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## INTRODUCTION

We begin this book with a scene that unfolded directly outside a first-year writing (FYW) classroom at Michigan State University (MSU), which is located along the banks of the Red Cedar River. The course was an honors section comprised of largely middle-class students from the state and surrounding midwestern region. It was themed around ethnographic approaches to writing, and on this day, the students were turning in papers on the analysis of a cultural artifact. Through the first-floor window overlooking a bridge were a number of other artifacts ripe for analysis: a row of US and Michigan state flags waving in front of the Old Auditorium building for Veteran's Day, the campus rock with Greek letters, graffiti underneath a bridge over the river running through the campus, and the street Farm Lane indexing the university's agricultural roots. This backdrop, however, went largely unnoticed by the students, who were silently typing in-class reflections on their laptops. However, their attention shifted as the scene was unexpectedly disrupted. Whispers began as an exotic white sports car slowed to a stop on the bridge and pulled to the curbside. Inside was a young Chinese student in sunglasses staring straight ahead, and beside him was a young female student. Directly across on the other side was a green-and-white SUV police vehicle with a policeman running the registration numbers and stepping out of the automobile to issue a ticket. Gazing out at the interaction, the midwestern students broke into peals of laughter at the incongruity of the scene. The sports car (and driver) seemed out of place on the midwestern campus, particularly in a state struggling from downsizing in the automotive industry. The social, cultural, and class divisions were intensified by the perception of international students as operating in ethnic enclaves.

Alastair Pennycook (2012) foregrounds the politics of mobility through attention to how and why objects and moments turn up in "unexpected places." The unexpected offers a window into social norms and forces regulating everyday interactions, practices, activities, and travels. The wholly unexpected scene outside the classroom brought these issues

into sharp relief. The scene foregrounded how language and culture regulated the students' movements, with the physical separation of local and international students indexing a wider linguistic and social divide among the student population. Entirely absent from the honors FYW section (with the sole Chinese student dropping it after the first day), most Chinese international students were tracked into remedial courses while paying out-of-state tuition dollars for limited college credits. From the perspective of the international students, the vehicle indexed a sign of modernity and mobility in the context of rapid social transformations within contemporary Chinese society. Moreover, it signified efforts to get around the system and subvert institutional rules and authorities, an issue we will more fully discuss in relation to what we refer to as underground economies of learning on campus. Finally, from the perspective of the university, the scene symbolized the university's efforts to capitalize on international students while also policing them through policies of containment. It is this focus on fixity and flow that will serve as a framework for attending to complex movements of this student population across semiotic, institutional, and geographic borders. We will moreover attend to the ways these movements shape and are shaped by everyday practices as they co-constitute part of a wider transnational social field in which the higher education landscape is being reconfigured.

These moves extend the emergent mobilities paradigm (Blommaert 2010; Lorimer-Leonard 2013; Nordquist 2017; Pennycook 2012) within writing and literacy studies through foregrounding the complex interplay among lived literacy practices, student mobilities, and internationalization. Attending to the intermingling of geographic and social spaces, this framework focuses on ways power is reflected and reinforced (Massey 1994). Core to these issues are questions of travel and movement in higher education: who is able to move, how they move, when they move, and to what effect. In the following pages, this line of inquiry is taken up with respect to a largely privileged upwardly mobile class within Chinese society—stereotyped in the popular media as “second-generation rich”—and the role of higher education institutions (HEIs), languages, and literacies in this process. This analytic approach opens up for scrutiny ways educational programs and practices are embedded in wider global eduscapes (Luke 2006) as well as in how globalized power operates through a variety of linked scales (Dingo, Riedner, and Wingard 2013) that connect diverse regions, nations, and HEIs.

While international study is certainly not a new phenomenon, what is new is the scale and intensity of this process. International-student enrollment is part of a worldwide trend, with levels now at nearly 4.5

million (Institute of International Education 2014). With its rapid economic expansion and emergence on the world stage, China is the largest engine of this growth, with one out of every six international students now from the People's Republic of China (Institute of International Education 2014). These newly affluent and mobile students have become a cornerstone of an aggressive recruitment campaign as a means to offset decreased national and state funding in an era of neoliberal reforms and privatization. While the landscape is shifting as students discover the benefits of alternatives in European countries, and as China develops its own competitive programs, the largest players in this marketplace have been the English-speaking destinations of Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. More particularly, because the United States is the select destination for many of the students, there have been record numbers of international students in the United States every year, with the numbers increasing by 40 percent over the past decade. In 2014, the number of students from China totaled two hundred and seventy thousand, or 31 percent of the local international-student population (Institute of International Education 2014). While these students are enrolled in large and small public and private institutions across the country, the majority are located in major public state schools, whose total international enrollments have doubled or quadrupled within the span of a few years. On the whole, however, institutes of higher learning such as MSU have been unequipped to absorb such a large contingent of students from a single region or to accommodate sometimes wide cultural and linguistic differences. Surrounding these matters are questions about how and whether or not educators should accommodate cultural and linguistic differences. Critically, at the core of these tensions is a reconfiguration of "the power differences and structural relations" (Li 2006, 3) between international students and the educational system. Central to the issues are "who controls what is taught, who has access to what, and whose literacy is legitimized in schools" (6). In this transnational study, we unpack these tensions in the context of writing and rhetoric programs and higher education institutions. It is our contention that the task for the various stakeholders is not to ask whether or not to change but rather to identify how HEIs are changing and the nature of these transformations.

Central to these moves is the need for closer insight into the ways that multilingual (translingual) and multimodal (transmodal) literacy practices of international students—inside and outside school-based contexts—mediate the development of their academic, disciplinary, and transnational identities. In a study of the rapidly growing

immigrant Asian community in Vancouver, British Columbia, literacy scholar Guofang Li (2006) put forth educators' "need to find effective ways to collect student social and cultural data outside school, as we cannot teach when we do not know who we are teaching" (211). Though Li was referring primarily to the context of secondary education, her contention is equally relevant to higher education spheres. The need for a more in-depth understanding of students' values, worldviews, and literacy practices is particularly critical for writing, speaking, and language-learning classrooms that often work with the largest contingent of international students when they first arrive and are tasked with the responsibility of preparing those students for the work they will be engaged in across the university.

To capture the multidimensional nature of this phenomenon, we draw on a longitudinal study that maps out the transliteracy practices of undergraduates at a major state university in the United States and at a private study-abroad program in China. Crossing semiotic, cultural, and geographic boundaries, we trace students' literate and social trajectories as they traverse home and host cultures while attending to the ways this process mediates literacy practices, academic socialization, transnational dispositions, social and class identities, and the fundamental restructuring of higher education. Grounded in this frame is the sense that education is no longer solely a sovereign entity (if it ever was) but is increasingly "a shared, transnational phenomenon" (Meyers 2014, 7). Taking up this perspective, our project attends to the ways the intertwined issues of globalization, education, and economics reach into everyday life. The book speaks to issues of the ways globalization demands rethinking of educational inquiry, and also, by implication, educational practices. Hence, beyond a focus on understanding how students adapt and adjust to Western models of education, there is the need to conceptualize the ways increased student mobilities challenge the underlying assumptions surrounding these HEI models. In particular, this study is built around the following questions:

- How are transformations in HEIs shaping and being shaped by the transnational migration and movement of students in and across home and host culture(s)? What are the uneven local and global structural relationships and linkages mediating this process? How is this process bound up in the reconstruction of social, class, and national identities?
- How do the students transculturally position (Guerra 1998) themselves as they move across social and material spaces (distributed across temporal and spatial scales)?

- How does this process mediate students' socialization into the language, literacy, and disciplinary practices of the university? In reciprocal fashion, how does their academic socialization mediate their identities and literacy practices outside classroom contexts?
- How can a more complex and in-depth understanding of these processes help us develop culturally responsive and reciprocal pedagogies (Li 2006) and research practices in writing, public speaking, disciplinary literacies, and global citizenship?

## TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELDS

Our study takes up these questions through attention to the ways everyday literacy practices of Chinese international students are shaping and being shaped by the global higher education landscape. To perform this work, we bring together individual case studies of transnational literacy practices as the students traverse home and host cultures in and across two primary locations. The first is at Michigan State University. Originally a land grant founded on the Morrill Act in 1863, the university has been traditionally focused on agriculture and engaging the local community with a strong outreach agenda. More recently, however, President Lou Anna Simon has expanded the mission of the university in a shift from a land-grant college to what is labeled as a *world grant*. Currently, MSU is one of the top ten universities recruiting international students, and the number of Chinese students at MSU has increased from 2 percent of the population in 2007 to 10 percent of the population in 2014 (MSU Office of the Registrar 2014). One of the unintended consequences has been that the large number of international students has enabled those students to self-segregate and form a rich, complex subculture, or sense of a “college within a college,” that remains opaque to many local students and faculty (Fraiberg and Cui 2016). Despite a need for a much more in-depth understanding of this population’s linguistic and semi-otic repertoires, cultural practices, and motivations, there remains limited research in this area or in the ways these students’ literacy practices afford and constrain the formation of their academic or global dispositions and learning. This data is particularly critical in the composition program, in which two of the scholars involved in this research project teach, where it is not uncommon in basic writing courses for 80 to 90 percent of the students in each classroom to be Chinese. It is moreover essential for those in writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID), as well as for other instructors intersecting with literacy studies, to attend to the ways students traverse the curriculum. Most broadly, this in-depth portrait is critical for making sense of

processes through which wider transformations in higher education are shaping and being shaped in the context of everyday literate practices. Even while MSU brands itself as a campus grounded in ideals of global diversity and social justice, its current recruitment practices, as well as other global strategic initiatives targeted at China, index a wider set of tensions as the university attempts to penetrate new markets. Pressured by current shortfalls in state funding, academic capitalism is playing an increasing role in the reproduction of social divisions on a global scale and in the construction of a transnational social class.

The second site serving as a focus for this research is called the Sinoway International Education (SIE) Summer School in China, which has a complex relationship to Michigan State University and the broader area of higher education within the United States. Indexing ways schools such as SIE are both a recent product of the higher education system in the United States and, in key respects, a challenge to its dominance, the SIE school itself was founded in 2009 by a Wabash College student and his friend from Harvard Law School after the former realized Chinese students returning home had little opportunity to take the same kinds of summer credit-bearing courses that were available to their North American counterparts. Modeling itself on the North American educational system, the SIE Summer School opened on the campus of East China Normal University in Shanghai and hired thirteen faculty members. As of 2015, the school has received financial backing from Renren (equivalent to the Facebook of China) and employs 250 faculty, with more than five thousand students enrolled in the program. The SIE program, as the first of its kind within China, has moreover engendered an array of competitors that have also recently opened their doors in a dynamic and rapidly expanding educational marketplace. In this fashion, the focus on this site and its relation to MSU serves to foreground a dynamic, shifting socioeconomic structure in which the Chinese middle class is not only reproducing but is also contesting and appropriating an educational model based on North American and US-centric hegemonic practice related to teaching and learning.

Together, these sites comprise new transnational circuits (Rouse 1992) shaping and shaped by the flow of pedagogies, ideologies, practices, teachers, and, of course, international students. Forming complex networks that stretch across borders, these sites serve to co-constitute what Levitt and Schiller (2004) define as a “transnational social field.” The term characterizes the manner in which transnational actors frequently live out their lives across borders as they cultivate multilayered and multisited identifications in and across local, regional, and

national spaces. These varied spaces consist of “differing forms, depth, and breadth” as “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed” (Levitt and Schiller 2004, 1009). This conceptual framework is grounded in Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986, 1991) notion of field as a structured space of relationships that determines people’s position and movement within it according to the relative distribution of resources or capital (economic, social, cultural). Within these social spaces, literacy serves as a form of capital production and exchange through which actors are variously able to attain positions in and across various fields. In order to map out this process, we theoretically and methodologically bring together a number of key theoretical strands as part of a more holistic approach that links local literacy practices to wider social, cultural, and economic mobilities.

#### LITERACY IN MOTION

Our “mobile literacies” approach (Lorimar-Leonard 2013; Nordquist 2017) centers on how literacy affords and constrains movement of actors, identities, and practices across geographic and social structures. Closely aligned with a rich body of work in academic socialization in writing and literacy studies over the past thirty years, research in this area has largely focused on ways students learn to “invent” (Bartholomae 1986) the university. This work examines ways students acquire academic and disciplinary identities as they learn to adopt the ways of speaking, being, and knowing in the academy (Casanave 2002; Ivanič 1998; McCarthy 1987; Prior 1998; Russell and Yañez 2003; Sternglass 1997; Zamel and Spack 2004). Moreover, emergent scholarship (Prior 1998; Roozen and Erickson 2017) has challenged models of disciplinary enculturation grounded in structuralist assumptions focused on container metaphors of “going into” disciplines. This is parallel with a recognition that the university is not a homogenous space but is rather co-constituted and dynamically comprised of multiple and competing discourses (Harris 2012). This scholarship breaks from a classroom-as-container model that conceptualizes educational spaces as bounded and discrete (Leander, Phillips, and Taylor 2010).

Concurrent with this shift is a broader move in transnational studies away from container models of the nation-state and what has been referred to as “methodological nationalism” (Shahjahan and Kezar 2013; Wimmer and Schiller 2002). This transnational optic indexes how transnational actors frequently live out their lives across borders as they

cultivate multilayered and multisited identifications in and across local, regional, and national spaces. This framework links local practices to networks of power and the material and political effects of these relationships (Dingo 2012; Hesford 2006; Hesford and Schell 2008). These moves align with research in New Literacy Studies (NLS). NLS has generally argued for a conceptualization of literacy as ideologically produced within social and institutional settings (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Gee 1996; Heath 1983; Street 1993) as opposed to a universal set of skills linked to individual cognition. This social-literacies approach conceptualizes reading and writing as situated practices whose values and meanings shift according to specific purposes in various contexts of use. Whereas this generation of literacy studies, however, focused predominantly on local communities and relatively bounded contexts, a new wave of research (Berry, Hawisher, and Selfe 2012; Brandt and Clinton 2002; Bruna 2007; Baynham and Prinsloo 2009; Duffy 2007; Kang 2015; Lam 2009; Leonard, Vieira, and Young 2015; Pahl and Rowsell 2006; Vieira 2011, 2016; Yi 2007) is moving toward investigating literacy practices within local and global, or translocal, contexts. As Lam and Warriner (2012) write, “It is mostly within the last decade that studies of language and literacy have begun to explore the relation between communicative practices and the multilayered relationships that migrants develop across geographical borders” (192). Key to this research is attention to the interplay between the local and distant (in space and time), with participants conceptualized as “bricoleurs” (Black 2009). Engaged in a process of “layered simultaneity” (Blommaert 2005), transnational actors draw on multiple resources from home and host cultures as they construct polycultural identities and traverse multiple lifeworlds. Through these practices, actors transculturally position (Guerra 1998) themselves as they develop multilayered affiliations, or “multiple reference points in the position of the self” (Black 2009, 378). It is within these spaces that actors negotiate and develop bifocal perspectives (Vertovec 2004) or a transnational habitus (Meinhof 2009) in which actors view the world from the perspectives of home and host cultures.

Stemming from this perspective, educational contexts are viewed through the lens of a wider transnational social field—comprised of complexly interlocking sets of campuses, classrooms, peripheral institutions, educational policies, neoliberal regimes—that mediates the complex flow of students, teachers, and curriculum across borders. Taking up this broader focus in a study of educational spaces across the US-Mexico border, Susan Meyers (2014) adopts a comparative approach to explore the spaces between sites and the ways they “cross over, combine, intersect,

and influence each other” (7). Further focusing on transnational connectivities, scholarship has begun to study the social effects on writing programs as they are increasingly entangled with other near and far-flung institutional practices and spaces (Donahue 2009; Kang 2015; Martins 2015). This scholarship includes attention to the complex linkages with international branch campuses (Wetzel and Reynolds 2015) and intensive English programs (Rounsaville 2015) as components of a relational network mediating international-student mobilities and identities. Overlapping with this focus has been increased attention to globally networked learning environments (Starke-Meyerring 2015) and cross-border and cross-national collaborations and partnerships (O’Brien and Alfano 2015). Finally, as part of an effort to challenge hegemonic US disciplinary and monolingual assumptions, writing scholars have begun to examine the socially and historically situated nature of writing programs beyond North American borders (Anson and Donahue 2015; Ayash 2014; Muchiri et al. 1995; Foster and Russell 2010; Thaiss et al. 2012; You 2010). Nevertheless, much of the literature remains focused at the level of individual actors and the ways they learn to invent the university as opposed to a broader focus on the ways the higher education landscape is being reinvented. Moreover, transnational studies that challenge narrower frameworks generally adopt a bird’s-eye perspective of transnationalism (e.g., broad-based policies, discussions of statistical trends). This view is in contrast to a grassroots focus on transnationalism (Smith and Guarnizo 1998) that attends to local and material processes of actors and literacies “on the move.”

Finally, dovetailing with this focus, we foreground the embodied nature of local and material processes by incorporating the literature in spatial theory (Latour 1999, 2005; Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1994, 2005; Reynolds 2007; Soja 1996; Thrift 2006). This scholarship broadly attends to the intersections of real and imagined spaces and ways they shape and are shaped by social relations. In a shift from neutral understandings of context, space is not a backdrop or stage against which activity takes place but is dynamic, changing, sedimented with ideologies, and co-constituted by the participants. Opening up relations of power for scrutiny, this analytic lens highlights ways spaces mediate uneven and differential flows of actors and objects. In making this move, it attends to the politics of mobility, or “how people move—why, with whom, and under what conditions” (Nordquist 2014, 18). In education and literacy studies, this analytic frame has been leveraged to examine the production of spaces and identities in classrooms (Leander, Phillips, and Taylor 2010; Leander and Rowe 2006; Leander and Sheehy 2004; Nordquist

2017). More broadly, Nedra Reynolds (2007) has looked at the social geography of the university and the ways it is bound up in geographies of difference and the production of social class. Despite the spatial turn, however, most studies in transnational higher education remain at the policy level, with more limited work (Brooks and Waters 2011; Sidhu 2006; Singh, Rizvi, and Shrestha 2007; Waters 2012) on the uneven and messy ways the educational landscape is being reconfigured in the context of everyday practices.

In sum, this book brings together scholarship in mobility studies, transnationalism, spatial theory, and disciplinary enculturation. In making these moves, we explore the intersections among social, geographic, and educational mobilities while attending to the complex manner in which everyday literacy practices are bound up in a wider shifting educational landscape. While individual strands of these issues have been taken up within writing and literacy studies, there is little research that brings these areas together as part of a less bounded approach. To accomplish these aims, we focus specifically on the Chinese international-student population, whose rapid and large-scale movement onto Western campuses serves to foreground key theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical issues.

#### MOBILE LITERACIES FRAMEWORK

Grounded in our mobile literacies framework, educational structures are imagined as physically and symbolically transporting students, teachers, administrators, policies, textbooks, and other actors across social and material landscapes. Operating as what Nordquist (2017) has identified as a mobility system, HEIs afford the movement of some actors while constraining the mobilities of others. This process is part of an ongoing struggle as actors continually shape and are shaped by these systems. Urry (2007) compares the emergent and dynamic nature of mobility systems to walking through a maze whose walls rearrange themselves as one travels. Useful for conceptualizing the fluid, dynamic, co-mediated nature of this interplay is “knotworking” (Prior and Shipka 2003). This process entails the complex orchestration of activity or the tying and untying of actors and objects distributed across near and far-flung spaces. It is this process that shapes the alignments of the participants, the coordination of activity, and the fluid ecologies co-constituting the dynamic and emergent pathways through which signs, symbols, and actors circulate. While the concept has generally focused on organizational contexts, scholars (Fraiberg 2010; Prior and Schaffner 2011) have argued that knotworking

is a long-standing feature of all literate and place-making practices. Taking up this frame, space itself is imagined as a knotwork or complex entanglement of densely knotted streams of activity. Challenging bounded container models, this analytic lens foregrounds how the mobility system is “enacted, maintained, extended, and transformed” (Spinuzzi 2008, 16).

Methodologically applying this perspective to international student mobility forces one to attend to the various material resources that afford and constrain “how they come to travel, how they travel, how often, and to what effect” (Brooks and Waters 2011, 130). Consequently, the mapping of literate identities necessitates the tracing of “trajectories of participation” (Dreier 1999) across scenes of writing, as actors draw on a diverse array of heterogeneous resources distributed across space-time. This approach provides the rationale behind our unit of analysis as mediated action (Wertsch 1991), serving to link situated practice to transnational social fields. The tracing of mobile practices further necessitates attention to how social objects and meanings on-the-move hold or lose their values as they travel from place to place (i.e., as they move through the world and move/are moved by the world). This movement includes not only the corporeal and physical travel of people and objects, but also imaginative and virtual travel (e.g., on the Internet).

In order to map out this process as we examine how students learn to “invent” the university (Bartholomae 1986)—and ways it is being reinvented—we engage in what has been characterized as multisited (Marcus 1995) and global (Burawoy 2000) ethnographic approaches. Dovetailing with this framework is the argument that global mobilities have transformed the traditional social fields and objects of education:

If people and objects are increasingly mobile, then, Gupta and Ferguson argue, ethnography has to engage these movements and, with them, the ways in which localities are a product of the circulations of meanings and identities in time-space. Research must become embedded self-consciously within the world systems, changing its focus from single sites and local situations to become multi-sited and multi-local, responsive to the networked realities. (Rizvi 2009, 279)

Critically while we have characterized this study as focused on two key locations, in the midwestern United States and southern part of China, these are not conceptualized as bounded or static spaces, as opposed to densely interrelated spaces that are continually under (re)construction. In mapping out activity in and across these sites, we are not only attending to actors and objects’ traversals between them, but the ways that they are densely intertwined with other regional and globally distributed spaces inside and outside our specified “sites.”

*Positions*

Arjun Appadurai (1996) describes the various dimensions of “scapes” characterizing globalization as “not objective given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, . . . deeply perspectival constructs inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of the various actors” (33). In this fashion, the various subjectivities of the authors of this project offer multiple perspectives on this process. In the chapters that follow, we present individual case studies conducted by the authors. The first two authors, Steve and Xiqiao, are located at Michigan State University, where they teach in the composition program. Steve was born in Michigan and speaks English as his home language; Xiqiao is originally from Lanzhou, China, and received her PhD in the States. While Chinese is her first language, she is for all intents and purposes bilingual and biliterate. As the case studies show, these differences mediated their individual studies and served to surface important “rich points” (Agar 1994). The third researcher, Xiaoye, is a professor at Penn State University but has taught in the SIE international program for several summers and, similar to Xiqiao, is biliterate. In similar fashion, his positioning among the summer-school students from various US colleges and universities is central to the story as it unfolds. Indexing the significance of the positioning of the researchers, we shift between *I* and *we* as part of an effort to capture the multiauthored and multivoiced nature of the book. Furthermore, as the process of globalization is driving new forms of subjectivity and hybrid identities, this move serves as an acknowledgment of ways the researchers’ positions have not only afforded a study of transnationalism within educational settings but have also been directly a product of them. Summarizing the motivation and necessity for a multiresearcher approach in the study of complex ecological systems, Leander, Phillips, and Taylor (2010) write as part of an argument for mapping mobilities and the changes in social spaces of learning,

Lemke (2000), among others, considers how historical and contemporary methods of research very often index what is reachable by a single researcher (in place and time), and how it may well “take a village” to study a village (275), or ecological system of learning. (343)

In this respect, the varied positions of the individual researchers have allowed for a richer and broader mapping of a transnational higher education field. Each of our case studies foregrounds different aspects of our analytic frames and methods based on our respective positions as researchers.

In key respects, we have leveraged our differing subject positions to make sense of our data. For instance, in an analysis of the social and class positions of the students in his class, Xiaoye focused on a debate over a film celebrating the lifestyle of a group of post-nineties-generation new rich. At the center of the tensions was a student's contention that the controversial film did not accurately represent the "real" lifestyles of average Chinese citizens. At first perplexed by the discussion and the use of the term *real*, Steve shared his confusion with Xiaoye. Unpacking the term, they jointly uncovered that missing were unshared assumptions linked to differences in their socialization into Chinese and American national discourses. Influenced by Xiaoye's upbringing in the People's Republic, the term "real" indexed the socialist-realism movement grounded in the notion that art should celebrate the working class. As a result of the interaction, Xiaoye incorporated additional historical context into his analysis. In this fashion, our social backgrounds and orientations served as a means to a fuller understanding of linguistic and cultural distinctions.

#### *Mobile Methods*

In locating situated moments of practice within a wider transnational social field, we were presented with a number of methodological issues related to global scale and complexity (Blommaert 2013; Urry 2003). Working across two different institutions including a major state university, we were tasked with trying to capture an entangled network of teachers, administrators, policies, regulations, digital networks, events, media reports, departmental units, a myriad of spaces, and four thousand Chinese undergraduates. Without a single fixed location as a starting point, we followed the advice of Bruno Latour (2005) to "begin in the middle of things" (27). Latour notes that starting almost anyplace will provide traces, vestiges, and linkages to other nodes or actors in the network. More particularly, he argues for a flat ontology to ensure that the establishment of every link in complex interlocking sets of associations—stretching in and across near and distant spaces—is visible. In order to achieve these aims, he offers three analytically separate but deeply related moves: localizing the global, redistributing the local, and connecting the sites. In the following section, we will identify more closely how these moves framed our methodological choices. However, first we articulate key assumptions undergirding these moves.

Grounded in conceptions of place as continuously in the making, our questions focused on what social or political forces render this process invisible or naturalize it as fixed. As Pennycook (2012) has suggested,

disruptions (as well as contradictions and breakdowns) in everyday scenes can help uncover hidden power geometries (Massey 1994), or the politics of mobility mediating who/what moves, when they move, how fast, how far, and to what effect. With these questions in mind, we began to register things turning up in unexpected places. On the MSU campus, this was not difficult: Chinese signs across campus; MSU workshops in Chinese (e.g., how to use library resources); large lecture halls filled with predominantly Chinese speakers; name-pronunciation workshops; underground economies for everything from delivering food to selling spaces for a course filled to capacity; media reports of a Chinese student gang; vandalized cars in a campus parking lot with the message “Go Home”; and the largest football half-time show in the school’s history directed by a planner of the Beijing Olympics. Identifying such moments as starting points, we interrogated wider social, cultural, and political forces mediating the construction of space and place.

As a flip side to looking at contradictions and breakdowns, we also identified moments of development and change over time. These moves were similarly premised on the assumption that fully developed and stabilized human practices, scripts, routines, and rituals are difficult to study because they are “so fast, fluent, dense and condensed” (Prior 2008, 3) that little is visible. Tracing the development of people (e.g., disciplinary identities and practices) and things (e.g., academic policies) offered glimpses into mechanisms through which they became “black boxed” or stabilized, as various actors recruited and were recruited into wider social and semiotic systems.

Attending to these areas, we focused on three specific moves.

### ***Localizing the Global***

Latour’s first move in keeping the analysis flat is to localize the global. The point is to make visible extended chains of actors (humans and non-humans) without jumping, breaking, or tearing. In this case macro no longer contains the micro; that is, no place can be said to be larger or wider than any others, “but some can be said to benefit from far safer connections with many more places than others” (Latour 2005, 176). As a result, what was above or below now remains on the same focal plane. This is not to suggest a lack of hierarchies or scales, but instead that one should not presuppose these in advance. To connect one site to another, the researcher needs to pay the full cost of the relation without shortcuts. Keeping this principle in mind, we charted transnational flows of people, imaginaries, and things in motion as they were translated or recontextualized across space and time. In making these moves,

we drew on a number of traditions related to tracing chains of activity (Kell 2009; Latour 1999, 2005; Leander 2008; Norris and Jones 2005; Prior 2004; Prior and Hengst 2010; Silverstein and Urban 1996; Spinuzzi 2003; Wortham 2006) across people, genres, languages, modes, and spaces. This process attends to the complex manner in which objects and meanings are translated, rearticulated, and transformed as they migrate across near and distant contexts. These unequal encounters across difference are sites of struggle and friction shaping and shaped by material and social structures. This framework foregrounds a historical-developmental view of actors and objects as they accumulate meanings and become stabilized-for-now structures mediating everyday activity. Localizing the global, this methodology never makes a “jump” with a “yawning break” between scales (Latour 2005, 173).

### ***Redistributing the Local***

Second, we redistributed the local to show how single sites and moments are relationally linked or folded into other times and places. Scale then does not depend on the absolute size but on the number and durability of the connections. Relevant to inquiry in higher educational spaces, Latour offers the scene of a university lecture hall that was planned fifteen years ago and two hundred kilometers away by an architect who drew up the blueprints. These plans provide a wider blueprint or social script shaping how loud the lecturer will need to speak, the arrangement of and number of students in well-ordered tiers, and the teacher located behind a podium. In this fashion this physical space is sedimented with orientations and meanings linked to other times and spaces that have been rendered invisible or black boxed. These structures both shape and are shaped by everyday interactions, so it is no longer only the teacher giving the lecture, but the teacher-lecture-hall-university delivering it. The question then is, who is carrying out the action? The answer is always at least two actors (or actants). In this fashion, we focused on such questions, asking who/what was acting (translating) and who/what was being acted on (translated). Extending Latour’s examples, we traced complex webs of activity in our own educational institutions across near and far-flung contexts.

### ***Connecting Sites***

Finally, we looked for the links, relations, and connections in the networks (see also appendix I). This entailed identifying events, objects, and people that were drawn together in various trajectories. Through tracing chains of activity across multiple sites we were able to identify complex connections between them. For instance, on the MSU campus an MBA

student established a for-profit Chinese college program for cheaper transferable college credits in less time. The school itself was a copy of another school, SIE, that was the focus of Xiaoye's study. Moreover, affecting these locations was a report published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* interrogating the quality and legitimacy of growing numbers of for-profit Chinese higher educational programs. Following the report both schools suffered drops in enrollment and triaged in various ways. In this fashion, we began to trace complex linkages across the sites and the resultant reconfiguration of the higher eduscape. This was done without scaling or "zooming" (e.g., from micro to macro). Latour uses an accounting metaphor to ensure that the development of analytic frames or scales have been paid in full through fine-grained tracing of chains of associations. To carry the metaphor forward, we paid the "transaction costs for moving, connecting, and assembling" (Latour 2005, 220) these various streams and threads of activity forming part of a transnational social field.

In order to accomplish these aims, we traced various actors, imaginaries, and objects across contexts. First and foremost this entailed the tracing of students in and across classrooms, bar rooms, and online chat rooms as they developed language and literacy practices and identities. Core to this focus was attention to translanguaging centered on questions such as, When did they use Chinese? When did they use English? How and why did the languages mix? In making these moves, we further focused on how students wrote and developed papers and oral presentations along with the various scenes and moments that went into developing them. For example, we attended to the ways a conversation out of class (in English) was translated into student jottings (in Chinese and English), later discussed (in Chinese) with a classmate back in China on a social media platform, and finally translated into a draft (in English) brought to a student-teacher conference. In this fashion, we linked students' local transliteracy practices to near and far-flung contexts distributed across a transnational social field. By following the students beyond the classrooms and into their everyday lives, we further attempted to understand how their extracurricular literacies and activities were deeply woven into this process. We additionally collapsed an array of binaries: virtual and real; in-school and out-of-school; text and talk; and local and global. Beyond a focus on international students' social and literate trajectories, we lastly traced the planning, development, and histories of things in the making, such as university policies, international student events, translingual pedagogies and curricula, and university marketing materials.

## DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

To gather data, we drew on an array of data-collection tools based on our subject positions and local contextual factors: computer screen recordings of writing sessions, still photographs, audio and video recordings of activity, participant observation, field notes, focus groups, retrospective and elicited interviews, literacy narratives, and the collection of artifacts (e.g., student papers, social media posts, syllabi). When possible, we used simultaneous and multiple means to provide optimal data sources (Leander 2003) for complicating our analysis. Assembling our data sets to map out relational networks, or knotworks, we adopted a critical perspective on how our data-collection methods framed our analysis grounded in the assumption that each method narrows down the field of view in its privileging of certain aspects of activities while limiting or omitting others. Reflexively attending to these issues, we focused on tracing multiple interlocking mobilities (embodied, imagined, virtual).

Tracing these complex entanglements, our study argues for a more holistic approach to writing and literacy studies, with attention to global complexity (Urry 2003). Core to our argument is the necessity for fine-grained tracing of mobile literacies across space-time while connecting moments of everyday practice to wider distributed networks, or knotworks, of activity. While in many respects these mobile methods have been firmly established in literacy studies, what is new is the scope of the analysis and their application to the study of transnational social fields in higher education. Over the past ten years, composition studies has experienced a translingual turn (Canagarajah 2006, 2013; Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur 2011), with much of the conversation tending to focus on classrooms and pedagogical practices related to leveraging difference as an asset for learning. Our study is a call for an expansion of this focus in a shift from tranlingualism to transliteracy (You 2016) and from single-sited analyses to multisited approaches. Dovetailing with a shift in writing and literacy studies toward a less bounded framework, it situates local classroom practices in the context of the world grant university.

## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The following chapters map out key issues shaping the students' movement across transnational HEIs. The first half of the book looks at the cultural, social, and linguistic landscape at Michigan State University while situating broader social shifts within the context of a rapidly increasing Chinese international-student population. In performing this work, chapter 1 offers a broad overview of the ways the recent influx of

Chinese international students is reshaping the social, geographic, institutional, and linguistic landscape on the MSU campus. It maps out the ways the university and local community are repositioning themselves in a globalized marketplace while simultaneously trying to capitalize on and “contain” the Chinese international students. Untangling this process, the university is conceptualized as a complex mobility system (Urry 2007; Nordquist 2017): that is, one open and unfinished and in which several apparently unrelated forces operate simultaneously without being centrally controlled or planned. Bringing together several disparate strands of activity, the analysis attends to the ways the reconfiguration of the university is bound up in the construction of pathways regulating movements of students in and across the HEI landscape.

Chapter 2 examines ways international students’ grassroots literacy practices are complexly entangled in this process as students take up, resist, and transform institutional structures. To analyze this interplay, the chapter attends to the ways grassroots activities are mediated by students’ *guanxi* networks. *Guanxi* is a key term in Chinese society referring to a complex system of exchange mediating the construction of social networks. The chapter examines how this trope is bound up in the ways students leverage transnational resources across home and host cultures. In particular, the analysis focuses on the ways two transnational entrepreneurs mobilized a deeply distributed array of social and material resources as a process intertwined with the reconstruction of identities and the HEI landscape. The first case focuses on ways a student who served as the “poster child” for the university leveraged his official status to develop an array of side businesses, including the establishment of the Summer China Program (SCP) International School. The chapter then turns to ways another student’s efforts to start an international student magazine, *Nebular*, was deeply linked to the production of emergent social and class identities in China. Together, the telling cases foreground the complex ways students were reconfiguring both social space and the social imagination.

Chapter 3 focuses on how the students’ social networks afford the development of disciplinary, academic, and transnational identities. To conduct the analysis, the chapter offers a fine-grained account of how a first-year English major similarly leveraged *guanxi* networks across campus, the United States, and China. Drawing on this trope—conceptualized as fluid, dynamic, contested—the analysis attends to the ways this process became densely intertwined with this student’s everyday literacy practices and academic trajectory. Tracing this English major’s movement in and across various courses—astronomy, Arabic, composition,

and English literature—the longitudinal study identifies ways her guanxi networks scaffolded her literate activities and afforded the manner in which she learned to write and “invent” the university. Linked to the previous chapter, the analysis furthermore attends to the ways her in-class collaborations and out-of-class participation in *Nebular* became densely intertwined. The chapter broadly argues for attention to ways unofficial literacy practices can serve as a powerful—and often overlooked—resource in teaching and learning. It also suggests wider ways the international students complexly positioned themselves both inside and outside the university as official and unofficial literacy practices spun off from one another.

Chapter 4 offers a contrastive case that indicates how the students’ social networks not only afforded but also *constrained* learning and the development of bifocal identities (Vertovec 2004). This chapter specifically examines the ways Chinese international students’ underground literacy practices in a basic writing course allowed them to self-segregate and to collectively circumvent assignments and find loopholes in the system. The analysis specifically attends to the ways the students organized themselves according to popular social and national identity types (typifications) related to educational status within mainland China. It particularly focuses on how the students collectively used a social media application, WeChat, to collaborate and exchange course information. The analysis further attends to the ways students’ underground networks extended into other spaces across the university, with a specific focus on ways one student established a strong standing within the community through exchanging online assistance in economics courses in return for other forms of social capital. The findings problematize discourses of diversity and multiculturalism perpetuated by the university while foregrounding not only the possibilities but also the significant challenges of recent translingual approaches.

Chapter 5 begins the next section of the book in turning to a study of the Sinoway International Education (SIE) program in Guangzhou, China. This chapter offers a broad overview of the program itself while conducting a spatial analysis of the social and linguistic landscape that situates the program within a complex and contested HEI marketplace. Central to this focus is the linking of material structures (buildings, computer networks, textbooks) to wider social, economic, and political structures. The chapter pivots around a key debate related to the status of for-profit Chinese summer college programs that was published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and the ways the arguments were taken up, resisted, and transformed locally at the SIE school. Central to the

analysis is attention to how educational institutions are bound up in a struggle for legitimacy, authority, and status within a contested and shifting globalized marketplace. The analysis itself is also situated in relation to the earlier discussion of SCP from chapter 2 in a move that serves to foreground the deeply relational and contested nature of the higher education landscape within and across national borders.

While the previous chapter maps out the social and linguistic landscape at SIE, chapter 6 turns to a fine-grained analysis of ways these structures shape and are shaped by everyday classroom practices. In the history of English-language teaching in China, while writing has been a college course for a long time, public speaking was seldom offered in Communist China (You 2010). When students participated in debates sanctioned by the university, both their topics and arguments had to conform to the Communist Party ideologies and government policies. This chapter attends to how the students took up a public-speaking model focused more squarely on Western as well as cosmopolitan frames related to civic engagement. In making this move, it focuses on the ways the students took up the curriculum in general and more particularly on debates surrounding social and class mobility within Chinese society. The chapter interrogates the ways the students and instructor were complexly positioned in relation to the discourses and roles in these debates as they struggled to reconfigure their literate, class, and national identities. The analysis illustrates the ways the social spaces of the classroom are densely intertwined with wider institutional, national, and international contexts. Our attention to this process foregrounds the need for a closer focus on ways writing and speaking—in both Chinese and English—are densely intertwined in students' rhetorical processes and practices.

Chapter 7 continues to map out the complex links between the students' literacy practices inside and outside the classroom and the ways these are bound up in their shifting academic as well as national identities. Whereas, however, the previous chapter primarily traces the students' activities within a classroom setting, this chapter extends the analysis through a close tracing of the students' literate activities across bars, hot-pot restaurants, and social media. Through situated observations of these practices—primarily focused on gaming (video games, television games, board games)—the chapter illustrates ways these scenes became densely intertwined with the students' in-classroom presentations. One key finding is that students' academic socialization inflects the *shanzhai* tradition in China. In this tradition, individuals or marginalized communities, who are often portrayed as outlaws, learn

the rules and ideas formulated by dominant groups and rewrite them for survival, for resistance, or for creativity. Attending to students' gaming practices, the analysis points to how students' dispositions, literacy practices, and identities are cultivated through weaving and reweaving bits and pieces of texts, objects, and ideologies from near and far-flung spaces. Attention to these translocal practices is conducive to understanding how middle-class mobilities mediate the reproduction of social inequality in China.

The conclusion synthesizes the various themes across the chapters while identifying the complex manner in which pedagogies, tropes, ideologies, languages, and actors travel across the various scenes of literacy. Implications are drawn for tracing the links between literacy and mobility across multiple sites and scales. In making this move, the chapter articulates methodological challenges in performing this work. More broadly, the chapter reflects on what this study suggests for both teaching and research in the fields of composition, second-language and literacy studies, and Chinese rhetorics while also drawing implications about HEIs more generally.

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