

# 'White pages' in the academy: Plagiarism, consumption and racist rationalities

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## Abstract

This paper is situated against the backdrop of the global market in tertiary education, and recent moral panics in the Australian press concerning the implications of international education for what is perceived by many as a decline in academic standards and a potential devaluing of Australian tertiary qualifications in the global marketplace. This paper poses a challenge to these notions, and draws on poststructuralist theories of consumption, production and power, to consider how discourses of educational consumption are mapped onto the racialised commodification of tertiary education. The paper argues that racism—under the rhetorical guise of neoliberal ideals such as maintaining academic standards, ensuring institutional accountability and protecting market share in the interest of the national economy—shapes the discursive terrain of international education in the tertiary sector.

**Keywords:** international education, racism, neoliberalism, academic standards.

## Introduction

In recent months numerous media reports concerning high profile examples of 'soft marking' and plagiarism in Australian universities have highlighted concerns within and beyond the academy that academic standards are being eroded by commercial—rather than intellectual—imperatives now driving what has been termed 'the enterprise university' (Marginson & Considine, 2000). In particular, concerns have been raised in relation to international students attending Australian universities both on and off-shore, along with suggestions by some (see, for example, media reports by Burke, 2005; Dodd, 2005; Jopson & Burke, 2005a, 2005b; O'Keefe, 2005) that these students' perceived poor scholarly performance and limited English language skills, together with pressure on academics to apply less rigour when marking the work of fee-paying international students, is resulting in lower standards of both teaching and learning in the Australian tertiary sector. In this paper, I want to take up some of the discursive threads of these debates, to consider the ways in which debates about plagiarism and international education constitute international and English as an Additional Language (EAL)/Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students as undesirable 'others' in the context of both global and local education markets. Drawing on poststructuralist theories of consumption, production and power, I consider how discourses of educational consumption are mapped onto the racialised commodification of tertiary education, and argue that racism—under the rhetorical guise of neoliberal ideals such as maintaining academic standards, ensuring institutional accountability and protecting market share in the interest of the national economy—shapes the discursive terrain of international education in the tertiary sector.

This discussion, it should be noted, takes place against a backdrop of public debate fuelled most recently by the comments of Macquarie University academic Andrew Fraser, whose public suggestion of a return to a 'White Australia' policy drew strong reaction from students,

fellow academics and the university executive. In the uproar that followed Fraser's comments—with reports that some supporters of his views (as well as detractors) had inundated the Vice Chancellor's office with phone calls, emails, and threats of violence—the university was placed in a media spotlight which emphasised (among other things) the University's role as a leading provider of education to students from a diversity of backgrounds, and public moves by the Vice Chancellor and academics to distance themselves from Fraser's views. While an extensive discussion of the issues raised by this public debate will not be undertaken here, of particular relevance to this discussion is how easily racialised anxieties and tensions appear to have been mobilised by a single academic speaking outside his area of expertise, using an out-dated and widely discredited (see, for instance, Leslie, 2001; Solomos & Back, 2001) eugenicist argument. A further point that merits mention here pertains to how readily the focal point of debate was shifted away from the historical, institutional and cultural racism at its core, placing emphasis instead on the individualising and de-racialised notions of 'free speech' and 'academic freedom'. While free speech and academic freedom may well have relevance to the debate surrounding Fraser's comments and the university's response in relation to them (and I am not suggesting otherwise), what I want to mark here is the ease with which racism slipped from view as the primary issue of concern (having been, after all, what sparked the furore in the first place), in preference to the seemingly more comfortable terrain of discussions about the rights and entitlements of a white, male, English-speaking, tertiary-educated university employee.

Importantly, I would argue, it is precisely such slippages that shape a number of debates concerning tertiary education, highlighting the significance of what Solomos and Back refer to as a "logic of racism" in which "[c]ontemporary racisms have evolved and adapted to new circumstances. The crucial property of these elaborations is that they can produce a racist effect while denying that this effect is the result of racism" (2001, p. 353). In the case of discourses of international education, academic writing and plagiarism, in particular, racism and its effects appear on the surface to be largely eclipsed by the rhetoric of academic standards, institutional accountability, individual surveillance, quality assurance and the economic interests of the nation. Yet these ideals driving what Slaughter and Leslie (1997) describe as 'academic capitalism' emerge from Western economies and rationalities that can be understood as both consuming and producing international (and in particular, non-Anglo, EAL/NESB) students as the 'Other' of Western neoliberal universities. In a curious double-manoeuvre, resources are focused on attracting and retaining students from lucrative overseas markets, even while international students are discursively constituted as threats to institutional viability within the competitive global marketplace. What this paper seeks to take up in greater detail, then, is how an analysis of racism in and beyond the academy might be contextualised in ways that are both "sensitive to local and contextual manifestations of racist discourse; and...able to connect local manifestations with wider or national public discourses" (Solomos & Back, 2001, p. 354).

Situated against the backdrop of the global market in tertiary education, the paper draws on Foucauldian notions of 'compulsory visibility', to argue that language is a central mechanism by means of which international and EAL/NESB students are subjected to scrutiny and surveillance disproportionately in comparison to their English-speaking peers in tertiary education. Using examples from recent media reports, the paper demonstrates how the logic of racism implicitly functions as a 'technology of power' (Foucault, 1977) that demarcates the boundaries of capitalist power in Western societies. It is argued here that while public discourses of higher education valorise market ideals in relation to English-speaking students from Western nations, the consumptive educational practices of international students is persistently problematised as a potential threat to market values, institutional viability, and Australian competitiveness in the global education marketplace. The paper also draws on Certeau's (1984) notion of the 'scriptural economy' in reference to reading and writing practices in capitalist societies, to consider how those same practices in contemporary neoliberal universities operate differentially along racialised grids of intelligibility.

### **Tertiary education, consumption and dissymmetry in the global marketplace**

Australia, along with other English-speaking nations, has seen a steady trend towards the commodification of tertiary education, as “the funding base of higher education has been switched from public funding to mixed public and private funding” (Marginson, 2002, p. 416), and the public funding which remains fails to keep pace with the increasing costs of a rapidly expanding tertiary sector. As Marginson argues, successive policy initiatives have ensured that universities which were previously considered essential to the project of nation-building have been remade according to market models.

Once seen as an investment in the nation, Australian universities are now seen primarily as a source of fiscal savings used to retire debt and sustain the nation’s global credit rating. According to the neo-liberal world-view, this does not matter: the national-public character of the universities is obsolete; if they are to survive and prosper they must re-fashion themselves as self-supporting global corporations (Marginson, 2002, p. 419).

As a consequence of this institutional re-fashioning, universities have developed increasingly corporatised internal structures, in which market values of competition, self-sufficiency, and profitability continue to alter the organisational cultures, workplace practices, and institutional aims of universities (see Currie & Newson, 1998; Gale & Kitto, 2003; Marginson, 2002). Importantly to this discussion, the increasing commodification of Australia’s tertiary sector has resulted in institutional strategies that are narrowly focused on imitation of competitors through what Marginson argues is a “narrow band of standard options: internationalisation, hyper-commercialism and distance education” (2002, p. 422). The drive to compete on the global stage has seen a burgeoning of marketing Australian university courses to overseas and distance education students, reflecting the prevailing expectation of competitive and economic advantage (see Marginson, 2002; Mason, 1998; Perraton, 2000). Crucial to this discussion, following the 1985 deregulation of university fees charged to international students, “*international education* was conceived by government and institutional manager-leaders as an economic market rather than a teaching and learning site” (Marginson, 2002, p. 424, emphasis added).

It is worth noting here that despite the relatively recent shifts toward educational marketisation and the economic emphasis it implies, the forms of education that have emerged in Western societies have for some time been implicated in notions of production and consumption. As Certeau argues in relation to eighteenth century Enlightenment ideals—which constructed education as a means of reforming/transforming social practices and thereby remodelling entire nations—the “myth of Education inscribed a theory of consumption in the structures of cultural politics” (1984, p. 166). Thus the changes brought about by the more recent and overt reconfiguration of education as a site of economic, rather than pedagogic and epistemological social production, map onto an already established rationale by means of which education is thoroughly implicated in ideologies of production and consumption. An important aspect of Certeau’s discussion is that which refers to practices associated with reading and writing in terms of a ‘scriptural economy’, in which, “for the past three centuries learning to write has been the very definition of entering into a capitalist and conquering society” (1984, p. 136). The expansionist logic underlying the scriptural enterprise to which Certeau refers (for a fuller discussion, see Davies & Saltmarsh, forthcoming) opens the way for rethinking current understandings, not only of agendas concerning educational reform, but also of the ways in which teaching and learning practices—generally treated as largely neutral exchanges of information resulting in the development of technical skills and professional competencies—are themselves ‘capitalist and conquering’.

Certeau's insights provide an interesting provocation for discussions of the globalised context of higher education, in which a corresponding expansionist logic casts the increasing reach of Western educational rationalities in terms of securing Australia's 'market share' of international students and the 'economic growth' of both the sector and the nation. Yet the changes in tertiary sector education resulting from reforms that include drives by universities to recruit students from ever farther afield and in ever larger numbers, are in turn reconfigured by the productive activity of those global 'consumers' to whom the 'product' of tertiary education is sold. As Marginson and Considine point out:

...universities are the site of one of the growing global markets, a market that is people centred and culturally based, and itself one of the causes and carriers of global change: the market in the education of international students. Throughout the world there are now about two million students who travel abroad each year to study. In Australian universities international student numbers have grown very rapidly, reaching 72, 183 in 1998, four per cent of the global market. Australia's share has doubled in the last decade, and its number of enrolled international students has tripled. These students are generating a billion dollars in direct revenues each year, and as yet unmapped changes in curricula and university cultures. (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p. 48)

The unmapped curricular and cultural changes to which Marginson and Considine refer, I would argue, sit at the heart of debates surrounding plagiarism, standards and the consumption of tertiary education by international students. While studies in international education (see, for example, Bretag, 2004; Bretag, Horrocks & Smith, 2002; Harris & Bretag, 2003) have taken up with some specificity the ways in which curriculum and pedagogy might be reconfigured to more adequately address the learning needs of international students, a number have expressed concerns about the changes to the ways in which universities conduct the business of educational provision in response to drives for global competitiveness. In particular, shifts in discursive understandings about the nature of knowledge production and acquisition have been highlighted as areas of concern, with some scholars arguing that the current context is one in which "[i]nformation has become a core product of commercial exchange, and the management of information a key occupational sector, together with a move from production to consumption" (Blackmore, 2003, p. 2).

What I want to take up here, specifically, is how students—reconfigured as consumers—are obliged to navigate *differentially* the spaces of production and consumption associated with tertiary education. Elsewhere (Saltmarsh, 2004) I have argued that against this marketised backdrop, practices such as plagiarism need to be considered, following Certeau (1984), as part of the productive activity of consumers. This is not to suggest that illicit textual practices and other forms of academic conduct should be condoned or legitimated, but rather it is to argue that bringing aspects of production and consumption into the matrix of explanatory factors shifts the focus from individual aberrant behaviours toward the complex interrelationships and accountabilities not only of student consumers, but also of institutions. In his discussion of usage and consumption, Certeau argues that what cultural consumers 'make' or 'do' with the cultural products they purchase or consume constitutes a form of production which, while seldom acknowledged as such, is nonetheless a powerful force in reshaping institutions and social practices (Certeau, 2000). Consumption, for Certeau, is a form of production manifested not "through products, but rather through its ways of using the products imposed by a dominant economic order" (1984, pp. xii-xiii). While there can be little doubt that the internationalisation of Australian tertiary education continues to bring about institutional and educational change, what makes Certeau's concept particularly useful to discussions of racist logics within (and indeed, beyond) the academy, are the moral panics that emerge in response to what is widely perceived and constructed as a racialised reconfiguring of the *product* by *non-Western* student consumers in ways that cause the

educational product to lose status and value according to Western rationalities of status and worth.

It is important to note that those rationalities are mapped onto the language and logic of global capitalism, guided, so the story goes, by the 'invisible hand of the market'. I would argue, however, that this seemingly neutral metaphor disguises an array of gender, race and social class dissymmetries, and that the market's 'invisible hand' must be recognised and named for what it actually is—a gendered and racialised body of wealth whose global dominance has been secured by Western nations through successive generations of colonial expansion and exploitation. Despite the contention that international education is an important means by which those global dissymmetries might be addressed (a point of debate that, while important, will not be taken up here), it remains incumbent upon educators, institutions, journalists and policy makers to recognise that failure to address the racist logics and modes of pejorative constitution to which many international students are subjected is, as Judith Butler's work (1997; 2004) would suggest, performative of an ongoing legacy of racist speech and conduct which precedes and pervades specific instances of racist address and logic.

The following section takes up the question of racialised constructions of international and EAL/NESB students by considering the compulsory visibility to which those student cohorts are subjected in the public discursive spaces associated with higher education. Discourses of racialised 'Others' of the education market, together with the discursive visibility associated particularly with language use, it is argued, disproportionately mark out international students as those primarily associated with illicit practices such as plagiarism. Specifically, it is suggested that the discursive location of international students as educational consumers, together with their linguistically based discursive visibility, is frequently mobilised in moral panics informing public debate in support of racist logic.

### **Compulsory visibility and racialised moral panics**

Despite the work of a number of researchers and educators, particularly in the area of international education, to find new and locally relevant ways of meeting the complex challenges of the global tertiary education market, there remains in many quarters of the academy both a lack of—and considerable resistance to—curricular and pedagogic change for the purpose of addressing the learning needs of international students. A considerable body of research suggests that the learning needs and practices of international students are not, as some commentators suggest, reducible to deficits in language skill, morality and/or motivation, but rather are shaped by differences in cultural beliefs and values that play a significant part in students' learning, study, research and assessment practices (see, for example, Tang, 1996; Robinson and Kuin, 1999). Such research has resulted in calls for more nuanced and culturally sensitive understandings of the ways in which students from non-Western educational backgrounds approach university study, as well as calls for critical appraisals of the ways in which courses and assessments are designed in order to more adequately address the learning needs of students. As MacKinnon and Manathunga argue, the traditional focus in universities on the "dominant cultural literacy" (1999, p. 133) poses significant disadvantages for international students, who must navigate not only course content, but also unfamiliar cultural and educational requirements. Thus they call for a challenge to such paradigms, "by not only emphasising the need to value and incorporate diverse cultural and community literacies but also by linking the development of culturally responsive assessment with the development of intercultural communications skills in all students" (1999, p. 133). Such calls notwithstanding, amid concerns that aggressive marketing, lax entry standards, and decreased availability of funding for teaching and curricular resources result in higher failure rates and lower levels of consumer satisfaction for international students, there are many who view moves to alter curriculum, assessment and pedagogy to accommodate (in particular) differing levels of English language skills as a decisive move in the direction of lowering academic standards. While these tensions are played out in an array of discursive sites—from faculty corridors and staffrooms to media

'exposés' in the national press—it is important to note that these tensions map onto specifically Western notions of educational practices and values.

With regard to the global context described in the previous sections, Mason argues that “it is clearly the case that leaders in the field of global education are predominantly Western, the language in use predominantly English, and the pedagogical and cultural approach predominantly that of developed countries” (Mason, 1998, p. 45). As such, some scholars have argued that the failure in some quarters of the academy to address the concomitant structural inequalities and educational disparities works to the considerable disadvantage of international students. Bretag, for instance, has argued that a lack of pedagogic focus with relation to overseas students “has had the virtual effect of disregarding the language needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students studying at English-speaking institutions” (2004, p. 531). And, as MacKinnon and Manathunga’s excellent discussion of assessment points out,

If our assessment continues to be based upon a Western template of knowledge that only values Western ways of knowing and learning, all our lip service to developing interculturally competent students is meaningless. It also institutionalises discrimination against students from non-dominant backgrounds and privileges students from dominant groups. (2003, p. 132)

Such arguments are critical to discussions of the consumptive and textual practices—be they illicit or otherwise—of international and EAL/NESB students located in Australian tertiary settings. They shift the emphasis away from pathologising and Othering discourses, and query those cultural assumptions and biases that impede, rather than enhance, the learning outcomes for these growing student cohorts. In particular, such arguments speak to the extent to which “epistemological racism” (Cadman, 2005, p. 1) is an inherent feature of institutional structures of power, through which consumers of tertiary education are attracted, progress, and are occasionally excluded. Indeed, Cadman argues that underlying the increasing focus on plagiarism with respect to international students is:

...an unspoken desire to maintain those taken-for-granted values which are perceived as inherent in the English language academy and its discourses. In many disciplines there is an unarticulated belief that English language academic discourse does not reflect context-dependent linguistic practices, but rather embodies, of its very nature, intrinsically superior modes of thinking and researching (Cadman, 2005, p. 2).

Importantly, the discursive repertoires through which these notions of cultural and linguistic superiority operate to construct international and EAL/NESB students as undesirable 'Others' in the context of global education are located in a multiplicity of sites. What is particularly interesting here with reference to discourses of plagiarism is the extent to which the racist rationalities underlying assumptions of linguistic and epistemological superiority in the academy at times articulate with those voiced in the popular press, each lending currency to the other in the domain of public debate. For example, reports in the *Sydney Morning Herald* recently cited a number of prominent academics in articles highlighting concerns about the internationalisation of education and its impact on academic standards, claiming:

Academics report that internet plagiarism grows as foreign student numbers rise...Further, a form of plagiarism that is difficult to detect—using foreign texts translated into English—is becoming more prevalent...(Jopson & Burke, 2005a, p. 27).

Or:

An internal University of Sydney document reveals that a committee on internationalisation has also expressed worries about “the overall quality of the

student intake". Written in late 2003, it said there was clear evidence that foreign students were performing below domestic students in certain faculties. In the same year...[academic staff] wrote that persistent problems included "the use of our courses by international students, particularly, the Chinese, as an Australian visa application process rather than an educational process". Related to this was "the marked increase in instances of transgressions of academic dishonesty by international students". In one case, an international student had tried to buy an academic essay from a professional editor, who reported it to the student's lecturer. "One can be sure that there are many with fewer scruples" [he] wrote (Jopson & Burke, 2005b, p.10).

What I want to raise in relation to the above reports is the extent to which generalised and pejorative assumptions about international student cohorts insidiously shape discourses of plagiarism and declining academic standards. While I am *not* suggesting that some of the issues raised in these articles are without basis and therefore do not merit careful consideration, what I *am* suggesting is that the pervasive assumption that international students are *primarily* the students associated with plagiarism and poor academic performance can be seen as part of a racist logic predicated on racialised notions of ability, deviance and moral deficit.

What stands out in the news reports cited above—and in many others like them—is the almost exclusive emphasis that is placed on international (often pejoratively signified by the referent "foreign") students as the primary source of concern in relation to both competence and moral deficiency. These students occupy an invidious discursive position, in which they are at once actively and enthusiastically recruited on one hand, while on the other they are vilified as deliberately tainting the value of the product they have been (magnanimously) offered. Indeed, this disjuncture evokes the claim made by Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge that:

...there is always, in the colonial regime, a tantalizing offer of subjectivity and its withdrawal which, for the colonized, momentarily confirms their entry into the world of the colonizer only to be rejected by it. The colonized never know when the colonizers consider them for what they are, humans in full possession of a self, or merely objects (1993, p. 278).

As overseas and EAL/NESB students are represented in increasing numbers within the Australian tertiary sector in both its local and offshore versions, it is important to acknowledge the unequal relations of power to which they are subject, and the extent to which their discursive location is perpetually re/constituted by the binary logic of racist institutions, social practices and disciplinary technologies. Thus for example, while the textual practices and assessment outcomes of international and EAL/NESB students are perpetually put forward as sites of concern, those of local students (whose discursive invisibility reinscribes their constitution as Anglo and English-speaking) are mentioned only as a comparative standard against which international student performance is measured.

Interestingly though, as data from a study conducted by Kitto (2005) and analysed by Kitto and Saltmarsh (forthcoming) demonstrates, while local students may enjoy a degree of discursive invisibility in the sphere of public debate with regard to issues such as cheating and plagiarism, the social networks and tactics used by local students in circumventing the learning demands and assessment requirements in university courses attract a different kind of response than those seen in relation to international students. In Kitto's study, although university staff were not unaware that students were working together to complete online exams intended to be completed independently, these local students' collaborative cheating was explained by staff as a form of collaborative *learning*. Staff under pressure to meet the increasing demands of the workplace rationalised, rather than intervened in, the 'subterranean ethics' deployed by local student networks, and in so doing tacitly endorsed the concomitant

reconfiguring of both educational institution and educational processes. As Kitto and Saltmarsh note:

...the educators' explanations of notions such as learning and collaboration, together with their apparent willingness to accept online examination cheating practices as a form of learning, are an interesting example of the extent to which the consumptive practices of student consumers function to alter the nature of higher education institutions and practices (Kitto and Saltmarsh, forthcoming).

Despite the existence of such practices, however, and a considerable body of research showing that "[s]tudents in Western countries typically confess to high rates of cheating" (Robinson and Kuin, 1999, p. 194), the suggestion that local students are actively engaged in various forms of academic misconduct seldom surfaces in public debate. Kitto's study demonstrates how readily academic discourse is reconfigured to *accommodate* and *incorporate* the 'subterranean ethics' of local students—in stark contrast to the moral panics that have emerged in response to similar kinds of practices engaged in by international students. Thus I want to argue that the absence of public debate around the textual practices of local, Anglo and English-speaking students serves two functions. First, it obscures the sorts of illicit practices such as purchasing, from fellow students or online English-language based sources, the intellectual property of others which is of superior quality to that of their own, or by the deployment of local networks to work collaboratively on assessment tasks intended to be completed individually or by sharing assignments amongst groups of friends (see Kitto & Saltmarsh, forthcoming; Robinson and Kuin). A second and related function is that the illicit practices of Anglo/English-speaking students (which may go undetected) potentially affords them higher grades for less effort, thus shoring up the discursive superiority which is already attributed to them and reinscribing the racialised relations of power at work in the globalised tertiary sector.

This raises particular questions surrounding the discursive visibility of international and EAL/NESB students, particularly with respect to the ways in which language use becomes a primary technology for citing difference. In the case of both face-to-face classrooms as well as in subjects offered online, the contribution of students to online discussions in unit websites, group work, essays and assignments is marked by the standard and consistency of written English that students are able to produce in a number of communicative contexts. Detection of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct among EAL/NESB students, therefore, becomes an instance not only of identifying noticeable anomalies in written work, but also an instance of reinscribing the 'compulsory visibility' (Foucault, 1977, p. 187) through which their marginalised discursive status is in part constituted. According to Foucault:

Disciplinary power...is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. (Foucault, 1977, p. 187)

Foucault's work is instructive here, highlighting as it does the ways in which disciplinary power is brought to bear upon individuals precisely because of the discursive visibility imposed upon them. As has been mentioned already, the discursive visibility of overseas and EAL/NESB students is marked particularly by language use, even while the institutional practices of both subjecting their written work to increased levels of scrutiny in the assessment process remain largely invisible. Thus in the context of the globalisation of higher education, "with its overtones of intellectual and cultural imperialism" (Alexander and Blight, 1996, cited in Mason, 1998, p. 155), assessment and its attendant technologies of control remain "a site of institutional power...where [students] must fulfil the requirements of



understanding, knowledge and skill that grants them formal recognition and validates their knowing” (Clifford, Nicholas and Lousberg, 1998, cited in MacKinnon and Manathunga, 2003, p. 132).

It might be argued, of course, that the work of *all* tertiary students is subjected to scrutiny and assessment, and that problems such as those raised in the media reports cited above have emerged out of a complex set of circumstances including not only increased numbers of international students, but also a measure of corporate greed which has seen a rise in numbers of inadequately prepared and ill-equipped students accepted into tertiary courses on the basis of their capacity to pay, rather than their capacity to satisfactorily meet the academic demands of tertiary study. While I would agree that these are complex and necessary points of debate, I would also suggest that maintaining as the primary focus in these debates the language use, textual practices and assessment strategies deployed by international students, while largely ignoring these problems as they pertain to local, English speaking students, brings discrimination on the basis of race (albeit perhaps unwittingly) into the largely invisible processes of disciplinary power.

### **Conclusion: moving forward**

The issues raised in this paper are both complex and confronting for a tertiary sector that remains reliant on internationalisation in order to survive the neoliberal agenda of current government policy. As tertiary institutions continue to navigate the vagaries of supply and demand economies in an increasingly global education market, however, there is also an imperative to ask difficult questions about not only the profitability of institutions and the standard of the 'products' they offer to consumers, but also about the assumptions of individual educators, administrators and policy makers that inform both policy process and pedagogic practice. In particular, the racialised dissymmetries associated with educational consumption, participation and outcomes discussed in this paper need to be brought to the fore in debates about declining academic standards, 'soft marking', and institutional accountability, in order to begin ameliorating the individual and structural effects of racism. Although I am *not* intending to imply a kind of wholesale charge of racism across the Australian academy—as indeed, there are many excellent examples of scholarship, activism, student services and policy reforms in Australian universities aimed at addressing racism and its effects—there remains an imperative to consider, as David Wellman cogently argues, that “[t]he distinctive feature of racist thinking, then, is not hatred. What sets it off from other thinking is that it justifies policies and institutional priorities that perpetuate racial inequality...” (2001, p. 172).

It is incumbent upon tertiary educators, administrators and policy makers to recognise the potential for racism and its effects to be inscribed in policies, institutional priorities and pedagogical discourse in ways that at once make invisible the racialised operations of disciplinary power, while disproportionately subjecting international and EAL/NESB students to compulsory visibility which works to their detriment. There is clearly much work to be done in terms of responding to challenges presented by the current climate in tertiary education, particularly with regard to developing better understandings of how students navigate institutional and academic demands, how they at times subvert and reconfigure through illicit means the aims of educators and institutions, and so on. Yet I would argue that there is an urgent need to reconsider the taken-for-granted assumptions about the internationalised context of tertiary sector educational consumption in light of how these assumptions map onto racialised Western rationalities of superiority and worth, thus re/producing racism and its effects at both macro and micro levels. Such a reconsideration offers tertiary institutions an alternative position in which the focus is shifted from pejoratively constituted 'Others' toward a renewed emphasis on both developing pedagogic practices and policy processes which effectively meet language, learning and equity needs across the full range of student cohorts, and on resisting the imposition of market models which operate to the detriment of educational and social justice aims.

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