

## Tracing academic literacies across contemporary literacy sponsorscales: Mobilities, ideologies, identities, and technologies

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Locating itself broadly within the 'sociolinguistics of mobility' (Blommaert, 2014) and taking heed of Stornaiuolo and Hall's (2014) call to 'trace resonance' in writing and literacies research, this article works to trace academic literacies across the emerging 'literacy sponsorscales' (Wargo, 2016a) of contemporary culture. Despite its variance and recent resurgence (Lillis and Scott, 2007), academic literacies continues to be reduced to: (1) an instrumentalist and pragmatic pedagogy, and (2) the ability to navigate academic conventions and practices of higher education (Lea and Street, 1998), in particular the writing classroom (Castelló and Donahue, 2012). This centred focus, however, is limiting, and silences the more innocuous and less tangible sponsors of academic literacies: *mobilities*, *ideologies*, *identities*, and *technologies*. Set against the backdrop of globalization, and grounded in two case studies, this article considers how academic literacies are not an 'and' but an 'elsewhere', thereby emphasizing the importance of sociolinguistic space in academic literacy development. In it, we chart new directions for scholarship and underscore how ideologies shift with mobilities (Pennycook, 2008; Pennycook, 2012), are indexed by identities (De Costa and Norton, 2016; Hawkins, 2005), and extend through technologies (Lam, 2009; Rymes, 2012). By outlining a *literacy sponsorscales* framework for studying academic literacies, this article highlights the purchasing power of seeing academic literacies not solely as a field or set of practices, but rather as a locating mechanism for studying a range of hybridized repertoires that are shaped and constituted by the physical and social spaces that contemporary youth inhabit.

**Keywords:** academic literacies; literacy sponsorscales; sociolinguistics; literacy; writing

### Introduction

For well over 30 years, academic literacies has remained a significant interdisciplinary field and study of communicative practices across higher education. However, mapping the field of academic literacy/ies is an arduous task, as Lillis and Scott (2007) remind us. Unable to be defined solely as the tracing of practices, rote skills, and/or knowledge, academic literacies begs to be studied as the terrain of lived experiences. Hence, the project we undertake in this paper is not necessarily a new one, but one that is refracted through a new lens. We investigate the in-between '-scales' and spaces of academic literacies by documenting the movement and vibrancy of what 'literacies' has come to be in a time of immense communicative shift and change. In sum, our project is one that does not necessarily focus on pedagogical 'value' and 'applicability', but

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rather makes visible and explicit the elements (identity, ideology, mobilities, technologies) and 'sponsors' of academic literacies.

Locating itself broadly within the 'sociolinguistics of mobility' (Blommaert, 2014) and taking heed of Stornaiuolo and Hall's (2014) call to 'trace resonance' in writing and literacies research, this article works to trace academic literacies across the emerging 'literacy sponsors' (Wargo, 2016a) of contemporary networked and connected cultures. Despite its variance and recent resurgence (Lillis and Scott, 2007), academic literacies continues to be reduced to: (1) an instrumentalist and pragmatic pedagogy, and (2) the ability to navigate academic conventions and practices of higher education (Lea and Street, 1998), in particular the writing classroom (Castelló and Donahue, 2012). This centred focus, however, is limiting, and silences the more innocuous and less tangible sponsors of academic literacies: *mobilities, ideologies, identities, and technologies*. Set against the backdrop of globalization, and grounded in two case studies, this article considers how academic literacies are not an 'and' but an 'elsewhere', thereby emphasizing the importance of space in academic literacy development. In it, we chart new directions for scholarship and underscore how ideologies shift with mobilities (Pennycook, 2008; Pennycook, 2012), are indexed by identities (De Costa and Norton, 2016; Hawkins, 2005), and extend through technologies (Lam, 2009; Rymes, 2012) in ways that constitute and render literacy sponsors visible. By outlining a *literacy sponsors* framework for studying academic literacies, this article highlights the purchasing power of seeing academic literacies not solely as a field or set of practices, but rather as a locating mechanism for studying a range of translanguaged and hybridized repertoires (for example, García and Li, 2014) that are shaped and constituted by the physical and social spaces that contemporary youth inhabit.

### **Mapping a shifting field of study: Academic literacies**

Academic literacies emerged as a response to deficit discourses addressing the changing demographic contexts and expanding student population across higher education systems. In light of the more recent neo-liberal turn in education and a growing obsession with measurement and standards-based learning, academic literacies continues to be an apt unit of analysis as youth and adults navigate the terrains of teaching and learning across the K–16, kindergarten through university, continuum. Historically, these studies have given us great insight into the relationships students have between navigating and reading the word and the world (Lea and Street, 1998; Lillis, 1997; Lillis and Scott, 2007; Ivanič, 1998; Thesen and van Pletzen, 2006). Qualitatively, academic literacies has used the researcher's gaze to examine student writing, and textual production more broadly, as an act and practice that monetizes (that is, provides currency for) achievement and success in the academy. Ultimately a field plagued by 'textual bias' (Horner and Lu, 2009), we want to shift the focus in academic literacies research from *writing* to *composing* more broadly. Composing, in contrast to writing, makes explicit the way in which particular elements (for example, mobilities, identities, ideologies, and technologies) are always already communicative products and processes expressive of relationships (Yancey, 2004). Having learners marshal the semiotic resources available to them, composing in contrast to writing, highlights the increased focus on multimodal communication. As a result of the mobile and technological resurgence, identities and ideologies concerning to and for whom we compose are important.

Certain theses and counter-theses continue to mark the field of academic literacies as a distinct area of study. Lillis and Scott (2007), for example, attend to elements by reflexively looking inward, charting certain trends in academic literacies research, but also by looking outward, suggesting new ways we think about the practices and processes that inform academic literacies research. Epistemologically, much of the academic literacies work (for example, Dysthe,

2002; Prior, 1998) has invoked a critical ethnographic gaze. Working against the treatment of language/writing as solely or primarily a linguistic object, academic literacies has long worked alongside the public outcry against imposing universal standards on student writing. We see this work as being increasingly pressing, as many academic forms of writing are being assessed using Scantron and other computer-assisted technologies. Ideologically, academic literacies has challenged the textual bias by shifting the emphasis away from texts towards practices, drawing on a number of traditions that make issues of social and cultural justice necessary and relevant to the everyday demands of higher education (Hawkins, 2011).

Social and cultural justice, however, does not intersect with academic literacies solely through an increased focus on practice. Hence, we want to expand the transformative ideological stance of academic literacies to focus on *experience*. This emphasis on experience echoes recent developments in literacy writ large. It signals a shift from literacy to what some have called 'electracy' (Arroyo, 2013; Ulmer, 2003). Thus, like Lillis and Scott, we chart a stance and heuristic for studying academic literacies that 'involves a commitment to staying rooted in people's lived experiences and ... what may be at stake for them in specific contexts' (Lillis and Scott, 2007: 13). We go one step further, however, to argue that these experiences and contexts shift. They merge, transform, and create new conditions that have everything to do with literacies (both academic and other), thereby demonstrating how deeply entrenched literacy is in the lives of people.

Building on and expanding what Lillis and Scott (2007) identified as salient areas for future research in academic literacies almost a decade ago, we take their call to develop a meta-theoretical stance and develop an analytic that traces the objects of academic literacies research across contexts. Although Lillis and Scott (2007) identified six elements of future-oriented academic literacies research (a range of semiotic practices, diverse educational domains, boundary crossing, multilingualism as a resource for meaning-making, computer-mediated practices, and meta-theory), we locate ourselves within the ongoing project and development of academic literacies research by focusing on the action and movement (for example, '-scapes') of composing. We understand the complex web of literacies as connected, networked, and maintained in an era of globalization.

### **Literacy sponsorscales: Locating academic literacies today**

Literacy sponsorscales are a heuristic perspective that helps account for the various 'sitings' of contemporary communicative landscapes and semiotic repertoires. It accounts for the situated 'in-between' moments of communication and how meanings shift in what Kress (2000) calls the 'flow of semiosis'. As argued elsewhere (Wargo, 2016a), literacy sponsorscales are 'a quasi-scavenger theory ... as it operates from seemingly incommensurable vantage points to nuance and understand both human and non-human sponsors of literacies practice'. Borrowing from Brandt (1998), literacy sponsorscales are a conceptual neologism that utilizes Appadurai's (1996) dimensions of -scapes (for example, *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, and *ideoscapes*) to highlight the convergence of community and the local across an increasingly global and connected world. It takes into account how *mobilities*, *ideologies*, *identities*, and *technologies* are always already steeped in the more formal understanding of literacy sponsors. These focal areas, we think, are those that suture personal experiences with academic literacies, sponsors, and teaching and learning.

As an analytic, literacy sponsorscales afford a lens to examine academic literacies works to, as Stornaiuolo and Hall (2014) suggest, 'trace resonance' across the varying landscapes of meaning, location, and (con)texts. Sponsorscales highlight the collective endeavour of academic literacies and learning. They work, as Appadurai describes, from 'conditions of collective reading,

criticism, and pleasure' (Appadurai, 1996: 8). At a pedagogical level, literacy sponsors demand that we commit fully to alter our praxis – to, as Shipka (2016) argues, 'consider how concretely engaging with different modes, genres, materials, cultural practices, communicative technologies, and language varieties impacts our abilities to negotiate meaning' (Shipka, 2016: 251); or, perhaps more importantly, how 'it might provide us with still other options for knowing and being, and for being known' (Shipka, 2016: 251). Literacy sponsors are not only a theoretical endeavour, working to locate the mobilities, identities, ideologies, and technologies inherent in learning the particular skills and knowledge of a discipline, but also an outlook on tracing experience. Working to leverage the compositional fluency and communicative repertoires that all composers already possess, literacy sponsors work to provide what Latour (2005) would call a 'backstage view' of production. It traces the experiences students have with sponsors and the range of repertoires used to navigate the multiple literacy contexts in which they work, live, and learn.

### **Tracing academic literacies across literacy sponsors**

In responding to the call to develop meta-theoretical stances and approaches to the study of academic literacies, we work to trace them across a variety of literacy sponsors. Working to reinvigorate critical ethnographic and post-structuralist approaches, we illuminate what is becoming increasingly visible for those of us who teach academic literacies across the early childhood through tertiary education spectrum. This impetus requires not only a reshaping of what we deem worthy of study, but also new analytic tools to trace the unseen. It requires a widening of the lens. By casting a light across four focal areas (mobilities, identities, ideologies, and technologies), we work to investigate how academic literacies evolve out of trans-semiotic, multimodal, and linguistically rich experiences. Our rationale for this project is theoretical, pedagogical, and methodological. Tracing academic literacies across literacy sponsors helps us better understand literacy development in an age of globalization, while simultaneously highlighting how young people are working towards cultural justice and navigating inequality. We examine these focal areas below.

#### ***Mobilities***

Missing from discussions concerning academic literacies is the examination of multi-directional flows of culture, text, identities, and ideologies. As educators in institutions of higher education, we know that students are more readily entering and exiting classrooms, occupations, and contexts. Utilizing a literacy sponsors heuristic to locate academic literacies, we can examine the increasing importance of mobile flows and exchanges across nations and learning for students of all backgrounds. Mobilities, as we name them here, create the conditions for identity-making, articulations that are not only transnational but, as we have seen, diasporic (Blommaert, 2014; Duff, 2015), too. As students traverse the diverse landscapes of academic production, mobilities become an even more salient and pressing theme. Be it genre, nation state, or occupation, being mobile is increasingly the norm of navigation for today's learners. Mobilities and the writing resonances of literacy sponsors illuminate the movement and vibrancy that is literacy learning.

#### ***Identities and ideologies***

Taking heed of the constellation of communities, discourses, and cultures that students traverse across and through, we argue that identities can no longer be considered static or indexical

(Manosuthikit and De Costa, 2016). Rather, like Vertovec (2010) and Rampton *et al.* (2015), we highlight how identities are always already a facet of a post-multicultural superdiversity that promotes inclusiveness by recognizing the multiple affiliations and discourse communities individuals traverse, and of which they remain a part. Typically, academic literacies are less flexible when talking across issues of identity. As an area of study it limits itself to a singular, typically ethnonational, identity (Heller *et al.*, 2015). By contrast, we align ourselves with De Costa and Norton's (2016) understanding of identities as a site of struggle that shift across scales of time and space (see also Canagarajah and De Costa, 2016). Although not an *a priori* for all students, this shift and struggle of identity-making is often seen across online multimodal literacy practices and networks (Jewitt, 2013). The new communicative resources and stretches afforded to youth composers in the age of the internet are increasingly allowing them to disrupt notions of identity as constituted to singular categories of difference (such as race, ethnicity, or nationality), and to interrogate and capitalize on the ideologies underlying such identity constructions. For example, in a recent study exploring *transcultural digital literacies*, Kim (2016) explores how youth on a microblog mediate their identities through particular digital practices and genres of participation. Fashioning multicultural identities in digital spaces through a variety of meaning-making practices, transcultural digital literacies is but one example of the literacy sponsornscapes inherent in a more expansive 'compositional fluency' (Shipka, 2016), a fluency that encourages:

consideration of texts, materials, and practices from the past, from other cultures and nations, as well as those associated with one's projected future, as these varied historical and cross-cultural contexts will likely involve the uptake of technologies, languages, varieties, genres, conventions, and modes markedly different from what one routinely experiences at present.

(Shipka, 2016: 255)

Literacy sponsornscapes illustrate the ideological underpinnings, methodological potential, and pedagogical possibilities of having, investigating, and holding a range of identities for being and becoming academically literate.

### **Technologies**

Accentuating the salience of out-of-school learning and the 'techtual counter-economies' (Wargo, 2016b) of informal learning and literacies, technologies are increasingly highlighting the visual, aural, and transmediated environments of today's conception of academic literacies. As we have seen through a variety of approaches, technologies have allowed users to traverse borders and make the local more global (Kim, 2016; Lam, 2009; Rymes, 2012). Technologies, however, are not solely about the digital but also about the material. As documented elsewhere (Wargo, 2015a; Wargo, 2015b), youth are using the affordances of technologies and a range of literacies practices to design more just social futures. With the advent of new media, computer-mediated communication systems, and digital environments that architect particular experiences available for some students, but disparate for others, technologies are becoming an accelerated area of study in academic literacies (Leung and Street, 2014).

### **Reading across resonances: Academic literacies as praxis**

The literacy sponsornscapes model we propose above demands that educators respond to the ever-shifting communicative landscapes of academic literacies. As a theoretical and methodological tool, it responds to the call to trace literacies across the more mobile and technological lived realities of our contemporary time. Pedagogically, it allows educators to tap into a range of semiotic resources available to students. It reads the resonances of academic literacies to

enhance learning and literacy development. Tracing resonance across these themes, we locate academic literacies across and between our primary focal areas: mobilities, identities, ideologies, and technologies.

### Literacy sponsors in action: Two case studies

To illustrate how academic literacies can be traced across diverse literacy sponsors, we turn to two case studies: Ben, a youth participant from the US, and Aaron, an international college student originally from China. Highlighting the contrastive resonances of academic literacies amid emergent and distributive learning ecologies, Ben and Aaron reveal how learning lives are always already situated and are informed by a number of social relations, locations, sponsors, experiences, and desires.

#### Ben

Ben is a White 19-year-old gay male student who participated in Jon Wargo's longitudinal connective ethnographic study examining how lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), and queer youth of colour navigated inequality through their writing, making, and composing with mobile media and digital literacies. At the time of data collection, Ben was a high-school student living in a small, affluent city. He attended an international baccalaureate (IB) programme that nurtured students to acquire a range of academic competencies, some of which included advanced language learning and technical skills, as well as accelerated college preparatory courses. Together, these experiences would culminate in introductory college credit. At the onset of the larger study, Ben was asked to draw a literacy sponsorship map, a map that detailed those sponsors that had the greatest impact on his literacy learning life. During the course of the interview, Ben produced the map shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Ben's literacy sponsorship map



Through the sponsorship map protocol, Ben detailed those sponsors that are most often cited when considering academic literacies. He cited his formal schooling and navigation across the disciplines. He also cited his mother reading to him. When we think about schooling and its role in constructing literate lives, we often consider how equity and opportunity intersect to produce literate learners. As the conversation continued, however, Jon was quick to pick up on a secondary theme that arose from Ben's primary literacy sponsors: digital media. From Tumblr to Facebook, microblogging, social networking, and mobile media were those icons on the map that resonated for Ben as equally important sponsors. Through these more sedimented sponsors (school, family, digital media), Ben discussed how he was cognizant of the particular identities that were indexed: son, follower, friend, student, and so on. Watching Ben shift his finger across these icons, however, produced a line of inquiry that Jon picked up on and asked him about: 'What about the in-between?'

Moving back to the map, Jon started outlining the white space that sat in-between sponsors, the mobilities, and technologies that facilitated the navigation of literacies and identities more broadly. For instance, how does the liminal space between Michigan (Ben's home) and Spain (his study abroad location) intersect? How can we trace the resonances of these sponsors? (See Figure 2.)



**Figure 2:** Charting the in-between in Ben's sponsorship map

In considering this space – what we refer to as the literacy sponsorscape of literate practice and lives – Ben began to make connections for Jon that at first were not as salient. As a student who held an increased interest in Spanish language and culture, Ben was able to travel abroad quite frequently throughout the IB academic programme. He talked about how technologies, specifically those mediated through his mobile phone and computer, fostered and sustained interaction with his peers and colleagues abroad. However, he also discussed the ways in which the more mobile lives he lived in Spain and Michigan were sometimes in tension:

Ben: I am more 'out' here. In Spain, I had a weird interaction. Like I was with a family, and I didn't just want to come out and say, 'I'm gay.' I would blog about it, though. Like there was this one time when my host uncle said something about how gays shouldn't get married and I just thought [audible gasp]. I wanted to tell him, get learned. I blogged about it on my Tumblr. My friends, well those who knew Spanish, got a kick out of it.

Hence, for Ben, the sponsorscales of identity and ideology were those that were both held at bay and in constant motion through semiotic stretches of writing and literacies activity. Literacy sponsorships helped bring to fruition the constraints of particular identities that Ben was able to index while being abroad, while simultaneously helping him to spread and share this tension.

Jon remembers seeing a variety of blog posts from Ben throughout his summer trips to Spain. The series of translanguaging blog posts that Ben produced on Tumblr were in direct relation to the more 'academic' requirements of the IB school. His teacher asked him to 'keep a language journal'. For Ben, this meant utilizing the platforms and tools he was most familiar with. He also wanted 'reach' when it came to audience. The post he cited in the above interaction was written in June 2013. In it, he writes: 'Cambiando de tema, este dia, Pablo y yo fuimos a la casa del otro Pablo. Era muy interesante alli. Un otro chico, Guillaume estaba alli. "Te gustara Guillaume" mi madre me dijo. Estaba falsa. Very false.' ['Moving on, this day, Pablo and I went to the other Pablo's house. It was very interesting there. Another boy, Guillaume, was also there. "You'll like Guillaume" my mom had told me. She was wrong. Very wrong.'] As his post progressed, readers worked their way through the Spanish/English text to find out that Guillaume was against gay couples having the right to adopt children, not to marry: 'Guillaume, el idioto, me dijo, "si un nino tiene dos padres o dos madres, la educacion del nino es incompleta."' ['Guillaume, the idiot, told me, "If a child has two fathers or two mothers, the education of the child is incomplete.']] Ben later translated his post, arguing that, 'Unfortunately my grasp of Spanish wasn't quite good enough to refute his homophobic ideas with science at that time. I hate Guillaume for his ideas, just a lot. Get learned.' Ben's navigation between two languages was a lot like his navigation between identities, sponsors, ideologies, and technologies. Although this interaction is brief, it shows how youth are leveraging the literacy sponsorscales of their lives to work across themes of identity and mobility.

Through the discourses of globalization and technologization, Ben constructed a moment that highlights just how far his own ideologies concerning what 'learned' meant travelled. Through his own writing and literacies work, Ben was able to illuminate a particular facet of his identity (his sexual orientation) that was outwardly not visible in the more global contexts of his academic life. These ideologies and experiences concerning human rights, queer or otherwise, are the terrain of literacy sponsorscales. Although academic literacies are typically confined to the knowledge and skills of disciplinary pedagogy and praxis (Lea and Street, 1998; Lea, 2004), Ben reminds us that they too are imbued with discourses concerning identities, ideologies, and mobilities. Just as Ben sets Guillaume up in opposition to his more 'learned' ways, many may read Ben as being able to flex these literacy muscles because he has cultural and social capital. Ben's literacy sponsorscales are those saturated in privilege. That said, the themes highlighted through a literacy sponsorscales lens could be refracted with all learners, even those who are not as privileged.

### **Aaron**

Like Ben, Aaron enjoyed the economic privilege that was made manifest in his status as an international Chinese college student. Aaron was part of a larger longitudinal study led by Peter De Costa that investigated the academic socialization of international students. On an economic



level, he appeared to have all the trappings of the ‘global elite’ (Vandrick, 2011), who criss-cross the world over the course of their study. Having attended a private Catholic high school in Pittsburgh, Aaron was unlike most of his Chinese classmates who were enrolled in the English Language Center at his campus. That he was mandated to take additional English as a Second Language (ESL) course because he failed his diagnostic language admissions test became a source of deep resentment.

More importantly, such resentment and his earlier educational history also contributed to being in a liminal space where he found himself unable to identify fully with either his domestic or his newly arrived international peers. Thus, while on the surface Aaron appeared to have ample economic capital, what he lacked was the cultural capital to legitimize his standing as a college freshman. Further, and unlike Ben, who was able to enhance his cultural capital through diverse literacy sponsors, Aaron lacked access to such diversity, which in turn inhibited his ability to develop his academic identity.

While Ben was fortunate to have had his mother read to him as a child, Aaron’s parents, who worked actively to build their family business, rarely had time to spend with him when he was growing up. Not surprisingly, he developed a distant relationship with them. In fact, they continued to pay for his tuition under the false belief that he had officially enrolled as a fully matriculated student, when in reality he had only gained provisional acceptance and had to take and pass English proficiency tests before being able to matriculate as a regular student.

The literacy sponsorship gap between the two young men becomes more evident when we compare the range of digital media (Tumblr, Facebook, microblogging, and social networking, in Ben’s case) to which they had access. For one, because of Chinese governmental restrictions, Facebook was not a social networking option available to Aaron in order to connect with friends in China. Instead, he used WeChat ([www.wechat.com/en/](http://www.wechat.com/en/)), a free messaging and calling app that had originally been developed for users in mainland China but that is now used internationally, following the creation of an English version. Aaron, however, continued to use this app almost exclusively in Mandarin Chinese, as exemplified in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Monolingual language use

Translation: Even if I failed my tests, I would still pose naturally for photos as always

When he did use English on WeChat, it was generally in the form of a repost (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4:** Reposting

Thus, while Ben used social media to translanguage, to express his powerlessness due to his lack of Spanish proficiency, and to articulate his disagreement with homophobic ideas, Aaron's posts lacked such a hardened stance, due in part to: (1) a lack of audience and a limited pool of literacy sponsors, and (2) how he viewed language. In respect to the former, Aaron's posts rarely received much uptake and were read by few friends. As mentioned, he was socially isolated from his peers on campus, and his loneliness was amplified by the fact that the few friends he had made at high school were now at colleges in different parts of the US.

Also, it appears that Aaron saw languages as being bounded and distinct entities, in contrast to the fluidity that characterizes translanguaging practices (García and Li, 2014). While Ben took an asset-based approach by using his liminal space between Michigan and Spain and translanguaging to illuminate his sexual orientation and foster his academic identity development, Aaron's liminal space between Michigan and China and his bilingualism were not exploited to enhance his learning environment. If anything, Aaron's posts over an extended period of time underscored his frustration (see Figures 3 through 5).



**Figure 5:** Emotional distress

Translation: Feeling bothered. Who'll come to love me (a curious face)

Furthermore, Aaron's lack of sponsors (both in terms of a variety of literacy affordances and in terms of reading audience) resulted in a curtailed form of academic identity development. This outcome serves as a reminder that while mobility and technologies can serve as effective sponsors of literacy, in order for academic literacy development to occur, learners would need to be both supported and validated by sponsors. Finally, our two case studies also illustrate the need to interrogate ideological processes that underlie academic literacy development. Aaron's case, for example, calls into question prevailing ideologies that construct affluent international students as having the resources to succeed. If anything, this case underscores the challenges that ostensibly 'global elite' students such as Aaron encounter.

## Discussion and conclusion

To date, the rich body of critical ethnographic work on academic literacies has illustrated how literacy development is a social enterprise that is inextricably linked to issues surrounding social justice and equity. Building on this intellectual lineage, in this paper we introduced the notion of literacy sponsors and proposed that it be an emerging heuristic and lens with which to

examine the sophisticated academic literacies work young people are navigating and engaging with. As demonstrated through our case studies, literacy sponsors enable us to trace a range of experiences that relate to their academic literacy development. Through Ben and Aaron, we observed how the liminal spaces of identities (LGBT youth and/or global elite) are always in flux through their experiences with academic literacies. Aaron and Ben also presented us with questions concerning mobility. Ben, for instance, used a myriad of technologies and translanguaging moves to reach across contexts, whereas Aaron felt the constraints (governmental and otherwise) of being immobile (through language and a physical separation from his high-school friends). In addition, the two case studies revealed how the presence of literacy sponsors can in fact facilitate literacy development, while its absence can impede development.

We would like to reiterate the benefits of adopting a literacy sponsorship lens in examining academic literacies. Theoretically, such a lens helps to trace literacies development across various modalities. It highlights the 'compositional fluency' (Shipka, 2016) that takes heed of learners' experiences. Although suggestive in respect of the two cases above, a literacies sponsors lens does not insist on technological access *a priori*. Through the case studies of Ben and Aaron we were also able to see, however, how technology alone did not shift and/or make mobile particular identities or ideologies. In other words, technological access alone does not guarantee equity. Rather, students are made successful through academic and personal mobilities, pathways often fostered through technology coupled with an identity that is legitimated and ideologies that position a learner as 'literate'.

Methodologically, a literacy sponsorship lens provides academic literacies researchers with a toolkit to extend their ethnographic gaze to virtual domains, which increasingly are fertile ground for literacy development. As we have seen in this article, the fluid mobility of youth such as Ben and Aaron warrants new investigative tools in order for us to gain a holistic understanding of the dynamic processes surrounding contemporary academic literacy development. Pedagogically, and in the spirit of earlier academic literacies research, it is vitally important that we examine the lived sociolinguistic realities of youth today. In an educational era that increasingly emphasizes standards-based tests and test-based literacy, literacy sponsors serve as a reminder of the vital need to draw on the resources that students bring with them to the classroom and to create pathways of access for those who encounter limited access. Put differently, when used creatively, the insights gleaned from such an endeavour will not only enable educators to trace writing resonances and composing practices, new forms of academic literacies work that have long resided in the scriptural counter-economy of classroom spaces, but also to tap these practices to enhance literacy development.

In closing, it might be argued that the cases and exemplars we draw on here are not the standard. We use Aaron and Ben, however, not to develop an archetype of what today's student is and does, but rather to bring to the fore issues of emergence for the study of academic literacies: mobilities, identities, ideologies, and technologies. Admittedly, most youth do not enjoy the mobility that comes with a study abroad experience (Ben) or the luxury of being educated at a foreign university (Aaron). However, it is not uncommon to find different manifestations of mobility in our classrooms in the form of immigrant and refugee learners, or students who have to negotiate a rural/urban divide as a result of changing demographic patterns. Such commonplace mobilities warrant investigation, as do the different levels of access to technology experienced by these students. One way to initiate such an investigation is to explore the literacy sponsors in which they reside, and we hope that more literacy scholars will be emboldened to take this crucial step forward.

### Notes on the contributors

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