaty (Ritchie, 2003), the continued erosion and colonization of Aotearoa New Zealand, *te reo* Māori (Māori language) and Māori tikanga (Māori rituals and practices), however, appear set to continue. Thus, although the Treaty has not precluded the full effects of colonization, the legal rights and obligations it sets out still exist and provide recourse for counter-colonialism, as is demonstrated by *Te Whāriki*.

Tracing *Te Whāriki* “histories of present” (Foucault, 1980) requires some investigation into how colonialism was performed in Aotearoa New Zealand, and how it caused dispossession and exploitation of Māori. With the early European settlers, came exploitations through sealing, whaling, clearance of the land, and farming. Walker (1990) argues that in Aotearoa New Zealand, “the outcome of the colonisation by the turn of the century was impoverishment of Māori, marginalization of elders and chiefly authority and a structural relationship of Pākehā dominance and Māori subjection. So total was Pākehā dominance ... that the colonizer deluded himself into thinking he had created a unified nation state of one people ...” (p. 10). Early acts of colonization may have included the performance of power as a physical force and legal domination; however, colonization was also enacted upon peoples' minds. Colonialist discourses disseminated thinking about Indigenous colonized people as either romanticized and “exotic”, as “noble savages” doomed for extinction, and very often as vilified wild and “primitive” beings, who needed civilizing and taming in order to be made fully “human”. As Said (1978) argues, the constitution of the colonized other justified these exploitations for the expansion of the Empire. Colonialist discourses, which constituted the white colonizers' subjectivities as “naturally” superior and dominant, and the Indigenous colonized others as “naturally” inferior, continue to shape the ways that both colonizers and colonized peoples understand themselves. In contesting such binaries, *Te Whāriki* demonstrates the counter-colonizing discourses through which its resistant role plays out, resistant to colonial domination but compliant with the spirit of the Treaty. *Te Whāriki* reclaims some of what had been dishonored.

The constitution of subjects and subjectivities (Foucault, 1980) in the early encounters between Pākehā and Māori is analyzed by Jones and Jenkins (2011), as they unearth and rethink early bicultural conversations and partnerships. They describe, for example, how Maui was returning on a ship with settlers and other Māori countrymen back to Aotearoa, singing waiata (Māori songs) and performing haka (Māori dance). Jones and Jenkins (2011) reproduce what Pākehā John Nicholas, who was on the ship as well, said about Maui: “it appeared to us as if civilization had cramped his limbs, and made him quite stiff and awkward”, as Maui struggled to join his countrymen after eight years spent in the West. The effects of civilization from the early beginnings thus led to colonization not only of the land and resources, but equally significantly, of the culture, body, and soul.

In her seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) elaborates on research by non-Indigenous scholars of this period, as

“travellers’ tales and adventurers’ adventures” (p. 8). Similarly to Said’s deconstruction of Orientalism (1978), she claims that they reproduced and constructed images of the “other”, and constituted discourses about far away people and lands, that romanticized, demonized, and, ultimately, trivialized and undermined Indigenous knowledges and spirituality. In return, through these images and tales, Indigenous people of the colonized lands constituted their own images of themselves. Aotearoa New Zealand lies within the settler colonial paradigm, which Veracini (2012) argues “is a globalizing and contemporary phenomenon” (p. 323), stating that “settlers inevitably displace indigenous peoples. Relatedly, even if they wish to free themselves of settler imposition, indigenous peoples operate within settler-colonial orders” (p. 328). Veracini (2013) further outlines “settler colonial phenomena – circumstances where colonisers ‘come to stay’ and to establish new political orders for themselves, rather than to exploit native labour” (p. 313). This is supported by Denoon (1995), who argues that “settler capitalist society had an irresistible capacity for destroying non-capitalist modes” (p. 131). The importance of *Te Whāriki*, as one such “non-capitalist mode”, is to act as a counter-colonial resistance to research in Aotearoa New Zealand, where “research that has perpetuated colonial power imbalances, thereby undervaluing and belittling Māori knowledge and learning practices and processes in order to enhance those of the colonizers and adherents of neo-colonial paradigms” (Bishop, 2011, p. 2). *Te Whāriki*’s unique structure and consultation process supports it in resisting these discourses. Instead of practices that inscribe “otherness” and perpetuate colonialist attitudes of superiority and inferiority, it promotes responsive and reciprocal relationships, inclusive practices, flexibility, Māori worldviews and ethics.

Neo-liberalism and neo-colonialism of Aotearoa New Zealand

Neo-liberalism has been operating in the West since the 1980s. This ideology continues to dominate the major political ethos of focusing on economic structures and on subverting the welfare state. The complexities of neo-liberalism reflect a new form of liberalism that is driven by a global elevation of capitalism and free markets, individual freedom, and economically productive citizen-subjects (England and Ward, 2007; Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard, 2007). From a neo-liberal perspective, the governed child-subject is seen as the economic future worthy of investment, as opposed to *Te Whāriki*’s promotion of a relational, non-materialist, and spiritual child-subject. Through deregulations coupled with increased governance – that is, where the discourses of individual choice and economic competitiveness replace government regulation as the primary form of governance – *Te Whāriki* witnesses local and global market and economic indicators that dominate and shape social and educational policy. The neo-liberal shift has been a major force on ECE policy in recent years.

In Aotearoa New Zealand neo-liberalism became increasingly pervasive with the introduction of Roger Douglas’s¹ economic policies in 1984. Based on notions

of Thatcherism and Reaganism, these policies became known as “Rogernomics”, were associated with large-scale state asset sales, and have strongly influenced educational policies since the late 1980s (Kelsey, 1995). Rogernomics policies also “enabled” massive numbers of women’s return to the workforce, and the corresponding rise in demand for early childhood services. This led to further concerns with policies and spaces that cater for children. These practices of economic and societal power thus permeate childhoods, and attempt to create expectations of ideal productive and measurable outcomes for all children. Neo-liberalism hides behind a curtain of egalitarian approaches, and equal opportunities for all. Its focus on individual achievements and competitive economic outcomes is completely counter to the complex thinking and kaupapa (knowledges, philosophies, and practices) of Māori. Traditional Māori philosophies are collectivist, not individualistic, as reflected “in the notions of *whanaungatanga*, representing both kinship ties and reciprocal relationships, and *manaakitanga*, representing hospitality, respect and care towards others” (Arndt, 2012, p. 29).

Neo-liberalism’s impact on early childhood education (ECE) in New Zealand

Early years centers in Aotearoa New Zealand are built on intersections of a colonial history, recent neo-liberal policy developments, and the growing number of business-oriented, for-profit early years centers (Farquhar and Gibbons, 2010; May, 2009). These conditions have been influenced by women returning to the workforce and the increased demand for more accessible services for parents. The landscape of early childhood in Aotearoa New Zealand in the past twenty years has shifted to one populated with an increasing number of private providers catering for increasingly younger children. The global movement that sees early childhood education as an investment for the future is represented in OECD reports about New Zealand. This notion of investment became possible through influential policies such as *Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education: Pathways to the Future* (Ministry of Education, 2002), which Farquhar (2010b) claims focuses on “the future economic health of the nation” (p. 51). As the Minister of Education writes in the preface of this plan: “If we are to build a strong future for this country, I believe we must firmly establish early childhood education as the cornerstone of our education system. Our social, educational and economic health can only benefit from efforts and resources focused on young New Zealanders. We cannot leave to chance the quality and accessibility of early childhood education” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 2). The plan was set for ten years, from 2002–12, and addressed concerns focused on the quality of ECE and care, a notion which is problematic in itself (see, for example, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 2007). As Farquhar (2010b) reminds us, such policies must be seen within the context of wider OECD policy documents, and their focus on investment in human capital, on increasing women’s participation in the labour force by encouraging women to work, and thus

utilizing early childhood and care services, as described in a 2004 OECD report *Babies and Bosses* – meeting the needs of working or having a career at the same time as having families. Furthermore, the 2002 New Zealand plan claims that “Although New Zealand ECE participation rates are high, some children are still missing out, often because families are not well informed about the value of ECE to their children’s development both in the present and in the future” (p. 8). This future oriented neo-liberal discourse posits children as subjects worthy of investment, and illustrates how Aotearoa New Zealand early childhood policies are influenced and shaped by international discourses.

One of the outcomes of the *Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education: Pathways to the Future* was the increased professionalization of the sector. An initiative involving large-scale investment into achieving 100 per cent registered (qualified) teachers in all early childhood services was eventually reworked in 2010, and reduced to an 80 per cent target of registered (qualified) teachers. Furthermore, this plan focused on the affordability of child care, in response to Māori and Pasifika children and families being disadvantaged. *Pathways to the Future* was formative in the direction of ECE, focusing on increased participation, raising “quality”, and collaborative relationships, targeting Māori and Pasifika participation, and an aim to “implement the curriculum (Te Whāriki) effectively” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 5). This document also introduced and paved the way for new regulations and funding criteria for the early childhood sector. The other major outcome of such policy developments, of seeing early childhood as worthy of future investment, continued in 2007 with the introduction of the “twenty hours free ECE” policy for three- to five-year-old children in licensed early childhood settings (licensed means, among other regulations to be met, that they are implementing *Te Whāriki* as a curriculum framework). The notion of “free” was heavily challenged and the policy became renamed to “twenty hours ECE”. From 2011, “teacher-led early childhood services can also ask parents for ‘Optional Charges’ within their 20 Hours ECE entitlement for the service having more than 80% registered teachers” (Ministry of Education, 2014b). What was, in its original form, a celebrated and welcome policy initiative, thus led to disappointment as modifications substantially altered its power to support high-quality ECE.

A recent report by the Early Childhood Education Taskforce (2011) expressed concerns that while “*Te Whāriki* is considered a model of best practice, nationally and internationally, ... [it] could benefit from a comprehensive review of its implementation. We recommend that this takes place as soon as possible” (p. 106), and, under recommendation 26, “a detailed, high-quality evaluation of the implementation of *Te Whāriki*, in particular focusing on its success for Māori and Pasifika children, children who have English as an additional language, and children with special education needs; and of the level and quality of the early childhood education sector’s assessment practices” (p. 106) is suggested. These recommendations further perpetuate recent neo-liberal calls for measurable

outcomes, prescriptive guidelines, focused subject knowledge, and assessment practices that prepare children for the future and for school.

Farquhar (2010a) argues that “the competent capable learner is now a child suited to the needs of capitalism; a flexible worker adapted to the ever-changing” (p. 139). Aotearoa New Zealand’s neo-liberal policies and reports, developed alongside international neo-liberal early childhood policies, have led to these significant shifts in ECE. These shifts can be conceived as the neo-colonization of childhoods and children by institutions such as the OECD, with outcomes that may or may not elevate minority subjects out of their marginalizing histories. There are no guarantees, for example, that children will be in good-quality settings, that women returning to the work force will end up in well-paid jobs, which can cover the ever-rising fees for increasingly privatized child care, or that improving Māori participation rates is actually beneficial for the children involved. Attempts to measure *Te Whāriki*’s effectiveness, as suggested by the Taskforce, need, therefore, to take into account the infinite intricacies and complexities implicated by neo-liberal and neo-colonial contexts, in which Māori and Pasifika children still have lower participation rates and higher exposure to risk factors such as poor health, higher rates of injury, and poorer outcomes from educational or health services (Child Poverty Action Group, 2014).

Features of *Te Whāriki*

Te Whāriki was developed in the early 1990s as a bicultural early childhood curriculum framework. Strong interest can be traced even earlier, to the 1980s, for the development of full immersion Māori preschools, called Kohanga Reo (Language Nest) (May, 2009). The development of *Te Whāriki* occurred in partnership with Māori involved in Te Kohanga Reo, in a weaving that is represented by the metaphor of *Te Whāriki*, as the woven mat on which “we can all stand” (Ministry of Education, 1996). The development of *Te Whāriki* involved consultations with communities, scholars, and early childhood teachers. This consultation process took place at the same time as neo-liberal educational policies were beginning to take hold of and to devolve social welfare ideals, in favor of competitive individualistic and economic priorities. In contradiction to *Te Whāriki*’s spirit and intent, in the twenty years since its development, neo-liberal ideas have become increasingly dominant in ECE in Aotearoa New Zealand, elevating notions of choice, accountability, individual responsibility, and a focus on economic growth and business investment.

The weaving metaphor of an inclusive mat is produced by the careful integration of Western epistemologies of the developmental and sociocultural discourses of Piaget, Erikson, Vygotsky, and Bruner (Ministry of Education, 1996), with Māori philosophical tenets, to guide a curriculum that is not dominated by one worldview of the child or of childhood. This weaving model of learning conceptualizes childhood and the child’s journey as multiple and intricate. It is a model

that links experience, development, and meaning and that focuses on both cultural and individual purposes. It accommodates diverse pedagogical approaches, and in this way it provides for cultural and learner diversity, and for bicultural knowledges and understandings. It encourages each setting and teacher to develop their own unique program within the framework, to suit local cultural traditions and environments, and to support and cater for children's interests and aspirations. The curriculum framework invites teachers to weave themselves, all children, their cultures, and settings into the curriculum, and it urges dialogue and reflection.

Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2011) weaves together four principles and five strands, following the spirit of the *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. The four principles are Empowerment (whakamana), Holistic Development (kotahitanga), Family and Community (whānau tangata), and Relationships (nga hononga). Arising from these principles are five strands, of Well-Being (mana atua), Belonging (mana whenua), Contribution (mana tangata), Communication (mana reo), and Exploration (mana aoturoa). The subsequent multiple goals are derived from each strand, and guide considerations for the practical implementation of the curriculum. The structure of the curriculum and its layers are focused on all early years settings, including Māori immersion programs and Tagata Pasefika programs, with an entire section, Part B, written in te reo Māori. Throughout the document, the text in te reo Māori reflects the intent and meaning of the English sections, rather than being a direct translation. The Western theories that underpin *Te Whāriki*, those of Bruner, Vygotsky, Piaget, Erikson, are woven together through the principles and strands, and the traditional knowledges of Māoridom and te ao Māori form the foundation of the bicultural weaving of the mat. A Māori worldview is not only respected, but it is also an influential foundation from which the outcomes for all children arise.

Te Whāriki's resistances

Te Whāriki offers holistic, communal, and respectful ideals. While it is not concerned with overarching grand narratives, it strongly promotes the importance of relationships between multilayered threads and stories, in the weaving of children, teacher, and families into the curriculum. It is interested in intimate and diverse experiences and ideas that destroy the smoothness of what might be seen as neo-colonial blanket statements and what Havel calls simple panoramas of everyday life (Havel, 1985). The brief historical glimpses above illustrate *Te Whāriki* as a weaving of Indigenous and Western epistemologies in a bicultural assemblage and framework, and demonstrate how its bicultural nature and the link to the Treaty give it the strength to resist the dominant neo-liberal and neo-colonial gaze.

Te Whāriki upholds and builds upon *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, and claims that it provides a framework for all teachers to “honour the guarantee of tino rangatiratanga (self determination of Māori)” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 82). In early childhood

settings this paves the way for teachers to consult with local Māori, the tangata whenua (people of the Land), in terms of the appropriateness of proposed practices, developments, and approaches. *Te Whāriki* states that decisions “about the ways in which bicultural goals and practices are developed within each early childhood education setting should be made in consultation with the appropriate tangata whenua” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 11). As Ritchie (2003) notes, there is an obligation under Te Tiriti, that teachers “protect taonga katoa (all things of value to Māori)” (p. 82), which means that the curriculum should incorporate te ao Māori (a Māori worldview), te reo Māori (Māori language) and Māori tikanga (rituals and practices) in an integrated way throughout the curriculum and not simply in one or two areas of play, or for a particular day, week or month. *Te Whāriki* thus provides a framework for governing child-subjects to become biculturally aware, by reframing the principles of the Treaty for implementation by early childhood settings. The challenge, then, is in individual settings' understandings and competence in implementing bicultural practices in non-tokenistic and authentic ways.

The fundamentally collective nature of Māori worldviews and beliefs captured in *Te Whāriki* put it at odds with basic neo-liberal tenets. Since New Zealand's 1988 “Tomorrow's Schools” policy, and the shift to a deregulation of education, there has been a push towards achieving higher standards through individual excellence, individual responsibility, rewards, and educational gains, through increased efficiency and management practices (Codd, 2008; Dale, 2008). *Te Whāriki's* weaving is the resistance to these pushes. Neo-liberal ideals particularly benefit a Western view of thinking and being, and elevate the individual and his/her economic value, above the collectivist orientations of kaupapa Māori. Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo and Rowan's (2014) argument that “situated neoliberal assemblages ... have colonizing effects on the capacities of certain bodies in certain spaces” (p. 39) can be seen within these marginalizations. Neo-colonialist discourses arising from Aotearoa New Zealand's colonialist geological/historical past thus continue to influence the way both Māori and Pākehā experience the world, including the different ways that they understand and engage with the curriculum framework.

From the outset, the consultation and development process of *Te Whāriki* embodied the collaboration and negotiation that is inherent in the relational nature of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, in te ao Māori (the Māori worldview). In-depth consultation with committees, writers, communities, and established ECE providers (May, 2009) demonstrated a strong resistance to demands for individualistic achievements and outcomes from the very beginning. The resistance offered by te ao Māori are, as Graham (2014) writes, reflected in the way that:

the question of “Ko wai koe?” (“Who are you?”) is seldom asked in Māoridom. It is considered to be rude or audacious as it requires people to

talk about themselves in reply. This goes against the principles of whakaiti or nohopuku, which require a person to be humble and to let others respond to the question. These principles are embodied in a well-known Māori saying, translated as “The kumara does not talk of its sweetness”. (p. 5)

Māori and Pākehā writers worked alongside each other in the development of *Te Whāriki*. The weaving of Māori philosophies of humility and tino rangatira-tanga through *Te Whāriki* as an ongoing resistance to individualized competition and achievement goals is demonstrated in Graham’s (2014) further statement about what encounters with settler others can mean for Indigenous people:

For some, this meant that we should be humble, while for others it meant that we should be silent. For others it signalled a possible need to change our philosophy, because if we did not respond, others would do so for us in ways that we did not agree with. (p. 6)

This reflects Graham’s earlier (1995) argument, that post-colonial texts may, on the surface, seem to decolonize Indigenous research, and to liberate Māori people. According to Graham, the actual field of post-colonial theory, however, has become filled with research focused on Western responses to Indigenous otherness, and therefore continues to marginalize Māori voices. In contrast, the collaborative research, writing, and consultation of *Te Whāriki* over six years followed a reciprocal research and learning process known as ako (a Māori understanding of the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning). This process resulted in the construction of the bicultural curriculum framework, which is written and constructed in both English and Māori. As already noted, the English and Māori texts are not direct translations of each other, but rather are treated as separate texts with similar meanings (May, 2013). The resistance to providing a direct translation follows a concern with translation as a colonizing act, as seen, for example, in the 1840 Treaty documents (Walker, 1990). *Te Whāriki*’s resistance to the act of translation therefore upholds and strengthens its resistance to the wider neo-liberal pressures, for efficiency, clarity, and sameness. In developing complementary texts that “speak to” and guide those that would be using each section of the document, *Te Whāriki* itself is the resistance.

Neo-liberalism and neo-colonialism infuse ECE with economic and social policies that, on the surface, appear to support biculturalism. An example is seen in policies promoting teaching of the Māori language in all educational settings (Lourie, 2013). Meeting the Graduating Teacher Standards set by the New Zealand Teachers Council (2014) can play out in arbitrary measurements of early childhood student teachers’ use of Māori words during their practicum, for example, or of displays in te reo Māori (Māori language) exhibited on a center’s walls. These practices, while intended to acknowledge and promote relationships with tangata whenua, are often simple performances of accountability and tokenistic

biculturalism and compliance. Such simplistic practices continue to marginalize Māori, their language and their knowledges, and work against the intentions and ideals of *Te Whāriki* as the metaphorical mat for all to stand on.

The story of *Te Whāriki* is a story of resistance to the repetition of colonial histories, through contemporary rising neo-liberalism and neo-colonialism. It honors Indigenous values and worldviews alongside Western knowledges, and creates a framework for non-quantifiable learning outcomes for individual children and groups of children. The resistance inherent in *Te Whāriki* lies also in its language and in the non-prescriptive nature of the framework. This has become increasingly significant as the political language of the era shifted from rights to risk and vulnerability, or, as May (2013) argues, “from investment in inputs to accounting of outputs”. Nuttall (2013) summarizes these concerns as ECE being “no longer seen as a public good but as a vehicle for risk minimization for government, now and in the future ... The language of *Te Whāriki* is not one of risk, vulnerability and competition. It speaks, instead of opportunity, respect and relationships” (pp. 2–3). Engulfed within neo-liberal and neo-colonial conditions, *Te Whāriki* still allows teachers to resist practices that mould, discipline, test, tweak, digitalise, approve, and surveil the child.

Te Whāriki’s witnessings

Graham Smith (2012) argues in the special issue of the *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* titled “Critical Conversations in Kaupapa Māori”, that “No one is pure in any struggle” (p. 18), and perhaps *Te Whāriki* is not either. As Ritchie (2013) claims, the Kaupapa Māori integration and respect of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* are critical to *Te Whāriki*’s standing, which was not only a first in early childhood, but “the first bicultural curriculum statement developed in New Zealand” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 7). While, on the one hand, *Te Whāriki* can be seen as a resistance to neo-liberal and neo-colonial tendencies, on the other, it is also a witness to the “business as usual” of the changing political and policy landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand. It is a witness, for example, to tensions between ECE as “care” rather than as “education”, and to the tension between considering early childhood workers as “babysitters” or “teachers” (Osgood, 2006), and, also to the OECD reports, that increasingly emphasize the economic measurability and value of investments in child care. *Te Whāriki* witnessed changes within early years education and early childhood teacher education policy, and its extensive consultation process and application across diverse settings is perhaps the reason that, even twenty years since it was produced, this curriculum framework remains mostly embraced by teachers, the governing Ministry, and academics alike.

Te Whāriki continues to witness a new performance of settlement in Aotearoa, and its increasingly multicultural and mobile, global society. As a document, it embraces these differences through its elevation of te ao Māori and bicultural practices. A constant flow of people moving “out” and moving “in” exemplify

the globalized world of the Aotearoa New Zealand settler colonial state, with, for example, more than 39 per cent of the population in the largest city, Auckland, born overseas (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). *Te Whāriki* acts as a counter-colonialist document in this context, by continuing to bring Māori perspectives to the fore of educational theory and practice, in line with the original intentions of the signatories of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*.

Notions of power and the legitimization of particular discourses within neo-liberal and neo-colonialist contexts can be explained through a traditional notion of top-down power, and ground-up resistance, as further complicated by Havel's (1985) notion of the intersections of power. Havel's perspective is similar to that of Foucault (1982), as it considers power to be productive, interactive, and diffusing. *Te Whāriki* is one of those intersections: As a witness to the era in which it was developed and implemented, and as an act of resistance, through its performance and framing of a bicultural curriculum. *Te Whāriki*'s complex developments through conversations and meetings, draft documents, and sector input, play out the intersections of productive power and power relations that created a curriculum framework which weaves Māori philosophy into the early childhood experiences of all children. Havel (1985) argues that there are thousands of points of intersections of power, and interactions of those with and without power. In his sense, the intersections are never clear, and each encounter of power relations is different. There is no static connecting line. Power, Havel asserts, is embodied in all encounters, all the time, just as *Te Whāriki* strikingly asserts Māori tikanga, te reo, and te ao Māori, in a powerful commitment to reconnecting with a Māori worldview, and to resisting neo-liberal and neo-colonial practices. As Rau (2010) argues, "Māori philosophy and Māori theories are ancient, real and Indigenous" (p. 26), and these notions are central to *Te Whāriki*.

Concluding comments

Te Whāriki is the bicultural Aotearoa New Zealand curriculum framework. It is an assemblage of various discourses that enable it to act as a witness and as a resistance to neo-liberal and neo-colonial contexts: a bicultural discourse, an educational discourse, a discourse of care, a neo-liberal/neo-colonial discourse, a sociocultural and a developmental discourse. It rises and falls on the basis of a fragile balance of the power of these discourses, and of its diverse audiences. *Te Whāriki*'s strength and influence place it within the dominant official discourse, as a national curriculum framework, and at the same time it elevates subjugated knowledges. This tension is essential to the privileged position that *Te Whāriki* has gained and maintained in the last twenty years, nationally and internationally, not only as an inclusive, flexible curriculum, but also as a framework for promoting bicultural attitudes and practices.

This chapter has argued that *Te Whāriki* has witnessed and resisted neo-liberal and neo-colonial practices in the everyday life and work of Aotearoa New Zealand

early childhood settings. Within the past twenty years, early childhood policies have accompanied neo-liberal thinking and neo-colonial practices, unsettling and uprooting the focus on relational, holistic, and bicultural early childhood systems, processes, and care. *Te Whāriki* has been a witness to these practices, and acted as a resistance towards policies and orientations promoting them. Since the early 1990s, the bicultural curriculum framework *Te Whāriki* has repositioned some of these spaces/places through its holistic thinking and child-centered focus, countering increasing demands for measurable, quantifiable outcomes and a narrow focus for teachers' practice and for children's learning. The temporality of neo-liberal and neo-colonial pressures reflects short-term commitments and outputs, and fleeting encounters with selected discourses, to which *Te Whāriki* is and remains a witness and continuous resistance.

Note

- 1 Roger Douglas (in office 1984–8) was New Zealand Minister of Finance in the Labour Government, leading the economic restructuring and policy developments.

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