Preschool - Play - Performativity

recrafting preschool subjectivities

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Introduction

In the introduction to her edited collection on the cultural politics of childhood, Sharon Stephens asks ‘how do new forms of international and local politics of culture effect children?’ (1995:3). In this paper I reframe this question to consider how global influences might impact upon the state level of politics in Queensland, and how this impact may seep out into understandings of preschool childhood and education. The analytical focus of this paper is upon the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines document, and the unusual (and I daresay uneasy) position in which it is placed, as mandatory guidelines for the voluntary preschool year in Queensland government schools. Within this global-local context I aim to consider how the kidscape of preschool childhood is now being discursively constituted through the new curriculum.

This paper begins from a basis that considers childhood as intimately related to, and part of, social structures and institutions. Preschool childhood and preschool education are considered here as explicitly political sites of activity. Mayall (1999: 22) makes the observation that ‘...research with...children is ultimately a political activity’. She goes on, however, to deny the importance of research both on and for policy, stating instead that ‘...research cannot and should not engage directly with policy making' (Mayall, 1999: 22). This seems to be a fundamental contradiction, for, I would argue, researchers engaging in policy studies or conducting research projects which have policy implications are ultimately engaged in the political process of policy making. Also, if research with children is ‘ultimately political', the central political response to such research would be through the policy process. Thus, I would concur with Jenny Ozga (2000: 7) who considers ‘...research on education policy as a valuable resource for the education community, and as a professional obligation and entitlement for educationalists'.

This follows for researchers and teachers working in early childhood settings, where it is necessary that the deeply social and political nature of their work is widely acknowledged. This position would also acknowledge that children do not live in a world of childhood that is somehow safe, distant and impervious to a ‘grown-up’ world of politics. One place this acknowledgement and engagement can take place is in the scrutiny of current policy relating to preschool children and the ways in which childhood is constructed within, through, by those documents. It is this type of engagement that I am undertaking here, considering the...
understanding of preschool childhood evident in the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* in terms of wider political contexts, and particularly in the context of local responses to, and manipulations of, global issues.

The question then, becomes one of how to go about such an exploration? Globalisation literature can be pictured as a sea of hyperbole, contradiction and contestation; often operating at a level seemingly disassociated with the lives of young children. However, if childhood is understood as a structural feature of society and if other 'structural features' (e.g. gender, class) are considered in light of changes being wrought upon Western nation-states, then studying the ways in which childhood might be recrafted seems not only to have been neglected somewhat but also of central importance. As Stephens (1995:7) suggests, ‘...we need...to explore the global processes that are currently transforming gender, race, class, culture - and, by no means least of all, childhood itself’. Given the way in which the inhabitants of childhood are so often positioned in terms of being a society's 'future' this type of analysis seems particularly relevant.

To focus on these issues I consider three points: 1) that preschool education needs to be considered as a political site where recent strategies and policies for early childhood education reflect broader state responses to aspects of globalisation, 2) that one textual outcome of the State's agenda, the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, provides a regulatory matrix of play based in a naturalised, deficit image of childhood where adults are central to their appropriate development, and 3) that if childhood is considered as a socially constructed institution then the central activity linked to preschool childhood and education, play, needs to be considered in this context also. In the following I consider first some global influences pertinent to preschool education in the Queensland context before considering in some detail the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* and the constructions of preschool childhood evident.

**Globalisation: performances and performativities**

Debates on the topic of globalisation vary widely (see for example Jameson & Miyoshi, 1998; Kellner, 2000 for discussion). As Jameson (1998:xi) points out ‘...one often has the feeling that the call for a definition of globalization, preliminary to any discussion of the thing itself, betrays a certain bad faith; and that those who insist on it already know what it is in the first place, at the same time seeking to prove its nonexistence by way of the confusion of the hapless definer’. Jameson, of course, is not suggesting we do not define globalization at all, but rather that it might be more worthwhile to develop a point at which a particular analysis or debate might begin in terms of globalisation, and move on from there. In terms of a useful approach to using concepts of globalisation for theorising and analysis, Tomlinson (1999) argues for an approach to cultural studies of globalisation that concentrates on a focused site of analysis, while always remembering and acknowledging the multidimensionality of any globalisation study. Thus, he is supporting an anti-reductionist approach, where points of contact, tension and intersection between aspects of globalisation are recognised.

It is a combination of these two suggestions from Jameson and Tomlinson that I make use of here. Finding a site where the complexity of political and economic factors which operate in a reciprocal relationship with social and cultural factors to reconstitute, or recraft, the 'kidscape' of preschool settings can be explored, while maintaining an anti-reductionist stance which recognises the complex connectivity (Tomlinson, 1999) of globalisation theories and processes. 'Kidscape' here, of course being a derivative of Appadurai's (1996) discussion of the usefulness of five -scapes (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes) as means to cut into analyses of glocal flows.
This paper will focus on performativity as a site at which it is possible to develop an analysis of the changing kidscapes in preschool classrooms. This approach will consider, to some degree, both a 'managerial' notion of performativity as discussed in, for example, Ball (1998, 2000) and a 'governance' notion of performativity as discussed by Butler (1993). Thus, there are two parts to this process of analysing the ways in which global politics, through the concepts of performativity, might be impacting upon local experiences of preschool childhood. First considering Queensland's state context and the changes being wrought at that site and the potential impact in terms of changing discourses of preschool childhood. Second, a specific focus upon the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines and the ways in which these might operate as a performative matrix, or a regulatory ideal, recrafting preschool kidscapes and subjectivities in Queensland. This second understanding of performativity, in terms of a regulatory matrix, constitutes the bulk of the paper. But before that, it is necessary here to discuss the 'managerial' and 'governance' understandings of performativity, how they are useful here for this analysis, and of course, whether and how they might operate in tandem.

'managerial' performativity

Ball (1998, 2000) describes a 'managerial' understanding of performativity, making use of concepts from both Foucault and Lyotard. In making this description Ball (1998: 190) sees performativity operating in 3 ways. First, as a 'disciplinary system of judgements', second as a system of signs and third in the performative utterances of language. In this formulation it is notable that the first of these ways in which performativity works for Ball is derived from Foucault, particularly I think through the notion of regulatory ideals, and provides a significant link into a 'governance' understanding of performativity as discussed in the next section.

Ball (1998) also warns against any implication that there is a one-way model of performativity; that there is a linear coherance to the processes of performativity in schools and other educational settings. Rather, there is a more complicated and messy process in play here. Where educators are complicit in the process, maybe seduced by an idea of excellence, maybe struggling with conflicting and uncertain subjectivities. As Ball (1998: 188) points out

...education policy texts are littered with contradictory tactics and meanings, with notions like control and operativity commonly deployed on the one hand, as against autonomy, 'natural' economic processes and choice on the other.

The Preschool Curriculum Guidelines are one example of this tension as 'managerial' notions of performativity are built into the document (through its mandatory implementation and professional development, and outcomes statements for example) while preschool teachers are simultaneously entreated to consider the natural, individual child in their care.

Ball (2000) refers to Lyotard's 'system of terror' that creates an environment of regulation and control through imposed moments of inspection and evaluation. Such a system of terror resonates with Butler's (1993) formulation of regulatory matrices of gender, whereby they operate through '...a set of foreclosures, radical erasures' which bound that which is imaginable and that which is abject and silenced. Although these two understandings of performativity resonate through a sense of symbolic violence, I would suggest that they also diverge here. I see a more 'managerial' sense of performativity being more explicit and defined, through outcomes statements, criteria for accountability etc. Whereas for Butler (1993: 7) a 'governance' sense of performativity is founded in reiterated, common sense '...conditions of emergence and operation', where regulatory matrices are spaces within and around which imaginable performances of gender are enabled.
'governance' performativity

Butler's (1993) discussion of performativity is derived, in part, from a Foucaultian notion of a regulatory ideal; she describes performativity as,

...not a singular "act," for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition (1993: 12).

In this description Butler picks up on Foucault's ideas regarding the ways in which social or political processes that contribute to the emergence of regulatory ideas are concealed, becoming common sense. Part of this concealing process is reflected in the production of texts such as policy or curricula, where the politics of what is represented is often silenced (Yates, 1997). This point, where regulatory ideals become common sense, is a point at which these two understandings of performativity diverge. Performativity in a 'managerial' sense seems to me to be quite explicit in stating outcomes and crafting an acceptable image. Although, such a crafting remains bounded by limits of possibility and what is imaginable (Ball, 1998).

Butler develops her understanding of regulatory ideals as a performance through a combination of some linguistic and Foucaultian concepts. Within linguistics, speech acts such as 'I pronounce thee...' or 'I name thee...' perform a social function, in that they operate to formalise or bring about a new social relationship, such as a marriage or naming. Butler extends this to consider the ways in which these performative speech acts are part the functioning of wider social discourses, building on Foucault's (1972) understanding of discourses as productive. Performativity then, '...must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act", but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names' (Butler, 1993: 2). Recognising the danger of misinterpreting the use of 'performance' here is important. This is not a performance in the sense of an individual deciding which discursive mask to put on each day (Butler, 1993). Instead, it is through regulatory ideals, such as that of play in the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines, that the conditions emerge in which the performance of that regulatory ideal becomes imaginable or unimaginable. Remembering that dominant regulatory ideals are repeated, becoming common sense, and operate within and through relations of power. Butler (1993:7) '...asks after the conditions of possibility' which enable a particular performance, while silencing other performances as unimaginable.

This discussion of performance being a reiteration of regulatory ideals functions with an understanding of power not as simply a top down imposition, but as a wider network of relations (Foucault, 1977). As Moira Gatens (1996: 66) points out, Foucault's '...work seeks to emphasise the less spectacular but more insidious forms of power'. Power can be noted in physical environments, so what is considered an appropriate physical environment for preschool is a reflection of a dominant regulatory ideal. In Queensland, preschool is quite obviously an 'added extra' in terms of not only separate physical sites, but also through various curriculum or handbook documents and its status as a non-compulsory year.

However, I would also concur with Butler (1993:22) who asserts that '...regulatory power produces the subjects it controls...power is not only imposed externally, but works as the regulatory and normative means by which subjects are formed'. Thus, understanding regulatory ideals as a delimitation of possibility and exclusion also entails a wide ranging and layered understanding of power networks, where the ways in which power relations function is both productive and exclusive.
Through both the 'managerial' and 'governance' notions of performativity, play in a preschool environment can be understood as not the natural activity of five-year-olds. Rather, it can be seen as the performance of 'being a preschool child' in Queensland state schools, to be judged and positioned against a regulatory ideal of play as articulated in the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*. In the following section I consider the current state context for education in Queensland.

**'Smart State': Queensland's context**

The Department for Education and Employment is concerned above all with the child as product - children's future, not their present (Mayall, 1999: 13).

Berry Mayall's observation on the status of children as assets for the future in the education offices of the UK resonates with the 'future' status of children in Queensland, reflected through curriculum, policy and in the media. For example, Peter Beattie, Premier of Queensland, points out in the introduction of the corporate strategy for Education Queensland, 2010:

> if we in Queensland want access to the benefits of the knowledge economy of the future, we have to ensure the education levels and skills of our people are up with the best in the world...it is the basis of a Smart State (Education Queensland, 2000: 3).

'Smart State' is the slogan employed to point to the need for Queensland to keep up with national and international benchmarks of performance, to be able to compete in a 'global economy'. Early childhood education is considered significant through the contribution it makes to providing a '...foundation for lifelong learning' (QSCC, 1998: iii). Although the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* document is a response to the earlier *Shaping the Future* report (Whiltshire, McMeniman & Tolhurst, 1994), it continues to reflect current state agendas, particularly through a focus on literacy, numeracy and outcomes. Grieshaber (2000) also points out that the language and terminology used in the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* is a reflection of the state's agenda evident, for example, in the explicit use of 'curriculum', 'assessment' and 'outcomes', jargon previously uncommon in preschool settings.

As Blackmore (2000:134) observes, 'many Western liberal states increasingly use policy and funding mechanisms designed at the center to steer from a distance more autonomous local units'. Which points also to the tension of neoliberal states that are becoming 'hollowed out' (Lingard, 2000: 55), decreasing their public spending and responsibility, while simultaneously increasing surveillance through performative measures such as outcomes and accountability. This notion of the state steering from a distance is quite evident in the mandatory implementation of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* for Queensland state preschools and the accompanying professional development for preschool teachers.

Within this performative process both preschool teachers and preschool childhoods are being recrafted. The kidscape of preschool childhood is now sandwiched between the developmental (physical, social, emotional and cognitive) discourses of infancy and the key learning areas from the National Statements and Profiles (English, health and physical education, mathematics, arts, science, languages other than English, studies of society and the environment and technology). The new 'foundational learning areas', posited in the guidelines as specific to preschool, are health and physical understanding, communication, understanding environments, thinking, social living and learning, cultural understanding and sense of self and others. These foundational learning areas all have outcomes statements and, combined with literacy outcomes and numeracy outcomes, potentially provide at least
nine areas within which a successful preschool childhood might be measured (Greishaber, 2000).

There is clearly evidence of a realignment from a previously flexible and teacher regulated preschool education system to much closer links and ties with the compulsory years of schooling. Despite this evidence, the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines, at its core remains influenced by the sedimented dominance of developmental psychology in early childhood education. Although there is passing recognition of issues such as ability, gender, class or race/ethnicity, these references are largely superficial. References to recent research, theorising or critique in early childhood education are mostly restricted to passing glances at social construction of knowledge or gender, with concessions also for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with disabilities. As Grieshaber (2000) points out, the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines are a curious, and I would add, uneasy mix of dominant early childhood education practices and the state's agendas.

This amalgamation retains a deficit image of preschool childhood based around innocence, a natural and teleological development, where children are but potentially adults. The dominance of a deficit image of childhood is no surprise when considered in the broader context of a perceived 'crisis' in childhood and the clear state focus on early intervention (Luke & Luke, 2000). That a tightening of the state’s surveillance of childhood is masked through a discourse of childhood as natural, and that this discourse functions as a manipulation of the kidscape of preschool is addressed later in this paper (see also James & James, 2000 for a discussion of this in the UK). Thus, it may be that even in state preschool centres across Queensland perceptions of childhood are being reconfigured through the impact of '...new Right ideologies of market liberalism and social conservatism wedded to a particularly limited vision of the individual as an autonomous, rational, self-maximizing chooser' (Blackmore, 2000: 135).

As Popkewitz (2000: 171) rather grandly asserts, 'today's educational reforms reconstitute the image governing the child'. This reconstitution is not just another global path to homogeniety however. Local uptakes of top down, mandated policy and curricula have always been reinterpreted, misinterpreted, ignored or manipulated at local school sites. For as Appadurai (1996: 18) reminds us '...that there is nothing mere about the local', and it is the local ways in which the images of preschool childhood are being recrafted (and indeed the extent to which they really are being recrafted) that is the focus of the next section of this paper.

Shaping local subjectivities: playing the preschool child

Beyond the confines of early childhood education and the imposition of Developmentally Appropriate Practice an understanding of childhood as social is often taken as a given. As Buckingham (2000: 6) points out, 'the idea that childhood is a social construction is now commonplace in discussions of the history and sociology of childhood'. The concept of childhood as an integral component of the structures of society has been recognised for decades, at least since the foundational study by Aries (1973) of childhood and families in France.

Understanding childhood as a social institution is one of the central tenets of the new sociologies of childhood. That is, acknowledging that children do develop biologically, while also understanding that the ways in which they develop are layered and cut through with social, historical and political factors (e.g. James & Prout, 1997; Mayall, 1996). Thus, '...the institution of childhood provides an interpretive frame for understanding the early years of human life' but it '...var[ies] cross-culturally' (James & Prout, 1997: 3).
It is worth noting here that what follows is a textual analysis, therefore, it is presented with an understanding of its potential limitations. The analysis made here is not meant to be a deterministic representation of preschool environments in Queensland State preschools. Rather, it is an interpretation of the ways in which preschool practices have been constituted and delimited through the mandatory implementation of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* in state preschool centres. For the analysis here, the guidelines are taken as a state endorsed representation of preschool practice, which has been disseminated to preschool teachers across the state through compulsory professional development programs. With the State's authority driving the implementation of the guidelines, it can be reasonably expected to have some impact, somewhere. Just what that impact is, and what form it takes, however, is another study altogether. For the purposes of this paper, I'm interested in how this particular text contributes to the possibilities of '*creating new social identities - what it means to be educated' (Ball, 2000: 2)* in preschools in Queensland. Thus, I'm interested in the contribution of the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* to a changing preschool kidscapes.

**Playing preschool**

Strandell (2000: 146) states that,

> In modern times, children's play has become a kind of archetype child activity. It is regarded as something children have the right to do, as a warrant for a healthy childhood, protecting them from insecurity and worries; an expression of children's real nature.

She goes on to reject this understanding of play, instead pointing out ways in which play has become integral to early childhood pedagogies. Other research such as that by Thorne (1993) or Walkerdine (e.g. 1999) also recognise play as an integral component of social experiences of childhood. Strandell, Thorne and Walkerdine all provide analyses that consider the relational aspects of play, albeit from differing analytic stances. Thus, they recognise play as not being natural or inherent, arguing instead that it is contingent on the interplay of a variety of factors, for example gender, class or adult intervention.

Play is at the core of early childhood education curricula. Within the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* play is positioned solidly on centre stage as the conduit through which preschool children learn and grow, thus, '*the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* describe the essential elements of an effective early childhood curriculum through the central role of play' (p. 2). This theme continues throughout the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, where play is unproblematically viewed as the natural, holistic, inherent activity of preschool childhood.

The appendices to the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* provide a table listing, naming and describing various types of play (pp. 85-88). This is followed by a similar listing of 'child study tools' through which preschool teachers are directed to observe preschool children (pp. 94-96). The tightly controlled listing, naming and describing in these matrices reflect Foucault's notion that the more an activity broken down into component parts, described and specified, the more it becomes a process of surveillance and discipline (1977). Thus, these explicit descriptors of play serve as a regulatory matrix of play in the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, operating not only to maintain dominant regulatory ideals, but also to set out conditions of possibility and exclusion. Such conditions delimit what it is possible to imagine as preschool play, and what is unimaginable.

Foucault (1977: 149) asserts that '*disciplinary tactics [are] situated on the axis that links the singular and the multiple. It allows both the characterization of the individual as individual and the ordering of a given multiplicity'. It can be suggested that this ordering is reflected
through the matrices of play and observation in the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, which operate to order, to exclude and to speak of individuality within an ordered multiplicity. The individual child implied in statements from the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* such as, 'I'm an individual, please don't compare me with others' (p. 8) is a free-standing, decontextualised individual who does not seem to function within relations of power, knowledge or context. Such an individual is echoed throughout the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines* through statements such as, 'when teachers identify each individual's unique developmental and learning pathways, they can make informed curriculum decisions' (p. 15). In this context I would suggest that references to children as unique individuals, not to be compared with others, operates as a smokescreen to the ways in which children are routinely subjected to the teacher's gaze to be coded, analysed and regulated.

The high level of adult control considered necessary within the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, is clearly reflected in the matrix of play (p. 86) where, for example, 'extended free play' is characterised as not usually involving contact with adults and as being '...engaged in with others or with peers'. Further comment is supplied to indicate that this play '...does not offer enough cognitive challenge or interactions with adults to provide the scaffolding for new learning'. According to the *Preschool Curriculum Guidelines*, play '...becomes educational when an adult modifies the spontaneous play of children so that it has educational value' (p. 87). This emphasis on the importance of the adult role in play ignores and devalues the learning which takes place through peer interactions. It also serves to silence the perspectives of children, who, although they '...are the central focus of the early childhood curriculum at all times' (p. 1) are also only '...potentially competent, engaged, thinking, creative and communicative’ (p. 5, emphasis added).

Despite the ways in which the adult privilege of intervention in preschool play is evident throughout the PCG, play retains its central position as the *natural* activity of preschool childhood. Thus,

> Play...is the fundamental medium for young children's learning and is central to an effective preschool curriculum. It is a *natural activity* for children through which they make meaning of the world around them. (p. 30, emphasis added).

The PCG repeatedly defines play as natural, despite the constant references to the necessity for adult intervention into play. For example, there is a list on page 32 that provides fifteen ways in which 'teachers support and facilitate play' many of which can be seen as positive, such as 'challenging stereotypical play when appropriate' or 'assisting children to respect the rights and choices of others in play'. However, it seems peculiar and contradictory to consider this play that is carefully and thoughtfully planned, extended or manipulated by adults is somehow a reflection of a natural childhood.

The expectation that teachers will intervene in play situations, that teachers are assumed to have a vitally important role in preschool play is fundamentally 'adultist' (Alanen, 1992). In the context of the PCG's insistence on the natural place of play in a preschool environment, placing such a heavy emphasis upon sustaining the central role of adult intervention in the play of preschoolers seems a contradiction. If play is natural or inherent, why the need for adult intervention? I would suggest that such an emphasis on adult intervention feeds into, and off, social and discursive constructs of childhood where children are '...what it suits the adult world for them to be' (Stainton-Rogers & Stainton-Rogers, 1998; 186). That is, in the PCG the ways in which play is validated as the natural process for learning serves to make invisible the significant level of adult intervention in play and the ways in which this intervention is directed towards a particular understanding of childhood.
Indicative of this process are several moments of conflict in PCG, one example of which is in the following paragraph,

Children, teachers and other partners co-construct the curriculum. Children's perspectives of the curriculum involve participating in interaction and play with peers and supportive adults in a flexible, inclusive environment. The teacher's role is to enhance learning through planning and interactions with children, while encouraging, extending and valuing children's spontaneous learning (p. 13).

In this statement learning in preschool can be seen as deeply social and contextual, developed through 'partnerships' and 'co-construction'. However, regardless of this social context and the overt effort and thought that contributes to children's preschool experiences, learning is still considered 'spontaneous'. While the relations and contexts within which this learning takes place are silenced, there can be no indication that these relations and contexts may also be constraining, marginalising or excluding some children. There is no recognition also, that this co-construction takes place within broader social relations of power; where adults have greater social power than children, and some groups of children can be perceived as having more power than others. One example of these relations of power amongst children is Danby's (1998) study of the construction of masculinity in the block corner, where some boys clearly dominated the regulation of masculinity and play in the block area.

The marginal position of social factors such as gender, culture, class or ability and the silence on other points, such as geographical location, enable the PCG to exist as they are. However, it is these marginalised points that may serve to expose the limitations of a 'natural' understanding of preschool play. If play was to be considered a social construction, a regulatory ideal through which preschool life is delimited, the PCG would look very different. For example, rather than attempts at assimilating the '...different values associated with play [that] tend to be culturally based' (p.31), perhaps there would be an emphasis upon the ways in which this difference can be positively valued as contributing to the cultural and social basis of the preschool context. Or if gender was recognised as integral to a regulatory ideal of preschool childhood, there could be an understanding of the ways in which adults, girls and boys police their play activities in gendered ways (Thorne, 1993; Danby, 1998).

Conclusion

To call a presupposition into question is not the same as doing away with it; rather, it is to free it from its metaphysical lodgings in order to understand what political interests were secured in and by that metaphysical placing, and thereby to permit the term to occupy and to serve very different political aims. (Butler, 1993: 30)

As Strandell (2000: 148, emphasis removed) points out, there is a need to consider the ways in which play is the pedagogical and curricular core of early childhood educational practice, where '...play is an instrument for learning adult competencies'. Thus acknowledging that play in preschools is a useful learning tool through which both children and adults are able to interact and learn (but also of course, to be excluded, marginalised, silenced or to 'unlearn'). As such, it is not my intention to negate the centrality and usefulness of play in preschool classrooms rather, it is to point to the ways in which play is central to the regulation of the performance of childhood and the evaluation of these performances. Play in the Preschool Curriculum Guidelines not only shapes a 'governance' performativity of preschool childhood through a regulatory matrix of preschool play, it also shapes a 'managerial' performativity where outcomes and 'school-readiness' measure the success of preschool childhood.
Western kidscapes are changing, in part (and for example) through the impact of information technologies, through changes to the workforce and to families, through changes in media, through changes in marketing (for example, the ABC's aggressive marketing to young children). This points to a problem whereby the state's discourses of children being society's future are developed out of constructions of childhood which are often based in nostalgic versions childhood. While the kidscapes, including play, of preschool are constructed as natural, within an uncritical framework of developmental psychology, the exclusions and silences upon which this construction depend will remain marginalised. Understanding childhood as natural or somehow inherent also serves to smoke screen the significant level of intervention and control of preschool childhood by adults. Thus, to continue considering play as a natural activity, indeed a biologically determined and universal activity, strips it of its location within socially, politically and historically located discourses.
REFERENCES


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