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International students in neighbourhood schools: A fickle commodity

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Introduction

I was just going to say you have to start and talk in a business sense and some people don't like when I use in a school I use the word business, they tend to think oh yeah its all money ... yes it is money but also efficiency. ... You have to have this program organised. You have to be efficient, and so on. But it is a business because you are suddenly collecting a reasonable amount of money and this reasonable amount of money will buy certain things (Kil, p.18)

That the number of international students in Australian educational institutions has become as a profitable business as students numbers have risen exponentially, over the last decade is an off-cited phenomenon. For public secondary schools, hard pressed for public funding, international students have allowed school communities access to new sources of funding when local students provide little financial support. Accessing these new funding opportunities, places new demands on school communities. Teachers and administrators must devise new ways of marketing their school, particularly to overseas markets. Teachers and students need new skills to move across cultures, languages and locations as they travel (virtually and materially) to sell their programs and to work with international and local students within their school. Tensions are set up as school community representatives seek to maximise much needed funding; but also work in the best interests of their students. Real attempts by school representatives to understand the academic and pastoral needs of students and parents become confused as these requirements are negotiated in relation to Government demands for economy and accountability, student demands for international and western education and the marketing and educational imperatives of the school.

This paper reports on research from a much larger study which reports on the impact of international students in Victorian secondary schools. Its particular focus is the impact of fee-paying international student programs on state secondary schools, traditionally supported by Government funding and local communities and the resultant imperative on teachers and administrators to source and to market to students

outside of Australia. My analysis begins from the day-to-day experience of teachers as they are placed within a material world reshaped by global, demographic and institutional changes and demands. Teachers discuss their daily tasks: the ways they sell the school to markets overseas and provide parents with information; and the need to work within government regulations and demands for accountability. These discussions are intertwined with other, and taken for granted notions that relate to those of identity and difference, neo-liberalism and naïve cosmopolitanism. Together these serve to objectivise and commodify the international in as they are wanted and not wanted in a paradoxical process of antagonism and desire. I make this argument in four sections. The first section explores the dimensions of a comprehensive methodological framework which can interrogate the different analytical directions contained within my discussions with teachers about their work. As ‘texts- in use’, teacher’s discussions about their everyday, embodied experiences are problematised in relation to institutional and systemic changes (Smith, 2001) and the ontological and discursive dimensions of social life that provide their shaping power laid out and interrogated (Lather, 1991; Pillow, 2007). The second section explores the day-to-day experiences of teachers in two government state secondary schools when they describe the ways that they market their school; and examines the systemic and ontological discourses played out within those conversations. The third section interrogates discourses of identity and difference, neo-liberalism and cosmopolitanism and investigates their interrelation with notions of commodification.

A methodological frame.

This paper develops the methodological frame of ‘analytical abstraction’ described in other of my work to explore the ways that race and ethnic relationships are discussed in schools (Arber, in press). This research approach begins with teachers discussions about their everyday life and the discursive shaping of these conversations within organisations and within society generally. It takes seriously Dorothy Smith’s (1987) notion that ‘we look at any or all aspects of a society’ from the place where we are actively ‘located, embodied, in the local historicity and peculiarities of our lived worlds’. Never a matter of mere portraiture, the research process becomes that of making the everyday world problematic in order to reflect its real complexity. The matter is to interrogate ‘what everybody knows experientially’ as it is embodied and is located in time and space (Campbell, 2007). This complex matter of

‘homework’ (Clifford, 1997) is one in which the researcher interrogates the everyday and embodied experiences of teachers and their work and critically confronts the often taken-for-granted ways of meaning, which shape the understanding of both researcher and researched. The insight of critical theory is that the social and cultural structures and notions that historically position researchers and the researched must be explored, but also dismantled in a process of ever greater ‘reflexivities of discomfort’ (Pillow , 2007, p.188)

The ‘terrain of imagination’ which frames everyday practice and social conditions (Anderson,1991; O’Callaghan, 1995, p.22). as a multilayered and unequally empowered complexity of discursive space are played across patterned fields of power. As participant within these same imagined spaces, social relationships can be explored from three different, but integrated vantage points: that of practice, that of concept and that of its underpinning logic.¹ From the vantage point of *narrational practices* I examine the seemingly *ad hoc* nature of individual experiences and stories and the ways that experiencing individuals understand and participate in their day-to-day worlds. From the vantage point of *narrational fields* I explore the patterned yet contingent and often-disjunctive ways in which meaning and practice are related to a particular conceptual or practical domain. From the final vantage point of *narrational maps* I explore the logic, or terms and conditions of the debate as they appear as essential ways of knowing and being in the world.

This paper is concerned with the impact of fee-paying international students in secondary schools. Its particular focus is the activities of school representatives to market their schools. When examining case studies of secondary schools and the ways that their programs are marketed to international students I examine: the day-to-day practices and understandings that community members speak about as they carry out these program; the common themes and patterns that focus how these ideas are discussed and debated (for instance as policy debates and curriculum ideals); as well as the normalised ways of thinking and behaving that provide the frame for these activities. The matter for research are the practices of school representatives; what they actually do and why and with what consequences. The analysis of discussions about these behaviours suggests that they are intertwined with other and taken-for-granted discourses in relation to location, identity and difference, and marketisation and serve to commodify international students and include them differently within the community.

A matter of business: Examples of two schools

Wentworth College

I exemplify my analysis with excerpts from my discussion with teachers as they speak about ways to market their school. Peter Gregory, is assistant principal of Wentworth college, a large rural school in the coastal regions and near Victoria’s sheep wheat

¹ For more information about this methodological frame see Arber 2003/2004, Arber, 2005

belt. The school attracts busloads of students who commute daily from the surrounding countryside and from the rural city itself. The school has well over a thousand students including 18 international students, most of them from China and Japan, For Gregory, the school has ‘two reasons’ for taking in international students:

two reasons, one is that we need to break down the monocultural aspect of our school and the wider society and a lot of people nodded that and say the other reason is and the ears prick up that we can potentially make money out of it and a lot of people expect the money to flow immediately (went p.18)²

International student programs are important to the ways schools develop student’ intercultural and international competencies; and is an important funding source. In the case of this country school, international students provide a way for the isolated and conceptually ‘monocultural’ environment of the school community to be broken down and offer local students access to international notions and experiences. The exploration of this discussion from the point of view of narrational fields portrays a paradoxical nexus between multiculturalism/monoculturalism and the presence of international students. The interrogation of my conversations with Gregory from the different vantage point of the narrational map (that is in relation to its ontological framing) interrelate these ideas with notions of belonging and identity. For Gregory, a primary reason for the introduction of international programs into ‘our’ school is to provide an intercultural and international education for students who otherwise have little exposure to cultural and ethnic differentiation. Bringing international students to the school makes ‘business sense’ as ‘people expect the money’ and they ‘expect the money to flow immediately’. ‘We’ can make money from this. ‘We’ get ‘a full fee pay out’ and that is what has been so ‘useful’.

My conversations with teachers and administrators focus on the ways to market the school including: the use of agents; the impact of the Government’s International Students Unit (ISU), participation within exhibitions and the employment of local and regional consultants and processes. Like many schools representatives, Gregory finds it most effective to market the school to international students and their parents personally as ‘word of mouth’ relationships:

maintain the best way of getting students long term and getting them rolling over is to develop a personal relationships with schools and then word of mouth. If you’re offering a good product it will spread and you’ll keep on getting them. So that’s what we’ve done basically – went 5

² These references denote the school and the page number from which this material was taken. These names have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the schools and people concerned.

An essential element of the marketing work of the school is to provide a good educational product. The development of good personal relationships between parents and schools placed in tension with the notion of the educational process as a commercial enterprise. The binary relation us/them underpins the marketing process as what we have done is get them here. The lexicon of them rolling over adds weight to the notion that this marketing trip works towards the commodification, not only of curriculum but of international students.

Keeping contact with families is prefaced by an awareness that parents want to be familiar with the school and need to be reassured that everything is ok.

The first kids we got from China though even though I went on a marketing trip and met the parents there again I believe it was that initial contact with the kids coming here was the most important thing. They were familiar with the school. And going on the marketing trip was important in the sense that their parents got to meet me and reassured that everything was okay and they could trust me and trust is very important with them.-went p.13

Encouraging parents to send their children to the school includes that parents are reassured that the school can provide good educational curriculum and a safe and ethical environment. The thrust of marketing exercises for the school was the development of 'trust' as parents 'get to meet' school representatives. The development of 'trust' as 'their parents got to meet me' and as trust is 'very important to them' sets up a curious binary relational space that is notional and material. Conceptually parents, as one-of-them and as different culturally and nationally to us, need to be convinced that their children can be entrusted to the school. Further the parents are truly separated by the logistics of distance. The purpose of the marketing exercise is to emphasise that the school community is attractive and safe despite the distance that separates parents from their children. It is a space that belongs securely to us which they enter as they come 'out' from 'over there' to stay at 'our place'. What is important is:

Parents being able to put a face to a school and having confidence that that person will look after their children is really, really important and as it would be for us if it was on the other foot.
-went p.13

The everyday pictures in albums and reports which Gregory shows parents during his visits allows parents to cross geographic and intercultural space and 'put a face to the

school'. 'Face' in this instance, is about creating an atmosphere of trust and security. Something surface, it is concerned with developing the conviction and the 'confidence that the person will look after their children'. Gregory's insight contains a moment of empathy, a *fatherhood* understanding that we would feel the same way 'if it was on the other foot'. Notions of 'face' and 'trust' nevertheless hide a tension between the parental 'they' who send 'their children' and the 'us' who receive and educate them. Gregory's motives as he speaks with parents are torn as he provides pastoral care and support for parents and students; and tries to convince parents to relinquish their children into his care.

To sell the school successfully in China involves entering different cultural and geographic spaces to become part of networks of friends and powerful people:

They would say my son is 13, in 3 years I'll be looking for a school and he will be going to Wentworth College because my friend recommends him and we had that so often and all this very, very important powerful people who in themselves know other people because Chinese society seem to work...its very patriarchal still but it works on networks, male networks basically.

To market the school successfully Gregory must accommodate intercultural and linguistic relationships. In this case it means understanding how social and friendship patterns work in countries outside of Australia. Gregory explains that this means integrating himself into networks and friendship groups which are powerful and patriarchal. Gregory here is confident that he understands the Chinese people: who they are; the way they work and his ability insinuate himself into the most sacrosanct of community relationships as 'my friend recommends him' 'to very very important powerful people'.

Despite the effort put into the marketing exercise, Gregory cannot count on 'getting a group up' of international students to the school. Factors beyond the school's control change the ways that international students come to the school including.

just sheer disorganisation of the Chinese and through the agent over there meant that we didn't get a group up. And we thought we were going to get another 30 ... but the 2002 tour was cancelled. We had a number every year. And then 2003 of course was SARS ... it was really disappointing because you counting on getting those kids interested and then it rolls over...they come back and it starts spreading. So it was just really, really disappointing.

The particular support of the International Students Unit (ISU), numbers of international students already at the school, the demography of local students, and the

relationship with agents, impacts on the numbers of international students who arrive at the school. World events including the impact of the SARs viral epidemic, administrative decisions in China and the educational provision, marketing and costing of Australian competitors have a huge impact. The terms and conditions that define what 'was really disappointing' are intertwined with other and 'taken-for-granted' ideas. The structures which define Chinese culture are not only described as disorganised but reflect deficiencies in the identity of all Chinese, The notion of students from 'getting interested'. 'get it to start spreading' and to get them 'rolling over' brings to mind the notion of students, distanced from us by distance and race, rotating through a production line.

Two years later I returned to Wentworth Secondary College and caught up with Peter Gregory. Gregory had semi-retired returning to the school only in his role as co-ordinator of the international students program. There were now only six students within the program and Gregory was concerned that without further commitment to the program the program would disappear from the school. In explaining why the program had changed he argued that:

it's a combination of factors. I'd say my leaving because I have a real passion for that so my leaving. ...I'm not being really critical of the school but I do think if they're serious about a program they need to devote a little bit more money to it than they have and that's not...you need to commit money to make money from something like this I really think. And there is also the changed climate and what I think is fairly poor marketing and fairly poor service to us as a regional school from the centre in Melbourne. So there's a combination of things there that have worked against our program.

Running the international students program demands a real passion that allows someone to devote the sort of time required to market the program properly. Moreover, there has been a changed climate and the kind of support that he has got from his school and his region has changed. Despite Gregory's efforts to market our program, Gregory finds himself an outsider to the school community itself as they need to be more serious and commit more money to the purpose of bringing in international students. It is a matter on working harder to compete within a market which is now considered only in terms of its importance as a business proposition. It is something in which you need to commit money to make money.

Broadbank college

Jason Douglas, assistant principal of Broadbank college describes how he markets for students at a metropolitan school community environment. The school is in the North of Melbourne, located between a housing commission area in Broadbank and one of the most affluent suburbs, Grenville. The students from the affluent Grenville suburb send their children to private schools or to a more prestigious suburban high school three kilometres to the east. The current school population is only 400 including seventy fee-paying students. The local school population is of low socio-economic and high ethnic diversity most of who are from Somali as well as students from the Pacific Islands, Lebanon and other Arabic speaking countries. Of the international students 65% are from China and most of the rest are from South East Asia, particularly Japan and Korea. The school has set up an English language school for its students. What is important is that:

So the overseas student program says...selling purposes it obviously increases numbers in the main group but it also hopefully will raise the bar for local kids in terms of academic standards. Last year two of our Chinese kids got into 1% of the Australian maths competition... and they got money prizes... And it was the Australian maths competition ... they really only get the best maths students. So to be in the top 1% means that top 1% of the best. So it's a sensational result. ...So we would certainly use that in publicity to advertise the fact to the Granville people that there are high academic standards happening in the school.

At this city school international students program, international student programming was encouraged as a way to increase student numbers, 'raise the bar for local kids' in terms of academic standards and make the school more attractive local middle class local students who presently avoided the school. The program had proved most successful with international students at the school coming within the top one percent within the Australian maths competition. This 'sensational' result provided a most useful opportunity for the school so 'We would certainly use that in publicity to advertise ... that there are high academic standards happening at the school'. The paradoxical relationship between the school community and the international has complex strands. The international students at the school have done very well – they are both 'Chinese' and ours. 'Our' international 'Chinese kids' are wanted as 'they get money prizes' and get the best 'maths students'. Who 'we' represents does not include the 'local students' who need to be prodded along by these results. 'We' want to advertise the good high academic standards to 'the Granville people'. These are the people who do not belong to the school but might if they realised that 'high academic standards' are 'happening' at the school.

Moreover, and as in other schools, the introduction of international students into the school is an accounting exercise:

In terms of expense the (ELC) is a major expense because of the small number of kids that you have in a classroom, maximum 15, so if we have 16 kids in the ELC, we have to provide enough teachers for two groups, which is expensive in terms of staff wages and so we are providing this service and it would be a financial benefit to our school when those kids, if those kids finish ELC and then go into our mainstream, because you know, then you have a kid in a mainstream class who is paying the school \$9000 next to a kid who is paying an annual fee of \$150.

A crucial component of the schools program to bring international students into the school has been the establishment of an English Language Centre (ELC). The centre provides a 'pipeline' for bringing more lucrative international students into the school compared to the expense of similar provision for local students ("who get \$150' compared to 'the international students who pay \$9000"}).

. On the other hand international students make demands on school infrastructure and their numbers are unreliable. Whereas staff can be casualised and employed at will to keep profits high, structural resources are less flexible and international students can become a 'major expense'. The enterprise nature of the programs fragments community identity adds to the difficulty of knowing who belongs to 'our school'. The 'we' who 'are providing this service' and get the figures for 'term 3' exclude many of the staff who must not be 'too expensive in terms of staff wages',

Paradoxically, the incongruous geographical and socio-cultural location of the school and its effectiveness as a language centre are assets in the way the school is able to sell its program.

When we first set up I think we were helped a lot by the ISU actually directing kids to us. When you're overseas its very obvious you have a few schools which have a very strong reputation and which the kids agents recommend who... They have limits on the number of overseas students they're prepared to take so they really take the cream of the overseas kids. They look at the kid's exam results and say whether they will accept them. So kids who weren't accepted by those schools were offered places at Broadbank I think ...was very helpful to us. We said we would take basically any number.

Marketing the school well, depends on the way in which they school is able to sell itself as doing well academically. Brentwood's participation is dependent on its ability to service those students who are not doing so well. The students coming in are objectivised in continuum; 'the cream' who go to other schools' and the others for whom Broadbank has the 'physical capacity' to take 'any number' of students who

are not 'accepted by those schools', The community, who has the capacity to take in students over and above 'the number of students we currently have' is nevertheless an unstable and fragmentary notion. Brentwood's marketing effort is aided by the participation of an outside body; the International Students Unit (ISU) of the Victorian Education Department. This body enabled the school to compete with academic middle class schools which have 'very strong reputations' and take 'the cream of the overseas students' entering Victoria. The pariah status of the school in relation to its academic and social class credentials is maintained by the intermediary 'the kids agents who recommend other schools Competition between institutions marketing for students is fierce as schools are in competition with schooling systems worldwide.

They cream kids world wide. They're sending kids to England and the United States. Every state of Australia. So it is pretty hard to get them to us as a individual school (old p.6)

The fragmentation of the community marketing for international students and the concurrent commodification of the international student is reinforced as the school competes for students at international fairs and globally and 'kids' are 'creamed' 'worldwide'. The international students business is one in which school compete against endless different communities and identities; England and the United States and 'every state of Australia'. The local 'individual' school community finds it 'pretty hard' to compete in a rough and tumble world and 'get them to us' as an individual school. .

As in Wentworth College, the number of international students coming to Australia is uncertain.

They have to be. You really don't know. With Sars or if there's a terrorist attack in Melbourne or health could go out. They're not happy but they're not uncomfortable with that situation but we've told them that that's just the way it is with and ESL teacher. Its very common for short term contracts over a long term.

The SARs epidemic of 2003, or the threat of a terrorist attack in Melbourne all can influence the ways in which students come to Australia. The number of students who can come to the school is something 'you really don't know'. The unreliability in student numbers, and the flexibility required to accommodate large numbers of students at short notice, impacts on the ways that staff is employed at the school. By the time I interview Jack the next year the language centre is becoming a liability rather than an asset to the school. The ISU is becoming increasingly inconsistent in

the way that it sent students to the school and it is suggested that a nearby school would begin its own language centre at the school. In direct competition with their school, such a move could drive down numbers at the school altogether.

Problematising Discourses: Identity and difference

The examination of conversations that I have with teachers about the impact of international student programs on their day-to-day experience brings into view other and more taken-for-granted conversations that define the nature of community belonging. The investigation of the ways such programs are marketed suggests that international students programs are mediated by discourses of identity, difference, neo-liberalism and cosmopolitanism in ways that differentiate and objectify the students as other and serve to commodify them.

Throughout the research, respondents depict a multicultural/monocultural binary between local school communities inclusive of many different cultural groups and communities that are culturally and racially homogeneous. In one city school a multicultural community, already differentiated by immigrant and ethnic difference, understands itself as having skills to integrate other groups who are culturally different. At another urban school, international students bring academic and middle skills not held by other multiculturally different school members. Such conversations interpolate already-contradictory discourses traditionally used to define community belonging for immigrant and refugee students. Traditionally, discussions about multiculturalism have been concerned with an ethnically or racially differentiated other who is included within our community, even as they continue to be defined as different and as not-quite-part of our community. Conversations about mono-culturalism are concerned with the ways that representatives of other ethnic and raced groups are allowed to enter a seemingly culturally and racially homogeneous community (Arber, in press; Rizvi, 1994). Either way, international students become token outsiders bringing to our-community that which it desires – internationalism – and often multiculturalism, diversity and the upgrading of the schools academic and classed condition.

Certainly, the development of international student programs and the marketing of them, requires of them new cross-cultural and linguistic skills and knowledges and brings into play new cross-national, intercultural and cross-racial complexities (Singh, 2007). Working with international students demands knowledge of social networking and communication skills to discover the specific demands of parents in different locations, ways of communicating knowledge about the educational products provided by the schools and the development of expertise to work with students on their arrival. The two schools exemplified here, keep good contact with the parents of their students, visiting them regularly, showing photos of their children involved in school activities and discussing with them their school reports. Teachers have

developed social skills and knowledges that allow them to travel overseas to China for instance and to work with social networks which, often, are tightly regulated and traditionally structured in ways which seem foreign to local Australian teachers

At the very least, this work involves school representatives in a complex kind of strategic essentialism (Luke, 2005, p.xvii). The teachers described here develop strategies to break into social networks in China, negotiate with agents, work with students on their arrival and keep contact with their parents. Too often this move to describe those within the school usefully and economically slips into the discursive device of the stereotype (Pickering, 2001, p.7). Conversations about our Chinese kids who get into 1% of the Australian maths competition ; the patriarchal nature of Chinese as it works on networks, male networks basically and the inefficiency and sheer disorganisation of Chinese organisations do more than describe observations about individuals and groups within the teachers acquaintance. Such notions about maths competency, male dominated societies and ineffectual organisational structures tap into commonplace and taken-for-granted assumptions about Asians and Chinese people and institutions held by the community generally. More than an attempt at categorisation, here we define the broad elements of cultural practices and process as primordial attributes. Negotiation with the identities described as individuals and as other than the attributes ascribed them is lost. It is not just that these school representatives fail to see the individual parents and students they work with. The paradoxical common-senseness that underlies these stereotypes impact these embedded notions within the realities of everyday life. Discussions about entering social networks too easily become generalisations about the sensibility of sending women to market the school or about the patriarchal nature of Chinese society generally.

The notion, to know and locate as ours the other who provides the focus of our conversations is to locate them, both conceptually and materially as an-other (Chow, 1993; Brah,1996; Young, 1990) Representations of other people become matters of appropriation and control as these claims to know , are ones made within the ambivalent protocols of fantasy and desire (Hall, 1997, Bhabha, 1994). The people, unable to find the other person, represent him or her in a fluctuation between its consideration as one thing and its opposite. It is an impulse that is always doomed to

failure: disrupted, slipping, and incomplete. As part of the orientalist project to locate and to know others miscellaneous and unequally empowered individuals and institutional practices and interests create and maintain what it is to be in our world (Said, 1991). Gregory no longer merely knows about the ways to behave and access social networks in China. He Knows the Chinese people. In fact, Gregory knows the Asian people generally. Most of all these people who he knows are comfortably located as ours and at our place.

The central condition of orientalism, is its appearance of normalcy, as an almost unconditional 'us' represents the condition of being and working within the world. The other person who is not-us, who is orientalised, becomes the creation that exists as a way of formulating what is in essence our world made in comparison to their world. It is within the power of those speaking from a position within our world to define the dimensions of the map that underpins the ways that day-to-day worlds in contemporary Western societies are understood (Young, 1990; Said, 1991; Dyer, 1997). 'Usness' comes to be seen as 'that what is'. That which is 'us' becomes an almost-empty category defined through that which it is not ourselves. It is a near-silence reflected throughout the research. Teachers within one school, describing their school as mono-cultural, discuss the cultural skills international students bring to the school to ameliorate its 'cultureless' condition. Teachers in a city school, speak of their school as multicultural, sharing with their students a sense of multicultural 'difference'. Who we are, in a sense, remains undecipherable and unexplained. It is a notion of 'us' which is, which is hybrid to its core, both powerfully omnipresent and slippery and changing as those who imagine themselves as part of the community are, in a complexity of binary thinking, variously included and excluded (Hall, 1997; Bhabha, 1994). Within the complexity of international student provision definitions of 'ourselves' always a slippery concept defines community belonging as nothing and everything including variously other teachers, other local schools, schools outside of Australia. 'Who-we-are' remains a near-silent chameleon presence criss-crossed with notions of race and geography as it describes at different times we-who-make-money-as-part-of-local-school-community, we-who-are-part-of-the-school-community-who-are-not-refugees-and-would-like-to-attract-middle-class-students, we-teachers-who-support-the-program-and-have-permanency and who-represent-our local/urban-school, our state, our nation.

Problematising Discourses: Neo Liberalism

Discourses of identity and difference defined in recent times through interplays of local and global conditions are overlaid by the entrepreneurial nature of the international student enterprise (Matthews, 2002, Ziguas, 2005). The most basic of educational notions are subject to challenge as they are understood through neo-liberal mantra's of corporately management, money making, business rules, market rules and the subsequent gratification of consumer desire (Singh, 2007, Raduntz, 2005, p.235, Apple et al, 2005).The primary objective of participation within international students programs is its importance as a 'money earning venture'. Without doubt the enrolment of international students within

secondary schools is profitable and provides much needed funding at a time of decreased education spending. Local community schools, strapped for cash, market for students globally to realise what has become an important and often lucrative funding opportunity. Gregory, speaking at a country school reminisces that ‘ears prick up’ as school community member realise that they can ‘potentially make money’ make money out of the program. Douglas, tellingly observes how international students ‘paying the school \$9000’ sit ‘next to a kid who is paying an annual fee of \$150’.

The ‘cherry picking’ that underpins a capitalistic approach to education means that support for international students is complex and inconsistent as its profitability to the local school community wavers. Provision for international students in schools is costly and makes high demands on school infrastructure and school staffing. To provide for large numbers of international students, schools such as Brentwood S.C. invest heavily in infrastructure, in classrooms for the provision of largescale English language instruction and in pastoral care provision. In order to remain cost-effective and to cover the cost of expensive capital investment the number of international students coming to the school needs to remain high. Any long-term changes to the numbers – the opening of competing language centres nearby, the impact of terrorism in Australia or SARs infections overseas – threatens the school with financial disaster. Further, as a tenuous but profitable venture, costs and benefits needed to be kept properly in check. This impacts on the careers of English language teaching staff particularly as because of the irregular nature of international student provision language teaching staff was hired on a short-term and contractual basis. Local schools come into competition for lucrative student contracts, Australian schools communities are disappointed as United States and British school take the ‘cream’. Schools in participant Asian countries increasingly enter the international student market themselves to form a new and socio-culturally complex source of competition to Australian schools.

Under the impact of neo-liberal discourse ‘public education is seen as a market commodity in need of marketing’ (Matthews, 2002). Other notions in support of international student programs - as providing social justice, international skills - are distorted as ‘altruistic reasons’ for bringing in international students are refocused in place of others which are to ‘make money’ and increase profits for the school community. Notions of good practice, concerns about humanitarianism and pastoral care, are similarly reconfigured. ‘Discussions about what international education could mean or what donor students and nations might want or need are notably absent’. (Matthew, 2002, p.373) Hard-won intercultural and linguistic skills needed to participate within the marketing process - interaction with agents, government and local bodies; attendance at marketing expos held in participating provider countries, interacting with social networks and families – are no doubt well intentioned but are nevertheless fraught by inconsistent purposes. The photographs which so touch the

hearts of parents add to the success of the marketing exercise. Crucial values – trust, friendship, pastoral care become inducted into the marketing process. On marketing trips, Gregory tells me, ‘parents... trust me and trust is very important with them’. Parents ‘put a face to a school’ and have ‘confidence that that person will look after their children’’. The lexical terms and conditions of marketing imagery, as they are shaped by capitalism and global business implemented spatially, reconfigure the ‘human face’ of the school (Sidhu, 2002).

The human face presented towards the international student is betrayed by the fickleness that underpins the maintenance of international programming as schools confront changed finance and politics. Support for the enterprise is not consistent – on my return to Wentworth, only three years later I find that Peter Gregory had retired. Later administrators do not share Gregory’s passion for internationalisation and the number of students in school is less than a third to what it has been only three years earlier. In other schools I visit teachers are reluctant in their support for these students on their arrival. Decisions by the International Students Unit (ISU) to support one school or another with student recommendations and marketing opportunities cannot be underestimated. In Brentwood, nearby schools with stronger academic and middle class credentials now provide for international students, making the Brentwood incursion into this market increasingly untenable. Moreover, schools are in competition with schools and secondary education providers worldwide. Large scale events – wars, the threat of terrorism, epidemics, the strength of the Australian dollar – change the ways that students are attracted to Australia annually. The loss of student numbers in any one year this means the loss of valuable networks and education patterns. The competitive nature of other major providers – particularly the US, UK and Canada - change the ways that Australian providers are able to compete – particularly at international marketing ventures such as expos. Moreover, international student markets themselves are changing as educational systems in supply countries are developed – and often become modern education and English language providers themselves. Douglas example, where US and UK providers are able to ‘cream’ the best students worldwide is only one instance of this.

Overlaying the discourse of race and difference is that of commodification and objectification. – of ‘getting them’. ‘Getting them rolling over’. Students are wanted

when they were profitable – not wanted when they were not. Infrastructure costs – the cost of staff are calculated in relation to student numbers and the cost of student marketing and provision. Gregory reports that the school is excited about bringing international students into the school when “we can potentially make money out of it’. Douglas is worried about the risk that is taken when international students are also a ‘major expense’. Throughout the conversation, international students are those who need to be sold to and wooed to come to Australia. They are desired as long as their presence is profitable, no longer desirable when the figures don’t add up. Their particular identity, other than that which is of importance to the schools development remains a matter of ensuring the physical capacity of the school to take any number of international students, acquiring appropriate staff and of finding your market niche.

Problematising Discourses: Cosmopolitanism

Notions of race and identity and those of neo-liberalism are criss-crossed by those of trans-locality and globalisation. Older notions used to describe refugee, immigrant, indigenous and religious groups describe groups of others who are here to stay and consider the ways that their inclusion into their community can be organised (Rizvi, 2005). The commonly held notion of international students as ‘sojourners’ impacts on traditional conversations about identity and difference as international students are sought from over there ‘to come here’ and come ‘to us’. Such conversations describe international students as short-term wayfarers who come to the community from the outside, stay for a while and then return. They bring to mind images of a naïve cosmopolitanism whereby, in a modern world, some people have the ability to travel extensively, corporally and imaginatively and virtually whenever and wherever they wish. The international student sojourner, becomes emblematic of the youthful wonderer who indulges his educational curiosity, consumes endless experiences on-route, takes risks, maps out cultures and identities and interpret and appreciates the world of others (Szczesny and Urry, 2002).

The class-based nature of this freedom of movement means makes such ease of travel available only to some. The cosmopolitanism afforded to international students is available, provided that they can pay. The materiality of class privilege supports the ways that international students move between contexts and into Australia as well as the efforts of the teachers and students who travel in support of these programs (Rizvi, 2005; Roman, 2003). Bauman’s (1997a, 1997b, 1998) insight is that globalisation has not meant the disappearance of conceptions of identity and difference but rather tends to introduce them in new more complex and paradoxical forms. A more complex and multilayered view of cosmopolitan identities in local/global contexts accounts for the activities of individuals concerned with a modern world impacted upon by their changed ability to travel and to interact both virtually and materially. The lives of people in local communities across the globe are affected as demands of industry and capital interchange make new demands on labour, education and social behaviour. These altered conditions introduce new tensions and debates that transform conceptions of community

relations and impact on the ways that people are mobile within a social world impacted upon by flows of finances, people, ideas and technologies (Appidurai). The phenomena of international students allows some to be 'tourists' rather than 'vagabonds' in a classed and gendered global world in which some can travel as never before and others remain tied in place ever more securely (Bauman, 1997)

To point out the class-based underpinnings of international student cosmopolitanism is crucial if simplistic. The international student ventures out on his educational venture paid for, even as he or she is representative of, the dreams and aspirations of himself and his family. The notion of international students as sojourners, and correspondent appreciation of their desire for western education cannot be understood separately from the indispensability of English language and western education as a resource for access to an increasingly complex modern world (Lin and Martin, 2005). It is a reflection of the particular empowerment provided by English language that in a globalised and post-colonial world where parents are forced to make difficult decisions about the education of their children in order to provide them access to future resources. Far from reflecting the ability of international students to be more freely in a modern and globalised world, international student market provides a rarefied point of access for students and their parents to themselves become tourists in a modern and increasingly globalised world.

It was difficult to analytically separate students quest for a western education from their quest for English language competence. The latter is necessary for the former if undertaking studies in Australia, but is acknowledged by the students to be a valuable commodity in itself and could be considered as adding value to their investment strategies. (Doherty and Singh, 2005, p. 7- 8)

Cultural capital investment in English language competence and western credentials mean life changes for students and their families. International students make heavy investments in acquiring English language proficiency as a form of symbolic of cultural capital investment to be exchanged for improved work opportunities locally and worldwide (Doherty and Singh, 2005)

Moreover, the person of the international students sojourner allows all school members to share, however vicariously, the notion that they are international and cosmopolitan. Local students, unable to move themselves, are given the opportunity to travel through cultures, experiment with languages, risk social interactions with others, through the person of the international student. Both 'mono-cultural' and 'multicultural' local students are introduced to international and intercultural experiences by introducing international students programs within the school. Academic standards are lifted by students who come to the school from the outside to become our students. Teachers have new freedoms, but also new responsibilities to move cross-culturally and cross-nationally both in their day-to-day experiences within the classroom and in their marketing experiences abroad. It is a semblance

of participation within the larger global context; a matter of opportunity, but also of incredible tension as international students provide access the skills and resources needed to participate in an increasingly complex globalised world

In a globalised world shaped within conditions of motion and disjuncture problems manifest themselves in new patterns in local terms but in contexts that are anything but local (Appidurai, 2003). Students come 'to us' and stay for a while. Parents wait over there, they are met when we go over there on a marketing trip – they want to 'put a face to a school' they might never see. Teachers learn new intercultural and international skills as they speak to me of 'going over there' of coming back to 'our place'. Agents come out and stay at our place as they act as intermediaries between students and parents over there and the school. A metropolitan school finds itself in competition not only with schools in its immediate neighbourhood but with schools in other English language provider countries worldwide. New interrelations of local and global are set up as local school representatives from rural Australia meet with Chinese parents and compete with educational marketers from the US and UK and more recently, new language providers including Japan, China and Emirate countries themselves. In these discussions the terms and conditions of class, race and identity are played out in new ways against backdrops of other discourses: particularly those of neo-liberalism and capitalism. (Sidhu, 2002, p.18). Marketing for international students takes place in a increasingly globalised world in which international education shapes human lives spatially through the different vectors of global finance, national politics, cultural politics and the *a-priori* subjectivities of student consumers and

Global capital in its contemporary form is characterised by strategies of predatory mobility (across both time and space) that have vastly compromised the capacities of actors in actors in single locations even to understand much less to anticipate of resist these strategies

The commodification of the international student

The analysis of conversations with teachers about their marketing programs for international students suggests that these discussions are interpolated with common-sense understandings about identity, difference and orientalism, neo-liberalism and naïve cosmopolitanism. Together these discourses reshape the ways that international students are understood within the school. Older notions drawn from those of race and ethnic difference mean that students, the majority of whom are drawn from South East Asia, are differentiated from the local student population. The school community's appreciation that international students bring international and intercultural skills to the school, nevertheless construct the international student as a purveyor of raced and cultured difference. The orientalist terms and conditions of these conversations make the international students the focus of our attention within spaces located and known by us, even as he or she remains pedantic and out of our

control. Discourses of neo-liberal capitalism further the differentiation of the international student within our community. The production of educational products for international students and their families and the lucrative aspect of their commodification in a market-based school environment mean that international students became persons much wanted when they bring profit to other members of the school members; no longer sought after when they did not. Discourses of naïve consumption and the notion that international students are but sojourners within the community account for the ways those students travel and consume between societies. It fails to understand the deep ambiguities that underpin a market driven and post-colonial world in which families seek western and English education as a sustained investment and an expensive and arduous commitment . (Doherty and Singh, 2005, p. 8)

Within the convergence of these discourses, the international student, differentiated and located outside of our community becomes depersonalised and objectivised: the focus of our imagination and desire. It is not just education that becomes consumable but international students themselves. The international student becomes- bringer of foreign skills and knowledge/ not-wanted if antagonistically different; wanted when profitable/ not-wanted when not-profitable; much-wanted as they 'add value' to the school/no longer wanted as they add 'negative value' (Kenway and Bullen, 2001, P.138) . It is a process of consumption that itself is an imagination, an expression of fantasy in which people define and redefine themselves. In the process of internationalisation the international student becomes objectivised known and located as the focus of our fantasy and desire. In the dynamic process in which we formulate our identities, the other just outside of our reach remains the focus of our attention and just out of our control. As providers of internationalism and otherness, the international student comes in as the exotic outsider/cap-in-hand to buy our education. Within the unequally empowered conditions of the post-colonial and globalised student market, the international student comes to represent the focus of our desires – for internationalism/ for exoticism/for wealth - even as we remain antagonised by their difference and shocked by our own greed.

It is a form of 'fetishisation' and disavowal the nature of which is one of power fascination and desire that is both indulged and at the same time denied as

It is a non repressive form of knowledge that allows for the possibility of simultaneously embracing two contradictory beliefs, one official and one secret, one archaic and one progressive, one that allows the myth of origins and one that allows the myth or origins, the other that articulates difference and division (Bhabha, 1996, p.168 in Hall, 1997, p.267)

The culture of fetishisation and orientalism that underpins commodification is by its very nature paradoxical. The disposition to know, locate and control is already out of

control. The international student and their families participant within the same ideological framework of economic exchange and strategic economic possibility look to their look to their experiences of transnationality and global consumer culture as a way to further the strategic interests of themselves and their family. In dreaming, they become involved within a process of imitation of what Homi Bhabha (1994) calls mimicry. The hybrid mimic is himself positioned within a form of resistance which subserves and negotiates his or her domination. Their position as consumers of western education and English language preference is no less an imagination than that wrought within the crucible of fantasy and desire by the school (Rizvi (2005). The manner in which students construct themselves as consumers and school communities consume students represent an imaginary drawn from discourses which are deeply embedded with the consumer and global culture of modern times (Kenway and Bullen, p21)

The study of the international students market describes everyday lives in schools working within an unequally empowered world shaped by conversations about user-pays, markets and accountability. These systemic and institutional arrangements take place within others about race and identity, neo-liberalism and naïve cosmopolitanism which interpellate the ways that international students. In evoking consumerist dreams, images and pleasures, genres of consumption engage both international students and local communities in a complex imaginary embedded in the ascetics of desire and dreams (Kenway and Bullen). The international student complicit within local school dreams of travel to far of places, intercultural interaction and pecuniary existences indulges his own and his families need and desire to commodify western education. In dreaming, they become involved within a process of imitation of mimicry which provides a form of resistance which subserves and negotiated its domination. It is a schizophrenic form of resistance which is never complete as it is shaped within other and powerful discourses of identity and difference and commodification. As the object of our dreams and the intensity of our desires international students become fickle commodities: much wanted when they are fit in and profitable – no longer wanted when they do not.

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