



## Kei tua i te awe māpara

# Countercolonial Unveiling of Neoliberal Discourses in Aotearoa New Zealand

Jenny Ritchie, Mere Skerrett, and Cheryl Rau

**Abstract** In this paper, we traverse both historical and contemporary discourses pertaining to early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand, offering a genealogical discursive analysis of assumptions of white superiority. It is proposed that such an analysis delivers a platform from which to launch a project of unmasking the recent and ongoing impact of neoliberal policies in our country. Two key documents are highlighted: the founding document of our nation, Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi, and the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*. These documents are unusual both within our country, and internationally, in that they offer a framework for bi-epistemological approaches to both education and social organisation more widely. Revisiting these documents in the context of uncovering the subtle racism that underpins assumptions of white superiority provides a platform for countercolonial, ethical reenvisioning of our educational becomings.

*Keywords: early childhood care and education, Indigenous education, colonisation, neoliberalism*

## Introduction

In order to proceed to unveil the impact of neoliberal policies on early childhood care and education in Aotearoa New Zealand, we have considered it preliminarily necessary to investigate our historicity, identifying the whakapapa/genealogy of the discursive power effects underpinning relationships between the Indigenous Māori and the colonisers of Aotearoa. This article firstly demonstrates the use of critical historical discourse analysis as a form of countercolonial resistance, backgrounding discourses prevalent in Aotearoa since colonisation that now underpin the current context in which the neoliberal enterprise impinges on our lives. This is followed by an uncovering of the multiple and conflicting lines of flight arising in the process of

implementation of the “bicultural” national early childhood care and education curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, in the 15 years since it was promulgated, with a particular focus on the ways in which neoliberalism has reconfigured the early childhood landscape. The past 25 years have seen a resurgence of Māori voice within the education sector and elsewhere in Aotearoa. The article also focuses on how our research methodology builds on ways in which Māori have transgressed striated spaces, reclaiming their positioning as indigenous partners alongside the descendants of the colonisers, creating smooth spaces in which to reassert their desires, ways of being, and knowing.

## Discourses of Harm

This first section of this article considers discourses of harm (Cannella, 2011) as produced by and through destructive hierarchies of colonial/neoliberal power, juxtaposing historical and contemporary examples of such discourses as they have appeared in a national New Zealand newspaper, *The Dominion Post*. It traces the antecedents of these discourses to the social organisation that was orchestrated at the outset of the colonisation process of Aotearoa. These discourses are signifiers and powerful shapers of the way we currently think and live our lives and influence the extent to which we are able to unpack our lives as subjective beings, demonstrating ‘that it is almost impossible for individuals to function beyond the discourses within which they find themselves’ (Cannella, 2011, p. 365). This methodology allows the context to ‘speak for itself’ as it were, through the records, through the quotes, through the newspaper articles, and through general sources.

In her seminal study, Angela Ballara (1986) argued that in her adoption of an approach sourcing material from a ‘day in the life of’ the *Dominion Post*, the discourses selected were typical of the media meals on the menu daily and throughout a range of contexts in Aotearoa. They are the signifiers displaying the ‘mechanisms of power’ which Cannella (2011, p. 365) refers to as constructing technologies of invisibility, co-opting identities, and reducing human values to neoliberal corporate functions. They control the way we see and make sense of the spaces we occupy.

*The Dominion Post*, the harbinger of news from the nation’s capital, has fed its ‘mythical’ discourses directly to New Zealand government policy makers and into the public consciousness for more than 100 years. Drawing on Ballara’s work (1986), the following section juxtaposes historical and contemporary discourses relating to the colonisation of Māori, demonstrating how these discourses have become internalised myths, uncritically perpetuated in public arenas including education settings. (For a fuller discussion of these discourses, see Skerrett, 2012.)

## 'He iwi kotahi tātou - We are one people' and Māori 'privilege'

The first article of the 1840 Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi legitimated British settlement of Aotearoa New Zealand, whilst the following articles promised to Māori their retention of chieftainship, self-determination, lands, and other things highly valued by Māori (Article Two) as well as assuring Māori that the Queen of England (the British Crown) would protect them, care for them, and ensure that they had the same rights as British citizens (Article Three). After the initial signing of the Tiriti/Treaty, Captain William Hobson, the British emissary who had secured the signing, proclaimed: 'He iwi kotahi tātou; we are one people' (Orange, 1987).

As the numbers of settlers rapidly increased, tensions developed in the relationship among Māori, the British Crown, and colonisers. Colonists assumed Māori were an 'inferior' and 'savage' people because that was the image portrayed for political purposes by those rallying support for the colonisation project, particularly the entrepreneurial New Zealand Company, which had precipitated the treaty signing by initiating mass settlement. This action was despite an 1835 Declaration of Independence, which had proclaimed Aotearoa to be a Māori sovereign nation and which had been internationally gazetted by Britain. Some settlers described Māori as 'damned niggers' (Ballara, 1986, p. 15), and as settler numbers grew, so too did their weapons of destruction. Put crudely by Henry Sewell, writing in his diary in 1859:

The settlers, outnumbering the Māoris and stronger in a greater degree than the proportion of numbers, would not suffer their progress to be checked by an inferior race. They would, if necessary, take the land; the Māoris would resist and be crushed or exterminated. (as cited in Ballara, 1986, p. 60)

In this early colonial period, discourses around the nonvalidity and illegitimacy of the Tiriti/Treaty were powerfully incorporated into the consciousness of the settler government. The likes of Joseph Somes of the New Zealand Company maintained that it was the 'right' of the British Crown to the 'waste lands' of New Zealand. He said the Tiriti/Treaty had been made 'with naked savages by a consul invested with no plenipotentiary powers, without ratification by the Crown, [so that it] could [not] be treated by lawyers as anything but a praiseworthy device for amusing and gratifying savages for the moment' (as cited in Ballara, 1986, p. 36).

Māori attempts to retain land and to redress increasing resource imbalance and injustices were deliberately reinterpreted as Māori seeking 'privilege' because they were 'inferior', as argued by Ballara (1986):

To Europeans, a symptom of Māori inequality was what they liked to call the 'privileges' enjoyed by the Māori people. In a debate in 1947 Sidney Holland . . . pointed out that the Māori 'enjoy many advantages; they enjoy special legislation; they enjoy special protection. . . . While these conditions obtain there cannot be equality of Māori with pakeha [Europeans]'. (p. 114)

Residing simultaneously alongside this discourse of inferior/privileged Māori was yet another conflicting layer of discourse, that of 'sameness' arising from the progressive notion, as expressed in Article Three of the Tiriti/Treaty that we are all British citizens with 'equal rights'. Yet this discourse contained a hidden assumption, once again of white superiority, with the implicit argument that 'because you are not actually the same as me (you are brown and speak a different language) you are actually inferior—for that reason you are not entitled to anything. Anything we bestow on you is a privilege'. In a strange twist of discourse, once the settler population and its government had a foothold, any insistence by Māori for redress in accord with the assurances contained within Te Tiriti o Waitangi was seen as illogical, nonsense, even a 'nullity'.

The notion of Māori as simultaneously both inferior and privileged sounds something like the following: How can you, a savage, be entitled to land, especially when you have not paid for it? Any talk of land rights or the Tiriti/Treaty is yet another demand for the 'privileges' you, as 'mere savages' are not entitled to. Therefore you (Māori) are a problem as you are working against the state. An enemy of the state is to be eradicated. Let us all be one, and work together for the state of the nation. So the 'one nation, one people' notion is simply a denial of Māori Tiriti/Treaty rights. The myth that Māori are one of the 'most savage, warlike races ever existing' (as cited in Ballara, 1986, p. 29) yet 'privileged' under the Tiriti/Treaty endures, at odds with Māori realities. Māori continue to feature disproportionately in negative health, education, and social statistics:

Of the 200,000 children living below the poverty line in our country, just over half are Māori (59,651) and Pasifika (44,120). Māori and Pasifika have hardship rates two to three times higher than other groups. They are more likely than other groups to live in over-crowded households. Māori and Pasifika children have two to three times poorer health than other groups. (Henare, Puckey, Nicholson, Dale, & Vaithianathan, 2011, p. vii)

These competing discourses of presumption of 'sameness', white 'superiority', and Māori 'privilege' underpin the contemporary context of neoliberalist policies

increasing the disparities between rich and poor in this country and in many other countries across the globe (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

### 'Natural Heirs': Pākehā (Europeans) Benefit as of Right

A popular idea promulgated in the earliest days of the colony's formation was that New Zealand should be viewed as 'the natural inheritance of Englishmen', to whom Māori should be grateful:

The Natives subsist on the food we have brought them, pork and potatoes; and till we came, they wandered over a fair portion of the earth, without knowing the use of it. Before that the only animals they had to eat, except themselves, were rats, and their only fruit, poor wild berries. (*Southern Cross* newspaper, 1843, as cited in Ballara, 1986, p. 47)

Ballara (1986) argued that this discourse of Māori gratitude for British benevolence was promoted to deny Māori rights and was in direct contrast to the realities of the time when many settlers in Auckland and Wellington were dependent on the food supplies cultivated and brought to market by the Māori. However, this recurring theme that because it was the British who bestowed the economic value to the land and its resources, therefore Māori have no rights to any economic advancement (because Māori can allegedly just revert to eating rats and berries), is highlighted in the current controversy over the Māori opposition to the current political climate of privatisation, expressed in the following letter to the editor:

#### **Letter: Government must reject Māori claims**

The Waitangi Tribunal has found that Māori have rights to water. Why? Because it has been 'commercialised' by passing through a power turbine. And why is commercialised water any different from other water? Māori didn't process water in 1840, so can't have had a customary claim to commercialised water. Water that has been treated for human consumption is also commercialised. If Māori own water that is commercialised through a turbine, they also have a claim to drinking water. There is actually a stronger argument with drinking water, because it retains its commercial character, and doesn't become waste water straight away, as hydro-water does. If Māori have an interest in water commercialised by others, it doesn't follow that they also have an interest in the power companies using that water. Or does the companies' brief use of 'Māori water' make that power company part Māori-owned? The tribunal apparently thinks so. By its logic, Māori would also have an interest in

water utilities and our own houses, because we all use tap water. The idea that anyone owns water, and that rights to water lead to rights to other property, is illogical and must be rejected. (*The Dominion Post*, June 9, 2012)

The following 2012 quote from New Zealand Prime Minister John Key is his take on the Treaty of Waitangi, given in response to Māori challenging the mandate of the government in proceeding with its neoliberal privatisation agenda. The move towards privatisation of state assets such as hydroelectric generation companies has resulted in Māori seeking clarification of their rights under Te Tiriti o Waitangi with regard to these resources. Key provides another restatement of the ‘we are all one people’ myth, as well as a gross misinterpretation of the Tiriti/Treaty:

And I think if you take the debate all the way back – my own personal view of this situation is that if you go back to 1840 when we signed the Treaty, the Crown as one partner agreed to preserve what would effectively establish property rights around land, forestry, and fisheries. What we also I think then said, well look, let’s also make sure that all New Zealanders enjoy the same rights of being a New Zealander – the same capacity to access those rights but I think at that time we also – let’s together, in partnership, build a modern day New Zealand, and so if you accept that view point then I think you have to accept that elements like water, and wind and sun and air and fire and all these things, sea, along with natural resources like oil and gas, are there for the national interest of everyone. They are for the benefit of all New Zealanders, not one particular group over another. (Taurima, 2012)

John Key, in an underhanded misrepresentation and manipulation of the historical context in which the Tiriti/Treaty was signed, now claims that the treaty was for the benefit of ‘all New Zealanders’. The treaty signing took place in a context whereby five years previously Māori had proclaimed and been affirmed by Britain as holding sovereignty of all lands and resources of Aotearoa. Māori, rather than being viewed as treaty partners, are relegated to a fringe group without any prior interests or rights. This presumption by the Crown/government of the right to exclude Māori and ignore Tiriti/Treaty assurances exemplifies the ‘we’ and ‘them’ of racism. A further exclusion has eventuated now that shares in the previously state-owned assets have been offered for purchase, since few individual Māori have the disposable income to invest in these now semiprivatised assets. The assumption by government of the right to determine what and whose knowledges are reified pervade the histories of education in Aotearoa (Simon, 1989, 1996, 2000).

Further analysis of these historical/contemporary discourses identifies a strong undercurrent in the rationalisation given for current policies driven by a neoliberal agenda (which include the recent promulgation of ‘national standards’ in education, the introduction of charter schools, and the instigation of ‘TeachNZ’, a six-week teacher education programme) that rather than resisting this neoliberal recolonisation, Māori should in fact be grateful for the ‘benefits’ that these programmes allegedly bestow upon them.

## Discourses and Counterdiscourses

The discussion above has illustrated some of the complex and twisted discourses of harm masking the power hierarchies of colonisation in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is interesting to unpack the relayering of colonialist self-justification being used to rationalise the recolonisation of Māori through neoliberal privatisation of socioeconomic assets, as these are wrenched from the social collective into the hands of upper-class individuals, leaving the majority of working-class citizens, Māori, and people with Pacific Island ancestry out of the transaction.

Implicit in kaupapa Maōri (Māori philosophy) theoretical practices is a requirement to dismantle the patriarchal hierarchies of colonisation, promulgated through public (and private) discourses, public policies, and practices which implanted the seeds of racial superiority (and conversely ‘inferiority’) and which continue to take root in the consciousness of mainstream New Zealand through the media. Countercolonial tools allow exploration of issues of identity, prejudice and racism, trickery, linguisticism, Eurocentrism, and injustice. Countercolonial theory allows examination of the influences of British colonisation on the shaping of Māori identities historically, politically, socially, economically, and educationally. Countercolonial methodologies allow for alter/native readings of the spaces we occupy.

*Te reo* Māori (the Māori language) remains the repository of our history and identity as Māori. If we do not accept our language as critical to transformational praxis, then we pass up the most vitally significant way of unravelling and understanding the dominant discourses of myth making. We have no other way of turning things around. Our language is our last defence. It houses our stories, our world views, our knowledge/s; it is our cultural archive.

Being Māori in Aotearoa is to be vigilant about decolonising a ‘colonised reality’ (Mikaere, 2004, p. 126) through the constant surveillance of hegemonic invasiveness. It requires Indigenous resistance and an ongoing articulation of the tensions surrounding representation. *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand early childhood education

curriculum, exemplifies social justice, an ethical approach to traverse cultural borders through questioning, challenging, and critiquing entrenched traditions (Smith, 1999/2006). *Te Whāriki* can be viewed as a decolonising project, Indigenous academics determining what was selected, how knowledge was arranged, what text was privileged, what perspectives were chosen, and what was significantly valued (Mead, 1996). Māori writers, however, view the curriculum as regained space, relocating Indigenous narratives to the foreground.

In the 1970s, strong political global activist movements across the world raised Indigenous consciousness in Aotearoa, precipitating a Kaupapa Māori gestalt. This theorising was grounded in te ao Māori (Māori worldview) philosophy and cosmology. Aligned to this was a critical theory approach applying conceptualisations of 'critical analysis, conflict, adversity and liberation in prioritising the struggle for Māori self-determination as essential for Indigenous wellbeing' (Rau, 2007, p. 33).

Integral to the implementation of early childhood care and education practice reflecting the aspirations of *Te Whāriki* has been the contribution and leadership of Māori women. The role of Māori women is expressed through Mana Wahine critical theory, which validates Māori women and their relatedness to an Indigenous paradigm. The paradigm has evolved as a way of articulating Māori women's experiences and understandings in Aotearoa. The unique positioning of Mana Wahine Māori is reflected in the complexity of the relatedness to the land:

Māori feminism was grounded in the identity and creation of this country, grounded in the rivers, lakes, mountains, seas and forests, grounded in the war and peace between tribes and families, grounded in the whakapapa [genealogy] of generations of families, tribes, waka [canoe], Gods and Goddesses, grounded in notions and concepts of time and space that required reclamation and if the price was a re-fashioning of Māori society then so be it. (Evans, 1994, p. 58)

Mana Wahine critical analysis interrupts and critiques underlying assumptions projected about Māori women in hegemonic spaces. Both Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wahine theorising advocate critique, analysis, and liberation and provide potentiality as counterdiscourse to the neoliberal onslaught. Māori women are agentic, problematising countercolonial theorising, engaging in praxis, and are committed to a deconstruction discourse which posits Indigenous women at the centre. Weber-Pillwax (2001) argues that 'as we integrate new knowledge it is we who give it life that it may sustain life' (p. 169). Indigenous interrogation of the 'post' discourse has propelled Māori women into highlighting tensions and renaming the construct.

Anticolonialism is viewed as an active term for describing the influences that affect the political domain of Māori (Mita, 1994). Some years ago, Leonie Pihama (1993) reacted strongly to being asked to participate in a panel dialogue focusing on post-feminism and postpatriarchy. She is discerning, unconvinced that either of these constructs could precipitate meaningful transformation for Māori women:

In my academic career I have been engaging a range of theories, post-structuralism, post-fordism, post-modernism, post-foundationalist, post-positivism, to name but a few, all of which have been complex and at times difficult to comprehend, and at times, as a mother of two toddlers what I have most wanted to be is post-toddlerism. (Pihama, 1993, p. 35)

Māori women have proactively accepted the responsibility to deconstruct dominant discourses and to generate new theoretical insights and ways of interpreting anticolonial theory. Mana Wahine theorising recognises 'Māori women's ingenuity and adaptability to navigate the educational terrain . . . an attestation of determination around upholding our epistemology' (Rau, 2007, p. 34).

## **Neoliberal Discursive Era**

Neoliberalism has been described as a 'heightening and renewal of modernity's now dominant metanarrative' of individuals as 'rational utility maximisers' (Peters, 2001, p. 119). Recent neoliberal metanarratives 'reframe *all* human transactions as being primarily economic in nature' (Cope & l'Anson, 2003, p. 220). International globalisation forces such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have promulgated 'a Western-centered architecture for global capitalism' (Robertson & Dale, 2009, p. 32), resulting in 'the triumph of market fundamentalism' infiltrating what were previously social services and education being remodeled to be a marketable commodity (Saltman, 2009, p. 56). This discursive shift is seen in education curriculum documents which promote the 'ability to earn money, flexibility, [and] competitiveness' as opposed to previously celebrated values for maintaining the social fabric such as 'solidarity, fairness, and compassion' (McCarthy, Pitton, Kim, & Monje, 2009, pp. 40–41).

The workings of neoliberalism create a sense of positioning for educational (and other) services which is deliberately (and artificially) detached from the direct engagement of government, a form of governmentality that allows the governmental officeholders to maintain a sense of independence from any calamities that ensue because 'risk management is forced back onto individuals and satisfied through the

market' (Peters, 2001, p. 111). The perils of this approach were supremely evident in the tragedy of the recent Fukushima disaster in Japan (Stiglitz, 2010). Meanwhile, the capture of the bureaucracy by the middle class and corporate interests promotes individualism in the forms of consumer autonomy, privatisation, user-pays, and individual enterprise (Peters, 2001), which are in contrast to Indigenous values of collectivism. Ironically the individual also becomes relatively powerless to oppose these forces because 'our contemporary capitalist society adjusts to changes, and works to refold rogue elements of the socius back into the ceaseless play of the commodity' (Roffe, 2007, p. 48). Since neoliberal subjects are required to become 'entrepreneurs of themselves' (Foucault, 1979, as cited in McCarthy et al., 2009, p. 40), individual 'freedom' is positioned 'as being more important than welfare liberalism's privileging of equality' (Farquhar, 2008, p. 17).

During the 1980s and 1990s, New Zealand experienced an extreme conversion to neoliberal doctrine resulting in deregulation, devolution, corporatisation, and privatisation of services, such as education, which had previously been the domain of the state (Farquhar, 2008). Within a decade, the 'governance of New Zealand changed from an ethos of liberal, positive freedom, involving the provision of certain resources for the public good, to neoliberalism' (Farquhar, 2008, p. 119) in what has been described as 'the most ambitious attempt at constructing the free market as a social institution to be introduced anywhere this century' (Gray, 1998, as cited in Farquhar, 2008, p. 119). After many years of priding itself on being a 'welfare state' which cared for all its citizens, 'New Zealand moved almost overnight to a user pays, market driven economic system', where welfare systems were pruned and national assets privatized (Carpenter, 2009, p. 3). New Zealand early childhood services have been increasingly privatised in line with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) policy which aims to 'limit public expenditure and to allow greater choice and control by parents' (Farquhar, 2008, p. 125). A dramatic increase is evident in the decade since 2000, when 26% of early childhood centres were privately owned profit-making businesses, whilst in 2010 we had 40% of our early childhood provision operating in the for-profit sector (ECE Taskforce Secretariat, 2010, p. 5), a situation which has rendered children, families, and teachers vulnerable to 'market failure' (Farquhar, 2008, p. 126).

New Zealand has therefore become 'a culture where the market is regarded as the ethic guiding all human action, [and] the subject's identity is constructed in and by the market' (McCarthy et al., 2009, p. 40). Recent research has identified increasing discrepancies in the provision of early childhood education, with many low-income Māori and Pacific Islands families struggling to have access to any early childhood

care and education settings, let alone high-quality, culturally responsive services (Ministry of Education, 2012; Ritchie & Johnson, 2011). The neoliberal metanarrative is comprehensively devoid of an ethic of care or the egalitarianism which was once a professed characteristic of New Zealand society, albeit with the ongoing underbelly of racism and colonisation. As Tooley (2000) argues, “This “business capture” has successfully established corporate hegemony and with its economic reductionist mode of thinking and acting, people (and collective interests) are of minor consideration and importance’ (p. 57).

The individualism of neoliberalism directly contravenes the collectivism of te ao Māori, as expressed through Māori values of whanaungatanga (relationships, connectedness), aroha (the reciprocal obligation to care, respect), utu (reciprocity), and manaakitanga (generosity) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship of the earth). Furthermore, the commodification of ‘market forces’ reconfigures not only education but Māori culture as a source of individual profiteering, a revisiting of colonialist assimilation in the guise of capitalist enterprise (Tooley, 2000). The Waitangi Tribunal recently released a long-awaited report on the commodification of taonga Māori (things of value to Māori). Māori had claimed that

their language, symbols, stories, songs, and dances have been commodified by people who have no traditional claim to them. They say the native flora and fauna upon which their culture and identity are built have been controlled, modified, and privatised by people, companies, or government agencies who have no affinity with those things. (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011, p. 17)

An aspect of Deleuze and Guattari’s project (2004a, 2004b) has been described as being a mode of ethical resistance to regimes, such as the machines of neoliberalism, enabling reconsiderations which allow us

to locate the ethical self as a locus of resistance to the systematicity of knowledge-power processes; a locus of resistance which operates in ways which enable the interstices in those systems to be exploited and the reproduction of control to be traversed or subverted. (Chesters, 2007, p. 245)

Deleuze situates this ethical project within ‘a broader process of becoming-minor’, a trajectory that Graeme Chesters (2007) believes has great resonance with the resistances currently being demonstrated by ‘alter-globalization movement(s)’ (p. 245) and which is in keeping with Māori understandings in regard to the importance of humility (Smith, 1999/2006).

## Ethical Promise: *Te Whāriki* as a Site of Tiriti-based Becomings

*Te Whāriki* was the first early childhood curriculum for this country, which allowed it a certain freedom from predetermined expectations. It is possible that Helen May and Margaret Carr, in committing to a Tiriti-based partnership model, consciously worked to break free of the historic monocultural model of educational discourse. This enabled working in a new space which was generative of new becomings:

It is possible that writing has an intrinsic relationship with lines of flight. To write is to trace lines of flight which are not imaginary, and which one is indeed forced to follow, because in reality writing involves us there, draws us in there. . . . The becomings contained in writing when it is not wedded to established order-words, but itself traces lines of flight are quite different. You might say that writing by itself, when it is not official, necessarily comes into contact with 'minorities'. . . . A minority never exists ready-made, it is only formed on lines of flight. (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 43)

Observers continue to reflect upon how *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), with its strong focus on a Tiriti-based recognition of te ao Māori, along with its nonprescriptive holistic and sociocultural philosophy, came to be promulgated mid-way in a decade in which the National (right-wing) party was in power. Farquhar (2008) considers that 'it is remarkable that in an era of right-wing conservatism, the document was able to capture the spirits of feminism, Māori sovereignty, children's rights and educational theories – at the same time as traversing the politically treacherous path to acceptance' (p. 108). She identifies the collaborative nature of the process for developing the curriculum as a key factor, which ensured that there was considerable support from across the diverse early childhood sector. It has also been suggested by a colleague who worked in the Ministry of Education at that time that the minister of education during that period was not overly interested in the early childhood sector, during an era in which the main focus was the promulgation of the new primary school curriculum documents. Nevertheless, the draft version of the document (Ministry of Education, 1993), which had been circulated for discussion, was considerably altered by internal ministry rewriting (May, 2001) before the final version (Ministry of Education, 1996) was released three years later.

The promulgation of the document created a new vista for the sector, fertile ground for ongoing deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of the *Te Whāriki* assemblage, as desires and movements animated and deepened practitioner and academic understandings of the potentialities of the document, the zig-zagging lines

of flight that emanated from different readings, codings, and decodings (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002).

Much has already been written regarding the efforts of early childhood educators to realise the vision of *Te Whāriki* (Nuttall, 2003; Ritchie, 1996, 2003a, 2003b). Although the document retains strong traces of developmentalist discourses, it was visionary in its model reflecting a Tiriti-based relationship between Māori and Pākehā and its potential to radically shift the power dynamics between the Indigenous people and the descendants of the colonising settlers of this country. This recognition of difference is at the heart of the document. The curriculum can be seen to have opened up new unknown possibilities for enactment of early childhood practice that is 'characterized by actual difference in the relations formed' (Bignall, 2007, p. 207). However, the ongoing challenge remains 'to intentionally *organize* this difference in ways that are ethical – postcolonial, rather than colonial' (Bignall, 2007, p. 207). *Te Whāriki* can thus be viewed as 'mapping a milieu of becoming' (Sellers, 2009, p. 44). A future focus of this project might be to interview Helen May, Margaret Carr, Tilly Reedy, and Tamati Reedy, the writers of *Te Whāriki*, regarding the process of conceptualising of the document. We may explore the way that the writing of *Te Whāriki* generated an assemblage inscribed with becomings because 'these becomings ultimately concern new ways of being in the world. On the other hand, becoming is the name for every kind of relationship or connection which is not governed by the dominant codes which organize life' (Roffe, 2007, p. 43).

*Te Whāriki*, thus, is an assemblage 'which is always collective, which brings into play within us and outside us populations, multiplicities, territories, becomings, affects, events' (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 51). The dialogical relationship among the key writers, the understandings, and 'regimes of utterances' (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 70) that emerged from these conversations and also from the many and collaborative consultations during the development process for the document generated 'a symbiosis, a "sympathy"' (Deleuze & Parnet, 2002, p. 69), new signs, and formulations for conceptualising early childhood education in Aotearoa based in a recognition of difference and in validation of the Indigenous Māori alongside Pākehā and other citizens' ontologies and epistemologies. Simone Bignall (2007) has explained that

Deleuze's theory of different/ciation embraces two strategic aspects of genealogy. The first is retrospective and critical and asks: what force has made the present what it is? The second is future-active and constructive and asks: if the actual present is to become an alternative present of a particular type (e.g., postcolonial), what forces of actualization are needed to bring it into being? (p. 207)

## A New Discursive Horizon

In their recognition of obligations to Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, May and Carr sought Māori co-writers when putting together their proposal for the contract to help develop the early childhood curriculum. Tilly and Tamati Reedy were nominated by the Te Kōhanga National Trust to serve in this role. This was a significant countercolonial shift, as *Te Whāriki* consequently became a framework decentring of Western discourse. This team of writers was engaged in a Te Tiriti o Waitangi–based relationship as architects who would reenvision designs and notions of curriculum, generating new spaces in shaping future directions for early childhood care and education. Embedding Indigenous ancient/authentic philosophy in a curriculum was innovative, the conceptualisation shifting beyond ‘the ruins’ (MacLure, 2011) of a Western gestalt of values that had dominated research and theoretical domains in Aotearoa for 200 years.

People from the early childhood community were involved in the development of *Te Whāriki*, their voices prioritised in a wide consultative process with articulations that contributed to the visioning of the document. The embedding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi within the document was significant because Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being were viewed as critical. *Te Whāriki* recognised Aotearoa as a bicultural nation, whereas historically early childhood care and education settings reflected hegemonic monocultural processes and discourses. *Te Whāriki* was the promise of a new era, a Te Tiriti–based relationship where Indigenous epistemologies would be both visible and validated.

The architects who structurally designed *Te Whāriki* converged at an interface where tensions of existent power constructions, underpinning assumptions, and hegemonic structures had contributed to ‘the maintenance of inequalities and the continued oppression of Māori people’ (Pihama, as cited in Mead, 1996, p. 201). Applying a lens of deterritorialisation, the writers drew from their backgrounds to philosophically and theoretically design *Te Whāriki*. Tamati and Tilly Reedy wrote an underpinning philosophy and sections of *Te Whāriki* in *te reo* Māori. Whilst May and Carr constructed their input in English, what is significant to *Te Whāriki* is that *te ao* Māori and *te reo* Māori hold their own integrity within the document with a separate text in *te reo* Māori for Māori immersion services such as *kōhanga reo*, as well as the integration of *kaupapa* Māori philosophy underpinning the structure, philosophy, and content of the entire document. It is a bicultural curriculum indigenous to Aotearoa. *Te Whāriki* is a challenging assemblage, a woven map comprising multiple pathways, with Indigenous knowledge, values, and beliefs visibly identified. In the end, the commitments in *Te Whāriki* were compromised during its implementation.

*Te Whāriki* precipitated sector response to build understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the impact of historical colonising regimes, and the impact on praxis. Teacher educators highlighted Te Tiriti o Waitangi as integral to their teacher education programmes, and many early childhood care and education settings prioritised professional development for the teachers. Critically important for Pākehā (of European descent) and tauwiwi (non-Māori) early childhood teachers, teacher educators, and students, it has also been significant for the decolonising of Māori at the interface. Inviting the early childhood community into *Te Whāriki* and gaining access to previously unavailable *marautanga* and *mātauranga* Māori (Māori curriculum and knowledge) required intensive Māori input and professional development support.

## Conclusion

This ‘genealogical’ discursive analysis of the pervasiveness of historical and contemporary discourses permeated by assumptions of white superiority delivers a platform from which to launch a project of unmasking the impact of neoliberal policies in our country, an impact which is fated to be even more severe for Māori children and families because of the ongoing legacy of colonisation. Te Tiriti o Waitangi and *Te Whāriki* are representative paradigms which reflect Aotearoa as a bi-epistemological nation, indigenous research theorising, and discourse foregrounding our methodological approach. As activist researchers, we draw on our specificities, as ethics, as philosophy, as belief, as theory – these are all tools that translate into our methodological paradigm which adopts a countercolonial approach (Ritchie & Rau, 2010). Mana Wahine and kaupapa Māori theorising challenges the presumption by colonisers and neoliberal policy makers that they have the right to dictate what ‘choices’ are made available.

The recent neoliberal policy initiatives both in education and in asset sales demonstrate a patent lack of genuine consultation, an implicit self-justifying belief that these government portfolio holders and officials know that they are ‘doing what’s best’ for ‘all New Zealanders’. This patronising attitude has its antecedents in the British Empire’s colonialist project, based in their implicit/explicit belief in white superiority. The current machinations of capitalism perpetuate the discourses of the past, an extreme version of recolonisation manifest in contemporary neoliberalism. This paper has outlined some ways in which unpacking historical discourses provides the context for uncovering the neoliberalist reterritorialisation of both te ao Māori and early childhood care and education within Aotearoa.

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## About the Authors

Jenny Ritchie's teaching, research, and writing has focused on supporting early childhood educators and teacher educators to enhance their praxis in terms of cultural, environmental, and social justice issues. She has recently led three consecutive two-year studies funded by the New Zealand Teaching and Learning Research Initiative.

Mere Skerrett is an enthusiastic champion of the regeneration of the Māori language as a living community language in Aotearoa New Zealand. In recent years her reflective practice has been around the mechanics of successful revitalization of the Māori language in Kohanga Reo (language nests) and initial teacher education in both 'whitestream' New Zealand and the Māori stream of Indigenous education. She is a senior lecturer at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Cheryl Rau is of Tainui, Kahungunu and Rangitane descent. During her 30-plus years in education, she has engaged across the range of sectors, including early childhood care and education, primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Her educational and research focus has centred on Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnerships in Aotearoa New Zealand and on Maori educators' articulating strategies that nurture Māori children and their families' potentiality.