

## **N8.2 Conwy 1 Thursday 6 December 16.00 - 18.00**

### ***The Hidden Narratives of Higher Education Internationalisation: Can Excellence and Inclusion Cohabit? The Case of East Asian Mobile Academics in UK Universities (0268)***

**Terri Kim**<sup>1</sup> *University of East London, United Kingdom*

This paper explores unofficial stories of internationalisation, equality and diversity in UK universities by taking intersectional approaches to minority ethnic identity, nationality, class, and gender. It takes the case of East Asian female academics, whose narratives have not been told much in the main stream literature on Equality and Diversity in UK HE - apart from the studies focusing on international Chinese students (Lowe, 2007; Qu, 2009). The number of Chinese students studying in UK universities has continued to increase and the number of first-year Chinese students in UK HE surpasses the total number of first-year EU students (HESA, 2017).

UK higher education has talked about internationalisation and international student experience for over three decades, but has hardly addressed international academic staff experiences. It is noted that East Asian (female) academics are almost invisible in the contemporary literature on equality/diversity in the UK, while they are important to the objectives of both this policy and the internationalisation of UK HE. Overall, there is a paucity of knowledge on the interface between 'international' and 'minority ethnic' academic identities, and their respective or entwined experiences. This can be strategically important for the future of UK HE given that the overall proportion of non-UK born, international academics employed in UK universities is expected to rise to 50 per cent by 2027 (Universities UK 2007, 10). Such demographic forecasting implies that the continuing success of UK universities will be increasingly dependent on international academics (as well as international students).

Against the background, the paper contextualises the lived experiences of East Asian female academics working in UK universities in the official mainstream narratives of internationalisation, equality and diversity - the overarching, linear and monological accounts presented by the policy makers and institutional managers. It will show how both policies on internationalisation and equality/diversity fit with the neoliberal normative way (Ball 2012) of mobilising social agents. At the same time, it will critique the disparity between the two sets of neoliberal policy discourses and practices in UK HE: i.e. the market-framed internationalisation for 'excellence' on the one hand and the over-generalised racial equality/diversity for 'inclusion' on the other.

The paper employs a comparative historical perspective of international power relations entailed in UK HE to analyse how East Asian female academics make sense of their cross-border mobility, current work conditions and how they have been subjected, and have subjected themselves, to these disparate neoliberal discourses and practices of 'excellence' and 'inclusion' in UK HE.

To explore this, the paper adopts a narrative-constructivist methodology and intersectional approach. Drawing on C. Wright Mills (1959)'s *Sociological Imagination*, the research analysis will offer a layered account of (i) individual biographies (East Asian female academic journeys in and after crossing territorial borders and social cultural norms); (ii) institutional, national contexts; and (iii) the neoliberal policy discourses to understand the intricate connection individual biographies, social structure and movement and the course of world history.

Discussion and Conclusion are organised by the following four themes in the context of UK HE:

- East Asian sisterhood
- East Asian strangerhood

- Neoliberal subjectification
- and the Yellow Peril in Silence

The paper will discuss different perspectives of being a 'stranger', drawing on Simmel (1908) and Schuetz (1944) to explore East Asian gender-specific, and other intersectional, attributes to making a 'stranger' in the neoliberal contexts of 'excellence' and 'inclusion'. It critically reviews epistemic possibilities and institutional restraints of 'professionalisation of strangerhood' (Kim 2010; 2017) in the current context of UK HE.

From a comparative historical perspective, the paper also raises an urgent question of the implications of the 'yellow peril' legacy (Tchen and Yeats 2014), of the late 19th and early 20th century) for contemporary politics in HE internationalisation and international relations. It argues that East Asian ethno-national and cultural norms may have gained a new recognition and rationality in the rise of East Asian economic power (Cox 2012; Jacques 2012), deviating from the Western hegemonic narratives. However, the ways in which this meta-narrative of change is translated into the micro-level of individual academic lived experiences has been little explored so far, and therefore requires attention (Kim & Ng forthcoming). Furthermore, it is important to take a more nuanced approach to the case of East Asian 'female' academics given their gender-specific experiences in crossing space-time boundaries.

## References

Ball, S.J. (2012). Performativity, Commodification and Commitment: An I-Spy Guide to the Neoliberal University. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 60 (1), 17-28.

Cox, M. 2012. "Power shifts, economic change and the decline of the West?" Research and Analysis, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK Government, November 28:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/power-shifts-economic-change-and-the-decline-of-the-west/power-shifts-economic-change-and-the-decline-of-the-west>.

Gu, Q. 2009. Maturity and Interculturality: Chinese students' experiences in UK higher education. *European Journal of Education* 44(1): 37-52.

Jacques, M. 2009. *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, Second Edition. London: Penguin Books.

Kim, T. & Ng, W. 2018. Ticking the 'Other' Box: Positional identities of East Asian Academics in UK Universities, Internationalisation and Diversification, forthcoming (submitted to a journal; under review).

Kim, T. 2017. Academic mobility, transnational identity capital, and stratification under conditions of academic capitalism. *Higher Education* 73 (6): 981-997.

Kim, T. 2010. Transnational academic mobility, knowledge and identity capital. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 31(5): 577-591.

Lowe, J. 2007. Decision Making by Chinese Students Choosing UK and Chinese Universities: Full Research Report. ESRC End of Award Report, RES-000-22-0911. Swindon: ESRC.

Schuetz, A. 1944. The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology. *American Journal of Sociology*, 49(6): 499-507.

Simmel, G. 1971[1908]. "The Stranger." In *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*, edited by N. Donald, and E. Levine, 143-150. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Tchen, J. K. W., and D. Yeats. 2014. *Yellow Peril! An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*. London: Verso.

Universities UK. 2007. "Policy Briefing. Talent Wars: International Market for the Academic Staff." <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/26319/1/TalentWars.pdf>.