

This article is taken, with publisher permission, from the Rethinking Series book: O’Loughlin, M. & Johnson, R.T. (2010). *Imagining Children Otherwise; Theoretical and Critical Perspectives on Childhood Subjectivity*. New York: Peter Lang. This chapter focuses on Ritchie’s research with early childhood educators who are committed to using pedagogies that support re-validating Māori individual and collective subjectivities and that have the potential for decolonization in Aotearoa. The reader is referred to the complete book that brings together a diverse group of influential thinkers who are forthright in their refusal to be seduced by simplistic binaries, who are willing to address the notion of childhood subjectivity in ways that are complex and critical, and whose arguments lead to practical advances in our thinking about child policy, child-rearing, pedagogy, and curriculum.

## **Mā Wai He Kapu Tī?<sup>i</sup> Being, Knowing and Doing Otherwise in Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa**

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Despite the onslaught of the re-colonising effects of globalisation, decolonising possibilities for early childhood education in Aotearoa<sup>ii</sup> are shaped by the particularities of our localised context. These include the comparatively recent history of colonisation, the strength and mana of the indigenous people, the Māori, the small scale of our national context as well as our sociocultural early childhood curriculum—Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996). Drawing upon recent research (Ritchie, 2002; Ritchie & Rau, 2006), this chapter will consider the potential for re-validating Māori individual and collective subjectivities within early childhood settings where educators are strongly committed to transforming their practice.

### **Context**

Pedagogical theorising within the context of Aotearoa is an endeavor fraught with ongoing postcolonial tensions. The British colonisers of this country not only de-valued the knowledges and languages of the indigenous Māori, but in their haste to appropriate lands and reproduce a neo-Europe (King, 2003), they

committed ongoing travesties of justice in breach of the 1840 Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) that they had initiated in order to legitimise their settlement. In their haste to secure Māori assent, they pledged to protect not only Māori lands, but everything of value to Māori, along with providing an assurance that Māori would be treated as equals of British citizens.

Cultural historian Michael King (2003, p. 25) referred to the “inherent self-ishness, hubristic sense of superiority and unrivalled capacity for manipulation” of the coloniser mindset. The term “Māori” itself is a construct of colonisation (Mead, 1996), which has homogenised particular whānau, hapū, and iwi (extended families, sub-tribes and tribes) “under one totalising label” (p. 107). This is reflective of Levinas’ view of a “self-centred, interested, and dominating consciousness,” foreclosing any attempts to genuinely know the Other (in Peperzak, 1993, p. 19). The Pākehā assumption of white racial superiority is well documented in a catalogue of overt and covert racism within education, the media, and elsewhere (Ballara, 1986; Belich, 2001; Simon & Smith, 2001). How bewildered and betrayed Māori must have felt when these purportedly honourable arrivals repeatedly and arrogantly disregarded the agreement that had facilitated their burgeoning presence. So rapid was the onslaught of Pākehā immigration that within 18 years of signing the treaty, Māori had been reduced to minority status within their own country, the majoritarian ‘democracy’ of the settlers ensuring the ongoing marginalisation of Māori. Since traditional Māori conceptualisations of relationships were genealogical, Māori had conceptualised the treaty as unifying Māori and Pākehā as ‘friends’:

The unity of a notional shared genealogy which Māori offered Pakeha implied a shared culture. The tie that bound them into political kinship was aroha, ‘love’ in the sense of the warmth and duty of care owed to family. ‘Ka nui toku aroha ki a koe,’ ‘great is my love for you’ was the commonest opening salutation in letters, whether to officials or family members. (Head, 2001, p. 111)

During the initial period following the treaty signing, Māori demonstrated their traditional values of aroha and manaakitanga towards Pākehā. Māori may have expected that the aroha and manaakitanga that they showed by selling lands to Pākehā would be reciprocated by a commensurate response from the governor in the form of policies which would protect Māori interests (Head, 2001), as promised in the treaty.

The New Zealand Teachers Council's recently promulgated new teaching standards include an expectation that teachers be required to "demonstrate respect for the heritages, languages and cultures of both partners to the Treaty of Waitangi" (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2009). Such steps though laudable, have a great distance to go towards transcending the pervasive ongoing legacy of postcolonial amnesia (Gandhi, 1998) that hinders efforts to validate and enact Māori ways of being, knowing, and doing within our education settings. In 2005, 53% of Māori boys and 46% of Māori girls left school with no educational qualifications (Flavell, 2007). Sadly, there has been a marked deterioration in the decade since 1996 when the equivalent statistics were 42.6% for Māori boys and 35.3% for Māori girls (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2001). Meanwhile, the New Zealand public is reported to demonstrate both ignorance and a lack of interest in issues pertaining to Te Tiriti and the rights issues that emanate from it (Human Rights Commission. *Komihana Tikanga Tangata*, 2002).

The early childhood education sector in Aotearoa has until comparatively recently remained outside of the regulation and compliances that have characterized the compulsory schooling sector (ages 6–16), and this positioning away from the government gaze had enabled a diversity of services to emerge in response to community needs (May, 2006). Prior to the development of Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996), the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, the early childhood education community had already demonstrated its progressive commitment to social justice through a range of policy statements honouring treaty obligations and Māori language and culture (Cooper & Tangaere, 1994; Cubey, 1992; Hawira, Mitchell, & Baxter, 1990; Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa Childcare Association, 1992; Working Party on Cultural Issues—Rōpū Hanga Tikanga, 1990). The curriculum document itself was the product of a Treaty/Tiriti-based partnership between Helen May and Margaret Carr, the Pākehā early childhood academics who lead the project, and Tilly and Tamati Reedy, the Māori academics who had been appointed by the Kōhanga Reo National Trust. The strength of the early childhood community's commitment, and the consultative partnership process employed in the writing of the document, somehow enabled this first bicultural curriculum document for the country to be promulgated during an era of neo-conservative government.

Despite its stated intentions of honouring the Māori language and culture, Te Whāriki's non-prescriptive style means that enactment is hindered by the enigmatic status of Tiriti-based early childhood practice (Ritchie, 2003a, 2003b). The overwhelming majority (93.1%) of early childhood teachers working in

services other than Kōhanga Reo are not Māori (Ministry of Education, 2004) and do not speak Māori or have an in-depth understanding of tikanga Māori. The Education Review Office (ERO) confirms that there “is still a need for considerable improvement in approaches to diversity” and that “provision for diversity of cultures needs to move beyond surface elements to a deeper understanding of how provision impacts on different cultures” (Education Review Office, 2004, p. 1). Interestingly, the ERO reports that

There was a strong correlation between the quality of provision of te reo and tikanga Māori and the provision for the differing cultures of families contributing to services. Rather than biculturalism and multiculturalism being alternatives, it appears that attention to one had positive benefits for the other. (Education Review Office, 2004, p. 11)

This suggests that decolonising strategies for indigenous people extend to transformative possibilities for other marginalised peoples, as educators release themselves from working within a paradigm that uncritically privileges the normative, universalising, dominant, and coloniser culture.

### **Researcher Positionality**

In the decade since Te Whāriki was released, I have been researching its application in terms of Tiriti-based expectations for kaupapa Māori to be integrated within early childhood programmes. I came to this research as a Pākehā teacher (with Jewish ancestry) who had taught in kindergartens in predominantly Māori communities, having worked subsequently as a counselor with families struggling to maintain their dignity in difficult circumstances. Since focusing on anti-racism education for my Masters dissertation in 1989, I have maintained a commitment to delivering anti-racism and Tiriti o Waitangi education within early childhood teacher education and the wider community. I consider that Pākehā who have the authority and privilege of educators and researchers have an ethical responsibility to address the issue of the roaring white silence surrounding the ongoing institutional racism within our education and research settings (Sleeter, 1996).

I have been mindful of the potential for abuse that attaches to the powerful role of educator and researcher in this context of ongoing imbalance, pain, and tension resulting from our colonial history (Smith, 1999). Acknowledging the insidious power effects (Ritchie, 2005) underlying the hegemonic dominance of

white (or in Aotearoa, Pākehā) culture as a “cultural terrain” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 234) can enable us to critique ways in which the assumption of the mandate to define ‘normality’ throughout key institutions has re-located Māori as ‘Other’ outside of decision-making sites. Analysing the construction of whiteness, its location of privilege and its culturally normative function are key components for reconceptualising anti-racist and decolonising approaches (Frankenberg, 1993).

However, to remain within the polarised binary boundaries generated by universalising terms such as ‘whiteness’ is limiting our understanding of the complexities and possibilities. An alternative cartography is sought for our journeying, one which nevertheless disrupts the privileging of white western values and assumptions (Chubbuck, 2004). As we move beyond dichotomized positions of “white” and “other,” into “third spaces” (S. May, 1999; McLaren, 1995; Meredith, 1998), we may need to cautiously sidestep pitfalls of cultural essentialism, mindful of the power that we have as educators and researchers to reinscribe meanings (Smith, 1999), and influence definitions of culture and identity. We are reminded to consider “Who has the power to exercise meaning, to create the grid from which Otherness is defined, to create the identifications that invite closures on meanings, on interpretations and traditions?” (McLaren, 1995, p. 213). As we tiptoe into complex cultural territories, negotiating cultural terrains, not just our own but other people’s, our motivation most certainly needs to be ethically guided and constrained:

As educators we need to be exceedingly cautious about our attempts to speak for others, questioning how our discourses . . . position us as authoritative and empowered speakers in ways that unwittingly constitute a reinscription of the discourse of colonization, of patriarchy, of racism, of conquest. (McLaren, 1995, p. 224)

The potential for this ‘unwitting’ appropriation is clearly an issue, even or perhaps particularly, in theorising and research that is framed as having an intent towards moving beyond colonisation. Researching in partnership with Māori colleagues has been a pathway in which space is generated for Māori voices and knowledge. Reflexive and politically charged dialogue has enabled the problematising of tensions as they emerge (Ritchie & Rau, 2005; Smith, 1999). This process involves for me as a Pākehā, a trusting receptiveness to being challenged by Māori colleagues, a willingness for ongoing self-critique, and the honesty to acknowledge and shift beyond ingrained patterns of cultural

dominance (Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

This chapter will explore some of the possibilities for early childhood pedagogies that may have potential for “decolonizing discursive aspects of the internalization of colonial ways of being” (O’Loughlin, 2005, p. 7), enabling tamariki Māori to access subjectivities affirming the knowledges that are their birthright (Mead, 1998, cited in Joseph, 2007).

### **Postcolonial Relinquishments**

Postcolonial challenges require problematising of dichotomised colonialistic notions: “Superiority? Inferiority? Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?” (Fanon, 1968, p. 231). Freed from such simplistic mechanisms as dichotomies, we now wallow in murky complexities, de-, re-, and again de-constructing our shaky philosophical frameworks. Emmanuel Levinas states, “The greatest virtue of philosophy is that it can put itself in question, try to deconstruct what it has constructed, and unsay what it has said” (Levinas & Kearney, 1986, p. 22). In our endeavour to shift our horizons beyond the constraints of the colonising gaze assumed by western academics (O’Loughlin, 2005), we are beginning to relinquish the positivistic scaffolds that have provided our foundations, instead embracing intuitive holistic ways of knowing that transcend concretised representations and categorisations. For Levinas, “to take on responsibility for the Other, ethics, and to take on the Other’s responsibilities, justice, is to enter into a sacred rather than an ontological or epistemological history” (Cohen, 1987, p. 24). This breaks with western positivistic secularity and individualistic endorsement of egocentrism, our focus shifting to “my responsibility for the other person, without concern for reciprocity, in my call to help him gratuitously, in the asymmetry of the relation of one to the other” (Levinas, 1988, p. 165). Part of this relinquishment is a release from seeking to know the other:

The relationship with the other is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion, or a sympathy through which we put ourselves in the other’s place; we recognise the other as resembling us, but exterior to us; the relationship with the other is a relationship with a Mystery. (Levinas, 1987, p. 75)

Postcolonial provocation seeks an ethical paradigm “for the possibility of thinking our way through, and therefore, out of the historical imbalances and

cultural inequalities produced by the colonial encounter” (Gandhi, 1998, p. 176). Perhaps it is at the micro-level of individual interaction between educators and children/families that we may find this ethical response, in interactions founded on respectful acceptance of alterity. This ethics of alterity releases us from the modernist agenda of seeking to know, to achieve the satisfaction of certainty, the comfort of control. For Levinas, “If one could possess, grasp and know the other, it would not be the other. Possessing, knowing, and grasping are synonyms of power” (1987, p. 90).

In Aotearoa, the validation of indigeneity by our early childhood curriculum provides an opportunity, a doorway, through which educators may embark on journeys of receptivity towards the histories and cultural knowledges that young children and their families/whānau represent. Whilst some Māori are understandably critical of essentialising, tokenistic representations of their culture (G. Smith, 1990, 1997; L. Smith, 1999), the potential exists for early childhood educators to make connections with children’s and families’ known and unknown stories, their deeply buried “latent historical subjectivities” (O’Loughlin, 2005, p. 26). Some clues to retrieving these stories may be found in the enactment of spiritual rituals of encounter such as the karakia and waiata of pōwhiri which may act as bridges to generate a sense of spiritual inter-connectedness and well-being between disparate and mysterious ‘others,’ as well as validating Māori subjectivities and identities (Durie, 1997) through “memorial reconstruction” of traditional rituals (O’Loughlin, 2005, p. 28).

### **Voices of Early Childhood Educators**

The voices in this chapter are those of early childhood educators and academics, Māori and Pākehā, who strive to honour and affirm kaupapa Māori perspectives in their work. They are drawn from two recent studies (Ritchie, 2002; Ritchie & Rau, 2006).<sup>iii</sup> Both studies employed narrative and kaupapa Māori research methodologies (Janesick, 1998; Richardson, 1997; Smith, 1999), involving co-theorising hui with participants to interrogate meanings and theoretical constructions. In both studies, interviews were conducted with individuals and groups of early childhood educators and pre- and in-service teacher educators, participants sharing their experiences of their journeys as early childhood educators committed to Tiriti-based early childhood practice. Emergent research processes modeled partnership between Māori and Pākehā researchers and participants/co-researchers (Ritchie & Rau, 2005; Rau & Ritchie, 2005). Whilst kaupapa Māori methodologies honour Māori processes, respect and affirm Māori knowledges, and are responsive to Māori priorities, Māori leadership

within bicultural research partnerships is important to safeguard Māori interests (Ritchie & Rau, 2005; Smith, 1999).

During my doctoral research (Ritchie, 2002), which focused on the early childhood teacher education programme in which I taught, I found that as an insider-researcher, I was surrounded by emerging, competing, and complex multiple subjectivities—my own and those of colleagues who had agreed to support my research. Commenting on a particular discussion section in the first draft of my dissertation, one of my supervisors suggested that I identify any unexpected findings or “surprises” that had emerged as a way of transcending hegemonic insider propensities for seeing what I already knew.

At a co-theorising hui with Māori participants, the concept of a whanaungatanga approach (Ritchie, 2003b) had emerged as a useful paradigm for early childhood teachers’ implementation of Tiriti-based practice. Also at this hui, I remember the anguish behind Kiri’s concern that Pākehā early childhood teachers should represent things Māori to her children. The worst thing that can happen is that there’s a Pākehā who stands to represent me on behalf of me and the way I see the world. For me as a young Māori mother, the message is that that Pākehā knows more about being Māori than I ever could, therefore I failed straight away . . .

The curriculum expectations in line with Tiriti obligations may well be positioning educators who lack either the requisite historical and political analysis or the cultural and linguistic capacity within situations where tensions are such that they may retreat from the commitment to the honouring of kaupapa Māori that social justice dictates. We need to consider what may enable non-Māori educators committed to utilising Māori language, stories, and knowledges in their education programmes, to transcend the arrogance of their inherited colonialistic hubris, and manifest instead a demeanour that is genuinely empathic, engendering “deep existential encounters” and “revivifying experiences” (O’Loughlin, 2005).

Kiri nevertheless saw important validation of Māori knowledges within the Te Whāriki curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 1996) as providing legitimation for her work in teaching tikanga and reo to students often resistant and doubtful of the importance of this kaupapa:

The other thing is for Pākehā students is Te Whāriki makes what you do, or the Māori things you do, real. Whatever



you're doing in class and when you do link it to Te Whāriki,  
"Oh okay, it's real then."

Te Whāriki, in this view, is re-validating for Pākehā eyes, what for Māori is intrinsic to their world view and well-being—their ways of being, knowing, and doing (Martin, 2007) embodied in, enacted, and expressed through te reo Māori, the Māori language (Pere, 1982, 1991).

A recent survey found that only 1% of non-Māori early childhood teachers use the Māori language more than 30% of their teaching time (Harkess, 2004). Although 75% of Pākehā early childhood teachers use some Māori whilst teaching, 70% of these teachers described themselves as speaking Māori "not very well" (Harkess, 2004). Māori participants in the doctoral study prioritised correct use of te reo, finding it offensive when Pākehā mispronounced children's names, and expecting students to work at attaining these competencies.

### **Whakawhanaungatanga— Building Relationships**

In the recent study (Ritchie & Rau, 2006), my colleague Cheryl Rau and I worked with a range of educators to explore and illuminate pedagogies that reflect a commitment to whanaungatanga, encouraging whānau Māori to feel a sense of belonging within early childhood centres enacting Tiriti-based practices. Māori women educators demonstrated mana wahine, leadership, reflection, and resilience as they struggled to enact kaupapa Māori understandings within Pākehā-dominated early childhood centres (Rau, 2007). Pākehā educators shared stories of journeys of change, in which they traversed boundaries and relinquished previously venerated practices in response to challenges that came from Māori with whom trusting relationships had been forged (Ritchie, 2007).

An example of commitment to an ongoing journey of change is seen in the work of Penny with her colleague Linda, both Pākehā kindergarten teachers. They had slowly implemented changes to their programme over a number of years, aligning their centre practice with its philosophy of 'whakapiripiri mai,' 'manaakitanga' and 'rangimarie.' For Penny, being respectful, reflective, and responsive to input from whanau Māori had meant that she had gradually, but profoundly, transformed her kindergarten practice. She had conceded to having a formal mattime at the start of the session, despite her reluctance to relinquish her prioritising of children's valuable free-playing time, in concession to tikanga Māori requirements for welcoming rituals of whakawhanaungatanga.

I think kindergarten's such a Pākehā institution and very clinical compared to the Māori way of supporting each other and that's a barrier that I've been trying to break down for a long time. And it only works because we treat everybody equally, as far as everybody gets welcomed, everybody is greeted. And our little Somali children, we'll greet them in their Somali way but we also use 'Kia ora.'

At first reading, this statement may seem to be a simplistic inversion of the status quo in that Māori greetings have replaced English ones. However, when placed in the context whereby historically, state education provision has normalised Western values and practices, thereby othering and marginalising those of the tangata whenua, we may see this stance of Penny's of respectful reinstatement of tikanga as a "re-normalisation" of things Māori. When Penny says she is "greeting everyone in a Māori way," she can be seen to be re-prioritising Māori ways of being and knowing. Sensitive to families' pressures and realities, Penny gently enacts a philosophy of manaakitanga:

I have no expectations of what a family should or should not give us because they have gifts and taonga that are not mine, and there's no ways that I can make them give them to us, so all we can do is make this place as warm a place as possible where they would like to spend time and if anything comes because they're here, then that's an absolute blessing and a real treasure that they've shared. So we share what we have with them. Our joy is just that their children are here and that they're prepared to share their greatest treasure with us, and we want to show them how marvelous their children are. So I'm very wary of being pushy about 'Can you come and do waiata with us?' 'Can you come and do that?' . . . To me, that's the Pakeha grasping and I'm very, very conscious of that. We're trying to do it the other way, 'What can we give to people?'

This reflects Levinas' acceptance of "responsibility for the other person, without concern for reciprocity" (1988, p. 165). For Penny knows that families will come to share what they choose to share, when they are ready, as relationships are built with trust, respect, and care. Whilst well-intended early childhood educational discourse has referred to 'using' families as a resource (Clark, 1995), there remains for me an underlying current of exploitation that is not rendered explicit until there is an examination of power effects couched within the

teacher/family dichotomy and notions of professional responsibility.

Integral to Penny and her colleagues' enactment of manaakitanga is their morning welcoming ritual, which includes karakia and waiata, the spiritual incantations and song that, for Māori, invoke a sense of spiritual well-being derived from connecting with ancestral collective consciousness.

### **Te Whāriki and Enactment of Māori Epistemologies**

Te Whāriki is unique in its validation and articulation of Māori epistemologies. The concept of wairua is central to explanations provided by Tilly Reedy (1995), one of the writers of Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum:

This dimension deals with power and a sense of oneness with the Universe. The student learns that all things are part of the Universe; that all matter is made up of the same forces. The past, present, and future are sources of trust, confidence and self-esteem; that internal questions about atua/gods and their place in the Universe are challenges for the mind to explore; that tradition, religious beliefs, philosophy, and modern science are not necessarily incompatible. (pp. 19–20)

Within a Māori worldview, spirituality is integral to learning, since knowledge is gifted from the gods. Hinengaro is described as the power of the mind to seek understandings (Reedy, 1995). Karakia are a vehicle for connecting learning with the spiritual domain (Marsden in Royal, 2003). Reedy (1995) explains that

“To meet these needs the Māori mind developed the very useful tool of karakia/incantation and affirmation. The karakia imprints within the mind and being of the person, the ability to focus on the purpose at hand which may be to seek help for someone, themselves, a job, or to help achieve some goal.” (p. 19)

Marsden (in Royal, 2003, p. 174) places mauri as pre-eminent within all creation, defining it as the “life-force which generates, regenerates and upholds creation . . . giving creation its unity in diversity. It is the bonding element that holds the fabric of the universe together.” Hohepa Kereopa (cited in Moon, 2003, p. 92) also views mauri as a spiritual undercurrent of extreme significance, stating that “What matters is the mauri. . . . Without that mauri

there is nothing. . . . It is all about mauri. That is what people have forgotten.”  
Mauri is what gives karakia (incantations) their impact:

Because if I just say the words of a karakia without any mauri, then it has no impact. It’s just words, nothing else. The whole community needs to feel what the mauri of a karakia is. It’s not just about knowing about karakia, it’s knowing about the force, the life-force of karakia that makes it happen. If you just learn a karakia, maybe because someone has asked you to, and you have no feeling for it, then that karakia has no value. It’s just words. (Kereopa cited in Moon, 2003, p. 93)

Marsden concurs that the route to kaupapa Māori epistemologies cannot be via “abstract interpretation. . .

The way can only lie through a passionate, subjective approach” that recognises that the act of existing is “fragmentary, paradoxical and incomplete” (in Royal, 2003, p. 179). This impassioned, subjective, and collective worldview is in direct contrast with secular western epistemologies that claim legitimation through rationalised positivist identification of tangibles. Te Whāriki’s curriculum paradigm deviates from the New Zealand education system’s longstanding commitment to secularism (McLaren, 1974) in its honouring of spiritual well-being, via the parallel strands of Mana Atua/Well-being. Whilst Te Whāriki describes the strand “Well-being” as promoting physical health, emotional well-being and safety, Mana Atua recognises the mauri within people, other creatures, and inanimate objects (Reedy, 1995, p. 20).

Mana Whenua, which aligns with the curriculum strand of ‘belonging,’ is about “the development of a sense of sovereignty, of identity and a sense of belonging” (Reedy, 1995, p. 21). Tilly Reedy describes rituals that demonstrate a sense of connectedness between people and the land:

Because of these traditions, the spiritual unity of the child with the land, with its people, and with the Universe at large is as one; the sense of identity for the land of one’s birth is inculcated in the person; familiarity and love for the geographic features of home are learned and imprinted in one’s mind and love and respect for the land and its environment. The spirit of the land lives in the person; the physical and emotion- al identity with the land are

strengthened through myths, song, dance, and karakia; confidence and self-esteem are the outcomes (Reedy, 1995, p. 21).

For Māori, “Karakia and honouring the land from whence we derive our connectedness to this Earth and acknowledging the Great Spirit (Io Matua Kore) who created and presides over it and us, are a given in our lives” (Heta-Lensen, 2005, p. 77). Karakia, meaningfully enacted, invoke the mauri and wairua, the interconnectedness of people with their ancestors and their specific environmental context, engendering a sense of spiritual safety, identity, belonging, and well-being for the people concerned. The practice of karakia provides a vehicle for early childhood programmes to integrally reflect and resonate these concepts. Miria, a Māori Playcentre educator, expressed her aspiration for her children to have early childhood experiences that resonated with connectedness to the whenua and the natural world:

Oh, I think my ideal of a fully bicultural Playcentre is that a lot of the time it wouldn't be at the centre. We'd be out, we'd be out at the beach and sit in the rivers, doing the real stuff, you know, eeling, cooking what you catch, looking after wherever you are. And I talk about as a child growing up and spending a lot of time at the beach and picking pipis and how we could ride our bikes around the streets. And, as long as you turned up for your kai, life was sweet. So what do you want for your children? It's so much the same. I want my children to swim and dive and ride kayaks and ride their bikes and play on the farms and get out and about and learn all these things. So I think fully bicultural means there has to be a huge connection to this land. And looking after what we've got.

Miria is here speaking of early childhood experiences which reflect and enact kaitiakitanga, the role of people in caring for the land, a value integral to kaupapa Māori philosophy (Mead, 2003; Patterson, 2000; J. E. Ritchie, 1992; Marsden in Royal, 2003), and one of increasing importance to us all in the face of encroaching destabilisation of the planet's well-being (Smith, 2001).

Integral to expression of manaakitanga is to offer nurturing hospitality to whānau attending the early childhood centre, such as the provision of a cup of tea. In Māori contexts the provision of kai is an integral part of rituals of encounter and spiritual safety, and enhances the mana of the provider.

Miria expressed her frustration with what she saw as the cowardice of Pākehā who failed to enact the Māori expectation to manaaki new Māori families, visiting an early childhood centre for the first time:

I try to tell the people in Playcentre to say 'hello' and to offer a cup of tea, because if our people don't feel welcome you don't get a second chance. If they don't feel comfortable coming through that door the first time . . . otherwise, they're gone. And that's a real problem with Playcentre because it is a Pākehā organisation, and it is the way of Pākehā people to not be brave.

In the earlier study (Ritchie, 2002), it had been reported that teachers considered offering cups of tea to whanau to be outside of their professional role. Yet in the Whakawhanaungatanga project (Ritchie & Rau, 2006), we found many instances of educators prioritising this kind of welcoming of families. Teacher education can play a role in increasing the courage of early childhood educators to enact kaupapa Māori values such as manaakitanga. An early childhood teacher education student, Kathy, related how she had acted on the suggestion of her Māori lecturer, Rona, that she might offer a visiting family a cup of tea, despite the misgivings of her centre supervisor:

I remember something Rona told us in year one or something, it was just that when she enrolled, when she started taking her son to Kōhanga Reo and they would offer her a cup of tea. It's just not something I had ever thought of doing because being in a kindergarten they drop their children off and they go and everything. Yeah, I just offered them a cup of tea, and my supervisor at first was really, 'Is that tea for us? Don't give it to the parent!' And I talked to her about it and she really understood in the end and it really opened up the relationship I think. Yeah, it really did.

Here a seemingly mundane and inconsequential offer of a cup of tea has become an instrument of transformation as Kathy, responding to her Māori lecturer Rona's articulation of the importance of manaakitanga, has demonstrated courage in challenging her early childhood centre supervisor's dictum that cups of tea should only be offered to teachers, not parents. Kathy articulates her understanding of the power of the ritual encounter of manaakitanga, as having potential to generate a sense of connectedness, building bridges between

teachers and families. As Marsden has written, addressing the dominance of Pākehā normative ways of practicing, which underpin the perpetuation of ongoing post-colonial injustices, “takes courage to understand and courage to implement positive changes. This will entail sacrifice, especially in the area of power-sharing. It will mean a commitment to the cause of Māori emancipation” (in Royal, 2003, p. 104). These educators are enacting Fanon’s (1968) challenge in putting aside hierarchical elitist binary notions of ‘professional’ versus parent, transcending traditional divides to share in rituals of encounter that symbolise mutual respect and an intention to nurture (manaaki) the Other.

### Conclusion

Unique in its commitment to honouring indigenous (Māori) ways of knowing, being and doing within mainstream early childhood education, Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 1996) provides legitimation for the struggles of educators committed to social justice and decolonisation. However, it is only through the commitment of educators to exploring the de-colonising possibilities of Tiriti-based pedagogies that tamariki and whānau in Aotearoa are able to experience early childhood education programmes that move beyond traditional colonialist models that are disempowering of Māori knowledges and people. Post-colonial thinking provokes the stripping of entrenched dichotomised hierarchical assumptions that have justified and obscured the exclusion and humiliation of Māori by educational practices/practitioners in this country. Dialogue and reflection are tools to expose the ongoing colonialist baggage that we continue to carry and perpetuate unless we challenge ourselves and each other on an ongoing basis. In Aotearoa, some educators have begun reconstructing canons of our western early childhood practice, to allow spaces validating of Māori subjectivities, re-forging links with traditions through enactment of rituals that affirm our interconnectedness as beings respectfully co-inhabiting this land.

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- i “Mā wai he kapu tī?” means “Who would like a cup of tea?”
- ii Aotearoa is a term that is used to refer to New Zealand, which honours the indigeneity of Māori as the tangata whenua, the first people to discover and colonise these islands. A glossary of Māori terms used within this chapter follows.
- iii We wish to acknowledge the funding of our project, Whakawhanaungatanga Partnerships in bicultural development in early childhood education by the Teaching & Learning Research Initiative Project, administered by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

### **Glossary**

Aotearoa is a Māori name for New Zealand. Aroha is reciprocal obligation toward kin. Hapū are sub-tribes. Hui are meetings. Iwi are tribes. Kai is food. Karakia are incantations. Kaupapa Māori are theoretical perspectives and educational practices grounded in Māori philosophy and expressed through the medium of te reo Māori, the Māori language. Mana is power, pride, and prestige. Mana wahine is the power, pride, and prestige inherent in Māori women. Manaaki means to welcome and nurture. Manaakitanga is hospitality. Mauri is life-force. Pākehā is a term for New Zealanders of European ancestry. Pōwhiri are greeting ceremonies, rituals of encounter. Rangimarie means peace. Tamariki Māori are Māori children. Tangata whenua are the people of the land,

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the indigenous people. Taonga are treasures, both tangible and intangible, highly valued by Māori. Te Kōhanga Reo is a community development movement which operates early childhood services run according to Kaupapa Māori (Māori philosophy) and where the language spoken is Māori. Te reo is the Māori language. Tikanga are the values and practices that are correct from a Māori perspective, enacted through customs, rituals, and traditions. Tohunga are spiritual experts/leaders/practitioners. Waiata are songs. Wairua is spirituality. Whakapiripiri mai means gather together. Whakawhanaungatanga is a process of relationship-building. Whānau are families, hapu are subtribes, and iwi are tribes. Whanaungatanga is the relationship between kin. The term refers here to relationship-building. Whenua is land.

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