**Asian Migration and Education Cultures in the Anglo-sphere**

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**Asian Migration and Education Cultures in the Anglo-sphere**

Asian migration is transforming education cultures in the Anglo-sphere. This is epitomised in the mounting debates about ‘tiger mothers’ and ‘dragon children’, and competition and segregation in schools. Anxiety and aspiration within these spaces are increasingly ethnicised, with children of Asian migrants both admired and resented for their educational success. This paper presents some frameworks for understanding how Asian migration both shapes and impacts upon education outcomes, systems, and cultures, focusing on Australia, the US, the UK and Canada. It challenges the cultural essentialism that prevails in academic and popular discussion of ‘Asian success’, arguing that educational behaviour cannot be reduced to ethnic categories, whether these are ethnic ‘learning styles’ (e.g. the ‘Chinese learner’) or ‘cultural’ family practices (e.g. ‘Confucian parenting’). In also presenting an overview of papers in this special issue, this introduction showcases the explanatory models offered by our authors, which locate Asian migrants within broader social, historical and geo-political contexts. This includes global markets and national policies around migration and education, classed trajectories and articulations, local formations of ‘ethnic capital’, and transnational assemblages that produce education and mobility as means for social advancement. These are the broader contexts within which education cultures are produced.

Keywords: Asian migration; education cultures; Asian success; cultural essentialism.

For parents of school-aged children, aspiration and anxiety often go hand in hand. In migrant-based nations such as Australia, the UK, the US and Canada, this anxiety towards education is increasingly ethnicised (Watkins and Noble 2013; Jiméneza and Horowitz 2013), with heated debates about migrant ‘tiger mothers’ and their over-achieving ‘dragon children’. This was nowhere more evident than in the reaction to Amy Chua’s *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011), an international best-seller that pitted a hard-line ‘Asian’ style of parenting against a more liberal ‘Western’ approach. In many Anglo-sphere nations, students of various Asian backgrounds often perform exceptionally well academically, with disproportionate numbers in accelerated learning programs, selective high schools and prestigious university courses. This phenomenon of ‘Asian success’ has led to concern about increased competition in education, ethnic segregation within and between schools (Ho 2015), and the rise of private tutoring (Sriprakash, Proctor, and Hu 2015), impacting considerably on the education cultures of these nations and prompting debates that are played out within various media on both a national and transnational scale. These debates implicate broader questions around immigration, multiculturalism, social cohesion and community harmony, as these migrant-receiving societies grapple with the emergence of a new Asian middle class. These debates also reflect an anxiety that the children of Asian migrants are now doing ‘too well’, threatening the White middle class and their privileged position within elite systems of schooling and higher education.

**A Culturally Essentialist Lens**

The achievements of these students from Asian backgrounds are often explained in *culturally essentialist* terms, with hard work and ambition seen as inherently ‘Asian’, especially ‘Chinese’, and traceable, for example, to Confucianism (Ryan and Louie 2007) or specific ethnic traits. This essentialism is also seen in much of the existing literature on ethnicity and education, particularly within educational psychology and studies of human development that examine the causes of this success by identifying distinct ethnic ‘learning styles’ such as those of the ‘Chinese learner’ (Watkins and Biggs 1996; Nisbett et al. 2001). Other studies identify Asian parenting styles, including Chinese ‘tiger parenting’, evaluating their effectiveness for education and well-being (Juang, Qin, and Park 2013; Kim 2013; Huang and Gove 2015). These works tend to view learning and approaches to parenting as inherent and static, somehow removed from their social context, fuelling these simplistic and culturally essentialist explanations of educational outcomes. Such perspectives easily feed a politics of racial hostility, as ‘Asian culture’ is viewed as fundamentally incompatible with ‘Western culture’. While high achievers of Asian backgrounds may be admired, they are also often resented for their success, which is seen as the product of a harmful culture raising the competitive stakes for all students.

Other scholars of ethnicity and education, including some in this special issue, have challenged this essentialism, arguing that the image of the high achieving ‘Asian’ student masks enormous variation within this cohort, with often damaging consequences for those who do not live up to the stereotype (Lew 2006; Li and Wang 2008). Scholars elsewhere dispute the prevalence of ‘tiger parenting’ and question its association with superior academic performance (Archer and Francis 2007; Kim et al. 2013). Sociologists of education and ethnicity highlight structural factors such as class, migrant status, discrimination and ethnic capital, all of which, they argue, play a powerful role in shaping educational outcomes (Lee 2006; Shah, Dwyer, and Modood 2010; Jiméneza and Horowitz 2013; Lee and Zhou 2015). Other sociologists have demonstrated that the parenting styles of high income groups in the White population also feature high expectations, discipline, and heavy investment of resources into children’s education (Lareau 2003; Reay 2004), challenging the stereotype that these are particularly ‘Asian’ practices. The ethnicisation of popular anxieties about education also fails to consider the role of government policies around foreign investment and visa requirements. Recent formations in the co-constitution of global education, housing markets, investment and citizenship requirements in several Anglo-sphere, immigrant-receiving nations have attracted new middle classes and super-rich investors (Javorcik et al. 2011, in Rogers, Lee, and Yan 2015, 731). Global education, immigration, citizenship and real estate are today all ‘inextricably linked’ in different ways (Robertson and Rogers, this issue), and this has enormous implications for how local education systems are enacted and experienced. For example, the property purchases among aspirational Asian migrants are sometimes aligned with high status school catchment areas, fuelling anxieties about locals being ‘crowded out’ of both property and schooling markets (Beers 2016). Such effects illustrate the wider impact of these education cultures and the need for scholarly interrogation of this transnational phenomenon.

**Origins of the Special Issue**

This is the focus of this special issue. It stems from an international workshop held at Western Sydney University in December 2015, on the topic of *Asian Migration and Education Cultures* that brought together established and emerging scholars from Australia, the UK and the US, and from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, including sociology, cultural studies, education, anthropology and geography, to shed light on this volatile scenario. As with the workshop, this special issue provides a transnational perspective on these issues that are generally only considered within a national frame. Across the Anglo-sphere, the dramatic rise of Asian migration over the last 20 years has created a new migrant middle class that is highly skilled and educated, and which highly values education as a means for social mobility. A transnational perspective, both juxtaposing various national studies and the inclusion of those that traverse national boundaries, allows us to see the striking commonalities regarding the impact of Asian migration on education and the similarities in the responses to it that range from admiration to anxiety and resentment.

Our overarching research question in this special issue is: How does Asian migration both shape and impact upon the education cultures of migrant-receiving countries in the Anglo-sphere? This question requires some explanation and, in particular, its focus on the Anglo-sphere. This is partly explained by the increasingly high levels of immigration from various Asian countries to those that are here collectively termed the Anglo-sphere[[1]](#endnote-1): the US, the UK, Australia and Canada[[2]](#endnote-2), the characteristics of which are considered in more detail below. Yet, it is not simply because of the size and similarities of these migratory flows that the Anglo-sphere is of interest. As long-term, migrant-receiving countries, they have experienced considerable demographic change, with waves of migration overlaying unresolved histories of colonisation, that have prompted particular policy responses for managing the resultant ethno-cultural diversity. Earlier policies of assimilation have been superseded by multiculturalism that espouses a certain ethos towards cultural difference emphasising a right to cultural maintenance and social inclusion. While severely tested, especially post 9/11, by ongoing critiques that associate multiculturalism with social fragmentation (Lentin and Titley 2011), it retains its prominence especially in Australia and Canada where policies of multiculturalism date back to the 1970s. This supposed embrace of cultural diversity within the Anglo-sphere, enshrined within the tenets of multiculturalism, provides an interesting backdrop when considering responses to Asian migration within these countries. What does it suggest about the penetration and resilience of such policies if certain migrants and their children are perennially othered; their belonging questioned within a social imaginary that remains predominantly White? Of course such experiences are not unique to Asian migrants but they are specifically targeted in relation to education, where the exceptional performance of many is viewed as a threat to the Anglo mainstream.

Such questions frame our focus on the Anglo-sphere in this special issue as well as our use of the term ‘White’. We follow scholars of whiteness here and their critique of this ‘invisible norm’ through which whiteness maintains its dominance (Moreton-Robinson 2004). Many of the papers in this special issue highlight the persistent work of White adults to invoke their collective whiteness as a powerful symbolic practice within the wider economy of cultural goods in these contexts (Bourdieu 1984). These racialised identities of White social and economic privilege have been historically structured and maintained under signs of post-colonial citizenship across Anglo-sphere nations (Hage 1998; Hartigan 2005), and particularly through their educational institutions. The papers in this special issue provide insight into the ongoing cultivation of such white nationalisms and stress the need for greater critical interrogation in order to de-centre the claim of whiteness to national identity in these spaces (Harris 2013).

For these reasons, our focus is not so much temporary migrants, such as international students and associated mobile populations, but Asian migrants and their children, either permanent residents or citizens, and the many established Asian diasporas within the Anglo-sphere. Given the increasing numbers of international students from Asia – in 2012 for example, the OECD (2014) found that 53% of all foreign students came from Asian countries – it is no wonder there is a growing literature on their experiences (see, for example, Brooks and Waters 2011; Robertson 2013). Much of this work documents flows to and from English-speaking countries within an unequal global economy that structurally privileges Anglo-centric institutional capitals and credentials (Waters 2016). There is also a growing body of work that examines the inter-Asian mobilities of students (Collins 2013; Collins et al. 2014), with countries such as Singapore offering English-medium instruction that also proves popular. While there is a concentration in this literature on tertiary level international students from Asia, there is a growing awareness of the temporary migration of younger students either with or without members of their families (Huang and Yeoh 2011) – the so-called wild geese (Kang and Abelmann 2011), parachute and satellite children (Kobayashi and Preston 2007) – seeking the advantages of English language instruction and the requisite credentials for university admission within the Anglo-sphere. There may be some similarity in experience between these students and the longer-term Asian migrants who are the focus of many of the articles in this issue but, as Brooks (this issue) points out in her examination of the media representation of East Asian students in the UK, the former are often received more favourably. As Brooks explains, the economic benefits of Chinese international students to the UK are generally prized in contrast to the British-Chinese whose educational achievement is often presented as a threat to the White majority.

Another distinguishing feature of much of this literature on international students is its framing within a mobilities paradigm, highlighting the transitory migration patterns and transnational connections of these increasingly mobile populations. Mobility here is not simply understood in a physical sense. As Waters (2016, 10) reminds us, international students ‘embody mobility (physical, cultural and social difference) within a host community’, a phenomenon not only symptomatic of the migrant experience in general but of mobility more broadly. It is an acknowledgment that places leave traces that are constitutive of individual subjectivity. For the migrant, however, this is often an uncomfortable process even well after settlement (Noble, 2013) and it is these longer term mobilities that are considered in many of the articles here, a perspective that mobility studies seem to have given far less attention (Hui 2016).

The intention of this special issue, then, is to capture both the ongoing and relational nature of migrant mobility – trajectories which are rooted in countries of origin but which are reshaped by experiences of settlement and are thus never complete – and the situated effects of practices of migration and settlement in very specific contexts involving educational institutions and relations with local communities. This requires an interrogation of the values and approaches to education undertaken by Asian migrants themselves, but also an examination of how perceptions of, and reactions to, these practices are reshaping education cultures among the majority, especially White, population, and creating new tropes in the media for how ethnicity and difference is constructed and perceived. For example, research across these different national contexts shows how resentment towards ‘tiger parenting’ has seen many White families turn away from schools that are seen as ‘too Asian’, in spite of these schools’ excellent academic results. Some White families are feeling a threat to their positions of privilege as they perceive themselves increasingly excluded from high performing schools and university courses, and still others adopt oppositional parenting practices to counter what they see as a troubling competitiveness within schools which they refrain from embracing. Many of these anxieties are fuelled by media portrayals that frame ‘Asian success’ in purely culturally essentialist terms, foregrounding ethnicity and ignoring the broader social, and policy context of people’s behaviour. Such representations contribute to an oppositional framework that sees Asian migrants in the Anglo-sphere as eternally culturally alien.

Ultimately, mainstream reactions to ‘Asian’ education cultures, which generally involve those of the White majority, transcend the world of education, and implicate broader race relations within migrant destination countries such as Australia, the UK, the US and Canada. The stereotype of the overly competitive and instrumental ‘tiger parent’, who reduces parenting to ‘pushing’ children to excel in standardised examinations, is a symbol of the ‘cultural clash’ between East and West, reminiscent of a Huntingtonian worldview that understands all behaviour through a totalising ‘civilisational’ lens. This is portrayed in terms of ‘Western’ parents who believe in giving their children freedom and who value childhood as a time of innocence, play and self-discovery (Jenkins 1998), and ‘Eastern’ parents who lock their children into regimes of study, turning childhood into an endless struggle towards the next educational milestone. Nostalgia itself is deeply embedded in Western journalism and public representations of children and childhoods (Holland 2004), while the central role of children in today’s media and the market finds their prominent position in the expression of collective anxieties around various risks now synonymous with globalisation (Katz 2008). Asian migration is constructed within such narratives as a threat to traditional ‘relaxed’ and ‘liberal’ approaches to education and parenting that have supposedly prevailed in Western societies.

**Contextualising ‘Asian’ as a Category**

Of course, much of this reaction is premised on particular understandings of the category ‘Asian’ and how ‘culture’ is used to explain what also involves complex social, economic and educational processes. Asia itself is a vast region whose geographic boundaries are not entirely clear-cut. Added to its blurred boundaries and regional specificities are the numerous countries that fall within the perimeters of Asia with their own heterogeneous mix of peoples, languages, religions and practices spilling over and across borders with nations never ethnically or linguistically discrete despite nationalist logics that frame them as such. The category ‘Asian’ is similarly blurred, particularly because of the transnational mobility of ‘Asians’ and the longevity, geographical dispersion and diversity of Asian diasporas around the world. Among the global diasporas, the Chinese diaspora is the largest, with 50 million Chinese currently living outside of China, and in virtually every country. Meanwhile 22 million ethnic Indians are dispersed across every continent (*The Economist* 2011). These diasporas, often hundreds of years old, are not always oriented towards a homeland. For example, Clifford (1994, 305-306) argues that the South Asian diaspora is ‘not so much oriented to roots in a specific place and a desire for return as around an ability to recreate a culture in diverse locations’. Moreover, Asian diasporas may be racialized in different ways in different societies across time (Parreñas and Siu 2007, 3). For example, Chinese and Japanese immigrants in the US were demonised as ‘unassimilable aliens’ before World War Two, but lauded as the ‘model minority’ from the 1960s (Wu 2014). The meaning of being ‘Asian’ is highly context-specific.

Yet, despite this, the term ‘Asian’ seems to possess a certain semantic congruence to the extent that in the US it functions as a category of race. The US Census collects data on its Asian population disaggregating this larger grouping into categories such as ‘Asian Indian’, ‘Chinese’ and ‘Other Asian’ providing examples of the latter such as ‘Pakistani’ and ‘Cambodian’ that confuse race with nationality (Hoeffel et al. 2012). Ultimately, however, these are all subsumed within the single macro-descriptor of ‘Asian’, distinct from others such as Whites or Blacks.[[3]](#endnote-3) There is added confusion in trying to pin down this category when comparing meanings in everyday usage within different national contexts. In the UK, for example, those referred to as ‘Asian’ are generally from South Asia of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds reflective of the greater number of these ‘Asian’ migrants to the UK. In Australia, however, ‘Asian’ typically denotes peoples from East Asia, in particular, those of Chinese and Vietnamese backgrounds similarly reflective of greater waves of migration from these regions. These differences, though, are generally elided as ‘Asian’ is deployed as a category of otherness distinct, in particular, from the Anglo mainstream.

Similar forms of othering are also evident without the use of the homogenising category of ‘Asian’. ‘Chinese’ operates in a similar way in an Australian context with all those who share this phenotypical similarity being viewed as Chinese. Little consideration is given to the diversity within this category. Even within China, together with the Han Chinese who are most obviously perceived as being from China, the country is peopled by various ethnic groups such as the Uyhur, Hui, Manchu, Tibetan, Mongol, etc. While China’s own nationalist aspirations generally mask this diversity, contributing to the homogenising of the Chinese abroad, as Ang (2014, 1192) explains ‘recent PRC[[4]](#endnote-4) Chinese migrants have very different understandings of Chineseness and being Chinese than other diasporic Chinese’. Dispersed across the globe, often for generations, many have little or no ties with China and yet they are still assigned the label ‘Chinese’ together with certain attributes which the category is seen to represent.

**Asian Migration and Complex Entanglements**

In contrast to the culturally essentialist stereotypes of ‘Asian’ identities outlined above, this issue considers the role of public policies in migration, education and foreign investment, showing how they have created the social environments that facilitate particular instrumental approaches to education and migration. In the case of migration, Asian migrants are generally ‘hyper-selected’ by the skilled migration policies that now prevail in the Anglo-sphere (Lee and Zhou, this issue), and which are shaped by the economic imperatives of states within the global economy. For example, in Australia, skilled entrants have formed the majority of permanent migrants since 1997 (Parliament of Australia 2010), and in 2014-15, the skilled migration stream comprised 68 per cent of the total permanent migration program (Australian Government 2016). Most of these migrants come from Asian countries. In 2009, China became the largest source of migrants to Australia, eclipsing traditional migrant source countries, the UK and New Zealand (Martin 2009). In 2013, Indian migrants began to outnumber Chinese migrants, comprising nearly 20 per cent of all permanent settlers (Thomas 2015). Given these migration schemes, which are similarly evident in the US, Canada, and to a lesser extent in the UK, it is not surprising that migrants from Asia tend to be highly educated. Among Australia’s Chinese-born and South Korean-born populations, nearly 40 per cent hold a university degree; approximately double the national average (DIAC 2014a, 2014b). Among the India-born population, over 50 per cent hold a university degree (DIAC 2014c).

Having arrived in their new countries, migrants with school-aged children find themselves in educational environments that have become increasingly competitive, the product of market-driven education policies emphasising competition and school choice. In these environments, Asian migrants often respond by deploying highly strategic approaches to school (and residential) choice, and strategic use of private tutoring and other training, particularly in preparation for selective school admission tests and standardised examinations (Sriprakash, Proctor, and Hu 2015). These are the practices that have generated anxiety among White majority populations, despite, in some cases, the long-established use of private tutors by families from high SES backgrounds and the increasing privatisation of education more broadly. However, it is important to acknowledge the wider social context of these kinds of practices. Public policy settings provide the crucial backdrop for understanding social outcomes, including ethnic segregation in schools, the dominance of Asian migrant students in high achieving programs, and the apparent effectiveness of ‘tiger parenting’ strategies.

This special issue also examines ‘Asian success’ as a product of the migrant experience, rather than an inherent part of ‘Asian’ cultures. Although Asian migrants tend to be highly educated, decades of research shows that they often experience downward social mobility (Ho and Alcorso 2004; Teo 2007), as they face discrimination in the workforce (Booth, Leigh, and Varganova 2012; Kozaki 2016), or otherwise fail to advance their careers in a new society. Fearful of discrimination against their children, what Louie (2004) calls ‘immigrant pessimism’, they focus on education as the key mechanism for ensuring their family’s future. Much of the ethnic capital shared within migrant communities is deployed in the education field (Modood 2004; Lee 2006; Shah, Dwyer, and Modood 2010), enabling even low socio-economic status (SES) migrants to make informed and strategic decisions about their children’s schooling.

To understand this phenomenon of ‘Asian’ success, particularly within a ‘new’ mobile middle class, this issue also gives consideration to how it intersects with structural changes in education within Anglo-sphere nations and the subsequent struggle for educational resources. Economic policies in these nations over the past 30-40 years have increasingly demanded citizens take more responsibility for their education pathways and outcomes, while fostering cultures of individualization and privatisation over commitments and investments in the public sphere (Reay et al. 2008). These ‘new’ middle classes across the world, tasked with the responsibility of being independent entrepreneurs and consumers (Heiman, Liechty, and Freeman 2012) are often heralded as exemplary performers within this individualised school market, and this is acutely evident in the construction of ‘Asian’ students in school markets (see Butler, Ho and Vincent this issue). Yet when schools must compete for resources through the accumulation of high performing students and rankings, this can in turn recreate and privilege ‘success’ stereotypes about Asian students at the expense of specific others, all of which works to reproduce inequalities and academic segregation in particular locales (see Drake, this issue).

**The Media and Practices of Othering**

News media, and journalism in particular, act as a significant source of much of this debate and are deeply embedded in how such tensions around Asian migration and education are experienced, interpreted and resolved. These media formats are critically different from other types of cultural production in that news, as a popular genre, claims to describe reality to the public (Bird 2010). News ‘uncovers’ ‘facts’ about events which are then organised into a story that functions within established domestic news frames already known to register with particular audiences (Gürsel 2010). This provides common reference points for the production of shared knowledge which both contributes to and recreates existing narratives (Spitulnik 1997). These understandings are then reproduced elsewhere, particularly through social media, which invites users to witness, participate in, and co-create the very meanings being circulated (Livingstone 2008). The construction of ‘Asia’ and ‘Asian’ students across these knowledge formats has seen media being implicit in the recycling of culturally essentialist tropes supporting the ethnicisation of academic achievement (Watkins and Noble 2013), which ultimately raises questions about who is producing such identities and for which audiences (Ortner 1998).

These depictions of Asian migration and education build on historically-shaped, national narratives in different geographic locales. In the US, for example, news journalism and user-generated content on ‘tiger moms’ is shaped through cultural narratives of changing global power and the decline of Anglo-centric world power and embedded in long histories of ethnic othering as well as more recent racialised framing of crime and terrorism (Poynting et al. 2004). In Australia, the mediation of ‘Asia’ and ‘Asians’ has a long history framed by ‘invasion anxiety’, which stems from being an Anglo post-colonial state in an Asian region (Burke 2008). The pathologization of Asian success, in this case, is likewise seen to directly threaten core social values of Australia prompting moral panics that surface in the media on a regular basis. In all such cases, this establishes moral oppositions which are then understood in racialised terms, revealing much about the politics of race and the ‘semantics of citizenship’ in migrant receiving nations (see Masquelier 2006, 737).

**Theoretical Influences and Methodological Frames**

The contributors to this special issue have tackled these issues in various ways, yet, there are numerous commonalities both theoretically and methodologically. A number have drawn on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and, in particular, his notion of capital to examine the value and utility of the cultural resources that have contributed to the exceptional achievement of many students of Asian backgrounds. Lee and Zhou make use of a notion of ‘ethnic capital’, a term that Modood (2004) also uses in his examination of the impressive educational outcomes of Asian students in a UK context and the ways in which class seems to have little impact on denting this performance. Lee and Zhou apply the term in a similar way to examine how middle class migrants of Asian backgrounds in the US make available the cultural capital they have acquired to others of a lower SES through various community networks in which, as they report, ‘Class capital becomes ethnic capital… reducing the effects of poor SES’. They consider the symbolic value of this capital, how the stereotype of the Asian student can prove beneficial for some, raising teachers’ expectations which then seem to improve these students’ performance. Yet, Lee and Zhou also acknowledge the downside of such stereotypes, particularly for those who don’t meet these high standards and, as a consequence, are viewed as ethnic outliers. While not referred to as ‘ethnic capital’, Francis, Mau and Archer explore the exchange value of the cultural resources that enable increasing numbers of British Chinese students to excel at school despite many of their teachers condemning the techniques they employ as learning ‘the wrong way’. They contrast this with these students’ experiences in the workplace post-school and university where ‘the game’ then changes and different forms of capital are required such as the social capital acquired through networking that favours the White middle class, limiting these students’ employment opportunities and possibilities for advancement.

The work of Bourdieu has also been influential in Aris’s contribution to this special issue. In her focus on Indian migrants in Sydney, Australia she explores their quest for their children to acquire highly valued educational credentials through a notion of ‘academic capital’. Such forms of institutionalised cultural capital have considerable resonance for these migrants. As Aris observes, there is much in common between the highly competitive field of education within the Australian state of New South Wales and what these migrants had experienced growing up in India; a kind of ontological complicity between their habitus and these different educational fields, equipping them with the appropriate resources, or ‘feel for the game’ in the educational marketplace of their newfound home. While not foregrounded to the same extent, Bourdieu’s work, along with that of Beverly Skeggs, Diane Reay and Andrew Sayer also informs how Butler, Ho and Vincent have tackled the phenomenon of Asian success. In their article, the authors investigate how a sector of the ‘old’ White middle class in Sydney have responded to ‘new’ middle class practices associated with these parents’ perception of ‘tiger parenting’ among local Asian-Australian families. They consider the ways in which a particular middle class morality of these White ‘community-minded’ parents is mobilised as a form of distinction and distanciation. This gives licence to both themselves and their children to promote different (and less competitive) approaches to schooling and to foreground other values which, among other effects, act as a thin veneer to underlying classed and racialised anxieties in a changing socio-economic landscape.

Like Butler, Ho and Vincent, other contributors have examined how the White majority, in the migrant nations that are their focus, have reacted to Asian success. Among others, they have found the work of Sara Ahmed and Ghassan Hage useful in this regard. In their account of responses to the increased numbers of Asian students in one of Sydney’s elite selective public schools for boys, Proctor and Sriprakash (this issue) ask the question, informed by Ahmed’s examination of whiteness, ‘what allows bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken shape?’ (Ahmed 2007, 158). With Australia’s postcolonial history and engagement with Asia as a backdrop, Proctor and Sriprakash use this question to highlight how Asian students are perceived as interlopers in this previously exclusive White domain, particularly given their success that threatens the privileged position of their White peers. Such responses, Hage (1998) considers, are a product of the White Nation fantasy; how, despite decades of multiculturalism in Australia, many Whites still perceive the country as ‘their space’. This is a perspective that Watkins (this issue) pursues drawing on Hage’s characterisation of Whites as ‘spatial managers’ as she explores the responses of various members of a public selective high school community to its changing demographics in the wake of increased Asian migration. Other contributors have sought theoretical guidance elsewhere. Rogers and Robertson, for example, enlist assemblage theory to provide insight into the transnational entanglements of Asian migration, real estate and educational mobilities. Through a notion of ‘brokerage assemblages’, informed by the work of Deleuze, DeLanda and Latour, they demonstrate the importance of a transnational frame for exploring these issues given the convergence within and across national boundaries of these interconnected and highly volatile markets. They invoke spatial theories of mobility and capital in the new economy to consider how Asian middle-class social formations are perceived, shaped and expressed.

Together with varying theoretical influences, the special issue is characterised by its engagement with literatures that span the disciplines of sociology, education, cultural studies, anthropology, geography and history. United, however, in their focus on the relation between Asian migration and educational cultures in the Anglo-sphere, many have drawn upon a number of key texts that explore these issues within particular national frames. These include Watkins and Noble (2013) in Australia, Archer and Francis (2007) in the UK and Lee and Zhou (2015) in the US. While each gives prominence to the specificities of effects and impacts of Asian migration on the different levels of education that they examine in their own national contexts, these texts share a number of similarities not least of which is a critique of the cultural essentialism that tends to dominate debates around the phenomenon of Asian success in these post-colonial states that dogs these diaspora no matter where they settle. Taken together, these texts are illustrative of the widespread nature of this phenomenon and commonalities in responses to it. Each of these authors is a contributor to this special issue. Juxtaposed here, alongside others who are similarly exploring these issues and transformations within and across various national frames, both the global and transnational nature of this phenomenon is given an even sharper focus.

Another key characteristic of this issue is its emphasis on the empirical. Drawing largely on qualitative methodologies, each of the contributors has amassed data that generates new insights into the varied impacts of Asian migration on schooling and higher education in these respective Anglo-sphere nations together with the broader social and economic repercussions of these relations. Of these qualitative techniques, two tend to dominate. Firstly, there are those that are largely ethnographic, drawing on observation, interviews and focus groups. Secondly, a number of contributors employ techniques of discourse analysis of various texts. These include those sourced from social media, and online content from different websites. In the case of the latter, these are primarily directed towards Asian migrants and those contemplating migration who are keen to assess the viability of education markets, particular institutions within these, such as their level of prestige and entry requirements, together with how these might intersect with other markets, namely real estate.

While this special issue seeks to provide qualitative insights into the ways in which Asian migration has influenced what are here termed ‘educational cultures’, giving richly detailed localised accounts together with those that provide either a national or transnational perspective, many contributors have also drawn on quantitative data to site their work within a broader context. Lee and Zhou, for example, draw on the Immigrant and Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles Survey and Pew Research Centre data that offer a useful comparison to that gleaned from their interviews with Chinese and Vietnamese migrants that they concentrate on in their article. Many of the Australian-based studies draw on data from the Australian Government’s My School website that allows for a comparison of schools in terms of the demographics of student populations and standardised test results. In the UK context, similar analytics are accessed through the Department of Education and Employment to yield data on broad trends regarding migration and education. Such data, however, operate more as a backdrop to the qualitative analyses presented here, each of which examines the intersections of Asian migration and education in distinctive ways.

**Summary of Papers**

The first three papers in this special issue are grouped together to provide an international perspective on the educational achievement of diaspora of Asian migrants and responses to it, focusing on how this is realised within three national contexts: Australia, the US and the UK. In her article, Watkins draws on recent research in schools in New South Wales, Australia around broader issues of multiculturalism. This proves insightful for understanding the responses of various members of one school community, a public selective high school, to increased enrolments of Asian students. She examines how policies of multiculturalism have shaped the ways in which teachers, parents and students conceive of these skewed demographics with many from Anglo-Australian backgrounds uneasy about their perceived loss of privilege and those who see themselves as ‘Asian’ complicit in the othering that sets them apart from the Anglo mainstream of the broader Australian population. Lee and Zhou provide a glimpse into the various factors that contribute to the exceptional educational outcomes of many Chinese and Vietnamese students within a US context. Countering the cultural essentialism which often typifies explanations for Asian success, they demonstrate how much of this can be attributed to the hyperselectivity of US migration programs that favour middle class professionals from Asian countries. Yet Lee and Zhou acknowledge this is only a partial explanation as many low SES Asian migrants to the US also perform exceptionally well. Here they draw on extensive interview data to reveal how networks within these ethnic communities are instrumental in the distribution of the required cultural capital to excel academically, seemingly neutralising the degree to which class can affect educational achievement. Francis, Mau and Archer (this issue) consider similar issues in the UK where many children of Chinese migrants from low SES backgrounds also perform exceptionally well, despite their class origins. In earlier work these authors have documented how this success is rarely lauded. Now, with the rise of China and Shanghai’s exceptional results in PISA, they reveal a discursive shift that gives greater acknowledgment to these students’ achievements tempered, however, by a persistent cultural essentialism that continues to other the British Chinese.

The next section of the special issue examines media representations of Asian students within the Anglo-sphere, which often depict their success as problematic. Focusing on mainstream media readers’ responses to articles on successful Asian-Australian students, Ho (this issue) argues that public opinion is divided between pro-meritocratic defenders of high-achieving Asian migrant children on the one hand, and on the other, anxious voices concerned that these students are ‘inauthentic learners’ introducing excessive competition into the Australian education system. Though apparently opposed, Ho argues that both camps contribute to the essentialist approach that sees ‘Asian success’ in purely cultural terms. Meanwhile, Brooks (this issue) examines the representation of East Asian students in the UK media, making an important distinction between British and non-British students. As is the case in Australia, British-Asians are often represented as a potential threat, symbolised in the demonization of the ‘tiger mother’, and in concerns about the ‘problematic’ ethnic mix in some British schools. In contrast, non-British Asian international students are viewed more positively, mainly in terms of the economic benefits they bring to the country. Returning to the Australian context, Proctor and Sriprakash analyse the racialized media debates surrounding the prestigious Sydney Boys High School, a public selective school perceived as illegitimately dominated by Asian-Australian students. Situating these debates in a historical context, Proctor and Sriprakash show how they are part of a long-standing struggle over elite forms of secondary schooling, as well as historical anxieties about masculinity, whiteness, privilege, and Australia’s postcolonial relations with the UK and Asia.

The third section of the special issue explores the impact of Asian migration on education cultures in various localised or ‘translocal’ settings. Both Robertson and Rogers, and Butler, Ho, and Vincent, situate their research within global political and economic transformations which have underpinned ‘the Asian century’ and consider effects of these changes in middle-class spaces, formations, mobilities and desires. Robertson and Rogers examine the complex (and often virtual) ‘assemblages’ that enable the desire and practice of middle class mobilities within wider migration investments in housing and citizenship. They draw attention to the often overlooked connections between study, migration and real estate investment mobilities which profoundly shape Asian migration and education discourse, policy and practice in several Anglo-sphere nations, and the critical role of ‘brokers’ in this field who operate with and between national borders. Butler, Ho and Vincent consider how the primarily White ‘older’ middle classes’ respond to ‘new’ middle class ‘Asian’ education practices through self-articulations of identity and moral worth. Drawing on a study into parent communities in Sydney primary schools, they show how White older middle class parents morally disassociate with practices associated with ‘Asian’ parenting and education, which are perceived as being acutely market-determined in school contexts. Alternatively, these parents invoke communitarianism and social reciprocity as sources of civic virtue, an active moral self-positioning that makes a claim on ‘legitimate’ middle-class identity, morality and childhood in an uneasy middle-class terrain.

Drake, in his study of Asian education practices in a wealthy suburb in Southern California, shows how transnational migration and education practices coalesce with existing power structures in the US’s segregated schooling system. Focusing on the mechanisms that produce educational inequality, Drake reveals how striking histories of racial discrimination persist within education structures to shore up scant resources among high achieving students – in this case, those of Asian American backgrounds. Drake shows how Asian American students are credited with establishing and maintaining an elite school’s esteemed reputation, leading to the privileging of Asian American students and the relegation of Black, Latina and working class students into inferior academic pathways. This contributes to the reproduction of ethno-racial and socioeconomic inequality and shows how educational institutions in turn legitimise the reproduction of inequality in US high schools.

Aris also foregrounds a transnational lens on Asian migration and education in her study of parents from middle class Indian Australian backgrounds. Through a concerted Bourdieusian lens, Aris (this issue) examines how experiences among such parents prior to migration have a structuring influence on their post-migration practices and pursuit of academic credentials for their children in Australia. Of focus here is the fit between pre-migration practices and their successful transferral to Australia’s market-driven school field which favours high stakes testing and strategies of school choice. The issue concludes with Noble's account of how teachers in one school community in Sydney, Australia, respond to what they perceive as a problem with 'bad Korean boys'. Counter to narratives of Asian success and the myth of the ‘model minority’, he examines how a culturally essentialist lens is also applied in the case of these under-performing students. Noble (this issue) argues that the way polices of multiculturalism conceptualise cultural difference shapes these teachers’ ‘professional vision’ and their responses to the educational issues arising around what are colloquially known as ‘Asian fails’. In all, these papers represent a broad range of scholarship in this area, disparate in approach but united in their examination of how Asian migration shapes and impacts on the education cultures of various countries within the Anglo-sphere.

**Endnotes**

1. This is not an exhaustive list of all those countries that could be said comprise the Anglo-sphere but those that are given more of a focus in this issue. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. While Canada has two official languages, English and French, it is considered a part of the Anglo-sphere given the dominance of the Anglo-Celtic origins of its population. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The 2010 US Census did allow respondents to identify with more than one ‘race’ but in relation to Asian this is then reported as Asian alone or in combination. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Peoples’ Republic of China.

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