

# Globalising Childhood: Assembling the Bicultural Child in the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, *Te Whāriki*

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**Abstract:** *In this article I use Te Whāriki as a site to critically examine the relationship between the discourses of childhood, neoliberalism, and globalisation. I argue that the bicultural child in Te Whāriki produces a neoliberal/global version of childhood in the context of early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. The bicultural discourse articulated in Te Whāriki operates on the basis of two separate domains. The structure of the document is binary, thus reinforcing essential difference with little space for the interweaving and exploration of 'difference'. However, Te Whāriki can be read in multiple ways; if the bicultural child is understood as an assemblage of discourses, it becomes possible to strengthen those aspects that foster a culture of engagement with difference. By providing multiple readings of the bicultural child, this article seeks to disrupt the production of a 'smooth' bicultural child by making the tensions and contradiction within the assemblage visible.*

## Globalisation, Neoliberalism and Childhood

Much of the sociological and geographical literature on macro level change has used globalisation as a framework for analysis (Beck, 1999; Harvey, 1998; Larner & Walters, 2002; Sassen, 1991; Turner, 2002); however, more recently analyses of large scale change have shifted to re-think the relationship between globalisation and neoliberalism (Larner, 2003a; Peck, 2004). Rather than using globalisation as a 'blanket term' for analysis, Peck (2004) for example suggests that it may be more useful to investigate how neoliberalism as a political rationality produces particular versions of globalisation in local contexts.

Analyses that focus on change in local contexts make it possible to gain a better understanding of the "globalising effects" (Larner & Walters, 2002) of neoliberal rationalities. A close examination of effects illustrates the tensions, contradictions and ambiguities that exist within hegemonising discourses that often appear 'smooth' and impenetrable, such as globalisation and neoliberalism (Bennett, 2003; Bratich, Packer, & McCarthy, 2003; Cruikshank, 1999; Foucault, 1994). Similarly, geographer Sue Ruddick (2003) argues for the inclusion of constructs such as 'childhood' that are often considered irrelevant to

analyses of large scale change. Ruddick suggests that ‘childhood’ is generally theorised at the local or national level. By investigating how childhood is transformed in the context of local/national versions of neoliberalism, it becomes possible to see how political rationalities reconfigure understandings within a global agenda.

To explore how contemporary childhood is transformed through globalisation and neoliberal discourses, I use *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum as a site for analysis. I argue that the tensions within neoliberal global rationalities are visible in the construction of the ‘ideal child’ in New Zealand early childhood education discourses. By problematising the idea of coherence and intelligibility, the assembled nature of the child becomes visible. Reading childhood as a political construct and as an assemblage problematises the notion of a smooth, unchallenging discourse of childhood. By making tensions and contradictions in the discourse of childhood visible, such a reading disrupts discourses that produce understandings of globalization and neoliberalism as coherent monolithic entities (Rose, 1999) – the smooth global neoliberal childhood that is presented in the *Te Whāriki* becomes visible as a veneer only.

My analysis focuses on the bicultural aspect of the child in *Te Whāriki* to highlight that the construction of this child is a response to the demands of governing in New Zealand. Rose (1999) puts forward an understanding of contemporary political change as the response to problems of governing which generates specific practices and techniques of governing. Neoliberalism in New Zealand thus differs from neoliberalism in Australia because problems of governing and tactics to address them always have a local component (Kelsey, 1995; Larner, 2002, 2003b). From this perspective, the bicultural child in *Te Whāriki* is an effect of global neoliberal rationalities in the context of early childhood education in New Zealand. The bicultural child is an articulation of the neoliberal global child in New Zealand.

### **Curriculum Analysis**

*Te Whāriki*, the first curriculum for early childhood care and education for children from birth to school entry in New Zealand, was published by the Ministry of Education in 1996. At the heart of the document lies a vision of the ‘ideal child’ in the New Zealand early childhood context. Commissioned by the Ministry in 1991, the curriculum development process included wide-spread consultation across the New Zealand early childhood sector (Carr & May, 2000; Te One, 2003).

*Te Whāriki* marked a milestone for early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Not only was it the first national curriculum for the sector, it was also

the first national curriculum to “represent and reflect Maori politics and pedagogy” (Te One, 2003, p. 24). According to two of the four curriculum writers, *Te Whāriki* was developed through negotiations and debates between three major voices: government interests, early childhood professionals and families, and national and international critical early childhood perspectives (Carr & May, 2000). Both nationally and internationally, the document has attracted attention as a progressive curriculum that aims to empower children and challenges existing power relations by emphasising its pronounced commitment to biculturalism (Fleer, 2003; Nuttall, 2003; Te One, 2003).

Curriculum analysis is political analysis: a curriculum is not a neutral document but a cultural artefact. It represents desires, aspirations and ambitions for the child as future contributor to society from the viewpoint of powerful adults. *Te Whāriki* makes statements about what kind of subject New Zealand, as a nation or as an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983), envisages as best able to contribute to its future society. As a cultural artefact *Te Whāriki* has a double function: it describes as well as produces some of the transformations of childhood in New Zealand. What *Te Whāriki* has to say about childhood is based on current beliefs of what a child is; *Te Whāriki* reflects social, cultural, political and theoretical perspectives of ‘the child’ (Mutch, 2003). The child in *Te Whāriki* is an amalgamation of local (national) and global (western) governmentalities (Foucault, 1994), rather than a representation of ‘truths’ about the child/childhood.

### **The Educationalisation of Early Childhood**

*Te Whāriki* was commissioned at a time of major education reforms which, for the first time, included early childhood education (May, 2001b; Mitchell, 2003). The reforms in the education sector coincided with major social reforms that made New Zealand a text-book case for the neoliberal project (Larner, 2003a). In the context of neoliberal reforms, the focus on early childhood education and the young child constitutes a political move towards the educationalisation of early childhood. *Te Whāriki* explicitly emphasises that learning is a life-long process that “begins at the very start of life” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 7). The curriculum includes infants as learners and provides links to *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* for school, thus spanning all of the early years. Although early childhood education in New Zealand is not compulsory, the pre-school child is now part of a grid which connects the ‘normal’ young child with educational institutions. This movement pushes the pre-school aged child who remains at home into the increasingly ‘not normal’/at risk margin.

Public expenditure on early education has significantly increased, not only in New Zealand, but in many western nation states (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). New Zealand government initiatives appear to be in line with other Western

countries, such as Britain (Moss, 1999), where early education is increasingly seen as an important site of early intervention, aimed at maximising the child's potential from the earliest possible age. In fact, some international studies now claim that a young child who does not participate in quality early childhood education might be a child at risk (Sylva, 2004). May (2001b) has identified a similar trend in New Zealand. The education of the young child is now part of the educational landscape on a global and local (national) level. However, my analysis is based on an understanding of the local as "a particular part of, a particular moment in, the global network of social relations and understandings" (Massey, 1994, p. 115). As such, *Te Whāriki* is a particular articulation of global shifts in conceptualising the child. *Te Whāriki's* task is the fostering of a child who encapsulates local (national) changes in social relations and understandings within the global network.

The young child and early childhood have become increasingly important to those in political power. In order to analyse how *Te Whāriki* produces a local articulation of the child within the network of global transformations of childhood, the following questions provide a starting point: how does *Te Whāriki* function as a technology of neoliberal government? What discourses are mobilised in this document to bring future global citizens into being? And how are older discourses of childhood affected by the metamorphosis of the modern capitalist world order which produced 'childhood' in the first place? I have argued elsewhere that the *Te Whāriki* child as an abstraction reflects larger shifts in New Zealand's political and social make-up (Duhn, 2006). A critical analysis of the complex interweaving of neoliberal and liberal discourses that have produced *Te Whāriki* highlights some of the shifts that are taking place in the imagination of childhood.

I will begin with a focus on the bicultural and bilingual nature of *Te Whāriki*. The emphasis on biculturalism is one of the specificities of the document, and some work has been done to investigate the implications of biculturalism for practice (Ritchie, 2003a, 2003b). The relationship between globalisation, neoliberalism and biculturalism however, has not been explored in great detail in the New Zealand context, although some of the impact of neoliberalism on the concept of biculturalism has been examined (Rata, 2005; Sharp, 2002). I am not attempting to analyse the significance of biculturalism to New Zealand's neoliberal educational agenda, but I am interested in mapping how some of the intersections between discourses of biculturalism, neoliberalism and globalisation add to the transformation of childhood in *Te Whāriki*.

### **The Site: *Te Whāriki* Close-up**

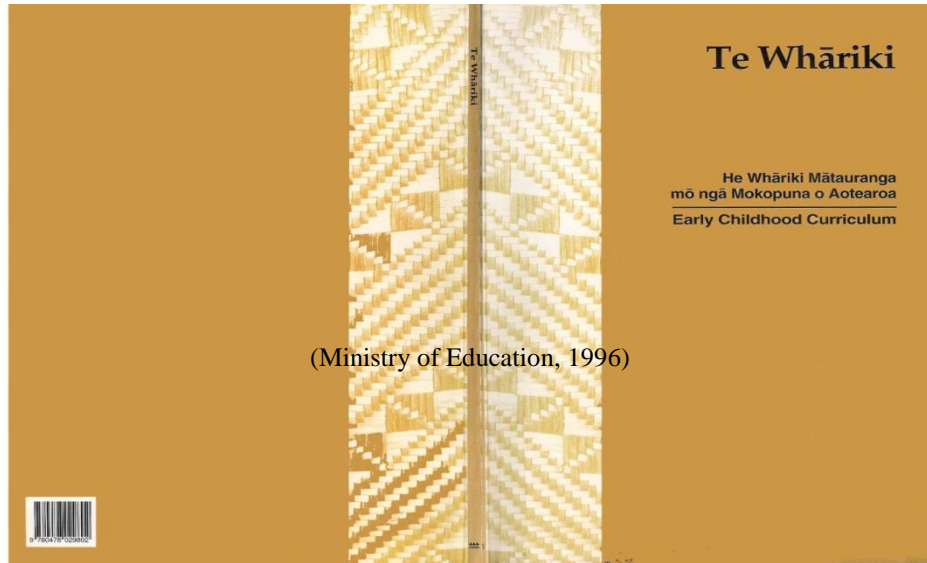
*Te Whāriki* is a bicultural and bilingual document; it is also the first curriculum that has been written in two languages, English and Te Reo Māori, the language

of Maori, New Zealand's indigenous people. In order to pursue my question of how local childhoods are transformed through discourses of globalisation, I want to focus on *Te Whāriki*'s specificities by considering the structure and appearance of the document before looking at the content.

It was the intention of the draft curriculum writers to construct a document which would emphasise New Zealand specificities. The most visible statement with regard to what is particular about New Zealand is the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty, signed in 1840, "...was an agreement between two parties – the tangata whenua (indigenous people) and the British Crown – about the future political organisation of the country" (Ritchie, 2003b, p.81). How the country has addressed this agreement about political organisation is a matter of great debate in New Zealand. *Te Whāriki* is embedded in these debates by making an explicit statement about the importance of recognizing the Treaty of Waitangi as the foundation for bicultural education in New Zealand.

*Te Whāriki*'s bicultural emphasis is clearly evident not only in the title of the document, but also in the way the cover is designed. The first impression of someone who is not familiar with the 100-page document would be that this is the Maori version of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum. The title of the document, *Te Whāriki*, features prominently at the top of the cover page. Halfway down the page the full Maori title is displayed: *he whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o Aotearoa*. Only then is the nature of the document stated in English: early childhood curriculum. These three words on the cover page are the only indication that English may actually be a language used in the document.

*Te Whāriki* means 'the woven mat' in Te Reo Maori. The design of the cover reflects the Te Reo Maori meaning: the cover is printed in greenish-brown hues, reminiscent of dried woven grass or flax. The bicultural emphasis is further illustrated by the intricate mat-like print which serves as a border along the left side of the front cover pages, and the right side of the back. When placed face down and opened up, the printed weave is visible at the centre of the double page. It thus represents the binding of the document.



(Ministry of Education, 1996)

### Many Contexts - Two Specificities

Describing the cover page in some detail has the purpose of illustrating *Te Whāriki's* specificity: the weaving and Te Reo Maori are significant because they highlight the distinctive context of *Te Whāriki*. Weaving is one of the arts of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific region, and flax weaving is one of the traditional arts of Maori culture. The weaving indicates that *Te Whāriki* is embedded in complex relationships between Pacific cultures, Maori culture and Pakeha (dominant/white New Zealand) culture. Although Pacific cultures appear to be represented through the weaving, they constitute the background for the two cultures, Maori and Pakeha, that have produced the content and structure of the curriculum. This is further emphasised by the bilingual nature of *Te Whāriki*: Te Reo Maori represents Maori, while English signifies New Zealand culture in general.

The two languages used in *Te Whāriki* represent two different worldviews. In contrast to other curriculum documents which acknowledge a commitment to biculturalism through the provision of Maori translations of English texts, *Te Whāriki's* Maori section articulates guidelines for curriculum as a cultural alternative (Carr & May, 2000). My analysis of changing childhood arises out of the English language version and my critique is embedded in a non-Maori perspective. Further analysis of the Te Reo Maori section may be carried out by

a Te Reo Maori speaker. It would be possible to then compare the two cultural visions of the child in light of neoliberal and global discourses.

*Te Whāriki's* specificities are identified on the last page of its introduction. Under the heading 'distinctive contexts', a two sentence paragraph makes a statement about the many contexts for early childhood education in New Zealand. I interpret the 'many contexts' as an indication of New Zealand's multicultural status, particularly in urban areas, and as a reference to the diversity of early childhood services. However, rising above the many, two distinctive frameworks are singled out: Maori immersion programmes and Tagata Pasefika programmes.

Each of these contexts is briefly described in a single paragraph. For the Maori immersion curriculum, there is special mention of kohanga reo, Maori language nests, as the source for the idea of a Maori immersion curriculum:

This document recognises the distinctive role of an identifiable Maori curriculum that protects Maori language and tikanga, Maori pedagogy, and the transmitting of Maori knowledge, skills, and attitudes through using Maori language (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 12).

This is, to some extent, homogenising because it fails to recognise iwi (tribe) language and cultural differences and even, arguably, urban Maori identities, assuming that 'Maori language and tikanga' (custom) are universal in New Zealand. For Tagata Pasefika, the Pacific Islands early childhood centres, the statement is much less focused. The paragraph remains vague about how Tagata Pasefika is identifiable. The rationale for this is that Pacific cultures are diverse, although they share

...historic links in language and culture, and there is a common geographic heritage. Examples suggested in this curriculum, while focusing on Pacific Islands early childhood centres, also demonstrate possible models for other ethnic groups who wish to support their cultural heritage within the early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 12).

Diversity and multiplicity are reduced to manageable sameness while simultaneously adding specificity to *Te Whāriki*: neoliberal rationalities emphasise the marketability of the cultural as spectacle, as commodity, as a point of difference in a global, competitive market (Harvey, 1989; Peck, 2004). Although Tagata Pasefika adds a Polynesian flavour to the document, the umbrella term 'Tagata Pasefika' does little to address the complex issues around very diverse Polynesian identities (Macpherson, 2001).

In order to pursue my question of how local childhoods are transformed through discourses of neoliberalism and globalisation, I want to focus on *Te Whāriki's* specificities by further considering the structure of the document. I am interested

in the relationship between biculturalism and the image of the woven mat as a metaphor for *Te Whāriki's* structure. How significant is the metaphor of the mat for the kind of biculturalism that emerges through the curriculum? Is there a relationship between the emphasis on biculturalism and neoliberal discourses of globalisation? These questions are relevant in light of my contention that *Te Whāriki* is a cultural artefact which contains and constructs contemporary childhood/s. I am assuming that *Te Whāriki's* status as the first bicultural curriculum document in New Zealand fabricates a child that has both local (national) and western (global) attributes: the bicultural child represents a global/neoliberal transformation of the modern ideal of childhood in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Exploring the metaphor of the woven mat to understand the structure of *Te Whāriki*, it seems evident that the material for weaving the mat consists of social, cultural, political and theoretical perspectives on childhood from Pakeha (white European New Zealand) and Maori culture. The curriculum has been created with the intention of constructing a bicultural framework that allows for a range of patterns to be woven. These patterns may reflect cultural identities, for example Tongan or Samoan or Muslim, or philosophical differences, for example Montessori or Playcentre perspectives, or structural/organisational/local differences. If Maori and 'New Zealand culture' (as a discursive construct rather than an identifiable entity) represent the warp and weft, Pāsefika is introduced as an example of how to weave a distinct pattern within the warp and weft (Ministry of Education, 1996).

While referring to New Zealand culture in general allows me to make a distinction between 'mainstream' New Zealand and indigenous cultures of the Pacific and New Zealand, the concept of a New Zealand mainstream culture disguises the increasingly multicultural nature of New Zealand society. The idea of a general New Zealand culture is misleading because it creates the impression of homogeneity when the reality is heterogeneous. However, referring to a mainstream New Zealand culture as different to indigenous Maori and Pāsefika cultures makes some of the power relations between cultures visible. The dominant/mainstream culture in New Zealand for the past 170 years has been Pakeha culture. In contemporary New Zealand, Pakeha culture signifies non-Maori culture which began with the settlement of New Zealand by white Europeans of predominantly British descent.

Although I am using the notion of 'New Zealand culture' to differentiate between mainstream and other cultures as they are represented in *Te Whāriki*, New Zealand culture remains assumed rather than described throughout the document. As feminist and postcolonial critiques have pointed out, the lack of definition of the 'centre' re-produces power relations by re-producing the Same/Other binary (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1989; Bhabha, 1994; hooks, 1990).



By defining New Zealand culture different to, say British culture, solely on the basis of the presence of Maori and to a lesser extent Pacifica, New Zealand culture becomes part of the powerful centre that is western culture. This is an ethnocentric perspective of culture which arises out of an assumption of sameness constructed against the backdrop of all that is not the same. The specificity of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum depends on the identification of its 'Others' – first and foremost, Maori.

One of the startling aspects of how the contemporary New Zealand child is produced through *Te Whāriki* is that there is such strong emphasis on creating a vision of bicultural 'national' childhood at a time when New Zealand is deeply entangled in discourses of globalisation. Globalisation is most tangible through the presence of a multitude of cultures in urban centres. The only direct reference to multiculturalism in *Te Whāriki* comes under the heading of *Increasing cultural diversity*, where two paragraphs sum up the relationship between the curriculum and multiculturalism:

There are many migrants in New Zealand, and, as in any country with a multicultural heritage, there is a diversity of beliefs about childrearing practices...The early childhood curriculum supports the cultural identity of all children...each early childhood education service should ensure that programmes and resources are sensitive and responsive to the different cultures and heritages...The early childhood curriculum actively contributes towards countering racism and other forms of prejudice (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 18).

Globalisation discourses carry with them the challenge to address the increasing flow of people across national borders, and New Zealand, like many other western nation states, is forced to address its multicultural status. It seems that *Te Whāriki* shies away from addressing the complexities of multiculturalism in favour of outlining biculturalism. This is a reflection of the wider political climate - discourses of multiculturalism in New Zealand are overlaid by bicultural issues. Tilly Reedy, one of *Te Whāriki's* two indigenous writers, articulated this very clearly by asking in a keynote speech delivered at the Auckland Orakei marae "why pretend to be multicultural, if bicultural doesn't work?" (May & Reedy, 2003).

A specific challenge that arises out of New Zealand's history is the ongoing unresolved issue of addressing the unequal relationship between New Zealand's indigenous culture and mainstream culture. The intention of the draft curriculum writers was to "write a curriculum to reflect the Treaty partnership of Maori and Pakeha as a bicultural document model grounded in the contexts of Aotearoa-New Zealand...There were no New Zealand or international models for guidance" (May, 2001b, p. 244). The draft was produced as a collaborative project between early childhood academics Helen May and Margaret Carr and

Tilly and Tamati Reedy from the Te Kohanga Reo National Trust. *Te Whāriki's* bicultural vision of childhood is an attempt to transform New Zealand's largely monocultural discourse of childhood which has been dominated by the modern western ideal. Within the New Zealand discourse of childhood, Maori childhood never featured as anything other than a deviation from the norm (May, 2001a, 2003, 2005).

The attempt to construct a bicultural vision of early childhood is embedded in educational reforms that took place in New Zealand from the late 1980s onwards. These reforms addressed government interests in aligning education with global and economic agendas (Peters, Marshall, & Massey, 1994). May (2001a) explains *Te Whāriki's* bicultural discourse of childhood as a reflection of wider reforms:

A decade of educational reform in New Zealand...blueprinted diversity as a model for funding and curriculum in the early childhood sector. The reforms were fuelled in part by global and economic agendas, but shaped by:

- campaigns for cultural and political self determination by Maori in relation to Pakeha;
- confidence as a nation to construct our own agendas within and against the tides of external dictates;
- a pro-active early childhood constituency who – against the odds – were active in redrawing the landscapes of childhood...with more possible paths and possibilities [than previously imaginable] (p. 17)

*Te Whāriki's* biculturalism arises out of the discourse of Maori self-determination, discourses of national identity and globalisation, and liberal and feminist inspired discourses of the early childhood constituency. All of these have in common that they are explicitly political: each discourse is concerned with re-defining power relations. Bicultural childhood is the site where these power relations coalesce.

The liberal intent behind the bicultural vision would be to address structural/institutionalised inequalities in the pursuit of creating social change towards a more balanced/bicultural society. Although different in emphasis, the demands for cultural and political self-determination from Maori have a similar emphasis on re-shaping relationships between Maori and Pakeha to create a more balanced New Zealand bicultural society. *Te Whāriki's* construct of childhood revolves around the idea of partnership between Maori and Pakeha to achieve the bicultural vision for New Zealand. This in itself appears to be in tension with many of the neoliberal reforms which emphasise individual responsibility rather than addressing institutionalised inequalities. Neoliberal reforms in New Zealand, however, are interwoven with the desire to define a national identity. The desire for a strong national identity which enables New

Zealand to 'hold its own' on the global scale aligns smoothly with a bicultural construct. From this perspective, *Te Whāriki*'s bicultural child is the perfect offspring for all parties concerned.

### **Reading from the Multiple: The Bicultural Child as an Assemblage of Discourses**

In the foreword of *Te Whāriki*, the Secretary for Education, Lyall Perris, emphasises:

This is the first bicultural curriculum statement developed in New Zealand. It contains curriculum specifically for Maori immersion services in early childhood education and establishes, throughout the document as a whole, the bicultural nature of curriculum for all early childhood services (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 7).

This statement reflects the expectation generated by the cover page of *Te Whāriki*: on leafing through the document, the reader expects to encounter a strong and continuously visible bicultural discourse of childhood. However, perhaps this bicultural discourse is even more complex than a neoliberal desire for the perfect globalized child. Reading *Te Whāriki* as an assemblage of discourses can actually foster a culture of engagement with differences.

### **The Tame Bicultural Child**

In many ways, the bicultural discourse of childhood can be assumed to produce a sense of displacement for Pakeha readers. Maori childhood has so far been considered as something for 'them' and not for 'us'. What Pakeha culture perceives as Maori childrearing practices makes headlines only as 'problematic'; statistics are frequently used as evidence to support the discourse of Maori childhood as largely unsuitable to western childrearing practices. In theory, many Pakeha New Zealanders may support elements of traditional Maori culture, such as strong kinship ties, but only as long as those alternative family structures do not disrupt western models of families. Generally speaking non-Maori and non-Polynesian New Zealanders have little knowledge of what may constitute 'other' childhoods and childrearing practices. It seems to me that a strong bicultural vision has to carry elements of displacement and a sense of encountering the unfamiliar for Pakeha readers (Reedy, 2003).

The exclusion of Maori childhoods from what counted as a normal childhood in New Zealand reflects this country's history of colonisation. By 1900, New Zealand had been politically colonised and, as May (1997) points out, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, indigenous and colonial childhood were worlds apart:

Colonial society created both the need and the impetus for charitable and educational services for European children; but for Maori, it brought about the loss of population, land, mana [respect], and language. These factors are at the crux of later early childhood services, as Maori families lost the resources and social structures which provided the traditional contexts for rearing the very young (p. xiv).

May (2001a) has outlined how Maori childhood developed as a deficit model in comparison with Pakeha childhood over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the framing of the deficit took a range of shapes, from images of corrupted urchins at the beginning of the century to concerns regarding educational underachievement and health problems of Maori children at the end of the century, Maori childhood has been conceived as problematic. May emphasises that for Pakeha, indigenous childhood never featured in any other form than as negative statistics. The deficit view of Maori childhood has begun to be challenged by Maori during the last two decades only. With a renewed focus on language as the transmitter of culture, Maori have begun to construct images of the bilingual indigenous child. This child is positioned in a transgenerational web which connects past and future: “Maori-constructed images of the Kohanga Reo [language nest] child skilfully combine: language and cultural prowess; and a warning that these competent mokopuna [grandchildren] will need reckoning with as they grow older and more politically powerful” (May, 2001a, p. 12).

One would expect that the bicultural child in *Te Whāriki* represents some of the Maori-constructed images; one could even suspect that this child, new to New Zealand, may show some of signs of what May (2001a) terms “Maori prowess”. What May alludes to is a liberal Pakeha perspective of Maori childhood. For those readers with less commitment to bicultural development, the thought of competent and potentially powerful mokopuna may sound slightly unnerving. For those less inclined towards biculturalism, the cover page of *Te Whāriki* may appear as a warning – the balance of power, for so long firmly lodged in favour of Pakeha, could swing the other way at some time in the future. Let me illustrate this point with some figures from Statistics New Zealand (2001): by 2021, Maori population is estimated to grow by 29 percent (and Pacifica by 59 percent), whereas New Zealand Pakeha barely keep up with an estimated growth rate of five percent.

How reassuring, then, for the possibly unsettled Pakeha reader, to leaf through *Te Whāriki*: from a conventional western perspective of childhood, the initial sense of insecurity regarding the vision of the child disappears as soon as the introductory section is opened. Although it was the intention of the curriculum writers to produce a curriculum document that would reflect the heterogeneity, not only of New Zealand early childhood services, but also of the many strands that make up Maori culture in Aotearoa (May & Reedy, 2003), the vision of the

bicultural child in the final draft document does not reflect this. The bicultural child, it seems, is articulate, well able to blend in and highly co-operative. This child does not generate a sense of unease or unfamiliarity – on the contrary, this child is exceptionally well behaved. When it comes to imagining the bicultural child, the child appears to be very smooth-skinned and pretty – a close cousin of the romantic child perhaps? Strictly speaking the child is a hybrid, a child of two cultures, two peoples. Even though a first glance at the ideal child produced through *Te Whāriki* may have given the impression of a noticeably bicultural child, once we get past the cover page, the child becomes more and more familiar as the romantic child we know and cherish. However, appearances can be deceptive *and* first impressions count.

### **Pakeha on the Outside/Maori on the Inside**

The curriculum is woven in and around a shared vision for children (May & Reedy, 2003; Te One, 2003). At the core of *Te Whāriki* lies the “good child”, as May (May & Reedy, 2003; Te One, 2003) calls it. The “good child”, I think, has to be understood as an attempt to construct a positive image of children which positions them as capable and confident. The “good child” carries on from liberation discourses which influenced educational analyses, including early childhood education, during the 1970s. The “liberation gaze” (May, 2001a) focused on the rights of minority groups, women and children; the “good child”, constructed through the liberation gaze, emphasises a children’s rights perspective. As such, *Te Whāriki*’s vision for children serves as a counter-image to the idea of the child as dependent and fragile.

The capable and confident child can also be read as a Maori-constructed image of the child. This child is competent, and if s/he happens to be Maori, s/he will grow up to demonstrate her linguistic and cultural prowess. Tilly Reedy describes the relationship between the child and early childhood curriculum from a Maori perspective: the mokopuna (grandchild) is *Te Whāriki*, and *Te Whāriki* is the mokopuna (May & Reedy, 2003). Reedy explains that Maori of her generation saw the opportunity to create a curriculum to touch future minds by empowering mokopuna to learn (May & Reedy, 2003). She points out that for Maori-constructed images of the child empowerment is a key term: if the child is empowered to learn, the child will link knowledge across time.

The child was, and still is, the living link with yesterday and the bridge to tomorrow: te taura here tangata, “the binding rope that ties people together over time”...the child is...the repository of the teachings of yesterday, the enhancement of the dreams of today, and the embodiment of the aspirations for tomorrow... (May & Reedy, 2003, p. 58).

The vision of the “good child” of the Pakeha liberation discourse is also the mokopuna who has been empowered to feel a sense of belonging to her or his

culture. The Maori inspired vision of empowerment as one of the four core principles of *Te Whāriki* informs the curriculum for all children. This raises the intriguing question of what “empowerment” means for many Pakeha teachers and children whose sense of belonging arises out of the non-recognition of difference.

### ***Te Whāriki's Vision for the Bicultural Child***

The first page of the introduction spells out the aspirations for the child; the vision for the child is presented in English only. As a non-Te Reo Maori speaker I can only assume that the aspirations for the Maori child appear in the Te Reo Maori section of the document. *Te Whāriki* does not explain the linkages across languages other than stating that texts “parallel and complement each other” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 10). The intention and hope for very young New Zealanders is:

to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body, and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9).

The language used in this statement reverberates with a range of desires for the child. It is almost as if the fairies of old have bestowed their good wishes on this young one. Let me introduce one Maori wise woman and four Pakeha Tinkerbells.

First up there is the state-employed fairy, who sprinkles some of her knowledge-society dust to impart her wish for competent and confident learners and communicators. Second in line we have the Maori wise woman who bestows health for mind, body and spirit. The liberal early childhood fairy's gift is a sense of security and belonging, while the global Tinkerbelle has come with her cosmopolitan twin sister to drop off their gifts: while one presents roots so that the child may belong to its country, the other one awards a pair of wings so that this child can gather information and knowledge from around the globe. Like a busy little bee the child will return with its bounty to contribute to the hive. Whereas the Tinkerbelle sisterhood has a clear vision of what attributes this child needs to succeed in the new global age, the Maori wise woman's gift is lovely, but a bit old-fashioned perhaps? Has she made a strong enough impression? Or has her presence at the cradle been overshadowed by the Tinkers?

The Secretary for Education made a strong statement about “the bicultural nature of curriculum for all early childhood services” in the *Te Whāriki's* foreword (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 7). But one page into the actual introduction, this statement is somewhat moderated by a milder, less prescriptive tone. Rather than re-stating the imperative of creating a bicultural curriculum for all children in New Zealand early childhood settings, the use of language

indicates choice in the matter: "...all children *should* be given the opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of the cultural heritage of both partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The curriculum reflects this partnership in text and structure" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9, my emphasis). So what may the text and structure tell us about the partnership? According to May (2001a) one of the attributes of the Maori-constructed child is its language and cultural prowess. How does Te Whāriki's text and structure account for this prowess?

### **The Bicultural Discourse: Two Separate Domains**

From its conception as a bicultural and bilingual document, *Te Whāriki* was envisioned as consisting of two separate domains, Maori and Pakeha. This intention is most strongly articulated through the use of the two different languages. To sum up: the cover page of *Te Whāriki* makes a clear statement about its bicultural nature through the use of Te Reo Maori and English and the metaphor of the woven mat. Although Te Reo Maori dominates the cover page, its visibility diminishes as soon as the document is opened. Te Reo Maori does not feature in the introduction. The only statement that explains the relationship between the languages emphasises its analogous and complementary nature. It sounds as if the languages are not expected to meet or intersect – each runs its own path. From a poststructural perspective, the emphasis on parallel texts underscores that language is neither innocent nor neutral. English is one of the most widely used western languages; it is one of "the languages of western metaphysics" (Derrida, 1972/1981, p. 19) which produces and re-produce a western view of the world. By not translating one language into the other, the inevitability of incommensurability is acknowledged: the Maori perspective of childhood espoused in *Te Whāriki* is embedded in a specific cosmology, which remains largely invisible and foreign to western/Pakeha understandings of the world.

Another interpretation of the bilingualism as it appears in *Te Whāriki* is to consider the document's structure as the product of binary logic. Binary logic, "the most classical and well reflected, oldest, and weariest kind of thought" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 5), is incapable of dealing with multiplicity. Multiplicity is always more than One, it cannot be contained. Multiplicity throws lines across domains to form links. The presence of Maori cosmology, inscribed in the principles and strands, indicates multiplicity within the curriculum. But unless *Te Whāriki's* reader has learnt to recognise and live with difference without feeling lost in unknown territory, the two domains of the different languages appear as a binary structure. Binary structures produce dualisms and essential differences that divide and separate, leaving no space for interweaving and partial coalescence of substances. *Te Whāriki's* two language domains appear not so much as a woven mat, but more like a grid. Like a grid, each language domain seems rigid and locked firmly in place in a loom-like

structure. Is this biculturalism woven as a flax or grass mat which aims to integrate difference? Or do Pakeha and Maori culture sit opposite each other, each aware of the other's difference and content to occupy distinctly separate spaces? What difference does it make to the transformation of childhood?

A loom requires a different weaving technique than flax or grass weaving. Each technique generates specific products. *Te Whāriki* is described as having been “envisaged as a whāriki or mat, woven from the principles, strands, and goals defined in this document” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 11). This self-description does not take account of the possibility that the material (principles, strands, goals) offered for the weaving of a mat may already have been produced on a loom. So what is the difference between the weaving techniques and why is this important?

1. Traditional indigenous flax weaving is not restricted by the demands of a structure that holds it. Throughout the process of weaving, the product retains some of the pliable qualities of the raw material. The weaver is not tied to a particular location – she can weave anywhere. Furthermore, the absence of a structural device, other than the weaver's imagination of what she wants to weave, allows for all kinds of shapes to emerge. From three-dimensional baskets and ornaments to two-dimensional mats, possibilities are only limited by imagination and tradition. This kind of weaving has the potential to integrate and innovate: for example, through spiral shapes and patterns distinctions between outer and inner dissolve (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 5).
2. Although weaving on a loom has a history that no doubt reaches back to the dusky beginnings of civilisation, I want to point out that the weaving loom has a particular place in the industrialisation of Europe. Weaving was one of the first industries of the emerging capitalist order. The weaver was literally tied to his or her loom. Survival depended on his/her ability to skilfully guide raw material between the grids of the industrial loom. The transformation from yarn to linen occurred to pre-set patterns. Weavers were required to aim for flawless, uniform weaving. Weavers were exploited to the extreme; as Gerhard Hauptmann, a German playwright, and recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1912, demonstrated powerfully in one of his plays, the industrial loom has long been recognised as one of *the* symbols of capitalism at its most inhumane.

The two weaving techniques represent completely different world views. They have different places in modern history; they produce different results. Rather than accepting biculturalism and its metaphor of the woven mat as given, I want to emphasise that the metaphor is not as unproblematic as it may seem. The



statement “The English and Maori texts parallel and complement each other” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 10) is an indication that the techniques used to weave the whāriki have a closer association with the loom than traditional indigenous weaving techniques. The mat image is a ‘safe’ metaphor for biculturalism as a hybrid entity – the threatening possibility of irreducible difference disappears in the tidy weaving. All that is left is a flat surface.

### **Biculturalism as Parallel Grids**

Unlike traditional weaving which may dissolve clear-cut distinctions by spiralling in and out, Te Reo Maori appears locked in a parallel grid in a separate section in *Te Whāriki*. The use of Te Reo Maori signals a specialist curriculum, namely the Maori version of *Te Whāriki*: “The Maori curriculum is designed specifically to provide a basis for appropriate practice in nga Kohanga reo” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 10). There is no English nor Te Reo Maori translation or explanation of possible differences between the two curricula. The Maori version, which makes up part B of *Te Whāriki*, spans seven pages (pp. 31 to 38). By comparison Part C, which provides the details for appropriate practice in non-immersion Maori services (which are all other services in New Zealand), is 51 pages long (pp. 39-91). The sheer difference in size means that there must be substantial differences in the two curricula.

Despite the separation and difference in size, *Te Whāriki* emphasises that the Te Reo Maori section/the Maori curriculum is “...an integral part of the document and provides a basis for bicultural early childhood education in New Zealand” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 10). Integration seems to mean ‘sitting in the document’: it is not clear how the seven Te Reo Maori pages, which can only be read by Te Reo Maori speakers, are providing a basis for bicultural education. The texts run parallel and grid-like. The Maori curriculum evidently is only of use for ‘them’, not ‘us’.

The biculturalism of *Te Whāriki* is clearly political. As stated earlier, curriculum analysis is political analysis. *Te Whāriki* articulates desires, aspirations and ambitions for the child as future contributor to society from two different perspectives. I have outlined that some of *Te Whāriki*'s structure appears grid-like and segregates rather than integrates the two perspectives. The grid may be necessary: the segregation may enable Maori to control their cultural domain. Here is a third interpretation: the existence of two separate views of the child and early childhood education in *Te Whāriki* may signify a new acceptance of difference and multiplicity. In this reading the mat is not a smooth hybrid but a work-in-progress with unfinished edges that invite the weaving of new patterns. This last vision is the most challenging one: to learn new patterns would involve the willingness to understand more than one perspective. It may also, on a practical level, require all those who work with *Te Whāriki* to become bilingual

if the bicultural vision is to come to something closer than a parallel movement only.

### **Using the Parallel Grid to Lever Biculturalism**

The strong emphasis on Te Reo Maori on the cover page marks the commitment of *Te Whāriki* to the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty ensured the sovereignty, or tino rangatiratanga, of Maori: “Rangatiratanga can be described as the right of political authority that enables Maori to exercise self-determination in relation to people and resources” (Ritchie, 2003b, p. 85). Tino rangatiratanga has been eroded ever since the Treaty was signed. “The low status of Te Reo Maori, the history of poor Maori achievement in education, and other negative social statistics throughout the past 163 years have led to new pressures for Maori self-determination” (Ritchie, 2003b, p. 85). The bicultural grid in *Te Whāriki* currently has the function of creating the space for a parallel Maori curriculum; it thus supports tino rangatiratanga. The high visibility of Te Reo Maori on *Te Whāriki*'s cover page is a political statement which addresses the importance Te Reo Maori has been given by Maori in regaining rangatiratanga. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Maori language has almost been lost; curriculum draft writer Tilly Reedy for example is one of the few people in New Zealand today who grew up with Maori as her first language. Without language, Reedy (2003) argues, there can be no self-determination; language is the key to gaining rangatiratanga.

Language and the education of the child who is the link between past and future, thus hold particular importance for Maori culture. Reedy stipulates that the challenge “for the survival of the young Maori child...created the most vigorous and innovative educational movement in this country...Te Kohanga Reo, the Maori language nests....The language is us and it is ours. We are in control” (May & Reedy, 2003, p. 65). By the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Maori are still economically, socially and culturally disadvantaged. The dominance of Te Reo Maori on the cover of *Te Whāriki* alludes to the imbalance in power between the Treaty partners – if New Zealand had been organised in partnership with Maori, New Zealand would most likely be a bilingual society, and the Te Reo Maori cover would go uncommented. The grid-like structure of the document further illustrates the imbalance. The grid also forcefully creates a space for Maori culture as a separate domain within the early childhood curriculum.

### **Differences Co-existing: The Original and Final Drafts**

May and Reedy (two of the four draft writers of *Te Whāriki*), have emphasised that the original draft document had a much stronger emphasis on biculturalism and bilingualism than the final, government-approved version. I am including material from the video taping of the ‘*Te Whāriki*’ conference at Orakei Marae,

where May and Reedy (2003) describe some of the processes of constructing a bicultural curriculum document. Both emphasise that *Te Whāriki* was produced in many separate parts rather than as one document. May talks about different paths and different histories or threads that were shared for part of the process; the intention was to allow for differences to exist alongside each other. Reedy uses the metaphor of a tapestry to describe *Te Whāriki* as a moment in the present that it stretches back to infinity and ancient times while also pointing towards the future. The writers were particularly interested in developing a partnership perspective which gave strong voices to both Pakeha and Maori throughout the curriculum. From its conception as a bicultural and bilingual document, *Te Whāriki* was established as consisting of two separate domains, Maori and Pakeha. From a partnership perspective, the intention was to create a less smooth and tightly structured whāriki or tapestry that would allow for a loose weave. A whāriki that is flexible enough to stretch across time holds the promise of being supple/loose enough to accommodate different patterns and different styles of weaving.

The early draft was much less cohesive than the final version. The lack of uniformity was intentional: it was meant to create space for multiple curricula within the frame of *Te Whāriki*. One of the interesting multiplicities within the original draft was the emphasis on possibilities for a multi-tribal curriculum. In the transformation from the earlier draft to the final government-approved document the multi-tribal nature of Maori culture has been lost. *Te Whāriki* in its official shape presents Maori as unified rather than multi-tribal. The Maori child is one now, when originally it referred to differences within Maori childhoods. Similarly, Pakeha/New Zealand mainstream culture is presented as homogenous rather than heterogeneous, and the 'good child' is the vision of a specific version of childhood rather than many. In her address at Orakei Marae, Reedy states that from the writers' perspective, the draft was bicultural and bilingual, whereas the final print is not.

The final draft of *Te Whāriki* constructs the bicultural child as an entity that is decipherable and identifiable. The bicultural child is a dual construct, made up of a Pakeha and a Maori component which are separated through language and structure. *Te Whāriki* in its final version is a tightly woven mat that disguises the multitude within. The bicultural child is the product of power relations: it is a highly political construct. The writers state that they were pleased to see the weaving metaphor as well as the "integral philosophy and framework of *Te Whāriki* survive[d] the long and complex process from draft to final document" (Carr & May, 2000, p. 62) which ultimately rested with the Ministry of Education. I argue, however, that the bicultural construct of the end-product lends itself towards an interpretation of smooth hybridity (Werbner, 1997) – a largely uncritical understanding of biculturalism - which obscures asymmetrical power relations and political implications. The original draft with its openness

towards considering heterogeneity, for example through a multi-tribal curriculum, had the potential for developing a less smooth, more critical biculturalism.

### Concluding Thoughts

To understand how the original ‘patchwork’ draft metamorphosed into a ‘smooth’ document, it is important to consider the political context that brought *Te Whāriki* into being. In September 1990, the newly elected government with the National Party in power published a call for the development of an early childhood curriculum. According to May (2003), it was made very clear that if nobody from the early childhood sector was able or willing to cooperate in the process of curriculum production, the government would commission someone from outside the sector. This indicates a certain level of determination on the government’s part to forge ahead. Final approval of the curriculum rested with the Ministry of Education, which had commissioned the document in the first place.

The government’s interests were clearly focused on incorporating early childhood education into the education sector. A national early childhood curriculum was one of the strategies used to forge the path towards creating life-long learners. *Te Whāriki*, with its emphasis on biculturalism, adds to the construction of a national identity at a time when New Zealand is deeply immersed in discourses of globalisation.

I want to conclude by returning to the concept of governance. My analysis of the bicultural child in *Te Whāriki* as a political construct highlights that ‘the child’ is central to struggles over knowledge-production. *Te Whāriki* is one of the means that govern early childhood education in New Zealand. Although the Ministry of Education was central in deciding on the shape of the final draft, the bicultural child at the core of the document is a political assemblage: the early childhood community as well as Maori educationalists have had a hand in its creation. From a perspective of governing, I have begun to trace some of the lines that traverse *Te Whāriki* in the form of “thought, of will, of invention, of programmes and failures, of acts and counter-acts” (Rose, 1999, p. 21). Governing is a process that involves a continuous struggle over authority and over knowledge. The bicultural child in *Te Whāriki* is not necessarily a smooth child, although it can be read that way (and neoliberal rationalities would encourage such a reading). This child also has the potential to show its prowess, to demand attention and to challenge the discourse of smooth, neoliberal biculturalism by making us aware that behind the tame child hides not one, but a vibrant multitude of other possibilities.

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